

New Year's Hymns (1749)¹

[Baker list, #176]

Editorial Introduction:

The first thing to note about Charles Wesley's collection of *New Year's Hymns* is that they were intended to be used on January 1. This might seem obvious, but until 1752 England remained on the Gregorian calendar, which identified March 25 (the Annunciation) as the proper turning to the new year. Many deviated from this practice and Charles Wesley was among them. His *MS Journal* marks the turn of the year in January from its earliest entries (1736).

The second thing to note about this collection is that it was produced to resource an emerging tradition in Methodist worship practice. In the initial days of the revival the Wesley brothers joined the English Moravians, who held a love-feast early on the morning of January 1 (see John Wesley's *Journal* account for 1739). This practice subsided a bit after the break with the Moravians, but was clearly retrieved by 1748. John Wesley's *Journal* describes a gathering in London on January 1, 1748, at 4:00 am for a service marked by "joy and thanksgiving." The same language is used in the journals of both brothers to describe services on January 1, 1750 in Bristol (led by Charles) and London (led by John). *Hymns for New Year's Day, 1750* had been published in December 1749, to provide the hymns for these services.

This early morning service of praise and thanksgiving on New Year's day became a standard feature of Methodist worship, and the *New Year's Hymns* collection was reprinted frequently to provide for this practice. Initially the date was changed in the title for each reprinting; eventually the date was dropped. The content of the collection remained the same.

There are seven hymns in the collection, one of which (#6) dates back to 1741 and had been published in *HSP* (1749).

Editions:

- [Charles Wesley.] *Hymns for New Year's Day, 1750*. Bristol: Farley, [1749].
Bristol: Farley, [1750]. [...*New Year's Day, 1751*.]
London: Cock, 1751. [...*New Year's Day, 1752*.]
London: [Cock,] 1754. [...*New Year's Day, 1755*.]
Bristol: Grabham, 1758. [stop adding year to title]
Bristol: Pine, 1761.
Bristol: Pine, 1766.
Bristol: Pine, 1769.
Bristol: Pine, 1772.
London: Hawes, [1775?].
London: Hawes, 1777.
London: Paramore, 1784.
London: Paramore, 1785.
London: New Chapel, 1788.

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**HYMNS
FOR
NEW-YEAR'S-DAY.**

1.

- 1 Wisdom ascribe, and might, and praise
To God, who lengthens out our days,
Who spares us yet another year,
And lets us see his goodness here;
Happy, and wise, the time redeem,
And live, my friends, and die to him.

- 2 How often, when his arm was bared,
Hath he our sinful Israel spared!
Let them alone his mercy cried,
And turned the vengeful bolt aside,
Indulged another kind reprieve,
And strangely suffered us to live.
- 3 Laid to the root with conscious awe,
But now the threat'ning axe we saw,
We saw, when Jesus stepped between,
To part the punishment and sin,
He pleaded for the blood-bought race,
And God vouchsafed a longer space!
- 4 Still in the doubtful balance weighed
We trembled, while the remnant prayed:
The Father heard his Spirit groan,
And answered mild It is my Son!
He let the prayer of faith prevail,
And mercy turned the hovering scale.
- 5 Merciful God, how shall we raise
Our hearts to pay thee all thy praise?
Our hearts shall beat for thee alone,
Our lives shall make thy goodness known,
Our souls and bodies shall be thine,
A living sacrifice divine.
- 6 I and my house will serve the Lord,
Led by the Spirit, and the word;
We plight our faith, assembled here,
To serve our God th' ensuing year,
And vow, when time shall be no more,
Through all eternity t' adore.

2.

1 Ye worms of earth arise,
 Ye creatures of a day,
Redeem the time, be bold, be wise,
 And cast your bonds away,
 Shake off the chains of sin,
 Like us, assembled here,
With hymns of praise to usher in
 The acceptable year.

The year of gospel-grace
Like us rejoice to see,
And thankfully in Christ embrace
 Your proffered liberty.
Pardon and peace are nigh,
 Which every soul may prove;
The Lord, who now is passing by,
 Makes this the time of love.

2 Saviour, and Lord of all,
 Thy proffer we receive,
Obedient to the² gospel call
 That bids us turn, and live:
 Our former years misspent,
 Though late, we deeply mourn,
And softened by thy grace repent,
 And to thy arms return:

 With fear, and grief, and shame
 Our folly we bemoan,
But wonder at the patient Lamb,
 Who lets us still alone:

²“The” changed to “thy” in 1752 edn. and following.

Thy patience lifts us up,
Thy free unbounded grace,
And all our fear is lost in hope,
And all our grief in praise.

3 To thee, by whom we live,
 Our praise and lives we pay,
Praise, ardent, cordial, constant give,
 And shout to see thy³ day:
 Thy⁴ day of saving grace,
 Thy consecrated year,
When the bright Sun of righteousness
 Doth to our world appear.

