

## Hymns with an Unusual, Perhaps Unique, Metre

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The 1933 Methodist Hymn Book contains two Charles Wesley hymns with the very unusual 5 5 5 11 metre.

I know of no other hymn writer who produced hymns that scanned in this way. (If anybody can correct me in this, I would be delighted to know!)

One of the hymns in the MHB celebrates Pentecost, the other is for use at ‘The Opening and Closing of the Year’.

Away with our fears,  
Our troubles and tears:  
The Spirit is come,  
The witness of Jesus returned to His home.

The pledge of our Lord  
To His heaven restored  
Is sent from the sky,  
And tells us our Head is exalted on high.

Our Advocate there  
By His blood and His prayer  
The gift hath obtained,  
For us He hath prayed, and the Comforter gained.

Our glorified Head  
His Spirit hath shed,  
With His people to stay,  
And never again will He take Him away.

Our heavenly Guide  
With us shall abide,  
His comforts impart,  
And set up His kingdom of love in the heart.

The heart that believes  
His kingdom receives,  
His power and His peace,  
His life, and His joy's everlasting increase.

Then let us rejoice  
In heart and in voice,  
Our Leader pursue,  
And shout as we travel the wilderness through.

With the Spirit remove  
To Zion above,  
Triumphant arise,  
And walk with our God, till we fly to the skies.

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.

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.

O that each in the day  
Of His coming may 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!

Both of these hymns are found in Hymns and Psalms but the last two verses of “Away with our fears” are omitted in this hymn book.

In MHB and Hymns and Psalms only two tunes are offered – “Ardwick” and “Derbe”; tunes that lend themselves to singing at a good pace, enhancing the written words.

Sadly, Singing the Faith has only included “Come let us anew”.

“Away with our fears” was published in “*Hymns of Petition and Thanksgiving for the Promise of the Father*” (1746). In the original version the verses were doubled in length. There was a penultimate 8 line verse:

The presence divine  
Doth inwardly shine,  
The Shechinah rests  
On all our assemblies, and glows in our breasts;  
By day and by night  
The pillar of light  
Our steps shall attend,  
And convoy us safe to our prosperous end.

In the “Companion to Hymns and Psalms” (Methodist Publishing House) we read that Shechinah was a late Hebrew word used in Rabbinic literature to signify the presence of God in the temple, or among His people.

“Come let us anew” was originally found as the fifth of seven hymns in “*Hymns for New Year’s Day*” (1749), a penny tract published in 1750. Bernard Manning, in an address to the Cambridge University Methodist Society in 1932, referred to this hymn as illustrating Charles Wesley’s ‘gift of elemental simplicity and stinging direct speech’.

There is one further hymn of this metre (doubled) in the 1933 Hymn Book – number 262. It is unfamiliar – I can't remember ever having sung it, although the tune (Derbe again) is familiar.

All thanks be to God,  
Who scatters abroad,  
Throughout every place,  
By the least of His servants, His savour of grace.  
Who the victory gave,  
The praise let Him have,  
For the work He hath done:  
All honour and glory to Jesus alone!

Our conquering Lord  
Hath prospered His word,  
Hath made it prevail,  
And mightily shaken the kingdom of hell.  
His arm He hath bared,  
And a people prepared  
His glory to show,  
And witness the power of His passion below.

He hath opened a door  
To the penitent poor,  
And rescued from sin,  
And admitted the harlots and publicans in;  
They have heard the glad sound,  
They have liberty found  
Through the blood of the Lamb,  
And plentiful pardon in Jesus's name.

And shall we not sing  
Our Saviour and King?  
Thy witnesses, we  
With rapture ascribe our salvation to Thee.  
Thou, Jesus, hast blessed,  
And believers increased,  
Who thankfully own  
We are freely forgiven through mercy alone.

His Spirit revives  
His work in our lives,  
His wonders of grace,  
So mighty wrought in the primitive days.  
O that all men might know  
His tokens below,  
Our Saviour confess,  
And embrace the glad tidings of pardon and peace!

Thou Saviour of all,  
Effectually call  
The sinners that stray;  
And O let a nation be born in a day!  
Then, let it spread  
Thy knowledge and dread,  
Till the earth is o'erflowed,  
And the universe filled with the glory of God. Amen.

There are six verses each with 8 lines. John Telford in “The new Methodist Hymn-Book Illustrated” (Epworth Press 1934) tells us that one verse was omitted – “the verse which is left out shows how Charles Wesley’s muse sometimes droops”. This observation is perhaps not surprising given the volume of poetry that flowed from his pen!

On August 10<sup>th</sup> 1746 Charles was preaching - for just under 2 hours!

His congregation was nine to ten thousand people! The location - Gwennap Pit in Cornwall.

