

**“The Church of Christ in Every Age” (Fred Pratt Green, 1969)**  
**Robin Knowles Wallace**  
**(work in progress)**

**The Proposal**

The theme for this conference, Charles Wesley’s “A charge to keep I have” (1762), engages the topics of God’s redemptive mission in the world and our responsible participation in that vocation through grace. Have other Methodist/Wesleyan hymnwriters engaged that discussion as well in their writing? If so, what is the particular Wesleyan slant to the descriptions of God’s redemptive mission in the world, our vocation, and experiences of grace as sung in our hymns?

My research will specifically be looking for texts and lines that speak to evidence that “the world is our parish” (John Wesley), that Christians are called “to serve the present age” (Charles Wesley), that we are accountable to God and each other (stanzas 3 and 4 of “A charge to keep I have”), and of our reliance on God’s grace to do so (underlying Wesleyan understandings of the limitations of human attempts toward holiness). This presentation will consider selected texts and historical settings of familiar and less familiar hymns by Methodists, primarily from English-speaking countries. The list of possible authors includes women and men; persons from Great Britain, the USA, New Zealand, Argentina, and Korea; writings from Charles Wesley up until the present year. Sources for these hymns include *Hymns and Psalms* (London: Methodist Publishing House, 1983), *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), *The Faith We Sing* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), older Methodist hymnals, and recent collections by single authors.

**The Assemblage of Texts: Some Background Notes and a Bit about Each Text**

*A charge to keep I have*

Written by Charles Wesley (1707-1788) in 1762 on Leviticus 8.35<sup>1</sup> for *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures*. Charles based the hymn on Matthew Henry’s *Commentary*<sup>2</sup> reads: “We have every one of us a charge to keep, an eternal God to glorify, an immortal soul to provide for, needful duty to be done, our generation to service, and it must be our daily care to keep this charge, for it is the charge of the Lord and Master.”<sup>3</sup> Among the Wesleyan books surveyed, this was the most published hymn, in 20 out of 25 hymnals; among 60 non-Wesleyan hymnals it was the second-most published, appearing in 34 hymnals; overall it occurred the most frequent, in 54 out of 85. Nutter and Tillett, in their 1911 annotated edition of the *Methodist Hymnal 1905*, say “This is one of the most frequently sung hymns in the language. . . . The serious view of life that underlies this hymn is one of its most notable characteristics. . . . Many regard this as the greatest of Charles Wesley’s short hymns.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> You shall remain at the entrance of the tent of meeting day and night for seven days, keeping the Lord’s charge so that you do not die: for so I am commanded. NRSV

<sup>2</sup> *Companion to Hymns and Psalms*, 1988, #785; relying on Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge’s commentary of the 1780 *Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodists, Volume 7, The Works of John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 465.

<sup>3</sup> *Matthew Henry Commentary*, Leviticus 8.31-367, II; quoted in *John Wesley’s Works, Volume 7, A Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodist* #309, p. 465.

<sup>4</sup> Charles S. Nutter and Wilbur F. Tillett, *The Hymns and Hymn Writers of the Church: An Annotated Edition of The Methodist Hymnal* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1991), 208.

This hymn announces the 2007 Oxford Institute theme of serving the present age and wholeheartedly doing our Master's will. As we live in God's sight we are accountable thus to God and wholly reliant on Godself. This is one of Charles less *grace*-filled hymns as that word does not appear in it. Yet for the strictness of the account to be given and the promise of death for betrayal of trust, there is the strength of the opening lines of glorifying God and participating in our salvation by our response to God. Or, as Fred Gealy said, "The Gospel always comes with threat and promise."<sup>5</sup> This is a hymn that takes seriously the gift of grace and the necessity of responding and living out one's life with serious intentions.

*See how great a flame aspires*

Charles was said to have been inspired after preaching to the Newcastle colliers/coal miners to write this hymn which was first published in 1749 in *Hymns and Spiritual Poems*.<sup>6</sup> Telford suggests that the fourth stanza is based on Elijah's experience after the scene on Carmel, told in 1 Kings 18.44-45,<sup>7</sup> and for many it also reflects the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the growth of the early church as depicted in Acts. Reference has also been made to its depiction of the rapid growth of the Methodist movement in both the United Kingdom and the frontier of the United States. Nutter and Tillet quote George John Stevenson in his *Hymn Book Notes*: "The imagery of the poet in this hymn is so exceedingly characteristic of the spread of vital religion that it has become a favorite at missionary services."<sup>8</sup> Among the Wesleyan hymnals surveyed, it occurs in 15 out of 25, for second-most frequent; among non-Wesleyan hymnals surveyed, it occurs only once.

*Father, Son and Holy Ghost*

This Charles Wesley hymn appears first in *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, 1745, #155, in Section V: "Concerning the Sacrifice of our Persons." After 1901 this hymn drops out of hymnals in the USA, but remains in UK hymnals. John Julian says that the original fourth stanza, beginning "Take my soul and body's powers" (in *Hymns and Psalms* 1983 stanza 3) "has been a favorite quotation in some religious bodies for more than a hundred years. Its spirit of self-surrender, and its deep fervour have suited both the strongly enthusiastic and the truly devout."<sup>9</sup> The first stanza (which is repeated as the 5<sup>th</sup>) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> speak most to the concerns of this paper:

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
One in Three, and Three in One,  
As by the celestial host,  
Let thy will on earth be done;  
Praise by all to thee be given,  
Glorious Lord of earth and heaven.