Risen, we know, thou art
With healing in thy wings,
We feel, we feel it in our heart
 The life thy presence brings!
 The seal, and earnest this
 Our pardon we receive,
And look with thee in glorious bliss
 Eternally to live.

3.

1 Blow ye the trumpet, blow
 The gladly solemn sound,
Let all the nations know
 To earth's remotest bound
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home!

³"Thy" changed to "the" in 1766, 1769, 1775, 1777 edns.

⁴"Thy" changed to "The" in 1766 edn. and following (except 1772).

- 2 Jesus, our great high priest,
 Hath full atonement made;
 Ye weary spirits rest,
 Ye mournful souls be glad,
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home!
- 3 Extol the Lamb of God,
 The all-atoning Lamb!
 Redemption in his blood
 Throughout the world proclaim:
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home!
- 4 Ye slaves of sin, and hell,
 Your liberty receive,
 And safe in Jesus dwell,
 And blest in Jesus live:
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home.
- 5 Ye who have sold for nought
 Your heritage above
 Shall have it back unbought,
 The gift of Jesu's love:
The year of jubilee is come;
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home.
- 6 The gospel-trumpet hear,
 The news of heavenly grace,
 And saved from earth, appear
 Before your Saviour's face:
The year of jubilee is come;
Return to your eternal home.

4.

- 1 All praise to the Lord
Whose trumpet we hear,
Which speaks in his word
The festival year:
The loud proclamation
Of freedom from thrall,
And gospel-salvation
Is published to all.
- 2 The year of release
Ev'n now is begun,
And pardon, and peace
With Jesus sent down:
Eternal redemption
Through him we obtain,
And present exemption
From passion and⁵ pain.
- 3 Ye spirits enslaved,
Your liberty claim,
Believe, and be saved
Through Jesus's name;
That infinite lover
Of sinners embrace,
And gladly recover
His forfeited grace.
- 4 With joyfullest news
Your prisons resound,
Your fetters are loose,
Your souls are unbound:

⁵“Passion and” changed to “passionate” in 1752 edn. and following.

Resume the possession
For which ye were born,
From Satan's oppression
To heaven return.

5.

- 1 Come, let us anew
Our journey pursue,
Roll round with the year,
And never stand still, 'till the Master appear;
His adorable will
Let us gladly fulfil,
And our talents improve
By the patience of hope, and the labour of love.

- 2 Our life is a dream,
Our time as a stream
Glides swiftly away,
And the fugitive moment refuses to stay,
The arrow is flown,
The moment is gone,
The millennial year
Rushes on to our view, and eternity's here!

- 3 O that each in the day
Of his coming might say
“I have fought my way through,
I have finished the work thou didst give me to do!”
O that each from his Lord
May receive the glad word
“Well and faithfully done,
Enter into my joy, and sit down on my throne!”

6.⁶

- 1 The Lord of earth and sky
 The God of ages praise,
 Who reigns enthroned on high,
 Ancient of endless days,
 Who lengthens out our trial here,
 And spares us yet another year.

- 2 Barren and withered trees
 We cumbered long the ground,
 No fruit of holiness
 On our dead souls was found;
 Yet doth he us in mercy spare
 Another, and another year.

- 3 When justice bared the sword
 To cut the fig-tree down,
 The pity of our Lord
 Cried, Let it still alone!
 The Father mild inclines his ear,
 And spares us yet another year.

- 4 Jesus, thy speaking blood
 From God obtained the grace,
 Who therefore hath bestowed
 On us a longer space,
 Thou didst in our behalf appear,
 And lo, we see another year!

- 5 Then dig about our root,
 Break up our fallow ground,
 And let our gracious fruit
 To thy great praise abound,

⁶A manuscript predecessor appears in MS Thirty, 53 (title “New Year’s Day, 1741”). It was published in *HSP* (1749), 1:250–51.

O let us all thy praise declare,
And fruit unto perfection bear.

7.⁷

- 1 Sing to the great Jehovah's praise!
 All praise to him belongs,
Who kindly lengthens out our days,
 Demands our choicest songs:
Whose providence has brought us through
 Another various year,
We all with vows and anthems new
 Before our God appear.
- 2 Father, thy mercies past we own,
 Thy still-continued care,
To thee presenting through thy Son
 Whate'er we have, or are.
Our lips and lives shall gladly show
 The wonders of thy love,
While on in Jesu's steps we go
 To see thy face above.
- 3 Our residue of days or hours
 Thine, wholly thine shall be,
And all our consecrated powers
 A sacrifice to thee;
'Till Jesus in the clouds appear
 To saints on earth forgiven,
And bring the grand sabbatic year,
 The jubilee of heaven.

⁷A copy of this hymn, in the hand of Charles Wesley Jr. and dated January 1, 1822, is pasted on the back cover of a book of Wesley Family Items at University of California, Santa Barbara, Davidson Library, Isaac Foot Collection, Box 2, folder 26.