

*Hymns for Children (1747)*¹
[Baker list, #136]

Modernized text

Editorial Introduction:

When John Wesley visited the German Moravians at Herrnhut, he made note of an item (#12) in their constitution: “Our little children we instruct chiefly by hymns; whereby we find the most important truths most successfully insinuated into their minds” (see his *Journal*, 11–14 Aug. 1738). This precedent likely encouraged the Wesley brothers to provide hymns specifically for use by children. The first explicit example is a set of seven hymns in *HSP* (1742) on pages 194–202.

Sometime thereafter a small pamphlet titled *Hymns for Children* was published. It listed neither author/editor, publisher nor date. Various secondary considerations suggest that it was published about 1747. It contained nine hymns, all drawn from *HSP* (1740), *CPH* (1741), and *HSP* (1742)—details indicated in blue font in the Table of Contents below. This makes it most likely the work of either John or Charles Wesley. Some have assumed that Charles Wesley took the initiative in developing this collection, noting his clear interest in providing such a resource that bore fruit in *Hymns of Children* (1763). However, there are stronger reasons to believe that John Wesley was the anonymous collector of this volume.

In the first place, John Wesley was currently in the midst of providing a series of resources for catechetical training of children. In 1745 he published *Instructions for Children*, which was a basic catechism translated and abridged from works by two French authors, Claude Fleury and Pierre Poiret. In 1746 John began a four-volume set of *Lessons for Children*, which was essentially an abridgement of the Old Testament. A volume of *Hymns for Children* would fit naturally within this larger project.

Furthermore, *Hymns for Children* (1747) contained more than the nine hymns. It added a prose exhortation to regular devotional practices and provided model prayers. Earlier inquiries into the responsibility for this volume have debated whether John or Charles would be the more likely author of these materials. They failed to identify these prose sections as abridgements taken mainly from a devotional guide by Thomas Ken, the concluding graces coming from a catechism published by the SPCK. John Wesley had drawn from Ken’s volume already for one hymn included in *CPH* (1737) and 3 hymns in *CPH* (1738). Likewise, John included the SPCK catechism on a manuscript list of suggested “books for the poor” he prepared about 1740. There is little reason to doubt that John is the editor drawing on these resources again for this volume.

The one remaining question is whether John is the source of the short bedtime prayer on page 12. This is the earliest source that we have been able to locate for this prayer. It directly echoes the preceding “directions” by Ken (see pp. 10–11), but is not found in Ken. It is surely possible that this is John’s poetic distillation of Ken.

For further discussion of the issues of authorship of this volume (without recognizing the sources for the prose material) see E. Ann Buckroyd, “A Consideration of the Undated *Hymns for Children*,” *Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society* 7 (2001): 61–80.

Edition:

[John Wesley, editor.] *Hymns for Children* [np, 1747?].

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HYMNS FOR CHILDREN.

[HYMN 1.]²

- 1 Gentle Jesus, meek, and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to thee.
- 2 Fain I would to thee be brought,
Dearest God, forbid it not.
Give me, dearest God, a place
In the kingdom of thy grace.
- 3 Put thy hands upon my head,
Let me in thy arms be staid,
Let me lean upon thy breast,
Lull me, lull me, Lord, to rest.
- 4 Hold me fast in thy embrace,
Let me see thy smiling face,
Give me, Lord, thy blessing give,
Pray for me, and I shall live.
- 5 I shall live the simple life,
Free from sin's uneasy strife,
Sweetly ignorant of ill,
Innocent, and happy still.
- 6 O that I may never know
What the wicked people do;

²Appeared first in *HSP* (1742), 194-95.

Sin is contrary to thee,
Sin is the forbidden tree.

7 Keep me from the great offence,
Guard my helpless innocence;
Hide me, from all evil hide,
Self, and stubbornness, and pride.

8 Lamb of God, I look to thee,
Thou shalt my example be;
Thou art gentle, meek, and mild,
Thou wast once a little child.

9 Fain I would be, as thou art,
Give me thy obedient heart;
Thou art pitiful and kind,
Let me have thy loving mind.

10 Meek, and lowly may I be,
Thou art all humility;
Let me to my betters bow,
Subject to thy parents thou.

11 Let me above all fulfil
God my heavenly Father's will;
Never his good Spirit grieve,
Only to his glory live.

12 Thou didst live to God alone,
Thou didst never seek thine own;
Thou thyself didst never please,
God was all thy happiness.