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<sup>5</sup> Carlton R. Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 182, referring to Gealy's Research Files for the 1970 *Companion to the Hymnal* [1966] (Dallas: Bridwell Library, Special Collections, Southern Methodist University, 555/1).

<sup>6</sup> *Companion to Hymns and Psalms*, 1988, #781. There is some debate about whether this was Newcastle-upon-Tyre (Thomas Jackson) or Newcastle-under-Lyme (Hildebrant and Beckerlegge). Though Frank Baker states that it was actually written for the coalminers in Staffordshire (Baker 1962, 110), quoted in Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 876.

<sup>7</sup> John Telford, *The Methodist Hymn-Book Illustrated in History and Experience* (London: The Epworth Press, 1934; 6<sup>th</sup> ed., 1952), #263, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup> Nutter and Tillet, 338.

<sup>9</sup> John Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology*, vol. 1. New York: Dover Publications, a 1957 republication of the 1907 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition with new supplement, 371-372

Take my soul and body's powers;  
Take my memory, mind, and will,  
All my goods, and all my hours,  
All I know, and all I feel,  
All I think, or speak, or do;  
Take my heart, but make it new.

*Give to the winds thy fears/Befiehl du deine Wege*

This hymn is included because of its appropriation by the Women's Temperance (anti-alcohol) Crusades in the United States in the 1870s. John Wesley's (1703-1791) translation of Paul Gerhardt's (1607-1676) German hymn of 1656 was first published in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1739. Carlton R. Young suggests that Wesley's work on Gerhardt's texts was probably in progress and may have been completed while he was still in Georgia.<sup>10</sup> George Stevenson says "There is not a hymn in the book [in 1894, speaking of the British *Methodist Hymn Book*] which has afforded more comfort and encouragement than this one to the Lord's tried people."<sup>11</sup> The original text by Gerhardt, an acrostic on Martin Luther's translation of Ps. 37.5, found its way into two translations by John in 1739, the second being "Commit Thou all thy griefs." Nutter and Tillett claim, "Probably no hymn ever written has given more comfort to the afflicted or more courage to the dying."<sup>12</sup> Among the Wesleyan hymnals surveyed, this hymn occurs in 11 out of 25, the 4<sup>th</sup> most frequent; Among non-Wesleyan hymnals, it appears in 23 out of 60, 3<sup>rd</sup> most frequent; overall, it is also the 3<sup>rd</sup> most-frequent in 34 out of 85 hymnals.

*Rescue the perishing*

Fanny Crosby (Francis Jane Van Alstyne, 1823-1915) wrote this hymn in 1870<sup>13</sup> after a visit to a mission in one of the worst districts of New York City.<sup>14</sup> Eskew and McElrath point out the use of unvarnished imperatives—*rescue, care, lift up*—as signs of the urgency of human need, seen by Fanny in her work with the homeless.<sup>15</sup> Young's *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal* 1989 notes "S. Paul Schilling, the eminent theologian and a consultant to the Hymnal Revision Committee, commented during the deliberation for continuing this hymn in our hymnals that it should be kept because it was one of very few gospel hymns that expressed the gospel imperative to reach out, i.e., *care, rescue, weep with, lift and save* society's despised and rejected."<sup>16</sup> This hymn appears in 12 of 25 Wesleyan hymnals, and in 18 of 60 non-Wesleyan hymnals; thus, 30 times in 85 hymnals.

Fanny Crosby was the author of over 8,500 gospel hymns and supplied texts for the most popular gospel hymn composers of her day.<sup>17</sup> She lost her sight soon after birth and eventually served on the faculty where she went to school, at the New York School for the Blind.

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<sup>10</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 352

<sup>11</sup> George John Stevenson, *The Methodist Hymn Book: Illustrated with Biography, History, Incident and Anecdote* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1894), 483

<sup>12</sup> Nutter and Tillett, *Hymns and Hymn Writers*, 230.

<sup>13</sup> Nutter and Tillett note its first publication in *Songs of Devotion*, 1870, as does Erik Routley in *A Panorama of Christian Hymnody* (Collegeville: Minn.: the Liturgical Press, 1979), 160.

<sup>14</sup> Telford, *The Methodist Hymn-Book Illustrated in History and Experience* #338, p. 179

<sup>15</sup> Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing with Understanding* (Nashville: Church Street Publishing, 1995), 297

<sup>16</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal* 1989, 568..

<sup>17</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal* 1989, 736.

*We have heard the joyful sound*

This hymn was written by Priscilla Jane Owens (1829-1907), a Baltimore public school teacher for 49 years and Sunday School teacher for over 50 years,<sup>18</sup> for a Sunday School anniversary in 1889.<sup>19</sup> As such it contains both the reiterated acknowledgement that “Jesus saves” and sends the Sunday School students into the world to bear the good news. This hymn occurs 8 times in 25 Wesleyan hymnals and 19 times in non-Wesleyan hymnals, for a total of 27 times in 85 hymnals.

