

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

in its power (urkräftiges) proceed from a contrived, shrewdly planned, reconciliation of differences. This Gospel, if it do not emanate from the Apostle John and point to that Christ, the intution of whom, on the part of the writer, gave birth to it, is the greatest of enigmas."<sup>1</sup>

---

## ARTICLE II.

### CHARLES WESLEY AND METHODIST HYMNS.

BY REV. FREDERIC M. BIRD, PHILADELPHIA.

(Continued from No. 81, p. 162.)

WE are now at liberty to glance over whatever may be most striking and important among the various poetical publications of the Wesleys. Their earlier volumes bear the names of both brothers, with nothing to distinguish the respective authorship of the separate poems; but it has been generally agreed by those who best understand the matter, to ascribe all the translations to John, and all the original poems — except in a very few cases, where there is some

<sup>1</sup> Neander's *Ges. d. Pflanz, u. Leit. d. Kirche*, 4 A. B. 2. s. 637.

The genuineness of the fourth Gospel has found an unexpected supporter in the person of M. Renan. In his recent *Life of Jesus*, he holds that the existence of this Gospel is presupposed, just as we have attempted to prove, in the controversies of the first half of the second century. By the force of the external evidence, and also by the historical truth which he is compelled to recognize in passages of the narrative, he is led to believe in the genuineness of at least the narrative parts of the work.

The embarrassment into which Renan is thrown by conceding that this history of Jesus is the work of an eyewitness, while he is yet unprepared to believe in miracles, is no concern of ours. We leave him to settle this matter with his disturbed friends of the *Westminster Review*. We simply record it as a very significant fact, that a writer who in treating of the *Life of Christ* plants himself on a theory of naturalism, is yet obliged in candor to allow that this Gospel is genuine. Strauss himself was for a time inclined to adopt the same view, and was finally kept from doing so only by seeing the fatal consequences that would ensue to his entire theory.

special reason to the contrary — to Charles (For particulars on this point, see Creamer's *Methodist Hymnology*, pp. 18–26 et al.). In their first publication, 1739, John's translations, adaptations, and selections occupy more room than Charles's originals; but to no subsequent volume does John contribute more than six or eight pieces. This first, and the two which followed it, in 1740 and 1742, were of the general character indicated by their common title: "Hymns and Sacred Poems."

In or before 1745 the Wesleys began to publish with reference to special subjects and occasions. Among the first and largest of these productions was "Hymns on the Lord's Supper," founded on Dr. Brevint's "Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice." This was one of their most popular books, and is valuable as an extensive, systematic, and well-versified collection of all that can be said on the subject; but not many of the hymns are in use, and a few only afford fair samples of the genuine Wesleyan power. Here is a sensible and pious acknowledgment of the mystery in the ordinance:

How he did these creatures raise, And make this bread and wine  
Organs to convey his grace To this poor soul of mine;  
I cannot the way descry, Need not know the mystery;  
Only this I know, that I Was blind, but now I see.

Yet Charles's views of the rite were very churchly. Whatever he meant by the following, the sentiment is sufficiently high, and the language more than sufficiently strong:

Did thine ancient Israel go, With solemn praise and prayer,  
To thy hallowed courts below, To meet and serve thee there?  
To thy body, Lord, we flee: This the consecrated shrine;  
Temple of the Deity, The real house divine.

His "Hymns on the Trinity" (1767) is a book of exceeding value and interest. Mr. Jackson is within the truth when he says: "There is not in the English language a volume that, in so small a compass, shows more clearly the scriptural doctrine of the Trinity, 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." The contents are arranged under five topics; through four of these, which are essentially doctrinal, each hymn has one or more texts of scripture prefixed, to which it is supposed to bear some more or less intimate relation. Thus, on Matt. xxxiii. 9, "Call no man your Father," etc.

Our heavenly Father is but one With that paternity  
In which the Father and the Son And Holy Ghost agree :  
Each person of the triune God May his own creature claim,  
For each impressed the earthly clod With his own awful name.

His distinctions are usually sound. 1 Cor. xi. 3, "The head of Christ is God."

The partner of our flesh and blood, As man, inferior is to God ;  
The lower part of Christ, the heel, Was bruised, and did our sorrows feel ;  
But though he would his life resign, His part superior is divine,  
And doth, beyond the reach of pain, God over all forever reign.

Very rarely, in this volume, does he use an incorrect expression. The last three lines of the following are perhaps the only instance :

How could God for sinners die ? How could man the pardon buy ?  
When thy human nature bled, Then the *blood divine* was shed, —  
*Blood of him who was in thee, God from all eternity.*

These expressions — "blood of God," "death of God," and the like, which not unfrequently occur in Charles Wesley — are themselves, and the ideas which they represent, popish and unjustifiable. The man Jesus alone suffered and died for us. The divine nature which was in him, mysteriously conjoined with his humanity, gave an infinite merit and atoning power to those agonies; and there we must stop. *How* the Godhead "made of infinite avail the sufferings of the man," is the mystery; and the mystery is not explained, nor any good done, by the use of language justified neither by reason nor scripture.

But this is an exception. For the elucidation of difficult passages, the harmonizing of seemingly contradictory ones, and the systematic and satisfactory presentation of a great doctrine in all its various phases, this would be a most valu-

able manual. It appears never to have been appreciated or reprinted. The last of its five divisions contains "Hymns and Prayers to the Trinity:"

Full credence we give, And exult to believe  
 What our reason in vain would aspire to conceive :  
 Not *against* but *above* Our reason we prove  
 Three persons revealed in the essence of love.

No distinction we find Of will or of mind  
 In the Maker, Inspirer, and Friend of mankind ;  
 But one God we proclaim, In nature and name  
 Indivisibly one, and forever the same.

Having thus outlined the scheme of orthodox doctrine, he is anxious to guard against formalism and mere intellectual belief; and he expresses himself as strongly as usual :

Right notions have their slender use,  
 But cannot a sound faith produce, Or vital piety.  
 They cannot make the Godhead known,  
 Or manifest Jehovah one In co-eternal three.

The orthodox, renowned in fight,  
 Fierce champions for opinions right, May reason's strength display ;  
 Their Arian and Socinian foes,  
 And Heresy's whole household knows The truth as much as they.

He insists earnestly on the necessity of spiritually discerning spiritual truths :

Creeds and books can nothing do, Unaccompanied by grace ;  
 Grace must form my heart anew, Give me to discern thy face,  
 Bring my faithful heart the power God in persons three to adore.

Our faith is but a shadow vain, Unless it works by love,  
 And, saved from sin and born again, We seek the things above ;  
 Unless we have the sacred Trine Into our hearts received,  
 And I can call each person mine, I have not yet believed.

Having thus satisfied his intellect, his orthodoxy, and his conscience, he, in a short hymn near the end of the volume, allows his innate poetry full swing. The piece is a fine example of that singularity of style and sentiment which he sometimes indulged without restraint :

Thy divinity's adorer, Thee that I may truly know,  
 Jesus, be my soul's restorer, Bleeding Lamb, appear below :  
 God, expiring on the tree, Love, be manifest in me.

Sharer of thy dereliction, Joining in thy plaintive cry,  
 Pained with thy extreme affliction, Let my broken heart reply :  
 O let all within me moan, Echo back thy dying groan !

Here would I maintain my station ; Never from the cross remove,  
 Till I, in my last temptation, Pay thee back thy dearest love, —  
 Faint into thy arms away ; Die into immortal day.

