

“Hymns in *Word for a Protestant*” (1745)¹

Modernized text

[cf. Baker list, #113]

Editorial Introduction:

John Wesley wrote a tract, with hymns attached, calling the English to repentance in October 1745, in light of the victory of Charles Edward Stuart (grandson of James II) in Scotland and the threatened invasion of England by Stuart’s troops—see “Hymns in *Word in Season*” (1745).

Stuart did turn his troops southward toward England in December, leading King George II to declare a national day of repentance on December 18. Wesley records in his *Journal* distributing tracts in the street on that day, surely including *Word in Season*, which argued that God was allowing this invasion of Protestant England by the Roman Catholic Stuart line because of the sinfulness of the general population. Apparently Wesley decided that he needed to elaborate this concern. On December 23 his printer in London, William Strahan, records printing 3,000 copies of a new pamphlet titled *Word to a Protestant*. In this pamphlet Wesley first calls upon his fellow Protestants to reject the threefold error of “papism”: the doctrine of merit, idolatry, and religious persecution. He then urges them to move beyond such minimal “purity” and to nurture true piety in their lives. His background assumption is again that God was allowing the present scourge because so many English Protestants were not truly pious Protestants.

The first edition of *Word to a Protestant* was 12 pages long and apparently contained three hymns at the end, though no copy has survived to verify this fact. In February 1746 Strahan printed a further 1500 copies of the 12-page version for sale at a penny, along with 1500 copies of a 4-page edition, without the hymns, for free distribution. Many more editions of both sizes appeared during these crucial winter months, with only scattered surviving copies. The earliest extant copy of the pamphlet that contains the three hymns is dated 1745, but described as the eighth edition! This edition is the source used as “original” below.

As with the hymns in *Word in Season*, the authorship of the three hymns included in *Word to a Protestant* is unclear. John often included hymns by Charles in his tracts without indicating source. In most cases we can establish Charles’s role, because he republished in *HSP* (1749) several hymns that appeared first appended to one of John’s tracts. But Charles did NOT include these three hymns in *HSP* (1749). It is also striking how closely the hymns echo the themes of the tract. The possibility must be considered that these three hymns were written by John rather than Charles.

Editions:

[Charles Wesley?]. “Hymns.” In John Wesley’s *Word to a Protestant*. [London: Strahan, 1745.]

[no copies extant]

London: Gideon Boyle, [1745?]. [Title: *True Protestant Doctrine*; no hymns.]

np, nd. [no hymns]

np, nd. [no hymns]

8th London: Stahan, 1745. [hymns included]

Bristol: Farley, 1746. [hymns included]

Dublin: Powell, 1749. [hymns included]

London, 1756. [only first hymn included]

Included in *Works* (Bristol: Pine, 1772), vol. 9 [hymns on pp. 326–33].

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HYMNS.

Hymn 1.

- 1 Where have I been so long
 Fast bound in sin and night
Mixed with the blind self-righteous throng
 Who hate the sons of light?
- 2 O how shall I presume,
 Jesus, to call on thee,
Sunk in the lowest dregs of Rome,
 The worst idolatry!
- 3 A stranger to thy grace,
 Long have I laboured, Lord,
To 'stablish my own righteousness,
 And been what I abhorred.
- 4 Foe to the Popish boast
 No merit was in me.
Yet in my works I put my trust,
 And not *alone* in thee.
- 5 For works that I had wrought
 I looked to be forgiven,
And by my virtuous tempers thought
 At last to *purchase* heaven.

- 6 Or if I needed still
The help of grace divine,
Thy merits should come in to fill
The small defects of mine.
- 7 Alas! I knew not then
Thou only didst atone
For all the sinful sons of men,
And purge our guilt alone;
- 8 Didst shed thy blood to pay
The all-sufficient price,
And take the world's offence away
By thy great sacrifice.
- 9 But O! My dying God,
By thee convinced at last,
My soul on that atoning blood,
On that *alone* I cast.
- 10 I dare no longer trust
On² ought I do, or feel,
But own, while humbled in the dust,
My whole desert is hell.
- 11 My works of³ righteousness
I cast them all away;
Me, Lord, thou frankly must release,
For I have nought to pay:
- 12 Not one good word or thought
I to thy merits join,
But gladly⁴ take the gift unbought
Of⁵ righteousness divine.

²Ori., "In"; corrected in 1746 edn. and following.

³Ori., "and"; corrected in 1746 edn. and following.