We who have heard that good news that Jesus saves are called, says Owens, to *bear the news to every land*, across the seas, over the noise of battle, and into the hearts of those who long for mercy, *to keep our Lord’s command*. The repetition of *Jesus saves* bears up the task on floods of grace, *salvation full and free* (Arminianism), so that to spread the news is joy itself.

*Tell the blessed tidings*

Mrs. Emily Huntington Miller, M.A. (1833-1913), the daughter of a Methodist minister, received her A.B. from Oberlin College, and later in her life served as dean of women at Northwestern University from 1891-1898.<sup>20</sup> Many of her hymns first appeared in *The Little Corporal* which later merged with *St. Nicholas*, to which she contributed monthly and edited from 1867-1875. Mrs. Miller wrote to Nutter and Tillett concerning this hymn: “It was written for the Young People’s Jubilee in connection with one of our branch missionary meetings, and has been often used since as a processional for similar occasions. I cannot give the exact date—perhaps 1903.”<sup>21</sup> In the 85 hymnals surveyed, this hymn occurs only 3 times, all in Wesleyan volumes. The middle stanza reads:

Tell the blessed tidings, ye whose ears have heard;  
tell it to the captives waiting for his Word;  
tell the hungry nations, longing to be fed,  
of the living water and the heavenly bread.  
Mighty to deliver, tender Guide and Friend,  
his the power and glory, kingdom without end.

*Where cross the crowded ways of life*

Frank Mason North, Methodist pastor and secretary of the New York City Extension and Missionary Society, wrote this, his first hymn,<sup>22</sup> in 1903 in response to a request from *The Methodist Hymnal 1905* committee. “The poet’s images of wretchedness and inhumanity in stanzas 1-4 spring from his long ministry in New York City among the poor and neglected whose human needs and civil rights were constantly ignored by racist slumlords, corrupt and self-serving politicians, and greedy and union-busting business entrepreneurs.”<sup>23</sup> Canadian historian

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<sup>18</sup> Julian, *Dictionary*, vol. 2, New Supplement, 1685; see also Gene Claghorn, *Women Composer and Hymnists: A Concise Biographical Dictionary* (Metuchen, N. J.: the Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1984), 183.

<sup>19</sup> Telford, *The Methodist Hymn-Book Illustrated in History and Experience* #316, p. 171

<sup>20</sup> Nutter and Tillett, 425.

<sup>21</sup> Nutter and Tillett, 342.

<sup>22</sup> Albert C. Ronander and Ethel K. Porter, *Guide to The Pilgrim Hymnal* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1966), 326.

<sup>23</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 701.

Paul T. Phillips calls this hymn “perhaps the Social Christians’ best claim for originality.”<sup>24</sup> It was first published in *The Christian City* in 1903<sup>25</sup> and then in the *Methodist Hymnal* 1905 and has since become a classic American hymn on the city.<sup>26</sup> Erik Routley notes in *Panorama* that it may be now (1979) somewhat dated with its assignation of work to men and tears to women in stanza 3. Among the non-Wesleyan hymnals surveyed, this hymn occurred most frequently, in 40 out of 60 hymnals; in Wesleyan hymnals, it was the third-most frequent, in 12 out of 25 hymnals; overall it comes as second most published, in 52 out of 80 hymnals surveyed. J. R. Watson notes that it is not as well known as it might be (perhaps in the UK?) and that a modernized version appears in *Rejoice and Sing*.<sup>27</sup>

The tune GERMANY deserves mention as “one of the most singable LM tunes in the repertory.”<sup>28</sup> As may be noted in the hymn tune chart related to this paper, this tune is called variously: WALTON, FULDA, GARDINER, and MELCHISEDEC.<sup>29</sup> William Gardiner in whose *Sacred Melodies* the tune first appeared in 1815 is said to have combined themes from Beethoven, Mozart, and a German folk song.<sup>30</sup>

### *Ye pilgrims through this vale of tears*

Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933) was a Methodist pastor, orator, poet, theologian, composer, social activist, “father of African American hymnody,” “progenitor of American gospel music” and “prince of preachers.”<sup>31</sup> The son of slave parents, he taught himself to read and write. He served a variety of congregations in Delaware and New Jersey, served as Presiding Elder of a district, and grew Bainbridge Street Methodist Episcopal Church, where he once served as janitor for five years, to an unheard of for the time membership of 12,000.<sup>32</sup> In 2006, 100 years after his first hymn collection was published, GBGMusik issued a collection of 46 of Tindley’s hymns entitled *Beams of Heaven*, where this hymn appears as #1. Tindley is writing in a time in the USA where, though slavery is ended, racism and struggle are still the daily experience of African Americans. Of the six stanzas, the first and third are the most pertinent to our work:

Ye pilgrims through this vale of tears,  
Come let us cheer each other,  
Amid the danger's doubts and fears,  
Let each console his brother.  
Our way is often dark and hard,  
Temptations all around us,  
Unless we pray with one accord.

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<sup>24</sup> Paul T. Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880-1940* (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 119.

<sup>25</sup> Routley, *Panorama*, 206.

