

*Reasons Against a Separation from the Church of England*¹ (1760)

The early 1750s were a period of growing tension between John and Charles Wesley over the nature and goals of the Methodist movement. A key point of divergence concerned the use of lay preachers. While open to this in principle, Charles was convinced that John was encouraging far too many who had neither the gifts nor the grace to take up the calling.² Even if they were persons of deep spiritual character and clear gifts for preaching, there was another challenge—many lay preachers chafed at their restriction from administering the sacraments.

Things came to a head in October 1754, when two lay preachers, Charles Perronet in London and Thomas Walsh in Reading, administered the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. CW suspected that JW was ready to allow this right to the lay preachers, in order to provide sufficient sacramental ministry among the Methodist faithful. This would have amounted to separation from the Church of England, and CW resisted it strongly. He began to muster support prior to the scheduled Conference at Leeds in early May 1755. One expression of this effort was his poetic *Epistle to John Wesley* (1755).

In part because of the pressure brought by CW, JW read a paper at the Leeds Conference affirming the purposes of the Methodist movement, while insisting they could be upheld without separating from the Church of England. JW then published an abridgment of his Leeds paper in *Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion* (1758), as a chapter titled “Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England” (pp. 237–46).

While CW appreciated this move, he desired to reenforce the point. So, in early 1760 he published two runs (10,000 copies) of *Reasons against a Separation* as a separate tract, appending to it his endorsement.³ In addition to the endorsement, Charles appended seven “Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Preachers” to his version of *Reasons*.⁴ John Wesley included this enlarged version, with the hymns, in his *Works* (1773), 23:120–40.

In September 1784 John Wesley ordained two of his lay preachers to serve as clergy among the Methodists in North America (rendered independent from the Church of England by the conclusion of the Revolutionary war). In response, in 1785 CW republished both his *Epistle to John Wesley* (1755) and his *Reasons ... with Hymns* (1760).

The transcription which follows reproduces the first edition of CW’s version of *Reasons*, indicating the page transitions (in **red** font) of the original.

¹This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: September 30, 2024.

²See Richard Heitzenrater, “Purging the Preachers,” in *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature & Legacy*, K. Newport & T. Campbell (eds.) (Peterborough: Epworth, 2007), 486–514.

³CW’s personal copy of *Preservative* (1758), with the endorsement added in CW’s hand (as the draft for the printer) survives in the Special Collections of Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.

⁴[Charles Wesley,] *Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England ... with Hymns for the Preachers among the Methodists (so called)* (London: Strahan, 1760).

REASONS AGAINST A SEPARATION FROM THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

[I.] Whether it be *lawful* or no (which itself may be disputed, being not so clear a point as some may imagine), it is by no means *expedient* for us to separate from the established Church:

1. Because it would be a contradiction to the solemn and repeated declarations which we have made in all manner of ways, in preaching, in print, and in private conversation.

2. Because (on this as well as on many other accounts) it would give huge occasion of offence to those who seek and desire occasion, to all the enemies of God and his truth.

3. Because it would exceedingly prejudice against us many who fear, yea who love, God, and thereby hinder their receiving so much, perhaps any farther, benefit from our preaching.

4. Because it would hinder multitudes of those who neither love nor fear God from hearing us at all.⁵ [p. 3]

5. Because it would occasion many hundreds, if not some thousands, of those who are now united with us to separate from us; yea, and some of those who have a deep work of grace in their souls.

6. Because it would be throwing balls of wild-fire among them that are now quiet in the land. We are now sweetly united together in love. We mostly think and speak the same thing. But this would occasion inconceivable strife and contention between those who left and those who remained in the Church; as well as between those who left us and those who remained with us; nay, and between those very persons who remained, as they were variously inclined one way or the other.

7. Because, whereas controversy is now asleep, and we in great measure live peaceably with all men,⁶ so that we are strangely at leisure to spend our whole time and strength in enforcing plain, practical, vital religion (O what would many of our forefathers have given, to have enjoyed so blessed a calm!), this would utterly banish peace from among us, and that without hope of its return. It would engage me, for one, in a thousand controversies, both in public and private (for I should be in conscience obliged to give the reasons of my conduct and to defend those reasons against all opposers), and so take me off from those more useful labours which might otherwise employ the short remainder of my life.