In his journal Charles records:

“He commended them to God, and the word of His grace”.  
“Never had we so large an effusion of the Spirit as in the Society.”  
“Next day I expressed the gratitude of my heart in the following thanksgiving:

*All thanks be to God  
Who scatters abroad*

And so the hymn came to be written.

Are there any more hymns with this unusual metre?

That question has intrigued me so I started a search through earlier Methodist hymn books!

A colleague at school, furnishing a cottage in Somerset, bought a job lot of furniture and effects, probably from a house clearance. Included was an 1831 hymn book – based on John Wesley’s book of 1780, with some additional hymns. Knowing my background, my colleague presented the book to me. Much later I started to search for Methodist Hymn Books on eBay and this led to the purchase of a “Wesleyan” hymnal - again based on the 1780 book but with a different set of additional hymns. Unfortunately both are only word editions, tune books would have enabled a quick search for the 5 5 5 11 metre! Each hymn does, however, have the metre printed above the initial text – only 500+ hymns to check!

Search complete and two additional hymns have been identified with this metre.

Both of these hymns also have the “doubled form” of 8 line verses.

Both are found in the Section of the Hymn Book entitled “*For the Society Giving Thanks*”.

On the left is hymn No. 495 from Wesley's Collection of hymns; on the right hymn No. 498. (Given the first two lines of the first verse of 498 we could well think we are about to sing a different hymn – one we know!)

Come, let us arise,  
And press to the skies;  
The summons obey,  
My friends, my beloved, and hasten away.  
The Master of all  
For our service doth call,  
And deigns to approve,  
With smiles of acceptance, our labour of love.

His burden who bear,  
We alone can declare  
How easy His yoke,  
While to love and good works we each other provoke;  
By word and by deed,  
The bodies in need,  
The souls to relieve,  
And freely as Jesus hath given to give.

Then let us attend  
Our heavenly Friend,  
In his members distrest,  
By want, or affliction, or sickness oppress;  
The prisoner relieve,  
The stranger receive,  
Supply all their wants,  
And spend and be spent in assisting his saints.

Thus while we bestow  
Our moments below,  
Ourselves we forsake,  
And refuge in Jesus's righteousness take:  
His passion alone  
The foundation we own;  
And pardon we claim,  
And eternal redemption, in Jesus's name.

Come, let us anew  
Our journey pursue,  
With vigour arise,  
And press to our permanent place in the skies.  
Of heavenly birth,  
Though wandering on earth,  
This is not our place;  
But strangers and pilgrims ourselves we confess.

At Jesus's call,  
We gave up our all;  
And still we forego  
For Jesus's sake our enjoyments below.  
No longing we find  
For the country behind;  
But onwards we move,  
And still we are seeking a country above:

A country of joy,  
Without any alloy,  
We thither repair:  
Our hearts and our treasure already are there.  
We march hand in hand  
To Immanuel's land:  
No matter what cheer  
We meet with on earth; eternity's near.

The rougher our way,  
The shorter our stay;  
The tempests that rise  
Shall gloriously hurry our souls to the skies.  
The fiercer the blast,  
The sooner 'tis past;  
The troubles that come,  
Shall come to our rescue, and hasten us home.

The language belongs to the Eighteenth Century – both the vocabulary (many words having changed their meaning or usage) and the grammar. That is probably the justification for not including them in “modern” hymn collections.

What does come through – in all of these hymns – is personal salvation; offered to all; and the call for transformed living, care and service to others, to be practised by all believers. That was the message of the early Methodist movement.

I cannot find any reference to it but at some time I read, or was told, that when John Wesley was asked to sum up his life he gave an answer adapted from the three points in his sermon on “The use of Money”.

“I have gained all I could; I have saved all I could; I have given all I could”.

In conclusion and returning to our hymns we find more hymns with a similar metre.

There are two that are 5 5 11 D rather than 5 5 5 11 D. (D denotes doubled, i.e. 6 or 8 line verses) One of these, “*My God I am thine; what a comfort divine .....*”, has been found in all of our hymn books up to and including Singing the Faith.

Three hymns, not included in the 1933 or subsequent hymn books are 5 5 9 D.

Wesley's Collection has one further hymn marked with this metre, but modern books give it as 5 6 9 6 6 9!

It is still with us today – “The Wesleys' Birthday Hymn”, (STF 458). 1<sup>st</sup> and last verses below

Away with our fears!  
The glad morning appears  
When an heir of salvation was born!  
From Jehovah I came,  
For His glory I am,  
And to Him I with singing return.

My remnant of days  
I spend in His praise  
Who died the whole world to redeem:  
Be they many or few,  
My days are His due,  
And they all are devoted to Him!

Three months after the death of Charles, John Wesley spent his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday at Epworth. The last verse of the birthday hymn (to the right above) was inscribed in his journal that day. An example for us all.