<sup>26</sup> Eskew and McElrath, *Sing with Understanding*, 73, 214

<sup>27</sup> According to [www.amazon.uk](http://www.amazon.uk) accessed on July 8, 2007, this is a United Reformed Church hymnal, 1991.

<sup>28</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 616.

<sup>29</sup> Ronander and Porter, *Guide to The Pilgrim Hymnal*, 326-327.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, discussions in Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 616, and Ronander and Porter, *Guide to The Pilgrim Hymnal*, 326-327.

<sup>31</sup> James Abbingtion, “Introduction” to *Beams of Heaven: Hymns of Charles Albert Tindley* (New York: GBGMusik, 2006), v.

<sup>32</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 843, says Tindley grew Calvary MEC in Philadelphia to over 7,000 members; I have chosen to use the church name and statistics from James Abbingtion’s introduction to *Beams of Hymns*, viii.

They surely will confound us.

While some are shouting all the time,  
Some other hearts are bleeding,  
They want the heavenly peace to find  
For which their souls are pleading.  
Come, let us lead them thro' the gate,  
The way of sins confessing.  
The word of God will put them straight  
And they will find the blessing.

*Lonely the boat/Everything dark!*

Helen Kim/Hwal-Ran Kim (1899-1970), Methodist educator, world Christian leader, president of Ewha College, wrote this text, based on Mark: 4.35-41, in 1921. *The United Methodist Hymnal* included it as one of three Korean hymns and placed it in the section on “Prayer, Trust and Hope.” The translation there is by Hae Jong Kim (the first Korean American bishop) 1980, versed by Linda and Doug Sugano, 1981, and altered by Hope Omachi-Kawashima, 1987.<sup>33</sup> Due to a variety of reasons this hymn does not appear in the 2001 Korean Methodist hymnal, *Come Let Us Worship*. Research in the late 1990s produced opposing views about Helen Kim’s legacy during the Japanese occupation of Korea.

The power of this hymn, particularly in its more literal translation, and its relationship to the situation of Korean in 1921 was the focus of an unpublished paper by Jin Won Park, a student in my course “Hymn Singing in the Wesleyan Tradition” (Spring 2006).<sup>34</sup> The translation in *Korean Hymnal* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1984) is even more vivid than that in *TUMH*, using *bleak, engulfed, battered, helpful, shrieks, mocking, pity, mad*, all in the first three stanzas. Jin Won explained that this text was written in the dark age of Korea, when it was under the rule of the Japanese Empire, and it is his sense that this text depicts the circumstances of the times as Hwal-Ran let her faith speak to the darkness of the times for Korea and the hope that God offers through faith. Knowing this history can help non-Koreans realize the deeper layers of meaning in this text which is more than a simple re-counting of a biblical story, but rather the painful and hopeful wrestling with the storms of our lives and the deep hope and calm in the midst of storms that God offers us through Jesus Christ.

*O church of God, united*

Frederick B. Morley (1884-1969), Methodist pastor in New Jersey and New York, submitted this hymn, written in 1953, for the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Evanston, Illinois, in 1954.<sup>35</sup> It was one of eleven hymns selected for use at the assembly, along with Georgia Harkness’ “Hope of the world.” Its call for the church to unite in its mission captures some of the energy of the ecumenical movement during this time. The first stanza reads:

O church of God, united  
to serve one common Lord,

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<sup>33</sup> Richardson, *Panorama*, 655.

<sup>34</sup> Jin Won Park, “Hymn Analysis: Focused on the Hymn 476, ‘Lonely the Boat,’” May 6, 2006, unpublished; used by permission.

<sup>35</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 502.

proclaim to all one message,  
with hearts in glad accord.  
Christ ever goes before us;  
we follow day by day,  
with strong and eager footsteps.

*Hope of the world*

Georgia Harkness (1891-1974), the first woman to teach theology in a Protestant seminary in the United States (Ph.D. from Boston University), wrote this hymn in 1954 for the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Evanston, Illinois, winning first place in a contest sponsored by the Hymn Society of America among nearly 500 hymns submitted for the Assembly.<sup>36</sup> Eskew and McElrath suggest that its portrayal of Christ as the source of hope for humanity reflects John 3.16 in a manner that bridges "O God, our help in ages past" and "My hope is built on nothing less."<sup>37</sup> Harkness published 28 books and several hymns.<sup>38</sup> This hymn appears in 5 Wesleyan hymnals and 11 non-Wesleyan hymnals surveyed, for a total of 16 times in 85 hymnals.