8. Because to form the plan of a new church would require infinite time and care (which might be far more profitably bestowed), with much more wisdom and greater depth and extensiveness of thought than any of us are masters of.

9. Because, from some having barely entertained a distant thought of this, evil fruits have already followed—such as prejudice against the clergy in general and aptness to believe ill of them; contempt (not without a degree of bitterness) of [p. 4] clergymen as such; and a sharpness of language toward the whole order, utterly unbecoming either gentlemen or Christians.

10. Because the experiment has been so frequently tried already, and the success never answered the expectation. God has since the Reformation raised up from time to time many

⁵CW omitted from JW's original "and thereby leave them in the hands of the devil."

⁶See Rom. 12:18.

witnesses of pure religion. If these lived and died (like John Arndt,⁷ Robert Bolton,⁸ and many others) in the churches to which they belonged, notwithstanding the wickedness which overflowed both the teachers and people therein, they spread the leaven of true religion far and wide, and were more and more useful, till they went to paradise. But if, upon any provocation or consideration whatever,⁹ they separated and founded distinct parties, their influence was more and more confined; they grew less and less useful to others, and generally lost the spirit of religion themselves in the spirit of controversy.

11. Because we have melancholy instances of this even now before our eyes. Many have in our memory left the Church and formed themselves into distinct bodies, and certainly some of them from a real persuasion that they should do God more service. But have any separated themselves and prospered?¹⁰ Have they been either more holy, or more useful, than they were before?

12. Because by such a separation we should not only throw away the peculiar glorying which God has given us—that we do and will suffer all things for our brethren’s sake, though the more we love them, the less we be loved—but should act in direct contradiction to that very end for which we believe God hath raised us up. The chief design of his providence in sending us out is, undoubtedly, to quicken our brethren. And the first message of all our preachers is to the lost sheep of the Church of England. Now, would it not be a flat contradiction to this design to separate from the [p. 5] Church? These things being considered, we cannot apprehend (whether it be lawful in itself or no) that it is lawful for us; were it only on this ground, that it is by no means expedient.

II. It has indeed been objected that, till we do separate, we cannot be a compact, united body.

It is true we cannot till then be “a compact, united body,” if you mean by that expression a body distinct from all others. And we have no desire so to be.

It has been objected, *secondly*, “It is mere cowardice and fear of persecution which makes you desire to remain united with them.”

This cannot be proved. Let every one examine his own heart, and not judge his brother.

It is not probable. We never yet, for any persecution, when we were in the midst of it, either turned back from the work or even slackened our pace.

But this is certain, that although persecution many times proves an unspeakable blessing to them that suffer it, yet we ought not wilfully to bring it upon ourselves. Nay, we ought to do whatever can lawfully be done in order to prevent it. We ought to avoid it so far as we lawfully can—when persecuted in one city, to flee into another.¹¹ If God should suffer a general persecution, who would be able to abide it we know not. Perhaps those who talk loudest might

⁷John Arndt (1555–1611). JW included an English translation of his book *Of True Christianity*, in the *Christian Library*, 1:157–2:206.

⁸Robert Bolton (1572–1631), a Puritan, several of whose works JW included in the *Christian Library*, 7:181–8:292.

⁹The 1785 reprint placed the opening of this sentence, to this point, in italics.

¹⁰The 1785 reprint placed this sentence in ALL-CAPS for emphasis.

¹¹See Matt. 10:23.

flee first. Remember the case of Dr. Pendleton.¹²

III. Upon the whole, one cannot but observe how desirable it is that all of us who are engaged in the same work should think and speak the same thing, be united in one judgment, and use one and the same language.

