

“Catholic Love” (1755)¹

[cf. Baker list, #211]

Editorial Introduction:

John Wesley’s sermon *Catholic Spirit* is the classic expression of his desire for greater acceptance, love, and mutual support among those who share the central beliefs and practices of Christianity. This sermon first appeared in volume three of John’s *Sermons on Several Occasions* (1750). Then, in 1755, responding to current sharp tensions among his followers over remaining in connection with the Church of England and ongoing tensions between the Calvinist and Wesleyan branches of the Methodist movement, John issued the sermon as a separate tract. Charles lent his voice to the cause by attaching a hymn on “Catholic Love.”

While this hymn was never added to the “Catholic Spirit” in reprints of John’s *Sermons* or in his collected *Works*, it was included when John reprinted the separate tract in 1770 (in the context of heightened tensions with the Calvinist Methodists) and 1789.

There is a signed manuscript copy of the first two stanzas, with no significant variants, at The New Room, John Wesley’s Chapel, in Bristol, England (NR 2001, 338).

Editions:

Charles Wesley. “Catholic Love.” Appended to John Wesley. *Catholic Spirit*. London: Cock, 1755.

2nd Bristol: Pine, 1770.

3rd London: New Chapel, 1789.

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CATHOLIC LOVE.

- 1 Weary of all this wordy strife,
 These notions, forms and modes, and names,
To thee, the way, the truth, the life,
 Whose love my simple heart inflames,
Divinely taught, at last I fly
With thee, and thine, to live, and die.

- 2 Forth from the midst of Babel brought,
 Parties and sects I cast behind,

Enlarged my heart, and free my thought,
Where'er the latent truth I find,
The latent truth with joy to own,
And bow to Jesus'² name alone.

- 3 Redeemed by thine almighty grace,
I taste my glorious liberty,
With open arms the world embrace,
But *cleave* to those who cleave to thee,
But only in thy saints *delight*
Who walk with God in purest white.
- 4 One with the little flock I rest,
The members sound who hold the head,
The chosen few, with pardon blest,
And by th' anointing Spirit led
Into the mind that was in thee,
Into the depths of deity.
- 5 My brethren, friends, and kinsmen these,
Who do my heavenly Father's will,
Who *aim* at perfect holiness,
And all thy counsels to fulfil,
Athirst to be whate'er thou art,
And love their God with all their heart.

²“Jesus’” changed to “Jesu’s” in 3rd edn. (1789).

- 6 For these, howe'er in flesh disjoined,
Where'er dispersed o'er earth abroad,
Unfeigned, unbounded love I find,
And constant as the life of God:
Fountain of life, from thence it sprung,
As pure, as even, and as strong.
- 7 Joined to the hidden church unknown,
In this sure bond of perfectness,
Obscurely safe, I dwell alone,
And glory in th' uniting grace,
To me, to each believer giv'n,
To all thy saints in earth and heav'n.