

Whole Armour (1742)¹

[Baker List, #56; cf. #57]

Editorial Introduction:

The British Library holds the only known surviving copy of a broadsheet containing a hymn titled *The Whole Armour of God*, which is a poetic expansion of Ephesians 6. The broadsheet does not list author, publisher, or date. However the poem also appeared in early March 1742 appended to John Wesley's tract *The Character of a Methodist* (the setting reproduced below). There is a textual variant in verse 13 of the broadsheet that is not found in any edition of *Character* that contains the hymn, nor is this variant found in the version that Charles Wesley placed in his collection *HSP* (1749), 1:236–39. This would suggest that the broadsheet was the earliest appearance of this hymn, likely in February 1742. The presence of the hymn in *HSP* (1749) and MS Thirty (pp. 22–27) establishes that Charles was its author. The most likely printer for the broadsheet at that time would have been Farley, in Bristol.

The theme of the hymn is the importance of developing mature Christian character through use of the means God has provided. It is easy to see why John would choose to append such a hymn to his tract describing the spiritual ideal to which the Methodist movement was committed. Nearly two decades later another Methodist writer, Thomas Walsh, also appended the hymn to a sermon he had written on Ephesians 6.

Editions:

[Charles Wesley.] *The Whole Armour of God*. [Bristol: Farley, 1742 ?]

[Charles Wesley.] “The Whole Armour of God.” Appended to John Wesley’s *The Character of a Methodist*, 18–20. Bristol: Farley, 1742.

2nd Bristol: Farley, 1743.

3rd Bristol: Farley, 1743.

[hymn not included in any of the later editions of the tract, likely to shorten and reduce cost]

Also appended to Thomas Walsh. *The Whole Armour of God: a Discourse*, 33–36. London: Widow Englefield, 1759.

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**The Whole Armour of God.
Ephesians vi.**

- 1 Soldiers of Christ, arise,
 And put your armour on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
 Thro' his eternal Son;
 Strong in the Lord of hosts,
 And in his mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
 Is more than conqueror.
- 2 Stand then in his great might,
 With all his strength endu'd,
And take, to arm you for the fight,
 The panoply of God;
 That having all things done,
 And all your conflicts past,
Ye may o'ercome thro' Christ alone,
 And stand entire at last.
- 3 Stand then against your foes,
 In close and firm array,
Legions of wily fiends oppose
 Throughout the evil day;
 But meet the sons of night,
 But mock their vain design,
Arm'd in the arms of heavenly light
 In² righteousness divine.
- 4 Leave no unguarded place,
 No weakness of the soul,
Take every virtue, every grace,
 And fortify the whole;
 Indissolubly join'd,
 To battle all proceed,
But arm yourselves with all the mind
 That was in Christ your head.
- 5 Let truth the girdle be
 That binds your armour on,
In faithful firm sincerity
 To Jesus cleave alone;
 Let faith and love combine
 To guard your valiant breast,
The plate be righteousness divine,
 Imputed and imprest.

²“In” changed to “of” in *HSP* (1749) and Walsh, *Whole Armour*.

- 6 Still let your feet be shod,
 Ready his will to do,
Ready in all the ways of God
 His glory to pursue:
 Ruin is spread beneath,
 The gospel greaves put on,
And safe thro' all the snares of death
 To life eternal run.
- 7 But above all, lay hold
 On FAITH'S victorious shield,
Arm'd with that adamant and gold
 Be sure to win the field;
 If faith surround your heart,
 Satan shall be subdu'd,
Repell'd his ev'ry fiery dart,
 And quench'd with Jesu's blood.
- 8 Jesus hath died for you!
 What can his love withstand?
Believe; hold fast your shield; and who
 Shall pluck you from his hand?
 Believe that Jesus reigns,
 All power to him is giv'n,
Believe, 'till freed from sin's remains,
 Believe yourselves to heaven.
- 9 Your Rock can never shake:
 Hither, he saith, come up!
The helmet of salvation take,
 The confidence of hope:
 Hope for his perfect love,
 Hope for his people's rest,
Hope to sit down with Christ above
 And share the marriage feast.
- 10 Brandish in faith 'till then
 The Spirit's two-edg'd sword,
Hew all the snares of fiends and men
 In pieces with the word;
 'TIS WRITTEN; this applied
 Baffles their strength and art;
Spirit and soul with this divide,
 And joints and marrow part.
- 11 To keep your armour bright
 Attend with constant care,
Still walking in your Captain's sight,
 And watching unto prayer;
 Ready for all alarms,

- Stedfastly set your face,
And always exercise your arms,
And use your every grace.
- 12 Pray, without ceasing pray,
(Your Captain gives the word)
His summons chearfully obey,
And call upon the Lord;
To God your every want
In instant prayer display,
Pray always; pray, and never faint,
Pray, without ceasing pray.
- 13 In fellowship; alone
To God with faith draw near,
Approach his courts, besiege his throne
With all the power³ of prayer:
Go to his temple, go,
Nor from his altar⁴ move;
Let every house his worship know,
And every heart his love.
- 14 To God your spirits dart,
Your souls in words declare,
Or groan, to him who reads the heart,
Th' unutterable prayer.
His mercy now implore,
And now shew forth his praise,
In shouts, or silent awe adore
His miracles of grace.
- 15 Pour out your souls to God,
And bow them with your knees,
And spread your hearts and hands abroad,
And pray for Sion's peace;
Your guides and brethren, bear
Forever on your mind;
Extend the arms of mighty prayer
Ingrasping all mankind.
- 16 From strength to strength go on,
Wrestle, and fight, and pray,
Tread all the powers of darkness down,
And win the well-fought day;
Still let the Spirit cry
In all his soldiers, "Come,"
'Till Christ the Lord descends from high,
And takes the conqu'rors home.

³"Power" changed to "powers" in *HSP* (1749) and Walsh, *Whole Armour*.

⁴Only surviving broadsheet reads: "from his table."