As a polemic poet, it is probable Charles Wesley has never been equalled. He possessed the combative qualities abundantly : intensity of thought and feeling, thorough sincerity and earnestness, unqualified devotion to his principles, a hearty hatred of whatever he thought unscriptural, false, and dangerous, outspoken and fearless honesty, keen wit, and unsurpassed vigor of language. He could be very satirical when he chose, — and he sometimes chose. The wretched formalism which everywhere prevailed, the deadness of the established church, the cruel bitterness of clergy and rulers against evangelical religion and its professors, aroused his wrath, and he frequently used words which must have been more true than pleasant. In his “*Hymns of Intercession*” (1758) occurs a picture, taken from life, of “*the universities*” :

Teacher divine, with melting eye  
 Our ruined seats of learning see,  
 Whose ruling scribes thy truth deny,  
 And persecute thy saints and thee,  
 As hired by Satan to suppress  
 And root up every seed of grace.

Where knowledge vain, unsanctified,  
 Fills every synagogue and chair ;  
 Where pride and unbelief preside,  
 And wage with heaven immortal war :  
 The prophets’ nursing schools are these,  
 Or sinks of desperate wickedness ?

The English Wesleyan Collection, and that of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, still contain part of a poem on Jer. vii. 4 : “*The temple of the Lord are these,*” headed in the latter collection : “*Before Preaching to Formalists.*” Our readers may be surprised to find so much irony in a hymn book.

The men who slight thy faithful word,  
In their own lies confide,  
These are the temple of the Lord,  
And heathens all beside !  
The temple of the Lord are these,  
The only church and true,  
Who live in pomp and wealth and ease,  
And Jesus never knew !

The temple of the Lord — they pull  
Thy living temples down,  
And cast out every gracious soul  
That trembles at thy frown ;  
The church — they from their pale expel  
Whom thou hast here forgiven ;  
And all the synagogues of hell  
Are the sole heirs of heaven !

But the most powerful, combative, and controversial poems that we have ever seen, appeared in "Hymns on God's Everlasting Love," published in 1741, and greatly enlarged in 1756. People seem to be shy of this polemic region: Mr. Jackson and Mr. Creamer pass the volume with very brief remarks; but it is one of the most able, interesting, and remarkable among the Arminian poet's publications. It preaches an unlimited, universal atonement, and attacks the doctrines of reprobation and unconditional election. Calvinism in that age was a somewhat different thing from that which bears the name now: the doctrine supposed to be taught that infants in great numbers were lost, and that most souls were arbitrarily predestined to endless misery, came sharply into conflict with Wesleyan views; and Charles thought he had a fair field for the exercise of spiritual archery. The famous controversy waged by Fletcher and John Wesley against Shirley, the Hills, Toplady, etc., was some years later; but John had already published his sermon on "Free Grace," and war was declared. We had better let the poet tell his own story; premising merely that it is the extreme and inhuman tenets of old-fashioned hyper-Calvinism which he is attacking, and that by the "hellish doctrine" and similar mild terms he means the dogma that Christ did not die for

all, but that some are, by a positive decree of the Almighty, shut out from any possible portion in the benefits of his atonement, and consigned irrevocably to endless punishment. The poet conceives, and pursues in several hymns, the bold idea of making a sinner, dying in his blood and without hope, justify the ways and attributes of Deity :

God forbid that I should dare To charge my death on thee ;  
 No, thy truth and mercy tear The *horrible decree* !  
 Though the devil's doom I meet, The devil's doctrine I disclaim :  
 Let it sink into the pit Of hell, from which it came.

God, the good, the just, I clear ; He did not die in vain :  
 Grace hath brought salvation near To every soul of man :  
 I *would not* be saved from death, And, self-destroyed, I justly fall ;  
 Publishing, with my last breath, The Saviour died for all.

And again,

A ransom for my soul was paid : For mine and every soul of man  
 The Lamb a full atonement made, The Lamb for me and Judas slain.

By my own hands, not his, I fall ; The *hellish doctrine* I disprove :  
 Sinners, his grace is free for all ; Though I am damned, yet God is love.

He cannot repeat the great truth too often or too earnestly :

Thou dost not mock our race With insufficient grace :  
 Thou hast reprobated none ; Thou from Pharaoh's blood art free ;  
 Thou didst once for all atone, Judas, Esau, Cain, and me.

He would make himself personally responsible for the truth he preaches :

We stake our interest in thy blood, On this, and this alone,  
 That it for all mankind hath flowed, And did for all atone.

He regards the sacrifice as complete, the atonement as positive, and personal salvation as the unavoidable result of appropriating faith :

Thou canst not now thy grace deny, Thou canst not but forgive ;  
 Lord, if thy justice asks me why — In Jesus I believe !

He accuses his antagonists of limiting the Infinite, and separating Christ from God :

Ye potsherds of the earth, presume To disunite the Trinity.

And he answers their predestinarian argument thus :



"Since God might justly let all die, And leave all to eternal woe,  
Might he not justly some pass by?" The wounds of Jesus answer, No!

His wrath he might on all have shown, Had not his law been satisfied:  
But now he cannot pass by one; He cannot, — for his Son hath died.

He makes one who is enjoying a state of grace, confess the possibility of falling therefrom:

The blackest crime upon record I freely *could* commit;  
The sins by nature most abhorred My nature *could* repeat.  
I *could* the devil's law receive, Unless restrained by thee;  
I *could* (Good God!), I *could* believe the HORRIBLE DECREE!  
I *could* believe that God is hate, The God of love and grace  
Did damn, pass by, and reprobate The most of human race.  
Farther than this I cannot go, Till Tophet take me in;  
But O forbid that I should know This mystery of sin!

So much wit on such a subject would be wickedness in most writers; but Charles is perfectly honest and serious. In like manner he represents the hyper-Calvinists as teaching, with regard to the fate of sinners:

*The righteous God consigned Them over to their doom,  
And sent the Saviour of mankind To damn them from the womb;  
To damn for falling short Of what they could not do,  
For not believing the report Of that which was not true.*

They think with shrieks and cries To please the Lord of hosts,  
And offer thee, in sacrifice, Millions of slaughtered ghosts;  
With new-born babes they fill The dire, infernal shade,  
For such (they say) was thy great will Before the world was made.

The hymn, "Equip me for the war," in the present Methodist books, is part of a long poem in this volume, being a preacher's prayer. Here is one of the petitions:

Increase (if that can be) The perfect hate I feel  
To Satan's HORRIBLE DECREE, That genuine child of hell,  
Which feigns thee to pass by The most of Adam's race,  
And leave them in their blood to die, Shut out from saving grace.

To most, as devils teach (Get thee behind me, fiend!)  
To most, thy mercies never reach, Whose mercies have no end.

This is that wisdom from beneath, That horrible decree!

My soul it harrows up, It freezes all my blood,  
My tingling ears I fain would stop Against their hellish God,

*Constrained, alas! to hear His reprobating roar,  
And see him horribly appear All stained with human gore.*

If Toplady ever saw that verse, no wonder that he called the Wesleys blasphemers. Comment is vain; human language cannot go beyond the terrible energy of these lines. If any one think that the author needs an excuse, it must be found in his thorough and intense sincerity. He believed he was battling for the glory of God; and he was perfectly ready to go to the stake for his convictions. Hear him on this:

*My life I here present, My heart's best drop of blood,  
O let it all be freely spent In proof that thou art good, —  
Art good to all that breathe, Who all may pardon have;  
Thou wilt not the sinner's death, But all the world wouldst save.*

*O take me at my word, But arm me with thy power,  
Then call me forth to suffer, Lord, To meet the fiery hour;  
In death will I proclaim That all may hear thy call,  
And clap my hands amidst the flame, And shout, HE DIED FOR ALL!*

Other polemic poems, on less catholic subjects, may be found in several of his works; supporting sometimes "the peculiar views of the Methodists," and sometimes views which were peculiar to himself. In the volume of 1749 is a long hymn on the text, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." It is an argument for sinless perfection, and against its disbelievers. Of some of these he says:

*Saints without holiness are they, Elect without election's seal;  
They do, yet cannot, fall away; In Christ, and yet in sin, they dwell;  
Their freemen are to evil sold, Their creatures new are creatures old.*

He was a strong advocate of complete and unspotted holiness, as attainable on earth. The expression, "unsinching state," frequently occurs in his writings. In one of his earliest volumes, he uses this strong and unjustifiable language:

*Gifts, alas! cannot suffice, And comforts are in vain;  
While one evil thought can rise, I am not born again.*

And likewise on Luke vi. 44, "The tree is known by its fruits":

The trees of righteousness, Thy planting, O almighty Lord,  
They never can thy law transgress, Or sin in deed, or thought, or word.