It is the final stanza, after four stanzas recounting "the compassionate, healing, and reconciling ministry of Jesus, . . . that calls us to be faithful to the gospel."<sup>39</sup> Young points out that the theme of the Assembly, "Jesus Christ, hope of the world," was a challenge to the Social Gospel movement in USA liberal Protestantism, with its emphasis on human endeavor. This hymn by a "one of the USA's leading liberal theologians and ecumenists" "only partly assuaged" this stir.<sup>40</sup>

*O God of every nation*

This 1958 hymn by William Watkins Reid, Jr., (1923-2007, 27 March) a Methodist minister who served in North Dakota and Pennsylvania and won several national hymn-writing contests,<sup>41</sup> speaks of the tragedy of strife and the need for peace in the world.<sup>42</sup> It won first place in the search for hymns to be sung at the National Council of Churches' First World Order Study Conference held in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1958. It appears, in 2 Wesleyan hymnals and 11 non-Wesleyan hymnals (tied for 6<sup>th</sup> most frequent), 13 times in 85 hymnals. Young notes that "while the hymn is better written than most social gospel hymns of that decade, we must turn to the poet's later efforts, such as "O God who shaped creation," to discover a more realistic appraisal of human sin."<sup>43</sup> The fourth stanza of this hymn locates our vocation within God's vision:

Keep bright in us the vision  
of days when war shall cease,  
when hatred and division  
give way to love and peace,

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<sup>36</sup> Fred D. Gealy, quoted in Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 403, referring to Gealy's Research Files for the 1970 *Companion to the Hymnal* [1966], 556/189.

<sup>37</sup> Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing with Understanding* (Nashville: Church Street Publishing, 1995), 288, 290.

<sup>38</sup> Claghorn, *Women Composers and Hymnists*, 110-111.

<sup>39</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 404.

<sup>40</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 404.

<sup>41</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 817.

<sup>42</sup> Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing with Understanding*, 214

<sup>43</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 513.

till dawns the morning glorious  
when truth and justice reign,  
and Christ shall rule victorious  
o'er all the world's domain.

*El cielo canta/Heaven is singing for joy*

Pablo Sosa (b. 1933) has become known worldwide for his infectious song leading and sharing of Hispanic music and worship. Richardson calls Sosa, “the most visible advocate for the development of congregational song in indigenous idioms of South and Central America.”<sup>44</sup> A Methodist minister, Sosa is conductor and professor of communions at the Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos de Buenos Aires (a Methodist seminary). Sosa primarily works to inspire others to compose and takes their songs around the world, but in 1958, he wrote the text and music for this hymn, of which the third stanza reads:

Heaven is singing for joy, alleluia,  
for your life and mine will always bear witness to God.

*Creator of the earth and skies*

Methodist minister, teacher and headmaster Donald Hughes (1911-1967) published this text in *Hymns for Church and School*, 1964, three years before his untimely death at age 56.<sup>45</sup> Stanzas 2 and 5 of the original were omitted in *Hymns and Songs* 1969, in *Hymnals and Psalms* 1983, and in *The United Methodist Hymnal* 1989. Eric Routley claimed that this hymn contains “a Wesley-like balance between the massive words and the small ones.”<sup>46</sup> J. R. Watson, in *An Annotated Anthology of Hymns*, says “The conventional first verse gives way to a description of a world torn by hatred and strife: the hymn then forcefully acknowledges the problems of modern living, is penitent, and prays for grace.”<sup>47</sup> The final stanza reads:

We long to end this world wide strife:  
How shall we follow in your way?  
Speak to us all your words of life,  
until our darkness turn to day.

*When the church of church*

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000), Methodist pastor, District Chair, poet and author of over 300 hymns,<sup>48</sup> was named by Erik Routley as “the most important hymnist in Methodism since Charles Wesley.”<sup>49</sup> Paul Richardson goes on to say that “Green has been likened to his Methodist forebear, Charles Wesley, in poetic skill and pastoral concern. Like Wesley, he is always conscious of the redemptive power of God’s love.”<sup>50</sup> This hymn, written in 1968, was his

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<sup>44</sup> Richardson, *Panorama*, 639.

<sup>45</sup> *Companion to Hymns and Psalms*, 1988, #419; Eskew and McElrath, *Sing with Understanding*, 168; Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 309.

<sup>46</sup> Erik Routley, *A Panorama of Christian Hymnody* (Collegeville, Mn.: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 189; quoted in Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 310. Note that Routley also titles this hymn “Penitence.”

<sup>47</sup> (Oxford University Press, 2001, 2003), 412.

<sup>48</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 758.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 758.

<sup>50</sup> *A Panorama of Christian Hymnody*, Erik Routley, edited and expanded by Paul A. Richardson (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005), 470.

“first effort in an amazing retirement career as a hymnwriter.”<sup>51</sup> The text cautions the church about the ability of worship’s loftiness to blind us to the ministry needs around us.<sup>52</sup> Young claims that it “embodies the 1960s controversy concerning urban churches who distanced themselves within their church buildings and liturgy from the realities and challenges of a decaying urban society. . . . Stanza 2 . . . adroitly draws on the Marx-Lenin critique of religion as the opiate of the people, ‘lest our hymns should drug us to forget its [the world’s] needs.’”<sup>53</sup> While appearing only in 2 Wesleyan hymnals, it appears in 6 non-Wesleyan hymnals surveyed.

### *The church of Christ in every age*

Written in 1969 by Fred Pratt Green, this hymn was subtitled “The Caring Church,”<sup>54</sup> as it calls the church to be the agent of change and reconciliation in the struggle against injustice and hunger.<sup>55</sup> This is most clear in the third stanza which speaks of the church as servant and as “partner in Christ’s sacrifice,” and in the 5<sup>th</sup> and final stanza which claims that our only mission is to serve Christ and care for all. It ties for 6<sup>th</sup> most frequent among non-Wesleyan hymnals surveyed, appearing in 11; in Wesleyan hymnals surveyed it appears 3 times.

