

## Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Robin Knowles Wallace

In 1744 Charles Wesley published *Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord*, a collection of 18 hymns, reprinted 20 times before Wesley died in 1788. Number 10 in this collection, "Come, thou long-expected Jesus," is the only one to survive into popular usage. Yet its place in Advent hymnody is firm, as reflected by its publication in 12 recent denominational hymnals.

Inclusion In Recent Hymnals	Hymn no.	Tune used
<i>Baptist Hymnal</i>	77	HYFRYDOL
<i>Cbalice Hymnal</i>	125	HYFRYDOL
<i>Covenant Hymnal</i>	135	STUTTART
<i>The Hymnal 1982</i>	66	STUTTART
<i>Lead Me, Guide Me</i>	5	STUTTART
<i>Lutheran Book of Worship</i>	30	JEFFERSON
<i>New Century Hymnal</i>	122	STUTTART
<i>Presbyterian Hymnal</i>	1	STUTTART
<i>Presbyterian Hymnal</i>	2	HYFRYDOL
<i>Psalter Hymnal</i>	329	STUTTART
<i>Voices United</i>	2	STUTTART
<i>United Methodist Hymnal</i>	196	HYFRYDOL
<i>Worship III</i>	364	STUTTART

### Tunes

It is interesting to consider the tunes associated with this popular text. Although Wesley's original setting was in two stanzas of eight lines each, the punctuation also suggests that the text might be separated into four stanzas of four lines each. Two tunes associated with the text follow Wesley's original eight-line stanza: HYFRYDOL and JEFFERSON.

Only the Lutheran Book of Worship uses the early American tune JEFFERSON, yet its use with Orff instruments was also promoted by Betty Ramseth's *Take a Hymn*, related to the LBW. This sturdy tune gives the text a certain energetic movement.

HYFRYDOL is the choice of United Methodists, Baptists, Disciples (Christian Church, *Cbalice Hymnal*), and the second setting of Presbyterians. Note that, in English, this Welsh tune name is pronounced with y=i (as in him) (Young, 1993, p. 302). Prichard, a Welsh song leader and tune writer, wrote this lyrical tune before his twentieth birthday in 1831, and first published it in 1844. Like other Welsh hymn tunes, this is meant to be sung in parts, and, in the key of F, calls for low Fs in the bass part. Transpositions to the key of G may make it more easily singable for some basses.

STUTTART is the tune of choice for most recent hymnals, setting the text into four stanzas of four lines each. This straightforward chorale tune first appeared in *Psalmodia Sacra* in 1715. To this United Methodist used to singing HYFRYDOL, STUTTART lacks the lyrical longing conveyed by the Welsh tune and, with its straight quarter note setting, has less feeling of freedom than either of the more flowing eight-line tunes. But try the different

tunes for yourself and see which your and your choir or congregation prefer. All three of these tunes are in the public domain, and the hymn text is familiar enough that switching tunes is not difficult.

To add more "tune" interest, consider the tunes used in two earlier sources: *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1861, England) sets this text in four stanzas to HALTON HOLGATE by William Boyce (1775) and CROSS OF JESUS by Sir John Stainer, both chorale-like settings in four parts. *The Methodist Hymnal with Tunes* (1878, U.S.) uses WILSON, arranged from Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. WILSON is a four-line tune and is the only other tune considered, like HYFRYDOL, in 3/4 time.

Several sources suggest using the first stanza of "Come thou long-expected Jesus" as a choral call to worship for the four Sundays of Advent. It might be interesting to use a different tune each week, beginning with the one used in your hymnal and then branching out to use another hymnal's tune or one of these historic tunes. All of the tunes suggested would work well with strings or woodwinds accompanying them, or soloing out the melody for an introduction.

### Text

What is there about this text which has given it "timelessness"? Perhaps it is the identification in the text with deep human longings for freedom, for deliverance from sin and fear. Perhaps it is the age-old longing for a Messiah who will rule with strength and consolation, bringing hope and joy and a gracious kingdom. Perhaps it is our search for an all-sufficient God who will rule graciously and gloriously in our lives, transforming them to abundance. All of these reasons suggest that this is a hymn for anytime, not just Advent.

Charles Wesley's text draws on imperative verbs—"come," "release," "let us find," "bring," "rule," and "raise"—and on a catalogue of names and adjectives for the Messiah: "long-expected Jesus," "Israel's Strength and Consolation," "Hope of all the earth," "Dear Desire of every nation," "Joy of every longing heart," "child," and "King." Each stanza (in the four-line setting) is bound together by a different element: 1) longing for freedom, 2) names for Christ, 3) the repetition of "born" to begin the first three lines, and 4) our prayer that by this, God would do that. These binding elements, plus the tight ABAB rhyme scheme, enable the metaphors to touch our hearts and resonate with the longings of Advent and everyday, for Christ to come again. ■

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## Advent.

Hymns Ancient & Modern

Hymn 640. HALTON HOLGATE.—8 7 8 7. (First Tune.) W. BOYCE, 1775.

A-men.

Hymn 640. CROSS OF JESUS.—8 7 8 7. (Second Tune.) Sir J. STAINER.

A-men.

[For copyright, see p. xliii.]

"Come, Lord Jesus."

*mf* COME, Thou long-expected JESUS,  
Born to set Thy people free ;  
From our fears and sins release us ;  
Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art ;  
Dear Desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

*f* Born Thy people to deliver ;  
Born a Child and yet a King ;  
Born to reign in us for ever ;  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thy own eternal Spirit,  
Rule in all our hearts alone :  
By Thy all-sufficient merit,  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

J. WESLEY, 1748.

### Four Calls to Worship

(These might be used to follow the singing of this hymn as a choral or congregational introit for each of the four weeks in Advent.)

Leader: Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
People: We long for you to come again into our lives.  
Leader: You alone can release us from sin and fear.  
People: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: Israel's Strength and Consolation, we wait  
for you.

People: Come, thou long-expected Jesus.  
Leader: You, O Christ, are the joy of every longing  
heart.

People: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: You, O Jesus Christ, were born a child and  
yet a King.

People: Come to reign in us forever.

Leader: Come, thou long-expected Jesus.

People: Bring your gracious kingdom now to us.

Leader: Come, thou long-expected Jesus,

People: Rule in all our hearts alone.

Leader: With your own eternal Spirit,

People: Come, Lord Jesus!

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