13 Loving Jesus, gentle Lamb,
In thy gracious hands I am,
Make me, Saviour, what thou art,
Live thyself within my heart.

14 I shall then show forth thy praise,
Serve thee all my happy days;
Then the world shall always see
Christ, the holy child, in me.

Hymn 2.³

- 1 Lamb of God, I fain would be
A meek follower of thee,
Gentle, tractable, and mild,
Loving as a little child;
- 2 Simple, ignorant of ill,
Guided by another's will,
Trusting him for heavenly food,
Casting all my care on God.
- 3 Let me in thy footsteps tread,
Be to all the creatures dead,
Dead to pleasure, wealth, and praise,
Poor, and humble all my days.
- 4 Prepossess my tender mind,
Let me cast the world behind,
All its pomps and pleasures vain
Help me, Saviour, to disdain.
- 5 Thou my better portion art,
Earth shall never share my heart,
I on all its goods look down,
I expect a starry crown.
- 6 I aspire to things above,
Lord, I give thee all my love,
I will nothing know beside
Jesus and him crucified.
- 7 Let the potsherds of the earth
Boast their virtue, beauty, birth,
A poor, guilty worm I am,
Ransomed by the bleeding Lamb.
- 8 Jesu, this be all my boast,
Thou hast saved a sinner lost,
Thou hast spilt thy noble blood
Me to make a child of God.

³Appeared first in *HSP* (1742), 196–97.

- 9 What a glorious title this
 (Title to eternal bliss).
 Thou for me thy life hast given,
 Me to make an heir of heaven.
- 10 O enlarge my scanty thought
 To conceive what thou hast wrought;
 Raise my groveling spirit up
 To my heavenly calling's hope.
- 11⁴ Let thy love possess me whole,
 Let it take up all my soul;
 True magnificence impart,
 Purify, and fill my heart.
- 12 I despise all earthly things
 Offspring to the King of kings,
 God I for my Father claim,
 Jesus is my brother's name.
- 13 Heaven is mine inheritance,
 I shall soon remove from hence;
 As the stars in glory shine,
 Christ and God, and all is mine.

Hymn 3.⁵

- 1 Come, let us join the hosts above,
 Now in our earliest days,
 Remember our Creator's love,
 And lisp our Father's praise.
- 2 His majesty will not despise
 The day of feeble things;
 Grateful the songs of children rise,
 And please the King of kings.
- 3 We all his kind protection share,
 Within his arms we rest;
 The sucklings are his tenderest care,
 While hanging on the breast.

⁴The original stanza 11 in *HSP* (1742) is omitted and remainder renumbered accordingly.

⁵Appeared first in *HSP* (1742), 197–98.

- 4 We praise him with a stammering tongue,
While under his defence,
He smiles to hear the artless song
Of childish innocence.
- 5 He loves to be remembered thus,
And honoured for his grace,
Out of the mouth of babes like us
His wisdom perfects praise.
- 6 Glory to God, and praise, and power,
Honour, and thanks be given:
Children, and cherubim adore
The Lord of earth and heaven.

Hymn 4.⁶

- 1 Lover of little children, thee,
O Jesus, we adore;
Our kind, and loving Saviour be
Both now and evermore.
- 2 O take us up into thine arms,
And we are truly blest;
Thy newborn babes are safe from harms
When lying on thy breast.
- 3 There let us ever, ever sleep,
Strangers to guilt and care,
Free from the world of evil keep
Our tender spirits there.
- 4 Still as we grow in years, in grace
And wisdom let us grow,
But never leave thy dear embrace,
But never evil know.
- 5 Strong let us in thy grace abide,
But ignorant of ill;
In malice, subtlety, and pride
Let us be children still.

⁶Appeared first in *HSP* (1742), 201–2.

- 6 Lover of little children, thee,
 O Jesus, we adore:
 Our kind, and loving Saviour be
 Both now, and evermore.