This and very many similar pieces were omitted by John Wesley, in a subsequent expurged edition of the Scripture Hymns. The founder of Methodism held very definite and practical views regarding Christian perfection; but Charles acquired notions which reduced it to a mere theory and abstract doctrine. At this time (1762) he considered the "unsinners state" to be the result only of long experience, and the fidelity of many years; thus on 2 Cor. xiii. 11. "Be perfect," i.e. Aspire to the highest degree of holiness :

Let down from heaven the ladder see,  
And mount, till all the steps are past:  
Perfection is the last degree ;  
Perfection is attained the last.

There were many Methodists at this time who professed to have attained this desirable state. In accordance with his own opposite views, Charles thought it necessary to rebuke their presumption; and the first edition of his Short Scripture Hymns contains many verses like this, on Phil. iii. 12. "Not as though I were already perfect":

Then know thy place (a novice cries,  
Whose fancy has attained the prize) ;  
Stand by thyself, nor rank with me,  
For I am holier than thee :  
Beyond the chief apostle I !  
And you, who dare my grace deny,  
The proof of my perfection know ;  
It is — because *I think* it so !

He puts a very severe test upon the practical perfectionists :

But if the smallest spark of pride Or self discover them at last,  
Set the false witnesses aside, Yet hold *the truth* forever fast.

He says in the preface that he has taken great pains both to prove and to guard this troublesome doctrine. Most people would think that the pains were wasted, that his "guards" demolish his "proofs;" that he is busy with first building up what he directly proceeds to pull down. The truth is, the poet is inconsistent in this matter, as in some

others. The *practice* of Christian perfection is alone of consequence; the mere theory is of no value whatever. But Charles reduces it to pure theory. His brother rightly accuses him of having no fruits, no possible results to his creed; and a faith which thus excludes works becomes totally insignificant. The sense of this matter, as most Christians take it, is expressed by Grimshaw of Haworth, a pious and faithful clergyman, who was strongly in sympathy with the Methodists. The letter was written to Charles Wesley, March 31, 1760. "The doctrine of perfection runs very high. . . . . Thirty profess sinless perfection; and thirty more, I expect, will pretend thereto shortly. If it be of God it is well. Time will prove it. I wish they knew their own hearts. My perfection is, to see my own imperfection: my comfort, to feel that I have the world, flesh, and devil to overcome through the spirit and merits of my dear Saviour; and my desire and hope is, to love God with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength, to the last gasp of my life. This is my perfection. I know no other, expecting to lay down my life and my sword together."

Yet the Methodist doctrine of perfection, or the doctrine of Methodist perfection, as outsiders are apt to call it, has been and is greatly misunderstood. If we of other denominations were better acquainted with the genuine, pure, original Wesleyan tenets on this subject, with what John preached and Charles usually sung, we should find less that is sectarian, and more that is scriptural, than we commonly fancy. Doubtless they used some strong and unguarded expressions (Charles, as we have seen, was perpetually doing that); and doubtless their teachings have often been perverted to false and dangerous uses by ignorant, fanatical, or dishonest men among their followers: but the wheat can be separated from the chaff. John Wesley seldom or never used the word *sinless*, or taught that the holiest believer was utterly exempt from human infirmities. He held, on the contrary, that certain unpleasant peculiarities and deficiencies, which he ascribes to the *intellect*, might still

interfere with the complete character and comfort of one who was living without sin. But the idea of a lofty state of grace, in which the believer enjoys unbroken communion with God, and lives, as it were, above the temptation to go astray, is surely not very averse to reason or scripture: and this is really the secret of the much abused Methodist perfection. The Wesleys were very strong and bold men; they took higher ground than most others had done: they attempted more, and they accomplished more. What precisely and fully were their doctrines and modes of thought, their aims and ways of working, may be best seen in their poetry. "All that these men of God have taught in the pulpit, and that thousands of their spiritual children have experienced, the hymns adequately express. They assume that it is the common privilege of believers to enjoy the direct and abiding witness of their personal adoption; to be made free from sin by the sanctifying spirit; to live and die in the conscious possession of that perfect love which casteth out fear: and they express a strong and irrepressible desire for these blessings, with the mighty faith by which they are attained." Thus the poet expects the annihilation of inward evil:

Come, O my God, the promise seal, This mountain, sin, remove!  
Now in my gasping soul reveal The virtue of thy love.

Anger and sloth, desire and pride This moment be subdued;  
Be cast into the crimson tide Of my Redeemer's blood!

And the setting up of Christ's image within:

Fully in my life express All the heights of holiness:  
Sweetly let my spirit prove All the depths of humble love.

And the utter absorption of the human in the divine:

Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, And seal me thine abode!  
Let all I am in thee be lost, *Let all I am be God!*

There is not much that is objectionable about this view of perfection. It is simply a question of how far we shall attempt to live up to our privileges and duties. That most professing Christians scarcely make that attempt at all, is a

melancholy fact. That the Wesleyan poetry should be above the comprehension and out of range of the experience of such, is a natural consequence: where known at all, Charles' hymns "are admired in proportion as the people are spiritually minded."

It has been made manifest that the Methodist poet was no latitudinarian. He was zealous for every minutest point of what he considered saving truth, and tenacious even of his individual peculiarities of opinion. The common notion, that he was of a mild, yielding, softly-poetical nature, without his brother's positiveness of character and fierceness of attachment to his own ways and views, is founded in ignorance. He had not his brother's administrative power, or uniform strength of cool comprehensive judgment; but he was quite as earnest and powerful in his affections and antipathies. Whatever he thought and felt the world might know. His multiplied verses were sure to publish his sentiments on every subject, in all their strength and variety. But the positiveness of his own principles, and his free comments on those of others, did not arise from a bigoted or sectarian spirit. In 1761 he and his brother published a Hymn Book "for the Use of Real Christians of all Denominations." This volume is what it professes to be; the Christian poet had a hearty sympathy and love for "all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." His hostility to Calvinism was quite as decided as that of his brother; but he maintained an unbroken friendship with the Calvinist Whitefield, his early college friend and predecessor in the itinerancy. Controversies frequently occurred, and sometimes raged, between them; but their personal affection and respect for each other was not destroyed. "I believe," wrote Whitefield, "we shall go on best when we only preach the simple gospel, and do not interfere with each other's plan." On the occasion of some friendly meeting between the brothers and their doctrinal opponent, Charles wrote a joyful hymn of thanksgiving:

Thy mind we surely know, In which we now agree,  
And, hand in hand, exulting go To final victory

Few will dispute the correctness of *that* sentiment. The parties concerned had grace to act up to it ever thereafter. With the manifold attempts which some hyper-Calvinists made to injure the Wesleys, Whitefield had no connection and no sympathy; nor was the conduct of the brothers towards him ever marked by anything but Christian courtesy and brotherly love. When that evangelist died, his old companion gave expression to his sorrow in an *Elegy* which shows that prejudice and party spirit had not obliterated affection and charity.