Do we not all now see *ourselves*, the *Methodists* (so called) in general, *the Church*, and *the clergy* in a clear light? [p. 6]

We look upon *ourselves* not as the authors or ringleaders of a particular sect or party (it is the farthest thing from our thoughts) but as messengers of God to those who are Christians in name but heathens in heart and in life, to call them back to that from which they are fallen, to real genuine Christianity. We are therefore debtors to all these, of whatever opinion or denomination, and are consequently to do all that in us lies to please all for their good, to edification.¹³

We look upon the *Methodists* (so called) in general not as any particular party (this would exceedingly obstruct the grand design for which we conceive God has raised them up) but as living witnesses, in and to every party, of that Christianity which we preach; which is hereby demonstrated to be a real thing and visibly held out to all the world.

We look upon England as that part of the world, and *the Church* as that part of England, to which all we who are born and have been brought up therein owe our first and chief regard. We feel in ourselves a strong Στοργή,¹⁴ a kind of natural affection for our country, which we apprehend Christianity was never designed either to root out or to impair. We have a more peculiar concern for our brethren, for that part of our countrymen to whom we have been joined from our youth up by ties of a religious as well as a civil nature. True it is that they are, in general, “without God in the world.”¹⁵ So much the more do our bowels yearn over them. They do lie “in darkness and the shadow of death.”¹⁶ The more tender is our compassion for them. And when we have the fullest conviction of that complicated wickedness which covers them as a flood,¹⁷ then do we feel the most (and we desire to feel yet more) of that inexpressible emotion with which our blessed Lord beheld Jerusalem, and wept and lamented over it.¹⁸ Then are [p. 7] we the most willing “to spend and be spent”¹⁹ for them; yea, to “lay down our lives for our brethren.”²⁰

¹²Henry Pendleton (d. 1557), after preaching against Lutheranism under Henry VIII, became a Protestant under Edward VI—but after boasting of his courageous fidelity, once more turned Roman Catholic under Queen Mary.

¹³See Rom. 15:2.

¹⁴The Greek word for “natural affection,” such as between parents and children.

¹⁵Eph. 2: 12.

¹⁶Ps. 107:10.

¹⁷See Amos 8:8.

¹⁸See Matt. 23:37, etc.

¹⁹2 Cor. 12:15.

²⁰Cf. 1 John 3:16.

We look upon the *clergy* not only as a part of these our brethren, but as that part whom God by his adorable providence has called to be watchmen over the rest. For whom therefore they are to give a strict account. If these then neglect their important charge, if they do not watch over them with all their power, they will be of all most miserable,²¹ and so are entitled to our deepest compassion. So that to feel, and much more to express, either contempt or bitterness towards them betrays an utter ignorance of ourselves and of the spirit which we especially should be of.

[IV.] Because this is a point of uncommon concern, let us consider it a little farther.

[1.] The clergy, wherever we are, are either friends to the truth, or neutrals, or enemies to it.

If they are friends to it, certainly we should do everything, and omit everything we can with a safe conscience, in order to continue and, if it be possible, increase their good-will to it.

If they neither further nor hinder it, we should do all that in us lies, both for their sakes and for the sake of their several flocks, to give their neutrality the right turn, that it may change into love rather than hatred.

If they are enemies, still we should not despair of lessening, if not removing, their prejudice. We should try every means again and again. We should employ all our care, labour, prudence, joined with fervent prayer, to overcome evil with good,²² to melt their hardness into love.

It is true that when any of these openly wrest the Scriptures, and deny the grand truths of the gospel, we cannot but declare and defend, at convenient opportunities, the important truths which they deny. But in this case especially we have need of all gentleness and meekness of wisdom.²³ [p. 8] Contempt, sharpness, bitterness, can do no good. “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”²⁴ Harsh methods have been tried again and again (by two or three unsettled railers) at Wednesbury, St. Ives, Cork, Canterbury. And how did they succeed? They always occasioned numberless evils; often wholly stopped the course of the gospel. Therefore, were it only on a prudential account, were conscience unconcerned therein, it should be a sacred rule to all our preachers, “No contempt, no bitterness, to the clergy.”

2. Might it not be another (at least prudential) rule for every Methodist preacher not to frequent any Dissenting meeting? (Though we blame none who have been always accustomed to it.) But if we do this, certainly our people will. Now this is actually separating from the Church. If therefore it is (at least) not expedient to separate, neither is this expedient. Indeed we may attend our assemblies and the Church too, because they are at different hours. But we cannot attend both the [Dissenting] meeting and the Church, because they are at the same hours.

