

Assorted Verse on 1784 Ordinations¹

The finalization of peace with the former American colonies in 1784 ended any pretense that Methodism could remain a movement within the larger Church of England in North America. This reality led John Wesley to take several steps to insure that his Methodist followers across the waters would continue to have access to the full panoply of the means of grace. Most importantly, he took this new situation as warrant for him to act upon his long-held belief, gained from reading Peter King, that presbyters (elders) could ordain in cases of necessity. On 1–2 September 1784, with Thomas Coke and James Creighton (both Anglican elders) assisting, John Wesley ordained two of his lay preachers, Thomas Vasey and Richard Whatcoat—first as deacons, then elders. He then commissioned Coke to serve as superintendent and dispatched the three to serve the North American Methodists.

Charles Wesley, had long been a critic of how broadly John used lay preachers, as well as other practices that portended a split from the Church of England.² As such, it is hardly surprising that he took strong exception to John's actions. Nor is it surprising that he put his dissent in poetic form. This file gathers four scattered items sparked by the 1784 ordinations, organized alphabetically by first line. See as well the closely related items: MS Brothers, MS Ordinations, and MS Revd —.

¹This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the diligent assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: October 9, 2014.

²See his published “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760).

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[Untitled]³

- [1.] Christ our merciful High-priest,
With thy people's grief distrest,
Help us for our guide to pray
Lost in his mistaken way:
- [2.] By a show of good misled
Lest he farther should proceed,
Stop, restrain him, and defend,
Till the hour of darkness end.
- [3.] Hide him from the thing design'd
Not according to thy mind;
Save him from the purpos'd Ill
After his, but not thy will.⁴
- [4.] We, alas, can nothing do,
But present him to thy view,
Weeping at thy feet complain
All the help of man is vain.
- [5.] Gainst the truth he stops his ears,
Will not see his children's tears,
Shuts his eyes against the light,
Sure, that He alone is right

³The original copy of this hymn, on two sides of a single page of paper, is at The New Room, John Wesley's Chapel, Bristol, England (NR 2006, 20). There is a transcription of this Bristol copy in MARC (DDCW 3/4). The text here is from the original copy and is provided with permission of the New Room. Published posthumously in *Arminian Magazine* 11 (1788): 446; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:93–94.

⁴Ori., "Not according to thy will."

- [6.] Whom we cannot undeceive,
Lord, we to thy mercy leave;
Seize him for thy mercy's sake,
Bring our wandring Shepherd back.
- [7.] We concerning this agree
In thy Name to ask of Thee,
Pity on thy Servant show,
Show him what he dreads to know.
- [8.] Of his ignorance convince,
Of his least-suspected sins,
Zeal, a name and sect to raise,
Love of power, and thirst of praise.
9. Mov'd by our united prayer
Pluck his feet out of the snare,
Guide of our bewilder'd guide,
Save him from the gulph of pride;
10. Rescu'd by Thy Spirit's groans
Pleading in his pious Sons,
Led to his Reward above,
Thro' the path of humble Love.

[Untitled.]⁵

- [1.] Jesus, believing in thy Name,
May we not now thy Promise claim
For One so justly dear,
So greatly by Thyself belov'd
By twice ten thousand Seals approv'd
Thy honour'd Minister?⁶
2. Permit him not to start aside,
Nor let his latest footsteps slide
By men, or fiends o'rethrown;
Screen him from every fiery dart,
And guard his unsuspecting heart
Till all his work is done.
3. Thro' life the Servant of thy will,
He cannot knowingly do ill,
In heart he cannot err;
But flatter'd, and surpriz'd may be,
And drawn by fond Credulity
Into the Fowler's snare.
4. The Fiend⁷ in an unguarded hour
May urge him thro' the love of power
At higher things to aim,
A Croud of Followers to collect,
And mould⁸ into a purer Sect
And call them by his Name.