The two volumes of "Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture," published in 1762, form a remarkable work, and contain many gems. The ideas are largely taken from Bengel, Henry, and Gill. Sometimes the poet uses a text merely as a peg to hang his peculiar notions on; sometimes he develops the true idea of the passage, though usually in a way of his own. It is a spiritualizing commentary. We give a few further samples:

*Exodus ix. 12.* "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh."

There needed, Lord, no act of thine,  
If Pharaoh had a heart like mine:  
One moment leave me but alone,  
And mine, alas, is turned to stone!  
Thus, if the blessing thou restrain,  
The earth is hardened by the rain  
Withheld: and thus, if God depart,  
Jehovah hardens Pharaoh's heart.

*Ruth ii. 19.* "Where hast thou gleaned to-day?"

At evening to myself I say,  
My soul, where hast thou gleaned to-day, Thy labors how bestowed?  
What hast thou rightly said, or done?  
What grace attained, or knowledge won, In following after God?

*Matt. viii. 10.* "Jesus marvelled."

But doth it, Lord, thy wonder raise,  
The faith thou hast thyself bestowed?  
Oh what a mystery of grace!  
The man in Christ admires the God!

*Matt. xxvii. 12.* "He answered nothing."

Speechless the Saviour stood Beneath my guilty load;  
He answered not, for I Have nothing to reply;

But when condemned and dumb I before God become,  
His mouth is opened then for me, His blood proclaims the sinner free.

John x. 10. "I am come that they might have life" etc.

Answer then thy blest design, Bring to me the life of grace ;  
Bring me larger life divine ; Fill my soul with holiness ;  
Fit me for the life above, All the life of heavenly love.

Rev. viii. 1. "There was silence in heaven."

What doth that silence mean ? Can man or angel show ?  
Away this noisy world between, And let me die to know !

The Funeral Hymns of Charles Wesley are perhaps the noblest specimens of his genius. Mr. Jackson inclines to this opinion, basing it upon all the hymns referring to death and eternity which are scattered through his various works. The spirituality of the poet's views regarding the last change has been already mentioned : he infused it thoroughly into his songs, and through them into his converts. There is a joyous, triumphant tone about the Wesleyan elegies, very different from the doleful sound of an ordinary death-knell. Other poets offer solemn or languid consolation in the hackneyed strains of long and common metre ; but the Methodist bursts forth :

Rejoice for a brother deceased ! Our loss is his infinite gain !

Our propriety is apt to be shocked by such abrupt and untimely raptures ; but our propriety is in fault. We may talk unimpassionedly about the shortness of life, the solemnities of eternity, and the sorrows of the bereaved, when the circumstances forbid our getting higher ; but at the funeral of a genuine and positive Christian, nothing else can be sung so appropriate as several of the Wesleyan hymns. What can be more edifying, consolatory, or instructive, at such a time, than that noble poem,

Blessing, honor, thanks, and praise, Pay we, gracious God, to thee :  
Thou, in thine abundant grace, Givest us the victory !

Yes, the Christian's course is run ; Ended is the glorious strife ;  
Fought the fight, the victory won ; Death is swallowed up of life.

This jubilant tone was in perfect harmony with the spirit



of the early Methodists, who used to make the streets or valleys ring with such songs of triumph, as they carried their dead to the grave. Religion was a living reality to them; they shared in their Master's victory over the last foe. Said a physician to Charles Wesley: "Most people die for fear of dying; but I never met with such people as yours. They are none of them afraid of death; but calm and patient and resigned to the last." "Madam, be not cast down," was said to a dying woman. She answered, smiling: "Sir, I shall never be cast down."

Such examples in the poet's daily experience supplied him with ever fresh and varying themes. Often tried by the loss of near and dear friends, his sensitive heart learned the lesson of perfect resignation and unquestioning faith:

If death my friend and me divide,  
Thou dost not, Lord, my sorrow chide, Or frown my tears to see:  
                    Restrained from passionate excess,  
Thou bidst me mourn in calm distress For them that rest in thee.

When his children, one after another, were taken from him, he could say with David:

Wherefore should I make my moan, Now the darling child is dead?  
He to early rest is gone, He to paradise is fled:  
I shall go to him, but he Never shall return to me.

Some respectable hymn books still offer to mourners such cold comfort as this:

"Though nature's voice you must obey,  
Think, while your swelling griefs o'erflow,  
That hand, which takes your joys away,  
That sovereign hand can heal your woe."

But Charles Wesley sees hope and heaven very much nearer, and cries:

Disconsolate tenant of clay, In solemn assurance arise,  
Thy treasure of sorrow survey, And look through it all to the skies.

In the larger tract of "Funeral Hymns," published in 1759, are two very remarkable poems "On the Death of Mr. John Hutchinson, July 23, 1754." They are preceded by a prayer for the same person, "a Backslider," when near his end.

Very little is said of this individual in Wesley's life, but the poet must have been tenderly attached to him. A year after the event, Charles spent an hour, weeping, in the room where he died. Notwithstanding their singular beauty, the poems have never, to our knowledge, been quoted or reprinted, except in the author's "Journal and Poetry." We give a few verses from each. The first is a model of truthful delicacy, and generous catholic sympathy, in the handling of a very difficult subject. He alludes to the faults and errors of the departed with a grace and tenderness which are inimitable :

'Scaped from a life of pain, Disburdened of his load,  
The struggling soul hath burst its chain Of peevish flesh and blood ;  
Safe to the haven brought, Where storms can never come,  
And every folly, every fault, Is buried in his tomb.

The pain, whose lingering strife And frequent impulse tore  
The wasted seats of irksome life, Shall never vex him more :  
Nor love's severe excess, Nor anger's furious start,  
Can his indignant spirit oppress, Or rend his frantic heart.

The tyrannizing power Of his own wayward will,  
The buffetings of sin are o'er, The stubborn pulse is still :  
Jesus hath heard our prayer, And caught him to his breast,  
And lulled the self-tormentor there To everlasting rest.

The other is in a different vein, and bears a remarkable affinity to some of the finest passages of "In Memoriam." "That friend of mine who lives in God" is near of kin to the transplanted spirit with whom Charles Wesley is communing :

Why should my tears forever flow ?  
Why should I wail the close of woe, The end of misery ?  
His real life doth still remain ;  
Nothing is dead but grief and pain, But that which wished to die.

My HUTCHINSON himself survives ;  
He lives, to GOD he greatly lives ! The imperishable part  
Is rapt beyond our world of care ;  
Yet now by faithful love I bear His image on my heart.

I see the generous friend sincere ;  
His voice still vibrates in my ear, The voice of truth and love !  
It calls me to put off my clay ;  
It bids me soar with him away To fairer worlds above.

Not even in death his friendship dies:  
 With grateful pity and surprise I ask, how can it be?  
 Loosened from all he leaves behind,  
 Yet still, — unutterably kind — Yet still he cleaves to me.

Some have considered the "Family Hymns" as the most meritorious of Charles Wesley's various works. It certainly displays to great advantage the versatility, vigor, and elegance of his genius, and contains many poems of extreme beauty, interest, and practical value. The following is one of eleven hymns "for a Woman near the Time of her Travail":

Jesus, thou son of Mary, Thou Son of the Most High,  
 Lo, at thy feet I tarry, And on thy truth rely;  
 In awful expectation Of my distressing hour,  
 I look for thy salvation, For all thy mercy's power.  
 On thee, my health in sickness, My feeble soul is stayed;  
 Thy strength in human weakness Is perfectly displayed:  
 Thou never wilt forsake me, Who on thy love depend,  
 But to thy bosom take me, Till pain with life shall end.