⁴Ori., "humbly"; changed in 1746 edn. and following.

⁵Ori., "The"; changed in 1746 edn. and following.

13 My faith is all in thee,
My *only* hope thou art,
The pardon thou hast bought for me,
Engrave it on my heart:

14 The blood by faith applied
O let it now take place,
And speak me freely justified,
And fully saved by⁶ grace.

Hymn 2.

1 Forgive me, O thou jealous God,
A wretch, who on thy laws have trod,
And robbed thee of thy right,
A sinner to myself unknown,
'Gainst thee I have transgressed, and done
This evil in thy sight.

2 My body I disdained t' incline
Or worship at an idol's shrine
With *gross* idolatry:
But Oh! My soul hath baser proved,
Honoured, and feared, and served, and loved
The creature more than thee.

3 Let the blind sons of Rome bow down
To images of wood and stone;
But I with subtler art,
Safe from the *letter* of thy word,
My idols secretly adored,
Set up within my heart.

4 But Oh! Suffice the season past:
My idols now away I cast,
Pleasure, and wealth and fame,
The world, and all its goods I leave,
To thee alone resolved to give
Whate'er I have or am.

⁶Ori., "through"; changed in 1746 edn. and following.

5 Lo! In a thankful loving heart
 I render thee whate'er thou art,
 I give myself⁷ to thee;
 And thee my whole delight I own,
 My joy, my glory, and my crown
 To all eternity.

Hymn 3.

1 O thou who seest what is in man,
 And show'st myself to me,
 Suffer a sinner to complain
 And groan his griefs to thee.

2 A sinner, that has cloaked his shame
 With self-deceiving art,
 Thy worshipper *reformed* in name,
 But unrenewed in heart.

3 The servants most unlike their Lord
 How oft did I condemn,
 The persecuting church abhorred,
 Nor saw myself in them.

4 The spirit of my foes I caught
 The angry bitter zeal,
 And fierce for my own party fought,
 And breathed the fire of hell.

5 Threat'ning I did and slaughter breathe
 (The flail of heresy)
 And doom the sects to bonds or death
 That⁸ did not think with me.

6 To propagate the truth I fought
 With fury and despite,
 And in my zeal for Israel sought
 To slay the Gibeonite.

⁷Ori., "thysel"; corrected in 1746 edn. and following.

⁸Ori., "Who"; corrected in 1746 edn. and following.

- 7 “The temple of the Lord are we!”
And all who⁹ dared deny
I would not have¹⁰ their conscience free,
But force them to comply.
- 8 With wholesome discipline severe
To conquer them I strove,
And drive into the pale through fear
Who would not come through love.
- 9 How vainly then the zealots blind
Of Rome did I¹¹ disclaim?
Still to the church of Satan joined,
And differing but in name!
- 10 How could I, Lord, myself deceive
While *unreformed* within,
Protest against their creed, and cleave
The closer to their sin?
- 11 Their foulest sin my own I made
(And humbly now confess)
While by my anger I essayed
To work thy righteousness.
- 12 A murderer convict I come
My vileness to bewail,
By nature *born* a son of Rome,
A child of wrath and hell.
- 13 Lord, I at last recant, reject,
Through thy great¹² strength alone,
The madness of the Romish sect,
The *madness* of my own.
- 14 Lord, I abhor, renounce, abjure
The fiery spirit¹³ unclean,
The persecuting zeal impure,
The sin-opposing sin.

⁹Ori., “that”; corrected in 1746 edn. and following.

¹⁰Ori., “leave”; changed in 1746 edn. and following.

¹¹Ori., “I did”; changed in 1746 edn. and following.

¹²Ori., “Through Jesu’s”; changed in 1746 edn. and following.

¹³Ori., “sp’rit”; changed in 1746 edn. and following.

- 15 Let others draw with fierce despite
Th' eradicating¹⁴ sword,
And with the devil's weapons fight
The battles of the Lord;
- 16 But Oh! My gracious God, to me
A better sp'rit¹⁵ impart,
The gentle mind that was in thee,
The meekly loving heart.
- 17 The heart whose charity o'erflows
To all, far off, and near,
True charity to friends and foes
Impartially sincere.
- 18 Heathens, and Jews, and Turks, may I
And heretics embrace,
Nor ev'n to Rome the love deny
I owe to all the race.

¹⁴Ori., "The persecuting"; changed in 1746 edn. and following.

¹⁵Ori., "mind"; changed in 1746 edn. and following.