If it be said, “But at the Church we are fed with chaff, whereas at the meeting we have wholesome food”; we answer, i) The prayers of the Church are not chaff; they are substantial food for any who are alive to God. ii) The Lord’s Supper is not chaff, but pure and wholesome for all who receive it with upright hearts. Yea, iii) in almost all the sermons we hear there we

²¹See 1 Cor. 15:19.

²²See Rom. 12:21.

²³See James 3:13.

²⁴James 1:20.

hear many great and important truths. And whoever has a spiritual discernment may easily separate the chaff from the wheat therein. iv) How little is the case mended at the [Dissenting] meeting! Either the teachers are “new light men,”²⁵ denying the Lord that bought them,²⁶ and overturning his gospel from the very foundations; or they are predestinarians, and so preach predestination and final perseverance, more [p. 9] or less. Now, whatever this may be to them who were educated therein, yet to those of our brethren who have lately embraced it, repeated experience shows it is not wholesome food. Rather, to them it has the effect of deadly poison. In a short time it destroys all their zeal for God. They grow fond of opinions and strife of words. They despise self-denial and the daily cross; and, to complete all, wholly separate from their brethren.

3. Nor is it expedient for any Methodist preacher to imitate the Dissenters in their manner of praying: either in his *tone*, all particular tones both in prayer and preaching should be avoided with the utmost care; nor in his *language*, all his words should be plain and simple, such as the lowest of his hearers both use and understand; or in the *length* of his prayer, which should not usually exceed four or five minutes, either before or after sermon. One might add, neither should we sing like them, in a slow, drawling manner. We sing swift, both because it saves time and because it tends to awake and enliven the soul.

4. *Fourthly*, if we continue in the Church—not by chance, or for want of thought, but upon solid and well-weighed reasons—then we should never speak contemptuously of the Church or anything pertaining to it. In some sense it is the mother of us all who have been brought up therein. We ought never to make her blemishes matter of diversion, but rather of solemn sorrow before God. We ought never to talk ludicrously of them; no, not at all, without clear necessity. Rather we should conceal them, as far as ever we can, without bringing guilt upon our own conscience. And we should all use every rational and scriptural means to bring others to the same temper and behaviour. I say *all*, for if some of us are thus minded and others of an opposite spirit and behaviour, this will breed a real schism among ourselves. It will of course [p. 10] divide us into two parties, each of which will be liable to perpetual jealousies, suspicions, and animosities against the other. Therefore, on this account likewise, it is expedient in the highest degree that we should be tender of the Church to which we belong.

5. In order to secure this end, to cut off all jealousy and suspicion from our friends, and hope from our enemies, of our having any design to separate from the Church, it would be well for every Methodist preacher who has no scruple concerning it to attend the service of the Church as often as conveniently he can. And the more we attend it, the more we love it, as constant experience shows. On the contrary, the longer we abstain from it, the less desire we have to attend it at all.

6. *Lastly*. Whereas we are surrounded on every side by those who are equally enemies to us and to the Church of England; and whereas these are long practised in this war, and skilled in all the objections against it; while our brethren, on the other hand, are quite strangers to them all, and so, on a sudden, know not how to answer them; it is highly expedient for every preacher to

²⁵This title was applied to a group of Presbyterians in Scotland who refused to subscribe to the Westminster Confession, questioning particularly the doctrine of the Trinity and tending toward an Arian Christology. See Benjamin Holme, *A Collection of the Epistles and Works of Benjamin Holme* (London: Luke Hinde, 1753), 43.