Here is a very natural idea under the circumstances :

But wilt thou suffer me to bear A sad reverse of thee;  
 A graceless, miserable heir Of endless misery;  
 Expose it to the world's black wild, And sin's malignant power?  
 And must I, Lord, bring forth a child For Satan to devour?

Here is a "Hymn for a Newborn Child":

Father, Son, and Spirit come, Enter now thy human shrine,  
 Take my offspring from the womb; Mine he is not, Lord, but thine:  
 Thine this moment let him be, Thine to all eternity!  
 Seize, O seize his tender heart, Beating to the vital air;  
 Everlasting life impart, Sow the seed of glory there:  
 Grace be to my infant given, Grace, the principle of heaven.

In "the Mother's Hymn," he enters his protest against the popular melodies of that day:

What follies abound, Where reason is drowned  
 By a heathenish nurse in a torrent of sound!  
 When by Satan beguiled, With sonnets defiled,  
 She angers her Maker To quiet her child!  
 Who the Saviour and son Of Mary have known,  
 They delight to converse With their Jesus alone:

They at all times proclaim His wonderful name,  
And in tending their infants they sing of the Lamb.

The subjects of the several poems in this volume are as various as the varying occasions of domestic and individual life. The titles of some are: "For a Child in the Small Pox"; "For a Child Cutting his Teeth"; "At sending a Child to the Boarding School." Where others would produce mere 'prose tagged with rhyme,' Charles Wesley shows the genuine poet; where others would be drearily and lifelessly commonplace, he has solid ideas, expressed with elegance, originality, and force; where others are either pompous or mawkish, he is natural, tender, manly, and earnest. No other poet has been able to write on such minute and common subjects, without first leaving his poetry behind him; but the Methodist Pegasus ambles through bedrooms and parlors, or soars from the house-top to heaven, as gracefully as if he were on the smoothest and most frequented road. Many of these poems — especially the hymns for Parents and Masters in the present Wesleyan Collection — are wonderful examples of minute comprehensiveness of thought and petition. There is a liberal and sensible discrimination between natural goodness and the righteousness of faith, in a wife's prayer "for an Unconverted Husband":

Thy goodness formed and turned his mind;  
Thou mad'st him generous, just, and kind; Yet, O incarnate God,  
Through thee escaped the gulf of vice,  
In nature's deadly sleep he lies, Nor pants to feel thy blood.

Thou know'st, if not a foe professed,  
A stranger to thy cross, at rest Without thy grace he lives;  
Thoughtless of death and judgment near,  
His joy, his good, his portion here, Contented he receives.

Some of the hymns are for "Various Occasions." Here is a fine description of a peculiar state of mind, "Written in Uncertainty":

My every choice, desire, design, I now implicitly submit;  
My will is fixed to follow thine, And lies indifferent at thy feet.

Parties and sects I now forego, From all their schemes and systems free :  
 After the flesh no more I know Those dearest souls thou gav'st to me.  
 Loosed and detached, I cease from man ; Opinions, names, are clean forgot ;  
 This all my aim, and all my plan, To do, and be — I know not what.

In 1766 Charles published 100 "Hymns for Children and Others of Riper Years." It is more especially the latter; for most of the contents are hardly within the grasp of infantine minds. The preface, supposed to be by John Wesley, says: "There are two ways of writing or speaking to children: the one is to let ourselves down to them; the other, to lift them up to us." Dr. Watts, he says, used the first style; his brother attempts the second, with "strong and manly sense, yet expressed" so as "even children may understand. But when they do understand them, they will be children no longer, only in years and stature." This is rather a contradiction in terms. The impossible promise is hardly fulfilled; and the book, in our opinion, shares the fate of all attempts to "lift children up to us," i. e. to put old heads on young shoulders. Dr. Watts and Peter Parley are the best instructors of babes, after all. Some things in the present volume are interesting, a few are edifying, and more are amusing; but with a few notable exceptions, the writer is either too high for the children or too low for others and himself. Children can hardly understand this kind:

Teacher of babes, to thee I for instruction flee ;  
 In my natural estate, Thee, my God, I cannot know :  
 Let thy grace illuminate, Thee thy own Spirit show.

Or,

Let the potsherds of the earth Boast their virtue, beauty, birth :  
 A poor, guilty worm I am, Ransomed by the bleeding Lamb.

Or, "when they do understand them, they will be children no longer," and so will be able to use the hymns for "others of riper years," without needing any specially manufactured for them. In a very few instances, the poet took especial pains to get out of himself, and become entirely comprehensible to the meanest understanding. Whether it were worth the

pains, except to show that he *could* write otherwise than well, is doubtful :

How wretched are the boys at school, Who wickedly delight  
To mock, and call each other fool, And with each other fight :  
Who soon their innocency lose, And learn to curse and swear ;  
Or if they do no harm, suppose That good enough they are !

An undeniable proposition ; but it scarcely required a great lyric poet to state it. Again,

Idle boys and men are found Standing on the devil's ground :  
He will give them work to do ; He will pay their wages too.

Enough of this, which is about the level of Watts's most juvenile melodies. First among the "Hymns for Girls," Charles, rather unkindly, proposes to make the female children of his disciples sing this :

Ah, dire effect of female pride !  
How deep our mother's sin, and wide, Through all her daughters spread !  
Since first she plucked the mortal tree,  
Each woman would a goddess be In her Creator's stead.

This fatal vanity of mind,  
A curse entailed on all the kind, Her legacy we feel :  
We neither can deny nor tame  
Our inbred eagerness for fame, And stubbornness of will.

See from the world's politest school  
The goddess rise, mankind to rule, As born for her alone !  
Unclogged by thought, she issues forth,  
And, justly conscious of her worth, Ascends her gaudy throne.

With lust of fame and pleasure fired,  
The virgin shines, caressed, admired, And idolized by all ;  
Obedient to her dread command,  
Around her throne the votaries stand, Or at her footstool fall.

And so on through sixteen verses. Charles had been married some years when he wrote this : his wife was a woman of birth and refinement, but it seems she was not able to correct his ideas on this point. He teaches his infants the true ascetic doctrine :

We for no worldly pleasures plead,  
No *innocent diversions* need, As Satan calls his joys :  
His rattles let the tempter keep,  
Or his own children rock to sleep With such amusing toys.

He also edifies the young people with a fancy picture of "Primitive Christianity," founded on fact, and somewhat singularly presented. Where, unless from his own vivid imagination, he got the facts as to the model children of those early days, does not appear :

The Christians of old, United in one,  
 As sheep in a fold, Were never alone ;  
 As birds of a feather They flocked to their nest,  
 And sheltered together in Jesus's breast.  
 Small learning they had, And wanted no more :  
 Not many could read, But all could adore :  
 No help from the college or school they received,  
 Content with his knowledge In whom they believed.  
 Men in their own eyes Were children again,  
 And children were wise and solid as men ;  
 The women were fearful Of nothing but sin,  
 Their hearts were all cheerful, Their consciences clean.

