

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

An Advent Service based on *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord* (1745)¹

by

Charles Wesley

Prepared and designed by S T Kimbrough, Jr.²

Preface: In 1745, Charles Wesley published a collection of eighteen *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord*. In this time of reflection and singing, we will explore how he aids us in grasping anew the meaning of God’s Incarnation in Christ.

Call to Worship

The psalmist implores us:

Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

(Psalm 96:1-3, NIV³)

In the paraphrase of the *Gloria in excelsis*, we are reminded that in the Incarnation, God empties the divine self of majesty and—

Being’s source begins to be,
And God himself is born.

Opening Hymn (1)

“Glory Be to God on High”

Nativity Hymns (1745) #4

Tune: AMSTERDAM (Sacred Harmony, 1780); see *United Methodist Hymnal*, 96, for the tune.⁴

A Mystery

What an affirmation—God is born! Yet, in the next hymn, “Let earth and heaven combine,” Wesley reminds us that this is incomprehensible—“Our God contracted to a span, / incomprehensibly made man.” Furthermore, Wesley says that God’s love is unsearchable and God’s grace is far above our thought. Still, we plead to be “Made perfect first in love, / And sanctified by grace.”

Hymn (2)

“Let Earth and Heaven Combine”

Nativity Hymns (1745) #5

Tune: ST. JOHN (ADORATION)⁵

¹ *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord* (London: Strahan, 1745), cited here as *Nativity Hymns* (1745).

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⁴ Tune is in the public domain.

⁵ Tune is in the public domain.

The Perennial Advent Prayer

The next hymn is a prayer that we pray from year to year at this time, but do we realize what we are asking? — to be released from fears and sins. We affirm that Jesus is the hope of the earth and the desire of every nation. Is he truly the desire of every nation? We plead that he alone will reign in our hearts. Can we truly make Wesley's prayer our own?

Hymn (3)

"Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus"
Tune: by Marcilio de Oliveira of Brazil⁶

Nativity Hymns (1745) #10

Into the Light

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Those who walk in darkness are not merely people of long, long ago whom God dared redeem through the Incarnation. Charles Wesley sees in himself and in each of us darkness that needs to be dissipated by the light of Christ. Therefore, we pray with him in the words of the next nativity hymn: "The new heaven and earth's Creator / in our deepest darkness rise, / scatt'ring all the night of nature, / pouring eyesight on our eyes."

Walking in such light, we are to be personifications of "gospel grace" and "perfect peace."

Hymn (4)

"Light of Those Whose Dreary Dwelling"
Tune: SALTASH (Plymouth Collection, 1855)⁷

Nativity Hymns (1745) #11

Doxological Joy

Scripture Reading

Luke 1:26-35, 38

As we come into the light of Christ, we break into doxological joy, as Wesley did when he read of the angel Gabriel's mission in the passage we have just heard from the Gospel of Luke. In a nativity hymn left unpublished at his death, Wesley invites us to welcome Jesus "with joy, and gratitude, and love."

Hymn (5)

"The Solemn Hour is Come"
Tune: DARWALL'S 148th

Unpublished Poetry 2:75–7⁸

Participation in the Divine Nature

Scripture Reading

Luke 2:1-7

In *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord*, Wesley emphasizes a theology of *theosis*, or the reality that in and through God's Incarnation in Jesus Christ, we become participants in God's nature (love, 1 Jn 4:8). The third stanza of the hymn, "Away with our fears," makes this clear:

Made flesh for our sake,
that we might partake
the nature divine
and again in his image, his holiness shine.

⁶ Music © by the Estate of Marcilio de Oliveira. Used by permission.

⁷ Tune is in the public domain.

⁸ S T Kimbrough, Jr., and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, eds., *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, 3 vols (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990), cited here as *Unpublished Poetry*.

Hymn (6)

“Away with Our Fears”
Tune: ROBERT by Carlton R. Young⁹

Nativity Hymns (1745) #8

Commitment and Perseverance

Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:1-6, 9-12; John 1:1-14

Becoming a part of the divine nature places a heavy responsibility on all who seek to follow Christ. Do we believe that the full image of love will be formed in our hearts as we have just sung? If so, Wesley’s words in another nativity hymn, also left unpublished at his death, will inspire us to learn from the perseverance of the wise men to follow the star without any diversion.

