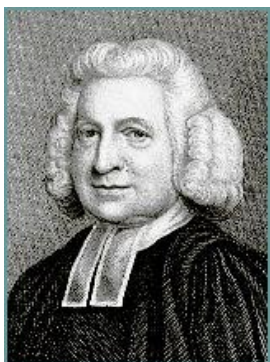


## Charles Wesley – Orpheus to the Christian Church

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According to legend, Orpheus was so blessed by the gods with the gift of song that nothing on earth, or in the underworld, could withstand the power and influence of his songs. The Christian Church has a real 'Orpheus' in Charles Wesley and for the last two hundred and fifty years, Christians around the world have been singing the hymns he composed.

Charles was born in his Epworth, Lincolnshire, rectory home on December 18, 1707, four years after his brother John. The son of the Revd Samuel Wesley and his wife Susanna, Charles was brought up in a home of strict Anglican piety, and a home where the Bible and good devotional books were constantly read and discussed. His natural gift for poetry was encouraged and following graduation, and then ordination in the Church of England, he spent a year with his brother John in Georgia in America and later experienced an evangelical conversion in London on Pentecost Sunday, May 21, 1738.



In that year he began to write the hymns for which he is still famous. In the fifty years until his death in 1788, he published some 8500 pieces of religious poetry, making him the most prolific poet in the English language.

In 1789 Charles published a hymn that was destined to be among his most popular. Significantly he titled it, 'A hymn for the Anniversary Day of one's Conversion.' The opening lines are:

Glory to God, and praise, and love  
Be ever, ever given.

All the hymnbook editions of this hymn begin with verse 7:

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise  
The glories of my God and King  
The triumphs of His grace!

Charles wrote 18 verses for this hymn but most hymnbooks use at most seven or eight of the verses. Charles Wesley longs to tell the good news of the gospel to others. He asks God for help in order

To spread through all the earth  
abroad  
The honours of Thy name.

With his own heart warmed with the redeeming love of God, he proclaims the beauty and glory and saving power of the name of Jesus. It's the name that 'charms our fears;' it is 'music in the sinner's ears;' it brings 'life and health and peace.' As the New Testament teaches, Christ alone can

Break the power of cancelled sin  
And set the prisoner free.

The hymn echoes God's invitation in Isaiah 45:22. 'Look to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth.'

Look unto Him, ye nations own ...  
Look, and be saved through faith  
alone  
Be justified by grace.

As with so many of the hymns he would subsequently write, Charles' main emphasis in this 'Anniversary Hymn' is the atoning work done by Christ in his death and resurrection.

This is still the 'good news' that the world needs to hear in 2007! Charles Wesley climaxes this rightly-popular hymn with an invitation to look to Christ.

See all your sins on Jesus laid  
The Lamb of God was slain.  
His soul was once an offering made  
For every soul of man.