He was more successful in his "Hymns for the Youngest," some of which combine solid piety and poetry with infantine simplicity and sweetness. Two verses beginning: "Loving Jesus, gentle Lamb," have been transferred to the present church hymn books of the Methodists; and their Sunday School collections contain part of another, which is one of the prettiest of its kind :

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, Look upon a little child ;  
 Pity my simplicity ; Suffer me to come to thee.  
 Put thy hand upon my head, Let me in thine arms be stayed :  
 Give me, Lord, thy blessing give ; Pray for me, and I shall live.  
 I shall live the simple life, Free from sin's uneasy strife ;  
 Sweetly ignorant of ill, Innocent and happy still.  
 O that I may never know What the wicked people do !  
 Sin is contrary to thee, Sin is the forbidden tree.

This volume also contains several of its author's finest hymns, which are not exactly "hymns for children." The noble poem, "And am I born to die;" really unites "strong manly sense" with perfect simplicity of language, and is adapted to impress any mind, young or old. Beside this appeared the hymn "And am I only born to die," and one

or two others, whose close, earnest, and lofty vein of thought commend them rather to those "of riper years."

We have yet to notice Charles Wesley's *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, published in 1749: two stout volumes, containing a great deal of interesting and valuable matter. Many of the poems are in some sense autobiographic, and several have been quoted in this Article to illustrate their author's life and character; but there remain a number, arranged under special heads and subjects, which exhibit the poet's wealth and power of imagination. He seems to have possessed, in a rare degree, the faculty of putting himself into some mental state entirely foreign to his personal experience and condition, and building up, on that ideal basis, a complete and symmetrical edifice. No one has described with equal fluency and minuteness the feelings of backsliders and impenitent sinners. A few minutes' conversation with such a person, or a fit of depression on his own part, would doubtless suffice to elicit a cry as from the depths, and produce a lifelike picture of hopeless misery. He has reached the middle period of life; a sober retrospect, perhaps, brings on a momentary gloom, and he dashes into the following:

And have I measured half my days, And half my journey run,  
Nor tasted the Redeemer's grace, Nor yet my work begun?  
The morning of my life is past, The noon is almost o'er;  
The night of death approaches fast, When I can work no more.

O what a length of wretched years Have I lived out in vain!  
How fruitless all my toils and tears, — I am not born again!  
O'er earth a banished man I rove, But cannot feel Him nigh;  
Where is the pardoning God of love, Who deigned for me to die?

There are a number of "Hymns for one fallen from Grace."

O how sore a thing and grievous Is it from our God to run!  
When we force our God to leave us, Wretched are we and undone:  
Are we not our own tormentors, When from happiness we flee?  
Yes, our soul the iron enters; Sin is perfect misery.

Plague and curse I now inherit, Fears and wars and storms within,  
Pain and agony of spirit, Sin chastising me for sin;  
Weeping, woe, and lamentation, Vain desire and fruitless prayer,  
Guilt and shame and condemnation, Doubt, distraction, and despair.



He closes with a pathetic exhortation to others to take warning by his fate :

Dead to praise and wealth and beauty,  
 Cast on Christ your every care ;  
 Walk in all the paths of duty,  
 Praying, watching unto prayer :  
 Pray ; and when the answer's given,  
 When ye find the passage free,  
 When your faith hath opened heaven,  
 Faithful souls, remember me !

The poet's usual style is diffuse rather than concise: but here is a perfect epigram :

That sudden flash of heavenly light  
 Which once broke in upon my night,  
 Has made my darkness visible,  
 And left me to a deeper hell.

He cannot paint too strongly the horrors of the fallen and backslidden spirit :

Would to God that I had died, Ere I the deed had done,  
 Mocked afresh, and crucified, And trampled on his Son !  
 All in vain I wish and pray ; It is, and cannot but have been :  
 Who can call back yesterday, Or nullify my sin ?

With a diamond's point it stands Engraven on my heart,  
 Wrote by mine and Satan's hands, It mocks the eraser's art :  
 Deep as hell's foundations driven Into my soul the marks remain :  
 Is there dew in that fair heaven To purge so foul a stain ?

Again, and yet more intensely ; but this time with a glimmering of hope :

Oh hell of sin ! thy fiery rage  
 Not many waters can assuage, Not all the ocean's flood ;  
 Thy flames would, spite of all, increase :  
 What then can make thy burnings cease ? A drop of Jesus' blood.

In the second volume are a number of hymns for widows. Here is a specimen of proud and magnanimous sorrow :

Weep, ye common mourners, weep, Tell aloud your shallow woe :  
 Silent all my griefs, and deep, In an even current flow,  
 Till they reach the peaceful sea, Lost in calm eternity.

The poet's views as to the recognition of friends in heaven, were clear and positive :

Can a true believer doubt If souls each other know ?  
Surely I shall find him out Whom most I prize below.

He is quite explicit as to the reunion of husband and wife :

Inflamed with seraphical love, Combined in a manner unknown,  
Not given in marriage above, Or given to Jesus alone ;  
The just who, admitted by grace, That first resurrection attain,  
With rapture each other embrace, And one with the Deity reign.

A manuscript version of most of the Psalms, by the Methodist poet, was accidentally discovered some years ago, and has since been published both in England and this country : the latter under the auspices of the Methodist Church, South. These paraphrases are written with ease and grace, and some of them possess much strength and beauty. A few had found their way into the volumes printed by the Wesleys, and are in the present hymn books.

With the standard collections of the Methodists we have no present concern, further than as they almost alone contain the accessible poems of Charles Wesley. The great Hymn Book of his brother, published in 1780, contained 525 hymns, and, with slight alterations and a considerable Supplement, is still used by the Wesleyan connection in England. Of 770 hymns herein, 627 are by Charles. This volume, or rather the old editions without the Supplement, is, taken all in all, the best collection of Wesleyan poetry extant, and the most essential manual for one who desires to study this attractive and important department of sacred literature. It by no means contains all of Charles's best poems, nor even all which are thoroughly suited to public worship ; but it is profoundly impressed with his spirit, and presents, in a purer form than any volume extant, many of the noblest fruits of his genius.

The present collection of the American Methodist Episcopal church is not what it might be. The compilers seem scarcely to have appreciated the treasures which were all their own ; for the smaller book which it superseded was, as a selection of Wesleyan poetry, superior to this volume. The long hymns of Charles Wesley, whether they will bear

it or not, are cut down to six, four, three verses; a task always delicate and difficult, and here not always executed with a tender hand. The unity and literary value of many poems are thus destroyed, while verses and whole hymns of the highest character are thrown out, to make room for comparatively indifferent matter from outside sources: for the extensive selections from the rich fields of non-Methodist hymnology have not been made with uniform good judgment.

The collection of the Methodists South is more satisfactory. That is a very bad church, but has a very good hymn book. This volume, it is sufficient to say, is not open to the charges just brought against the other; but does fair justice to the poet who is its chief contributor, and contains, within a less number of hymns, more real poetry and more solid, useful matter than the northern compilation.

Our extracts have been made chiefly from poems which are not exactly hymns, and are utterly unknown to the public. It is proper, before closing this Article, to refer briefly to those productions by which Charles Wesley is generally known, and which are supposed, or offered, to be sung in public and social worship.

That not all of these are fitted for congregational use any person of competent judgment will soon discover. Some are too private and personal in their experiences; some too ecstatic in feeling; some too loftily imaginative or unrestrainedly poetical; some too minute and lengthy to be strictly lyrical; and some are in metres not to be sung. In all these respects John Wesley's hymn book is reduced and elected from the wide scope and vast variety of style, of its materials; but, in all these respects, the Wesleyan matter which goes into any modern collection must be yet further elected and reduced from it. Charles Wesley invented or adopted no end of metrical habits to contain his poetry, some of which were as "peculiar" as this:

Speechless am I, till thy kind sigh From this dumb fiend deliver:  
Then, my Lord, my God, I cry, And sing and shout forever!