Hymn (7)

“No more I rashly turn aside”
Tune: LIMINAL, Swee Hong Lim¹⁰

Unpublished Poetry 2:17

Gospel Reading

John 1:1-14

Prayers of the People and The Lord’s Prayer

Bearers of Peace, Love, and Grace

In Wesley’s paraphrase of the *Gloria in excelsis*, with which we began, he stresses that in the Incarnation of Christ, “peace descends.” Peace, love, and grace are the three most important emphases Wesley connects with the Incarnation. They are constant themes throughout *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord*. We close with Charles Wesley’s most famous nativity hymn, “Hark! the herald angels sing,” which does not come from the little volume that has been our focus. It too is a hymn of peace—Christ brings “peace on earth and mercy mild / God and sinners reconciled.” As those who participate in God’s nature through the Incarnation, we are called upon to embody in thought, word, and deed—in all our being—God’s peace, love, and grace.

Hymn (8)

“Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”
Tune: MENDELSSOHN, Felix Mendelssohn

Hymns and Sacred Poems 1739
United Methodist Hymnal, 240

Benediction

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1. Glory Be to God on High

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. Glo - ry be to God on high and peace on earth des - cend;
 2. Him the an - gels all a - dored their Ma - ker and their King;
 3. See th'e - ter - nal Son of God, a mor - tal Son of man,
 4. We, the souls of earth, re - joice, the Prince of Peace pro - claim,

5
 God comes down: he bows the sky and shows him - self our friend!
 Tid - ings of their hum - bled Lord they now to mor - tals bring:
 dwell - ing in an earth - ly clod whom heaven can - not con - tain!
 with heaven's hosts lift up our voice, and shout Im - man - uel's name;

9
 God th'in - vi - si - ble ap - pears, God the blest, the great I AM
 emp - tied of his ma - jes - ty, of his dazz - ling glo - ries shorn,
 Stand a - mazed the heavens at this! See the Lord of earth and skies!
 knees and hearts to him we bow; of our flesh, and of our bone

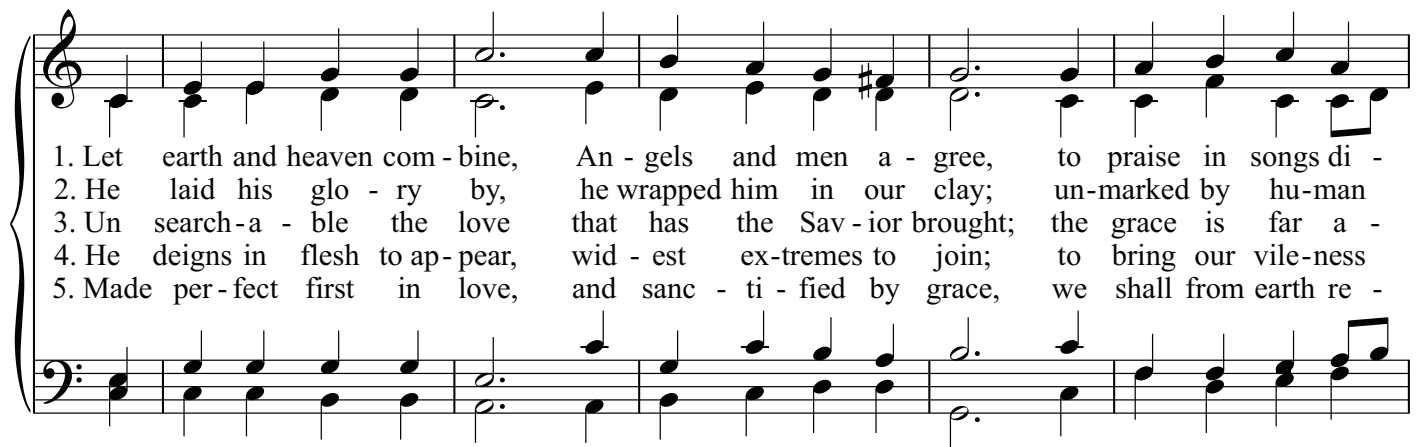
13
 so - journs in this vale of tears, and Je - sus is his name.
 Be - ing's source be - gins to be and God him - self is born!
 Hum - bled to the dust he is, and in a man - ger lies.
 Je - sus is our bro - ther now, and God is all our own.

WORDS: Charles Wesley, *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord* (1745), Nr. 4.

MUSIC: AMSTERDAM, *Foundery Collection* (1742).