²⁶See 2 Pet. 2:1.

be provided with sound answers to those objections and then to instruct the societies where he labours how to defend themselves against those assaults. It would be therefore well for you carefully to read over the *Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion*, together with *Serious Thoughts concerning Perseverance*, and *Predestination calmly Considered*.²⁷ And when you are masters of them yourselves, it will be easy for you to recommend and explain them to our societies—that they may “no more be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine”; but, being settled in one mind and one judgment by solid scriptural and rational arguments, “may grow up in all things into him who is our Head, even Jesus Christ.”²⁸

JOHN WESLEY²⁹

[p. 11]

I think myself bound in duty to add my testimony to my brother’s. His twelve reasons against our ever separating from the Church of England are mine also. I subscribe to them with all my heart. Only, with regard to the first, *I* am quite clear that it is neither expedient nor *LAWFUL* for *me* to separate. And I never had the least inclination or temptation so to do. My affection for the Church is as strong as ever, and I clearly see my calling—which is to live and to die in her communion. This, therefore, I am determined to do, the Lord being my helper.

I have subjoined the hymns for the lay preachers still farther to *secure this end, to cut off all jealousy and suspicion from our friends, or hope from our enemies, of our having any design of ever separating from the Church*. I have no secret reserve, or distant thought of it. I never had. Would to God all the Methodist preachers were, in this respect, like-minded with

CHARLES WESLEY

[p. 12]

**HYMNS
FOR THE USE OF THE
METHODIST PREACHERS.**

Hymn I.

[1] O Lord, our strength and righteousness,
Our base, and head, and corner-stone,
Our peace with God, our mutual peace,
Unite, and keep thy servants one,
That while we speak in Jesus’ name,
We all may speak, and think the same.

²⁷JW, *Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion* (1758), *Serious Thoughts upon the Perseverance of the Saints* (1751), and *Predestination Calmly Considered* (1752).

²⁸Cf. Eph. 4:14–15.

²⁹JW’s signature was not included when he published the “Reasons” in *Preservative Against Unsettled Notions*. CW has added it, prior to his following endorsement.

- 2 That Spirit of love to each impart,
That fervent mind, which was in thee,
So shall we all our strength exert,
In heart, and word, and deed agree
T' advance the kingdom of thy grace,
And spread thine everlasting praise. [p. 13]
- 3 O never may the fiend steal in,
Or one unstable soul deceive:
Assail'd by our besetting sin,
And tempted sore the work to leave,
Preserve us, Lord, from self and pride,
And let nor life, nor death divide.
- 4 Pride, only pride, can cause divorce,
Can separate 'twixt our souls and thee:
Pride, only pride, is discord's source,
The bane of peace and charity:
But us it never more shall part,
For thou art greater than our heart.
- 5 Wherefore to thine almighty hand
The keeping of our hearts we give,
Firm in one mind and spirit stand,
To thee, and to each other cleave,
Fixt on the Rock which cannot move,
And meekly safe in humble love.

Hymn II.

- 1 Forth in thy strength, O Lord, we go,
Forth in thy steps and loving mind,
To pay the gospel-debt we owe,
(The word of grace for all mankind)
To sow th' incorruptible seed,
And find the lost, and wake the dead.
- 2 The wand'ring sheep of England's fold
Demand our first and tenderest care,
Who under sin and Satan sold
Usurp the *Christian* character,
The Christian character prophane,
And take thy *church's* name in vain. [p. 14]

- 3 Or shameless advocates for hell,
 Their crimes they Sodom-like confess,
Or varnish'd with a specious zeal,
 An empty form of godliness,
The power they impiously blaspheme,
And call our hope a madman's dream.
- 4 Haters of God, yet still they cry,
 "The temple of the Lord are we!
The church, the church!"—Who dare defy
 Thy self-existent deity,
Proudly oppose thy righteous reign,
And crucify their God again.
- 5 'Gainst these by thee sent forth to fight,
 A suffering war we calmly wage,
With patience meet their fierce despite,
 With love repay their furious rage,
Revil'd, we bless; defam'd, intreat;
And spurn'd, we kiss the spurner's feet.
- 6 Arm'd with thine all-sufficient grace,
 Thy meek unconquerable mind,
Our foes we cordially embrace,
 (The filth and refuse of mankind)
We gladly all resign our breath,
To save one precious soul from death.

Hymn III.