⁵Two copies of this hymn are present in MARC: DDCW 3/10 and MA 1977/594/13 (Charles Wesley Notebooks Box 5). The text here follows DDCW 3/10, noting variants found in MA 1977/594/13. Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:308–9. The transcription which follows is provided with permission of the Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

⁶MA 1977/594/13 has “Messenger” instead of “Minister.” Both refer to John Wesley.

⁷MA 1977/594/13 has “Foe” instead of “Fiend.” Both terms almost certainly refer to Thomas Coke.

⁸MA 1977/594/13 reads “form”; but suggests “mould” in the margin as an alternative.

5. Has Satan the advantage got?
The Servant by the Flatterer⁹ caught
Thou only canst set free,
Canst strip the Fiend of his disguise,
Open our Guide's unwitting eyes,
And force the Blind to see.
6. This moment put him, Lord, in fear
Of danger, and Destruction near,
(If favor'd¹⁰ Saints presume,)
Of pride that swells aspiring worms,
Of Error in a thousand forms,
And endless ills to come.
7. Show him the subtle Foe's¹¹ Design,
An hoary minister of thine
Against his God t' employ,
As Author of a causeless Rent
To make thy gracious Instrument
Thy gracious work destroy.¹²
8. Convinc'd his foot hath slipt, uphold,
And bring him back into the Fold,
The Shepherd and the Sheep;
And safe within thy arms of Love
One with thy Family above
Our Church for ever keep.

⁹MA 1977/594/13 has "Tempter" instead of "Flatterer."

¹⁰MA 1977/594/13 has "prosper'd" instead of "favor'd."

¹¹MA 1977/594/13 has "Enemy's" instead of "subtle Foe's."

¹²The original draft of MA 1977/594/13 is struck out and replaced as above.

~~To make thy choisest Instrument
(Author of a perpetual Rent)
Thy choisest work destroy.~~

All My Geese Are Swans
— Revd C. Wesley 1786¹³

The Methodists must all allow
Their Preachers taken from the Plough;
In Schools they pick'd up little Knowledge,
Nothing beholden to the College; [4]
To Science they had no Pretence,
To Dress, or Taste, or Elegance;
To Labour, not to Learning bred,
Yet most of them could write and read; [8]
And some, by Mother's care, knew how
To doff their Hats, and make a Bow.

Small their Acquaintance with their Betters,
With Men of Fashion, or of Letters; [12]
They aim'd at no Distinctions here,
Of Place, or Rank, or Character.

But lo! thro' a fond Father's Aid
They all at once become well-bred; [16]
And instantaneously polite;
Spring up like Mushrooms in a night;
Equals to Men of high Degre,
The very Pink of Courtesy; [20]
Worthy superlative Esteem,
For why? —they all belong to HIM
Whose ev'ry Goose is a black Swan,
Whose ev'ry *Jack's a Gentleman*. [24]

¹³MARC, DDWF 27/5, item 3. The verse is in the hand of Charles Wesley's son Samuel. Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:82. The transcription is provided with permission of the Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

[Untitled and Uncertain Authorship.]¹⁴

A Roman emperor,¹⁵ 'tis said,
His favourite horse¹⁶ a consul made:
But Coke brings greater things to pass—
He makes a bishop of an ass.

¹⁴Published posthumously in William Guirey, *The History of Episcopacy* (Raleigh, NC: Gales, 1799), 332; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:81. In a footnote Guirey states: “These lines are to be found in the possession of the Reverend Mr. Samuel Bradburn, in Mr. Wesley’s own handwriting; and if I mistake not, Mr. Bradburn told me he was present when Mr. Wesley wrote them.” The present location of such a manuscript is unknown

However, a slightly different version of these four lines, titled “A Panegyric on Modern Primitive Ordinations,” does survive in Box 1 of the Adam Clarke Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University. This copy is in the hand of Charles Wesley’s son Samuel, along with a note “written by S. Wesley, July 5, 1794.” This may indicate that Samuel is the actual author.

¹⁵Duke copy reads: “A frantick emperor.”

¹⁶Duke copy reads: “Of his own horse.”