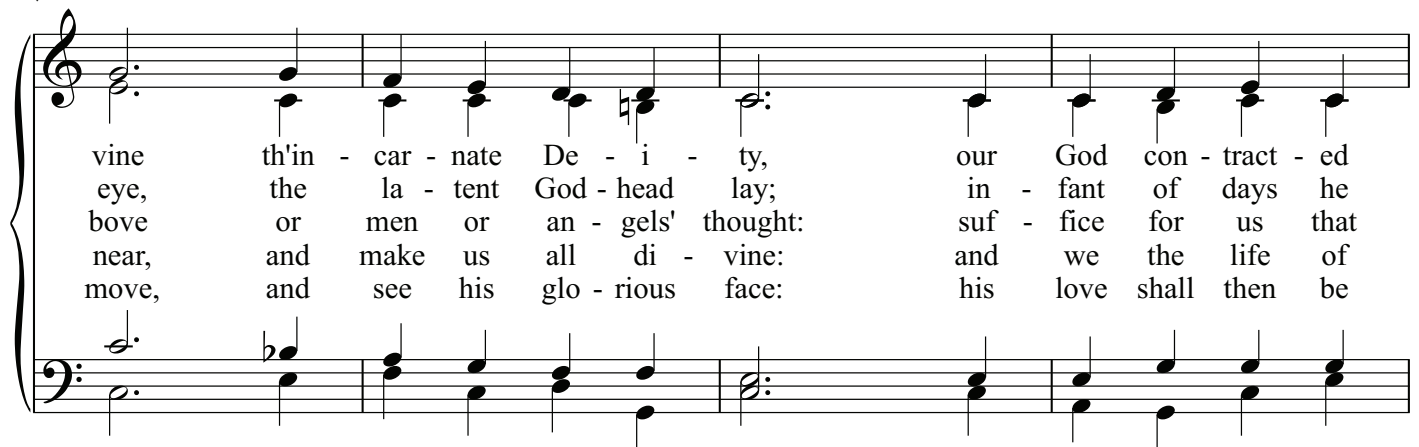
2. Let Earth and Heaven Combine

♩ = 100



1. Let earth and heaven combine, An - gels and men a - gree, to praise in songs di -
 2. He laid his glo - ry by, he wrapped him in our clay; un - marked by hu - man
 3. Un search - a - ble the love that has the Sav - ior brought; the grace is far a -
 4. He deigns in flesh to ap - pear, wid - est ex - tremes to join; to bring our vile - ness
 5. Made per - fect first in love, and sanc - ti - fied by grace, we shall from earth re -

7



vine th'in - car - nate De - i - ty, our God con - tract - ed
 eye, the la - tent God - head lay; in - fant of days he
 bove or men or an - gels' thought: suf - fice for us that
 near, and make us all di - vine: and we the life of
 move, and see his glo - rious face: his love shall then be

11



to a span, in - com - pre - hens - i - bly made man.
 here be - came, and bore the mild Em - man - uel's name.
 God, we know, our God, is man - i - fest be - low.
 God shall know, for God is man - i - fest be - low.
 ful - ly showed, and we shall all be lost in God.

WORDS: Charles Wesley, *Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord* (1745), Nr 5.
 MUSIC: ST. JOHN (ADORATION) from *The Parish Choir* (1851).

3. Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus

$\text{♩} = 110$

1. Come, thou long-ex - pect - ed Je - sus, born to set your peo - ple
 2. Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a

free. From our fears and sins re - lease us, let us
 King, born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy

find our rest in thee. Is - rael's strength and con - so -
 gra - cious king - dom bring. By thine own e - ter - nal

la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art; dear de -
 Spi - rit rule in all our hearts a - lone; by thine

WORDS: Charles Wesley, *Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord* (1745), Nr. 10.
 MUSIC: © Estate of Marcilio de Oliveira. Used by permission.

sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
all suf - fi - cient mer - it, raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

A^b B^b E^b F^b/C^{b6} A^bm B^{b7} E^b

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a hymn in E-flat major (three flats). The score consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal melody in treble clef, featuring a mix of quarter, eighth, and half notes, with a final half note and a double bar line. The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, using chords and some eighth notes, with a final half note and a double bar line. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef, primarily using quarter notes, with a final half note and a double bar line. Chord symbols (A^b, B^b, E^b, F^b/C^{b6}, A^bm, B^{b7}, E^b) are placed below the middle staff, corresponding to the harmonic structure of the piece.