- 1 So be it, Lord! If thou ordain,
 We come to suffer all thy will,
The utmost violence to sustain
 Of those that can the body kill,
But having push'd us to the shore,
The feeble worms can do no more. [p. 15]
- 2 We come, depending on thy name,
 For we have counted first the cost:
Let ease, and liberty, and fame,
 And friends, and life itself be lost,
We come our faithfulness t' approve,
And pay thee back thy dying love.

- 3 Not in a confident conceit
Of our own strength, and virtuous power,
We offer up ourselves, to meet
The fierceness of that fiery hour:
Left to ourselves we all shall fly,
And I shall first my Lord deny.
- 4 I first, of ill o'ercome, shall yield,
Apostate from thy glorious cause,
Shall vilely cast away my shield,
And hate the haters of thy cross,
Retort the sharp opprobrious word,
Or smite with the offensive sword.
- 5 Strange fire will in this bosom burn,
Unless thou quench it with thy blood;
Impatient of their cruel scorn
My spirit will throw off the load,
"And Baal's priests with wrath repel,
And send th' accursed brood to hell."
- 6 Or I shall gaul the *mitred* race
By satire keen, and railings rude,
By proud contempt, and malice base,
Scurrilous wit, and laughter lewd,
Laughter which soon itself bemoans,
And ends in everlasting groans.
- 7 But do not, Lord, from us remove,
While sin and Satan are so near,
But arm us with thy patient love,
That only to ourselves severe [p. 16]
The world we may, like thee, oppose,
And die, a ransom for our foes.

Hymn IV.

- 1 Master, at thy command we rise,
No prophets we, or prophets' sons,
Or mighty, or well-born, or wise;
But quick'ned clods, but breathing stones,
Urg'd to cry out, constrain'd to call,
And tell mankind—He died for all!

- 2 We speak, because *they* hold their peace,
 Who *should* thy dying love proclaim:
We *must* declare thy righteousness,
 Thy truth, and power, and saving name,
Though the dumb ass with accent clear
Rebuke the silence of the seer.
- 3 But shall we e'er ourselves forget,
 And in our gifts and graces trust,
With wild contempt the prophets treat,
 Proudly against the branches boast,
Or dare the rulers vilify,
Or mock the priests of God most high!
- 4 *Let them alone*, thy wisdom cries,
 If blind conductors of the blind!
Let them alone, our heart replies,
 And draws us to the work assign'd,
The work of publishing the word,
And seizing sinners for our Lord.
- 5 Here let us spend our utmost zeal,
 Here let us all our powers exert,
To testify thy gracious will,
 Inform the world how kind thou art,
And nothing, know, desire, approve,
But Jesus—and thy bleeding love. [p. 17]

Hymn V.

- 1 Jesu, thy waiting servants see
 Assembled here with one accord,
Ready to be sent forth by thee,
 To preach, when thou shalt give, the word:
Now, Lord, our work, our province shew,
For lo! We come, thy will to do.
- 2 O what a scene attracts our eyes!
 What multitudes of lifeless souls!
An open vale before us lies,
 A place of graves, a place of skulls,
The desolate house of England's sons,
A church—a charnel of dry bones!

- 3 The slaves of pride, ambition, lust,
Our broken pale, alas, receives!
The world into the temple thrust,
And make our church a den of thieves,
Her grief, her burthen, and her shame,
Yet all assume the church's name.
- 4 Her desolate state too well we know,
But neither hate her, nor despise:
Our bosoms bleed, our tears o'erflow;
We view her, Saviour, with thine eyes,
(O might she know in this her day!)
And still we weep, and still we pray.
- 5 We pray that these dry bones may live:
We see the answer of our prayer!
Thou dost a thousand tokens give,
That England's church is still thy care,
Ten thousand witnesses appear,
Ten thousand proofs, that God is here! [p. 18]
- 6 Here then, O God, vouchsafe to dwell,
And mercy on our Sion shew;
Her inbred enemies expel,
Avenge her of her hellish foe,
Cause on her wastes thy face to shine,
And comfort her with light divine.
- 7 O light of life, thy Spirit shed,
In all his chearing, quick'ning power:
Thy word that rais'd *us* from the dead,
Can raise ten thousand, thousand more,
Can bring them up from nature's grave,
And the whole house of Israel save.