That sort is not admitted into the Wesleyan hymn book, which contains only twenty-six different metres; but of those twenty-six we have to drop several. So of other things. The poet was wont to express innate depravity in strong terms :

Worse than all I find The bitter root within,  
The beastly heart, The devilish mind, The hell of inbred sin.

And

The beast and devil I deny, Sensual and animal delight;  
The wanton and the curious eye Be closed in everlasting night;  
My learned lust be cast aside, And all my filth of self and pride.

This, in the authorized books, is reduced to

The beast and devil in my soul.

But this, though merely a strong expression for an undoubted truth, is not exactly lyrical, nor adapted to edify a promiscuous audience. So, when the itinerant preacher, in the tender fidelity of his ministerial and poetical heart, exclaims :

Outcasts of men, to you I call,  
Harlots and publicans and thieves!

Come, Oh my guilty brethren, come,  
Groaning beneath your load of sin;  
His bleeding heart shall make you room,  
His open side shall take you in :

For you the purple torrent flowed  
In pardons from his wounded side;  
Languished for you the eternal God;  
For you the Prince of glory died;  
Believe, and all your sin's forgiven;  
Only believe, and yours is heaven!

We admire the powerful and elegant verses, but do not propose to sing them on ordinary occasions. Yet there is abundance that we *can* sing: a number, quite as large, we believe, as can be found in any other hymn-writer, that are not only poetical in a high degree, but thoroughly lyrical, and suited to the purposes of general worship. Where shall we find finer *practical* hymns than those beginning "A

charge to keep I have"; "Sinners, turn, why will ye die?" "And am I born to die"; "O God, my inmost soul convert"; or nobler songs of Christian triumph than: "Rejoice, the Lord is King!" "Blow ye the trumpet, blow"; "Oh for a thousand tongues to sing"; "Christ the Lord is risen to-day"; or more appropriate vehicles and helps to a spirit of prayer than: "Oh for a heart to praise my God"; "I want a principle within"; "Jesus, my strength, my hope"; "Love divine, all loves excelling"; or sweeter devotional hymns than: "Jesus, lover of my soul"; "Arise, my soul, arise"; "Vain delusive world adieu"; or truer expressions of appropriating faith than, "Jesus, the sinner's friend, to thee"; "Jesus hath died that I might live"; "Forever here my rest shall be." Nor is our author confined to one style or tone. If we want quiet, thoughtful hymns, where solid doctrines and strong ideas are crowded into concise and mellifluous measures, we find our very ideal in such as "Father, to thee my soul I lift"; "Father of Jesus Christ, my Lord" (the greater part of it: the middle verses are a rhapsody); "Thy ceaseless, unexhausted love"; "Jesus, if still thou art to-day." Or, if we wish more intense and fiery melodies, we can have

Oh that thou wouldst the heavens rend, In majesty come down,  
Stretch out thine arm omnipotent, And seize me for thine own!

We may either sing the Incarnation in decorous and theological long metre, or burst forth:

With glorious clouds encompass round, Whom angels dimly see;  
Will the Unsearchable be found, Or God appear to me?  
Will he forsake his throne above, Himself to worms impart?  
Answer, thou man of grief and love, And speak it to my heart!

No hymn-writer is more *intellectual*: none puts more doctrine, thought, solid mental pabulum, into his poems. And certainly none is more awakening and edifying; few others, in fact, approach him in native moral earnestness, force, fire; and none possesses a higher, purer, more consistent, uniform, and positive spirituality. How and why then does it happen, all this being so, that his writings are not more largely known, honored, and used? We shall attempt

several suggestions towards an answer to this difficult question.

First, then, — it may seem absurd, but it is true, — the very merit of these productions has stood, and still stands, in the way of their more extended usefulness and honor. Says Mr. Burgess. “The peculiar excellence of many of the hymns; the high tone of devout sentiment which pervades them; the exalted spirit of piety which they breathe, — are in fact the very things that make them unfit for general and indiscriminate use. They are *too good* for such purposes; too deep in meaning, too minute, and too accurate in describing the feelings and wants, the exercises and desires of genuine Christians. Hymns of an inferior order might be used more freely and with less danger.” This is an honest, discriminating, and just remark, by one who had deeply studied the subject. And the criticism is honorable to its subject. There are few things in this world “*too good*” for their destined place and use; and we do not know another hymn-writer whose effusions are liable to this objection. That not merely the poetical, but the spiritual character of hymns should be too high for common and promiscuous use is a unique defect. But so it is. Of course it is largely our fault; as people become more spiritually minded they learn better to understand, enjoy, and profit by such poems. If the English language and the recognized metres be used in heaven, doubtless the Wesleyan hymns will be sung there with thorough appreciation. With so low a standard of spiritual experience and ambition as prevails here and now, of course they are above our heads. But if it be worth while to attempt to raise that standard, to teach the people more than they at present or usually know, to seek a higher point and larger measure of holiness, — then it will be well to introduce more of the Wesleyan poetry into our hymn books.

Secondly; it is commonly supposed, with some slight foundation of truth, that the Methodists have in some sense a gospel of their own; that they look at divine truth in a

way peculiar to themselves, have built on the common foundation a superstructure of wood, hay, stubble, and hold certain views, habits, doctrines, which are an appendix to catholic Christianity, but essential to their system, as immersion and close communion to the Baptist, reprobation and Rouse's Psalms to the Old style Puritan, apostolic succession and exclusiveness to the Episcopalian. Now, as aforesaid, some little of this is so; and in proportion as it is, or as we of other names fancy it is, we are naturally disposed to shrink with a sort of suspicion from peculiarities which we do not endorse. There is a *definiteness* about the Methodist system of which the rest of us do not see the correctness or point. The idea of Christians generally — be it right or wrong — has been expressed by Samuel Wesley, Jr., the brother of John and Charles. "As it was in the beginning, I believe it will continue to the end, in another sense. Darkness will be, when the Spirit of God moveth upon the face of the waters. It is enough for us, that we are not concerned to tell how these things be." But John and Charles were concerned to tell it, and took a very different view of the matter. They soon had the region mapped out, with roads and distances and rules and technical terms. In their account, the mysterious operations of the Holy Ghost within man's heart become as clear and plain as external, sensuous, worldly matters. There must be a time of agony and darkness, then instantaneous conversion, then a period of ecstatic joy, then a "wilderness state," and subsequently various ups and downs, for which the rules would vary to suit circumstances. Whether all this scheme was right or wrong, it is not our business to decide. That the Wesleys committed no sin in believing and teaching it, we are satisfied; that it was a part of the necessary means to accomplish certain great ends at that time, appears probable; that it was wonderfully popular and did much good, is abundantly proved; that it or its perversions have done some harm, is likewise apparent. But the point is, that, correct or incorrect, this extreme

definiteness; this dividing and arranging and explaining of mysteries; this carnalizing — which it sometimes almost runs into — of spiritual things; this incarnating of the Spirit as well as Christ, in a visible, tangible form; this attaching so much importance to human emotions; this resting so positively on human evidences and inward signs, — does not exactly tally with the views of the church at large. A genuine Methodist cannot see that this is not an essential part of the gospel; and Mr. Burgess expatiates, with enthusiastic approbation and delight, upon the following couplets, which our readers will be more apt to consider sentimental than otherwise: “What a depth of meaning,” he says, “what propriety, what truth is there in such lines as these.” We cannot see it, nor that tears and sighs do any such thing:

The tears that tell your sins forgiven,  
 The sighs that waft your souls to heaven:  
 The guiltless shame, the sweet distress,  
 The unutterable tenderness;  
 The genuine meek humility:  
 The wonder, “Why such love to me?”

