

“Hymn on the Death of Whitefield” (1770)¹

[cf. Baker list, #324]

Editorial Introduction:

George Whitefield, long-time associate of the Wesley brothers, died on September 30, 1770, in Newburyport, Massachusetts, while on another of his preaching tours in the American colonies. It took some time for news of his death to get back to England, where it arrived at a time of increased tension between the Wesleyan Methodists and the Calvinist Methodists, due to the strong critique of Calvinism adopted at the Conference of the Wesleyans in August 1770.

While there was understandable resistance among the Calvinist Methodists, it was finally agreed to honor Whitefield’s desire and allow John Wesley to preach the sermon for the formal recognition of Whitefield’s death in England. Wesley copyrighted *A Sermon on the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield* at Stationers Hall on November 28, 1770.

A hymn was appended to John’s published sermon. Although it was unsigned, it was almost certainly by Charles Wesley, adding his voice to that of his brother in honoring their colleague.

Editions:

[Charles Wesley.] “Hymn.” In John Wesley. *A Sermon on the Death of the Rev. Mr George Whitefield*, 31–32. London: J. & W. Oliver, 1770.

Dublin: Powell, 1770. [also includes two hymns from *Funeral Hymns* (1759)]

Included with sermon in *Works* (Bristol: Pine, 1771), vol 4 (hymn on pp. 142–43).

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An Hymn.

- 1 Servant of God, well done!
 Thy glorious warfare's past,
The battle's fought, the race is won,
 And thou art crowned at last;
 Of all thy heart's desire
 Triumphantly possessed,
Lodged by the ministerial choir
 In thy Redeemer's breast.
- 2 In condescending love
 Thy ceaseless prayer he heard,
And bade thee suddenly remove,
 To thy complete reward:
 Ready to bring the peace,
 Thy beauteous feet were shod,
When mercy signed thy soul's release
 And caught thee up to God.

- 3 With saints enthroned on high
 Thou dost thy Lord proclaim,
And still “To God salvation” cry,
 “Salvation to the Lamb!”
 O happy, happy soul!
 In ecstasies of praise,
Long as eternal ages roll,
 Thou seest thy Saviour’s face.
- 4 Redeemed from earth and pain,
 Ah! When shall we ascend,
And all in Jesu’s presence reign
 With our translated friend!
 Come, Lord, and quickly come!
 And when in thee complete,
Receive thy longing servants home,
 To triumph—at thy feet!