Hymn VI.

- 1 Great guardian of Britannia's land,
To thee we here present our blood,
Set forth the last, a desperate band
Devoted for our country's good,
Our brethren dear, our flesh and bone,
We live, and die, for them alone.

- 2 *Our brethren*; tho' they still disclaim,
And us despitefully intreat,
With scornful rage cast out our name,
Trample as dirt beneath their feet,
Out of their synagogues expel,
And doom us to the hottest hell.
- 3 If thou preserve our souls in peace,
Our brethren shall afflict in vain:
Most patient, when they most oppress,
We all their cruel wrongs sustain,
And strengthen'd by thy meek'ning power,
The more they hate, we love the more. [p. 19]
- 4 No, never shall their rage prevail,
Or force us the dry bones to leave:
The more they push us from the pale,
The closer we to Sion cleave,
And daily in the temple found,
Delight to kiss the sacred ground.
- 5 If some defile the hallow'd place,
The truth, and us with slanders load,
Or fiercely from their altars chase,
And rob us of the children's food,
We will not quit thy house and word,
Or loath the offerings of the Lord.
- 6 Should those who sit in Moses' seat,
Conspire thy little flock to harm,
Judge in their courts, and scourge, and beat,
And bruise us with the ruler's arm,
Matter of joy our shame we make,
And bear it, Saviour, for thy sake.
- 7 Or should they stir the people up
Our goods to spoil, our limbs to tear,
Sustain'd by that immortal hope,
Their lawless violence we bear;
Or laid in bonds our voices raise,
And shake the dungeon with thy praise.
- 8 A gazing-stock to fiends and men,
When arm'd with thine all-patient power,
As sheep appointed to be slain,
We wait the last, the fiery hour,

And ne'er from England's church will move,
Till torn away—to that above. [p. 20]

Hymn VII.
The Preacher's Prayer for the Flock.

- 1 Shepherd of souls, the great, the good,
For the dear purchase of thy blood
 To thee in faith we pray:
The lambs and sheep of England's fold,
Now in thy book of life inroll'd,
 Preserve unto that day.
- 2 Whom thou by us hast gather'd in,
Defend the little flock from sin,
 From error's paths secure:
Stay with them, Lord, when we depart,
And guard the issues of their heart,
 And keep their conscience pure.
- 3 Soon as their guides are taken home,
We know the grievous wolves will come,
 Determin'd not to spare;
The stragglers from thy wounded side,
The wolves will into sects divide,
 And into parties tear.
- 4 Ev'n of ourselves shall men arise,
With words perverse and soothing lies,
 Our children to beset,
Disciples for themselves to make,
And, draw for filthy lucre's sake,
 The sheep into their net.
- 5 What then can their protection be?
The virtue that proceeds from thee,
 The power of humble love:
The strength of all-sufficient grace,
Receiv'd in thine appointed ways,
 Can land them safe above. [p. 21]
- 6 Now, Saviour, cloath them with thy power,
And arm their souls against that hour
 With faith invincible,

- Teach them to wield the Spirit's sword,
And mighty in the written word
 To chase both earth and hell.
- 7 When I from all my burthens freed,
Am number'd with the peaceful dead,
 In everlasting rest,
Pity the sheep I leave behind,
My God, unutterably kind,
 And lodge them in thy breast.
- 8 Ah! Never suffer them to leave
The church, where thou art pleas'd to give
 Such tokens of thy grace!
Confirm them in their calling here,
Till ripe by holiest love t' appear
 Before thy glorious face.
- 9 Whom I into thy hands commend,
Wilt thou not keep them to the end,
 Thou infinite in love?
Assure me, Lord, it shall be so,
And let my quiet spirit go
 To join the church above.
- 10 Sion, my first, my latest care,
The burthen of my dying prayer,
 Now in thine arms I see;
And sick on earth of seeing more,
I hasten home, my God t' adore
 Thro' all eternity.

Source: [Charles Wesley,] Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England ... with Hymns for the Preachers among the Methodists (so called) (London: Strahan, 1760).