Hymn 5.⁷

- 1 All thanks and praise to God belong,
 Our Father and our friend;
 Let us with life begin the song,
 Which never more shall end.
- 2⁸ Not to the vain desires of men
 We live, but to our God,
 Who died for us, and rose again,
 To wash us in his blood.
- 3 To him our earliest fruits we bring,
 The sacrifice of praise;
 All our diversion is to sing
 The dear Redeemer's grace.
- 4 To him we innocently live,
 Delight his will to do;
 A pattern to you men we give,
 A child may teach e'en you.
- 5 Children ye must be all again,
 Make haste like us to be;
 Return ye wise and sinful men
 To harmless infancy.
- 6 Poor men, acknowledge your offence,
 And blush to hear our song,
 And sigh to see the innocence
 Ye have outlived so long.

⁷First appeared in *HSP* (1742), 199–200.

⁸Stanzas 2–3 of original in *HSP* (1742) omitted, and remainder renumbered accordingly.

Life and Eternity.⁹

- 1 Thee we adore, eternal name,
 And humbly own to thee
How feeble is our mortal frame,
 What dying worms we be.
- 2 Our wasting lives grow shorter still,
 As months and days increase!
And every beating pulse we tell
 Leaves, but the number less.
- 3 The year rolls round, and steals away
 The breath that first it gave;
Whate'er we do, where'er we be,
 We're travelling to the grave.
- 4 Dangers stand thick through all the ground
 To push us to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around
 To hurry mortals home.
- 5 Great God! On what a slender thread
 Hang everlasting things!
Th' eternal states of all the dead
 Upon life's feeble strings!
- 6 Infinite joy and endless woe,
 Attend on every breath;
And yet how unconcerned we go
 Upon the brink of death!
- 7 Waken, O Lord, our drowsy sense,
 To walk this dang'rous road;
And if our souls are hurried hence,
 May they be found with God.

Hymn for Sunday.¹⁰

- 1 The Lord of Sabbath let us praise
 In concert with the blest,

⁹Source: Isaac Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 2nd ed. (London: John Lawrence, 1709), 178–79 (Book 2, no. 55). John Wesley's adaptation first appeared in *CPH* (1738), 53–54; then in a slightly revised form in *CPH* (1741), 15. The present text follows that in *CPH* (1741).

¹⁰Source: Samuel Wesley Jr., *Poems on Several Occasions* (London: S. Birt, 1736), 241. This adaptation first appeared in *CPH* (1741), 36.

- Who joyful in harmonious lays
Employ an endless rest.
- 2 Thus, Lord, while we remember thee,
We blest and pious grow;
By hymns of praise we learn to be
Triumphant here below.
- 3 On this glad day a brighter scene
Of glory was displayed
By God, th' eternal Word, than when
This universe was made.
- 4 He rises, who mankind has bought
With grief and pain extreme;
'Twas great to speak the world from nought,
'Twas greater to redeem.

A Morning Hymn.¹¹

- 1 Jesus the all-restoring Word,
My fallen spirit's hope,
After thy lovely likeness, Lord,
O when shall I wake up!
- 2 Thou, O my God, thou only art
The life, the truth, the way:
Quicken my soul, instruct my heart,
My sinking footsteps stay.
- 3 Of all thou hast in earth below
In heaven above to give,
Give me thine only self to know,
In thee to walk, and live.
- 4 Fill me with all the life of love,
In mystic union join
Me to thyself, and let me prove
The fellowship divine.
- 5 Open the intercourse between
My longing soul and thee,

¹¹First appeared in *HSP* (1740), 25–26.

Never to be broke off again
Through all eternity.

- 6 Grant this, O Lord; for thou hast died
That I might be forgiven,
Thou hast the RIGHTEOUSNESS supplied,
For which I merit heaven.

An Evening Hymn.¹²

- 1 Jesus, the all-atoning Lamb,
Lover of lost mankind,
Salvation in whose only name
A sinful world can find:
- 2 I ask thy grace to make me clean,
I come to thee, my God:
Open, O Lord, for this day's sin,
The fountain of thy blood.
- 3 Hither my spotted soul be brought,
And every idle word,
And every work, and every thought
That hath not pleased my Lord.
- 4 Hither my actions righteous deemed
By man, and counted good,
As filthy rags by God esteemed,
'Till sprinkled with thy blood.
- 5 No! My best actions cannot save,
But thou must purge ev'n them:
And (for in thee I now believe)
My worst cannot condemn.
- 6 To thee then, O vouchsafe me power
For pardon still to flee,
And every day, and every hour
To wash myself in thee.

¹²First appeared in *HSP* (1740), 26–27.

