

Week 5: Charles Wesley

Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies

Text: Charles Wesley (1707–1788), 1740

- While studying at Oxford for ordination in the Church of England, formed a “Holy Club” for prayer and bible study that John Wesley and George Whitefield later joined
- After ordination, sailed for America as missionaries, but were ill-received and left for Britain again less than a year later
- In 1738, both Wesley brothers had a conversion experience, and John later wrote he felt his heart “strangely warmed”
- In what was uncommon practice at the time, they began preaching outdoors, and without prepared sermons
- This text was published two years later in their collection *Hymns and Sacred Poems*
- James Montgomery, author of “Hail To The Lord’s Anointed” (among others), said this hymn is “one of Charles Wesley’s loveliest progeny”

Tune: Johann Gottlob Werner (1777–1822), 1815

- Organist for a succession of churches in Germany, including Freiburg Cathedral and Merseburg Cathedral, where he was also music director
 - Not to be confused with an earlier Johann Gottlob Werner (1719–1781), a German theologian
 - This tune was originally a German folk tune, published in his *Choralbuch* collection
 - The name RATISBON is an old English name for the German city of Regensburg
 - Harmonized by William Henry Havergal in 1847 for *Hymns Ancient and Modern*
1. This text is somewhat unique in that it is so focused on a single metaphor, the idea of light. What are some of the different ideas that Wesley communicates using the metaphor of light (and dark)? How do they fit together in the overall message of the hymn?

O for a Heart to Praise My God

Text: Charles Wesley (1707–1788), 1742

- Originally published with eight stanzas, along with a quote from Psalm 51:10, “Make me a Clean Heart, O GOD, and renew a right Spirit within me”
- A later hymnal compiled by John in 1780 (organized by topic) included this hymn in a section “For Believers Groaning for Full Redemption”

Tune: Thomas Haweis (1734–1820), 1792

- First apprenticed as an apothecary and physician, later became a minister in the Church of England
 - After meeting Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, served in many of the chapels she oversaw
 - Invited to America by George Whitefield, but decided to remain in England
 - First published this tune in 1792, was later shortened and modified by Samuel Webbe Jr. in 1808
 - Webbe named the tune RICHMOND, in honor of Leigh Richmond, a minister and friend of Haweis
 - Occasionally also appears as CHESTERFIELD, named after one Lord Chesterfield, a frequent visitor of Hastings
1. This text has a lot of different descriptions of what a “renewed” heart looks like. Which stand out to you as the most important, and why? How should having a “copy” of God’s heart change the way you live?
 2. The final words “thy new, best name of Love” recalls another text of Wesley’s, “Come O Thou Traveler Unknown” (titled “Wrestling Jacob”, also written in 1742). Read the poem aloud as a class. Do you see other parallels between the two?

Rejoice, the Lord is King

Text: Charles Wesley (1707–1788), 1744

- First published in *Moral and Sacred Poems* in 1744, then *Hymns for our Lord's Resurrection* in 1746
- Around this time, the Wesleys were drawing big crowds but also significant opposition
- In one instance in 1743, Charles wrote:

I had just named my text at St. Ives ... when an army of rebels broke in upon us ... They broke the sconces, dashed the windows in pieces, tore away the shutters ... beat and dragged the women about, particularly one of a great age, and trampled on them without mercy. The longer they stayed, and the more they raged, the more power I found from above.

- Three years later, after visiting the same location again he wrote:

At St. Ives no one offered to make the least disturbance. Indeed, the whole place is outwardly changed in this respect. I walk the streets with astonishment, scarce believing it St. Ives. It is the same throughout all the county. All opposition falls before us...

Tune: John Darwall (1731–1789), 1770

- A lifelong Anglican minister, and amateur musician, served at St. Matthew's Parish in Walsall for the entirety of his 33-year career
 - Having been widowed with five (possibly six) children, remarried in 1766 and had a further six children
 - His second wife, Mary Whateley, was already a published poet; together they ran a printing press and wrote hymns for the Walsall congregation
 - Composed soprano and bass lines for each of the 150 psalm texts in Tate and Brady's 1696 psalter *New Version of the Psalms of David*
 - This tune, DARWALL'S 148TH (written for a version of Psalm 148 in Aaron Williams' *New Universal Psalmist* of 1770), is his only one still in regular use
1. This hymn is a wonderful blend of victorious imagery from both Christ's resurrection and his second coming. As Christians, how should this knowledge of God's ultimate victory affect the way we live?
 2. Though it occasionally appears with other tunes, Darwall's is an overwhelming favorite for use with this hymn. What feature can you see in the music that make it such a good fit?