### *Let every Christian pray*

Written in response to a request from John Wilson for a Whitsunday text to the tune LUDGATE, this text was published in Pratt Green’s first collection, *26 Hymns*, 1971.<sup>56</sup> Each stanza contains two couplets, each followed by the line “Come, Holy Spirit, come!” The third stanza speaks of how the Spirit strives to teach the church to love, “age after age,” and how “age after age” the church has “proved the gospel true.”

### *Go ye, go ye*

Natalie Allyn Wakeley Sleeth (1930-1992) majored in music theory at Wellesley College. Studies with Lloyd Pfausch led to her first published anthem in 1969.<sup>57</sup> This short chorus was published by Choristers Guild as an anthem/response in 1979. Several of Natalie’s anthems have been adapted as hymns, such as “In the bulb there is a flower” and “Praise the Lord with the sound of trumpet.” Three lines of each stanza of this hymn remain constant about Christ’s commission to us to go into the world, where he is. The remaining lines name our vocation *to make disciples, take the gospel to all, and to tell the story.*

### *O God who shaped creation*

This hymn was commissioned by the United Methodist Hymnal committee and written in 1987. Biblical references include Genesis 1.1-3, 26-27 and Luke 15.8-10. Young notes that this may be Reid’s best contribution to contemporary USA hymnody, yet he also suggests that the hymn is complete without the vague and pointless stanza 5.<sup>58</sup> Reid’s use of alternate metaphors includes God seen as a mother anguishing over her lost child, a woman in search of a treasured

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<sup>51</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 697

<sup>52</sup> Eskew and McElrath, *Sing with Understanding*, 296

<sup>53</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 698.

<sup>54</sup> There are alternate versions in use; see *Companion to Hymns and Psalms*, 1988, #804 and *Lutheran Book of Worship* (USA).

<sup>55</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 627.

<sup>56</sup> *Companion to Hymns and Psalms*, 1988, #305

<sup>57</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 831.

<sup>58</sup> Young, *Companion to The United Methodist Hymnal*, 514-515.

coin, and the mother-like compassion of the prodigal's father. Or, as Richardson describes: Its inner stanzas use female images to express God's compassion for wayward children.<sup>59</sup>

*He came singing love*

Colin Gibson (b.1933), a professor of English and editor for the New Zealand Hymnbook Trust<sup>60</sup> has written both hymn texts and tunes. In this hymn Gibson takes the metaphor of Christ's incarnation, life, and death being his song of love, faith, hope and peace; then he suggests that the resurrection came in silence, leaving us to continue Christ's singing and song.

*We need a faith so colorblind*

Texas United Methodist pastor John Thornburg (b. 1954) "has demonstrated an ability to present fresh perspectives in his hymnwritng."<sup>61</sup> Several years ago he "retired" from pastoring to concentrate on a ministry of hymnsinging. In addition to writing texts, working as a consultant to churches wishing to improve their singing, and teaching congregational song, John is assisting the Methodist Church in Cameroon to put together its first hymnal. This hymn names the problems around racism which still exist in the USA and call for Christians to see and live God's call to move beyond these barriers.

*Together we serve*

Dan (Daniel Charles) Damon (b. 1955), United Methodist pastor in California, jazz pianist, and theologian, writes both texts and tunes. This hymn for which he wrote both text and tune in 1998, combines themes of service, seeking, welcoming, and grace.

*Deep in the human heart*

Bill (William L.) Wallace (b. 1933) is a New Zealand Methodist pastor, writer of hymns and worship resources, and a participant in the Asian Consultation on Liturgy and Music. His most published hymn is one for Good Friday, "Why has God forsaken me?" "Deep in the human heart" first appeared in Wallace's *Something to Sing About* (Australia: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1981). In 1985 it was used at the 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia in Seoul, Korea, to a new tune written for the words by composer Francisco Feliciano from the Philippines.<sup>62</sup>

*O Source of many cultures*

Andrew Pratt (b. 1948), British Methodist pastor and scientist, has written many hymns in response to contemporary situations and issues. His study of the origins of the *Methodist Hymn Book* (1933), *O For a Thousand Tongues*, was published by Epworth Press in 2004.<sup>63</sup> Pratt wrote this text in 2000, to address the concerns of living together in a multi-faith world. Its use of *Source* is the sole name for God enables it to be useful in interfaith services which often find themselves unable to sing together.

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<sup>59</sup> Richardson, *Panorama*, 538.

<sup>60</sup> Richardson, *Panorama*, 608.

<sup>61</sup> Richardson, *Panorama*, 541.

<sup>62</sup> W. L. Wallace, *Sacred Earth, Holy Darkness: Hymns, Poems and Reflections for Aotearoa: Singing the Circle, Book 1* (New Zealand: W. L. Wallace, 1990), 51.

<sup>63</sup> [http://www.gbod.org/worship/default.asp?act=reader&item\\_id=15699&loc\\_id=17,22,1131](http://www.gbod.org/worship/default.asp?act=reader&item_id=15699&loc_id=17,22,1131) Information on Andrew Pratt on the USA United Methodist General Board of Discipleship

### *When cities change and neighborhoods*

John Thornburg wrote this text, published in 2003, for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of a 15-church coalition called the East Dallas Cooperative Parish.<sup>64</sup> It describes the experiences where “needle, knife, and bullet slug adorn the church’s lot” and in an interesting play on words suggests that we frame this experience within God’s “counterplot” and God’s desires for peace and reconciliation.