One would think he was painting an earthly heroine in some very human scene. The present writer would not put these verses in a hymn book, because he sees neither doctrine, devotion, nor practical profit in them: only well-meant human emotion and misplaced prettinesses of fancy.

Again; this hymn is very popular among the Methodists:

How can a sinner *know* His sins on earth forgiven?  
 How can my gracious Saviour show My name inscribed in heaven?  
 What we have *felt and seen* With confidence we tell;  
 And publish to the sons of men The *signs infallible*.

The “infallible” signs are, of course, inward and chiefly emotional. Here is the first and chief:

Exults our rising soul, Disburdened of its load,  
 And swells unutterably full Of glory and of God.

Our readers need not fear the contagion. These two are by far the strongest specimens in the Wesleyan hymn book. If the Methodist poet be sifted a little, he is not dangerous. Not often is there enough distinctive Methodism in him to



prevent his use by the "holy church universal"; but the facts and illustrations we have given present one cause, things being as they are, why he is used so little. We have never heard the subject discussed; but this peculiar feature of his theology must have done much towards hindering the church at large from knowing, honoring, and using him as she might and should have done.

These two reasons existed in the nature of the subject: the others are more casual and less creditable. One springs from — soften the terms as we may — the sectarianism, the denominational spirit, the party pride and prejudice, not of Methodism, but of other churches. We are not so bigoted as our grandfathers were: a catholic and liberal spirit, thank heaven, is advancing fast; but there is still room for improvement. When Cowper wrote his poetry, though he revered the character and labors, he dared not mention the name, of Whitefield. Some of us are still afraid of the brother name, Wesley. Why do several of the Methodist's finest hymns — "Blow ye the trumpet, blow"; "Light of those whose dreary dwelling"; "From the throne of God there springs"; almost universally appear credited to Toplady? Why are numerous others with the same origin wildly credited to Montgomery, Cowper, Cudworth, or any but the true author, or still more wildly fathered upon Whitefield's Collection, Pratt's Collection, Tiebout's Collection, or any obscure compilation which had no more to do with them than we have, in putting them likewise into our hymn books? Ignorance or mistake, of course: but what caused the mistake or ignorance? It was wilful somewhere, with somebody; and it is quite time it were rectified. The blunders of hymn-book manufacturers have been multifarious and disgraceful; and never so numerous or inexcusable as when they fell upon Charles Wesley. But one ought to be thankful if he is named at all. We have seen collections of size and respectability, in which his poems are either totally kept out, or carefully ascribed to some one else, or — with but one or two exceptions — left anonymous. This is

simply contemptible, and the practice is fortunately abating. But Calvinists still have some dread of the heresy-monger, and churchmen affect to dispise the schismatic. It is time all Christians should learn that no instrument is to be slighted which God uses for his own glory, and that this psalmist was not merely, nor chiefly, the poet of a party, but of the holy church universal.

If the present writer were a Methodist, he would blush to mention the last reason why Charles Wesley is so little known. It is the fault of those who were the natural heirs of the treasures he left, and guardians of his reputation. The spiritual children of the great itinerants profess to venerate the memory of their founder's brother, and to admire beyond measure his poetry; but they have done almost nothing towards bringing the mass of that poetry within their own reach, or making it generally known. While the "complete works" of a thousand obscure scribblers have been presented to the world; while every unfinished fragment and posthumous relic of many an inferior literary light has been carefully edited and published; the Bard of Methodism has been treated as though he had written nothing that could interest posterity, nor ever left a great church under incalculable obligations. It may be guessed, from the samples we have given of his forgotten poetry, that it is worth reprinting and reading. His brother's entire prose works are still sold; Charles's poems should be no less interesting, and would occupy less space. Two large octavos might contain all that were ever published; and meantime a volume of judicious selections from the whole would be one of the most attractive books of poetry in the language. But neither the American Methodists nor the English Wesleyans — both large, powerful, thoroughly organized bodies — seem to possess the enterprise, liberality, and spirit for such an undertaking. The latter did indeed republish a few of Charles's smaller volumes; and, with a keen eye to business, purchased of his heirs the vast mass of his manuscripts (already referred to), which they never attempted to print.

In this country, nothing whatever has been done. Mr. Creamer, in his Hymnology, raises a cry of natural and honest indignation about this, and vainly urges his church to republish the "Hymns for Children." It is difficult to understand this lethargy, when a very simple action of obvious propriety and duty would open an additional revenue to the church; for the Wesleyan volumes, officially put forth, would sell largely. But so it is. That the Methodist body knows anything about her own hymnology, and is able to tell which separate lyrics in her hymn book are by her own poet, she owes to the spirit and zeal of a few private individuals like Mr. Creamer. Excepting his Hymnology, the present Article is probably the most extensive dissertation on the subject which has been printed in America. If any wish to be further acquainted with Charles Wesley and his poetry, they must consult the above-mentioned volume, and Mr. Jackson's Life. The former contains much important information, not to be found elsewhere; the latter is one of the most thorough, interesting, and appreciative of biographies. We speak of the English edition, in two volumes; that published in America is abridged, and the poetical quotations much diminished.

The immense power of the Wesleyan poetry upon those who use it has been noticed. "One of the greatest blessings," said Fletcher, "that God has bestowed upon the Methodists, next to the Bible, is their Collection of Hymns." We cannot but believe that this blessing was intended for wider use than the limits of a single denomination; and that the piety and taste of the rest of us will be improved, when we shall raise enough of both to make much larger inroads into the Wesleyan poetry, and enrich our reservoirs by more copious streams from that neglected but generous fountain.

It has been considered a difficult point to decide which is entitled to stand first among hymn-writers, Charles Wesley or Dr. Watts. The difficulty lies simply here, that Dr. Watts was merely a hymn-writer, and could and did, most naturally, put all his powers within the proper limits of a

song suited to public worship. The only question to ask relative to anything of his is, is it good enough? Whereas twenty reasons may unfit Wesley's poems for that use. If a piece of the Doctor's is unfit to sing, it is probably unfit to read: not so with the other; for Wesley was a poet in a larger sense. Their relative claims *as poets* will soon be settled, by the good taste of competent judges, whenever Wesley's poetry becomes sufficiently known. Dr. Watts's confession that his rival's "Wrestling Jacob" was worth all his own effusions, proves nothing but the modesty and generosity of the speaker; but there are other grounds for believing that Wesley excelled him in originality, variety, intensity, and elevation. Dr. Watts has been appreciated within the church at large; Charles Wesley has not. Let him not be judged further than as he is known.

It is an easy task to compare our poet with the other more eminent hymnists. Doddridge and Steele are diluted reproductions of Dr. Watts. Montgomery, a professed and lifelong poet, is inferior to Wesley in all the qualities mentioned above, and in no respect above him in propriety, harmony, and grace of style. Heber, the most elegant and mellifluous of sacred poets, is not more polished and fluent than his Methodist predecessor; nor has he anything of his solidity, strength, and fire. Cowper is the greatest name in the hymn books; but Cowper's best poems, which are very few, are but equal, not superior, to Wesley's best, which are very many. Toplady approaches most nearly to the Methodist poet; but Toplady borrowed his inspiration from Wesley, and reproduced his style; and it is the Calvinist's highest praise that his finest pieces are undistinguishable from those of his Arminian neighbor. No other names in British sacred lyric poetry can be mentioned with that of Charles Wesley; and when it is remembered that all these counted their poems by dozens or hundreds, while he by thousands; and that *his* thousands were in power, in elegance, in devotional and literary value above *their* few, we call him, yet more confidently, great among poets, and prince of English hymnists.