An Exhortation for a Child.¹³

If you have any regard, dear child, to your own eternal happiness, it ought to be your chiefest care to serve and glorify God. 'Tis for this end God both made and redeemed you; and two excellent rules he hath given you in Holy Scripture, by the conscientious observation of which you will be able, through his grace, to dedicate your tender years to his glory.

The one teaches you what you have to do: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

The other teaches you what you are to avoid: "Fly youthful lusts"; that is, all those sins which are usually incident to young persons.

You cannot imagine the unspeakable advantages a pious youth gains by the practice of these two rules; and how many ghostly dangers that soul escapes which is seasoned betimes with the fear of God, before he be sullied with ill company, before he hath contracted vicious habits, which will cost him infinite pains to unlearn. Learn, then, dear child to accustom yourself to bear Christ's yoke from your youth. Do but consider how welcome a young convert is to God. To young Samuel God revealed himself; and it was St. John, the youngest of all the disciples, who was permitted to lean on our Saviour's bosom at the Last Supper.

Directions for a Child.¹⁴

As soon as ever you awake in the morning, dear child, strive as much as you can to keep all worldly thoughts out of your mind, 'till you have presented the first fruits of the day to God, which will be an excellent preparative to make you spend the rest of it the better.

When your clothes are on, look on your souls as still undressed, 'till you have said your prayers, no matter what places you pray in, for God will hear you anywhere, if you pray from your heart. Never omit prayer, morn-

¹³Source: Thomas Ken, *A Manual of Prayers for the Use of the Scholars of Winchester College, and all other Devout Christians. To which are added, Three hymns, for morning, evening and midnight*, revised edition (London: Charles Brome, 1695), 1–4.

¹⁴Source: Ken, *Manual of Prayers*, 6–7, 25–26.

ing or evening, for many have gone well to bed overnight who have been found dead the next morning, and therefore it highly concerns you to take care to make your peace with God before you go to sleep.

Towards night examine how you have spent the day; what has been amiss in your thoughts, words and actions that day. Consider what idleness or unchastity, what lying and stubbornness you have been guilty of, and get the blood of Christ to blot it all out before you close your eyes. And if you have had any quarrel with any other child, be sure to be friends with them before you sleep.

Morning Prayer for a Child.¹⁵

Glory be to¹⁶ thee, O Lord God, for all the blessings I daily receive from thee, and for thy particular preservation and refreshment of me this night past.

O Lord, have mercy upon me and forgive whatsoever thou hast seen amiss in me this night. And for the time to come, give me grace to fly all youthful lusts, and to remember thee, my Creator, in the days of my youth.

Shower down thy graces and blessings on me and on all my relations (*on my father and mother, on my brethren and sisters*), on all my friends, on all my governors; and give thy angels charge over us, to protect us all from sin and danger.

Lord, bless me in my learning this day, that I may every day grow more fit for thy service. O pardon my failings and do more for me than I can ask or think, for the merits of Jesus, my Saviour, in whose holy words I sum up all my wants: “Our Father which art in heaven, ...”

Evening Prayer for a Child.¹⁷

Glory be to thee, O Lord God, for all the blessings I daily receive from thee, and for thy particular preservation of me this day.

¹⁵Source: Ken, *Manual of Prayers*, 10–11.

¹⁶Ori., “to to”; a misprint.

¹⁷Source: Ken, *Manual of Prayers*, 11–12.

O Lord, have mercy upon me and forgive whatsoever thou hast seen amiss in me this day past. And for the time to come give me grace to fly all youthful lust, and to remember thee, my Creator, in the days of my youth.

Lord, receive me and all my relations into thy gracious protection this night, and send me such seasonable rest that I may rise the next morning more fit for thy service.

Lord, hear my prayers and pardon my failings, for the merit of my blessed Saviour, in whose holy words I sum up all my wants: "Our Father which art in heaven, ..."

At Lying Down in Bed.

I lay me down, hoping to sleep,
I pray to God, my soul to keep;
But if I die before I wake,
I pray to God my soul to take.

A Grace Before Meat.¹⁸

Sanctify, O Lord, we beseech thee, these thy good creatures to our use, and us to they service, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Grace After Meat.

Blessed and praised by thy holy name, O Lord, for these and all thy other blessings bestowed upon us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¹⁸Source for these two graces: John Lewis, *The Church Catechism explained by way of question and answer; and confirmed by scripture proofs*, 6th edition (London: Joseph Downing, 1712), 81.