### *What can we do when, legs infirm*

Jane Marshall (b. 1924) is a United Methodist composer, educator, conductor, and author, who writes both hymn texts and tunes. This hymn appeared first in her collection *What Gift Can We Bring*,<sup>65</sup> with her original tune WELCOMEHOUSE. It deals with concerns around the accessibility of the church for those in wheelchairs or with braces, *whose minds or eyes or ears scarce work*, whose diseases have no cure, and who are in pain, suggesting that the task of the church is to empathize, *make the pathway straight, understand and lend a warming hand, mourn their fears, and love them in their search*.

## **Analysis in Terms of Four Foci**

### *“The world is our parish”*

Charles Wesley’s “Father, Son and Holy Ghost” begins this focus with its repetition, *Let thy will on earth be done* (1:4, 5:4),<sup>66</sup> and “See how great” contains *the nations fires, sets the kingdoms on a blaze, o’er all the thirsty land* (1:3, 1:4, 4:4). Crosby’s broad search for the *perishing and dying* speaks to the global human condition (1:1, 4:1, refrain). Owens’ call to spread the news that *Jesus saves stretches all around, to every land, cross the waves*, and other references in stanzas 1, 2, and 4 is the most explicit about the need to tell the good news to all the world. North ends *Till all the world shall learn your love* (6:1). Kim’s setting on the seas implies a global understanding. Morley calls Christians *from every land and nation* (2:1), though *creeds and tongues may differ* (3:1). Harkness’ repetition of *Hope of the world* at the beginning of each of the five stanzas as well as her prayer that Christ will *heal earth’s wounds* expands our outlook.

Reid’s “O God of every nation” begins and ends with God as sovereign of *the world’s domain*. Hughes is concerned with *world-wide strife, as far and wide the wreckage of our hatred spreads* (4:1, 3:2). The entirety of Green’s “When the church” is a strong call for Christians to move outside the church building and see the world as our parish. His “The church of Christ” calls us to look *across the world, across the street* (2:1). Sleeth’s following of the Great Commission sends Christians out into the world, to *all nations, people, and believers* (1:2, 2:2, 3:2), as that is where Christ is. Damon calls us to invite *God’s world to the glorious feast* (1:3). Wallace holds before us God’s vision of *a world renewed, a world of peace, one community, all humanity* (1:3, 2:2, 3:6, 3:8).

This focus of the world as our parish, that is, both a global vision and a sense of world as our vocation, is seen most clearly in Owens (“We have heard the joyful sound”), Green (“When the church of Jesus”) and Wallace (“Deep in the human heart”).

### *Serving the present age*

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<sup>64</sup> “Hymn Notes” in *Can God Be Seen in Other Ways?* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003).

<sup>65</sup> *Hymn Texts with Tunes, and Worship Responses* is the subtitle (Colfax, North Carolina, 2003).

<sup>66</sup> Reference in parentheses are to stanza:line.

This focus has been mentioned above in many of the backgrounds of the texts and authors. Writing for one's particular time and situation may produce hymns that don't cross the centuries or even decades, but as "A charge to keep I have," coming out of the fervor of the Wesleyan religious commitment, demonstrates, sometimes timeless texts evolve. "Give to the winds" is an example of a text written for one time which gave courage and fortitude to a movement generations later. The evangelical nature of the texts by Crosby, Owens, and Miller, reflect the desire for spreading God's love, while North's text spotlights the city as a place of struggle, pain and need of Christ. Tindley eloquently draws on the journey motif in "Ye pilgrims" to give encouragement to his congregation and us. Beginning to understand the oppression of Korea under foreign rule adds depth to the *struggling seas* of Kim's text.

The hymns by Harkness, Morley, and Reid ("O God of every nation") speak to deepening understandings of the church around the world working as one. Sosa's hymn lifts up the Latin American ability to celebrate in the midst of suffering and poverty, which takes voice in liberation theology. Texts by Hughes, Green ("When the church), Reid ("O God who shaped"), Wallace and both texts by Thornburg confess the sins of their and our time, lamenting, and praying for God's guidance and forgiveness. Pratt acknowledges our interfaith world and seeks to provide a framework for living in it. And, for all times, Green is explicit in "The church of Christ" and "Let every Christian pray" that Christ and the church are alive and need to speak to this and every age. As a whole these writers have paid attention to their own age while writing about the timeless truths of God.