4. Light of Those Whose Dreary Dwelling

♩ = 160

1. Light of those whose dreary dwelling borders on the
 2. Still we wait for your appearing; life and joy your
 3. Save us in your great compassion, O, our mild, pa-

shades of death; come, and by your love's re-veal-ing dis-si-
 beams im-part chas-ing all our fears, and cheer-ing ev-'ry
 ci-fic Prince; give the know-ledge of sal-va-tion, give the

pate the clouds be-neath; the new heav'n and earth's Cre-a-tor in our
 poor be-nigh-ted heart: Come, and man-i-fest the fa-vor God has
 par-don of our sins: By your all-re-stor-ing mer-it ev-'ry

deep-est dark-ness rise, scatt-'ring all the night of
 for our ran-somed race; come, O u-ni-ver-sal
 bur-dened soul re-lease; ev-'ry wea-ry, wan-d'ring

na-ture, pour-ing eye-sight on our eyes.
 Sav-ior, come, and bring the gos-pel peace.
 spi-rit guide in-to your per-fect peace.

WORDS: Charles Wesley, *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord* (1745), Nr. 11.

MUSIC: SALTASH, *Plymouth Collection* (U.S.A.), 1855.

5. The Solemn Hour is Come

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. The sol - emn hour is come for God made vi - si -
 2. The sin - ners' Sac - ri - fice the Head of an - gels
 3. Let hu - man - kind a - base their souls be - fore the

ble, fruit of a vir - gin's womb a man with all to
 see from Jes - se's stem a - rise, and grasp the De - i -
 Lord, and hum - bly pros - trate, praise the great in - car - nate

dwell, the Sav - ior of the world t'ap - pear and
 ty! His sa - cred flesh the on - ly shrine that
 Word, and wel - come Je - sus from a - bove with

found his hea - venly King - dom here.
 holds im - men - si - ty Di - vine.
 joy, and gra - ti - tude, and love.

WORDS: from *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon/Kingswood, 1990), 2:75-6; based on Luke 1:26-7, "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God—to a virgin," etc. MS Luke, p. 6.
 MUSIC: DARWALL'S 148th by John Darwall, 1770; harm. from *The English Hymnal*, 1906.

For Robert Young

6. Away with Our Fears!

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 54$

1. A way with our fears! the God - head ap - pears in
2. He came from a - bove, in man - i - fest Love, the de -
3. Made flesh for our sake, that we might par - take the
4. Then let us be - lieve, and glad - ly re - ceive the
5. And while we are here, our King shall ap - pear, his

Christ re - con - ciled the Fa - ther of Mer - cies in
sire of our eyes, the meek Lamb of God, in a
na - ture di - vine, and a - gain in his im - age, his
tid - ings they bring, who pub - lish to sin - ners their
spir - it im - part, and form his full im - age of

1. 2. 3. 4.
Bm **G** *rit. mp* **Bm** **G**
Je - sus the child, Je - sus the child.
man - ger he lies, man - ger he lies.
ho - li - ness shine, ho - li - ness shine.
Sav - ior and King, Sav - ior and King.

5. **Bm** **G** *rit. Em⁷ mp* **D**
love in our heart, love in our heart.

MUSIC: ROBERT by Carlton R. Young © 1994 Selah Publishing Co. All rights reserved.
WORDS: Charles Wesley, *Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord* (1745), Nr. 8.

7. No More I Rashly Turn Aside

Matthew 2:3, "Lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them,
till it came and stood over where the young child was."

$\text{♩} = 100$ **Softly but determined**

The musical score is written for a single melodic line and piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/2. The tempo is marked as 100 beats per minute. The score is divided into three systems. The first system contains the first two lines of the song. The second system contains the next two lines. The third system contains the final two lines. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. The lyrics are written below the melodic line.

1. No more I rash - ly
2. Or if my Light it -

turn a - side, or quit my true ce - les - tial Guide, t'in -
self with - draw, with sim - ple faith and hum - ble awe I

quire of fool - ish man; di -
urge my drear - y way, till

WORDS: Charles Wesley, *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, 3 Vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 2:17.

MUSIC: LIMINAL, Swee Hong Lim, Singapore; © 2010 The Charles Wesley Society, Archives and History Center, Drew University, 36 Madison Avenue, Madison, NJ 07940. All rights reserved.

rect - ed by his word a - lone, I seek the in - fant -
Je - sus' star a - gain ap - pear, and point - ing to the

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal melody and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written on a single staff in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The melody continues with a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F#4. The piano accompaniment is written for a grand piano with two staves. The right hand starts with a half note G3, followed by a half note A3. The left hand starts with a half note G2, followed by a half note A2. The system concludes with a double bar line.

God un - known, and can - not seek in vain.
Sav - ior near its glad - d'ning beams dis - play.

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The melody continues with a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F#4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same pattern as the first system. The system concludes with a double bar line.