#### *Accountable to God and each other*

This focus was drawn from the experience of Methodist class meetings and Charles' lines *And O thy servant, Lord, prepare/a strict account to give!* While the words *account* or *accountable* do not appear in any of the texts studied, that are perhaps hints of this focus in some of the texts. Wesley's "Father, Son and Holy Ghost" contains the line: *Now I give thee back thine own* (4:2). John Wesley's translation calls us to leave God in charge: *Leave to God's sovereign sway/to choose and to command* (3:1-2). Crosby claims that *duty demands* us to *rescue the perishing* (4:1). Owens and Miller are perhaps more implicit that as *we have heard the joyful sound* (1:1) and *heard the blessed tidings* (2:1), the called-for response is to tell and share. Tindley's "Ye pilgrims" carries the sense in its 48 lines that "we are in this together" and that we are thus accountable to each other for telling Jesus' story and encouraging each other on the journey. A number of the texts hold us accountable to God's vision, those by North, both by Reid, Hughes, Green ("The church of Christ"), both by Thornburg, Wallace, and Pratt. Damon makes it clear that it is *together* that God's work is done, while Gibson is clear that for Christ's *love/faith/hope/peace to go on/we must make it our song:/you and I be the singers*. For Marshall, the questions of acceptance all find answers in being the church.

#### *Reliance on God's grace*

Our need to rely on God's grace is explicit in six of the hymns studied. In "See how great" the *flame* of the first line is *kindled by a spark of grace* (1:2) and God has *given the word of grace* (3:3). In "Rescue the perishing": *Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,/feelings lie buried that grace can restore* (3:1-2). North connects what we do with serving Christ: *The cup of water given for you/still holds the freshness of your grace* (4:1-2). In "O God, who shaped creation" Reid gives a twist to the Prodigal Son story in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> stanza: *with mother-like compassion/you share your warm embrace;/you set for us a*

*banquet/and heal us through your grace.* Damon's "Together we serve" begins its final stanza *Together, by grace,/we witness and work,/remembering Jesus, in whom we grow strong.* Bill Wallace concludes his text *By grace we work with Christ,/As one community,/To bring new hope and fuller life/To all humanity.* The word *grace* thus appears seven times in six texts; in each instance *grace* is active and essential for what is to happen. To compare, *love* appears 16 times in 11 texts (4 times alone in Damon's "Together we serve"). *Mercy* appears six times in five texts. Implicitly all of these texts rely on the strength and vision of God to overcome human limitations, and to motivate and inspire us.

### **A Gift from Methodists to the Larger Church**

While preparing this paper, I was also engaged in a project involving Charles Wesley's hymns on the Christian community, most originally written for the class, band, or society meeting. It is rare for these texts to occur outside of hymnals with Wesleyan roots. Of 85 hymnals surveyed for these two projects only eight out of the 15 of Charles' hymns on community appeared, in 11 non-Wesleyan rooted hymnals.

By contrast, of the 27 hymn texts studied for this paper, 60 hymnals from non-Wesleyan rooted denominations contain at least one of these hymns. Six of the 27 do not occur in any of the 60 non-Wesleyan hymnals, some because of their recent writing. Of the remainder:

"Where cross the crowded ways" appears in 40, that is 2/3 of the hymnals

"A charge to keep I have" appears in 34

"Give to the winds" appears in 23

"We have heard the joyful sound/Jesus saves" appears in 19

"Rescue the perishing" appears in 18

"The church of Christ in every age" and "O God of every nation" each appear in 11

This is a wonderful gift from the Wesleyan heritage to the broader church!

### **Work for the future**

One area into which I did not delve is that of the "Black Itinerants of the Gospel," early Methodist preachers like John Jea (b. 1773), "African Preacher of the Gospel" who published *A Collection of Hymns* in 1816. Jea's hymns tell the story of his conversion and freedom, and it was beyond the time constraints of this paper to deal adequately with his corpus.<sup>67</sup> There may well be others like Jea who wrote for their time and whose hymns have not been passed down through official channels.

As my research was nearing an end, I discovered that Paul Richardson in his 2005 expansion of Erik Routley's *A Panorama of Christian Hymnody* names a variety of Spanish, Portuguese and Korean hymnwriters who would also have been appropriate for this study. Spanish-language Methodist hymnwriters from South and Central America include Federico J. Pagura, Methodist bishop of Costa Rica and Panama, and of Argentina, author of "Because Christ came to enter in our journey/Porque . . . . " 1970; and Mortimer Arias, noted evangelist and author, executive pastor of the Methodist Church in Uruguay and bishop of Bolivia, "Mingled in all our living/En medio de la vida" 1973 [Refrain: O Lord of earth and heaven, I give my life to you, loving you in my neighbor, praising you in the world].<sup>68</sup> Writing in

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<sup>67</sup> See *Black Itinerants of the Gospel: The Narratives of John Jea and George White*, ed. Graham Russell Hodges (Palgrave Mcmillan, 2002). See especially Appendix 1, "The Hymns of John Jea," 165-173

<sup>68</sup> Richardson, *Panorama*, 639, 669, and 670.

Portuguese from Brazil are Methodist theologian, teacher and composer Jaci Maraschin “Come to be our hope, Lord Jesus/Vem, Jesus nossa esperança” 1978 and Simeu Monteiro, professor of music and worship, serving on the staff of the World Council of Churches in 2005, “Come, O come, creating Spirit/Vem, Santo Espiritu” 1984.<sup>69</sup> Korean Methodist hymnwriters include Hyun Sul Hong and Ho Un Lee, who wrote “God made all people of the world” 1967, and “Now a new life I live” 1967.

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<sup>69</sup> Richardson, *Panorama*, 639, 671-672.