

Jesus, Lover of My Soul or Watchman, Tell Us of the Night

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Charles Wesley, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"

This hymn is one of the most popular written by the prolific Charles Wesley (1707–1788). Charles and John Wesley (1703–1791), the brothers whose evangelical vision and tireless efforts shaped 18th-century Methodism, left a rich legacy of hymns with enduring appeal. They encouraged congregational singing and provided their followers with songs that gave vent to the deepest emotions of participants in the 18th-century evangelical awakening. The vast majority of the Wesleys hymns came from the pen of Charles.

The brothers were reared in an Anglican manse and deeply influenced by their capable mother, Susannah, and their rector father, Samuel. Educated at Oxford, they took Anglican orders and sailed to the American colonies to undertake a mission in Georgia. In Savannah, they compiled their first hymnal but met with no marked religious success. They returned to England, deeming their missionary efforts a failure. In the third week of May, 1738, both brothers experienced dramatic awakenings to faith—in John Wesley's famous description, their hearts were "strangely warmed." A new commitment to evangelism and holiness marked their future efforts. Charles Wesley immediately turned to poetry to express his religious emotions and urge others on to deeper commitment. He wrote his first hymn a day or two after his conversion and dictated his last on his deathbed.

"Jesus, Lover of My Soul" first appeared in the Wesleys' 1740 publication, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. It is based on a text in the Apocrypha, Wisdom 11:26 ("Thou sparest all things, for they are thine, O Lord who lovest the living"), and also borrows from Matthew Prior's poem, "Solomon," published in 1718. Its point is simple: Jesus is the soul's only satisfaction: "Thou, O Christ, art all I want/More than all in thee I find."

Charles Wesley wrote five stanzas for this hymn. The third is now generally omitted:

Wilt Thou not regard my call?
Wilt Thou not accept my prayer?
Lo, I sink, I faint, I fall!
Lo, on Thee I cast my care;
Reach me out Thy gracious hand!
While I of Thy strength receive,
Hoping against hope I stand,
Dying, and behold I live!

John Wesley disliked the intimate language of his brother's poem, once declaring his effort "in all the hymns which are addressed to our blessed Lord, to avoid every fondling expression, and to speak as to the most-high God." When he edited the definitive *Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodists* (1780), he omitted this popular hymn. His

objections failed to diminish its appeal. Just ten years later (1790), American Methodists included it in their hymnal. In 1807, it appeared in an American hymnal published by Roman Catholics; in 1870, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints opted to put it in their hymnal. Well over 2,000 hymnals published in the United States have included "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

This hymn has been set to various tunes. The most popular in the United States are REFUGE, MARTYN and ABERYSTWYTH. In Great Britain and the United States, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" is perhaps most often sung today to ABERYSTWYTH, a haunting minor melody by Joseph Parry (1841–1903). A native of Wales, Parry was an ironmaster who spent some time in the United States. He later became a professional musician and disciplined himself for a time to compose one hymn tune every week. He wrote ABERYSTWYTH while visiting the seaside town of that name in 1879.

John Bowring, "Watchman, Tell Us of the Night"

Sir John Bowring wrote "Watchman, Tell Us of the Night" in 1825 as a poem rather than for use as a hymn. He first found it used as a hymn early in the 1830s when he attended a meeting of American missionaries in Turkey and heard them sing it. Bowring was born in Exeter, England, in 1792. The son of a wool manufacturer, he worked briefly with his father and also studied modern languages. As a young man, he became a follower of Jeremy Bentham and a contributor to the *Westminster Review*. In 1835, he entered the House of Commons as a Radical. He began a distinguished career of government service abroad in 1849, concluding as Governor, Commander-in-Chief, and Vice-Admiral of Hong Kong and its dependencies, and Superintendent of Trade east of the Ganges. Knighted in 1854, he published widely and devoted himself to reform causes until his death in 1792.

There has been debate about how to classify Bowring's religious inclinations. A member of a Unitarian congregation, he manifested strong affinities for evangelical piety. While several of his poems gained wide acclaim as hymns (especially "Watchman, Tell Us of the Night" and "In the Cross of Christ I Glory"), others have been used almost exclusively by Unitarians.

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This hymn arrangement is sponsored by the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (ISAE) at Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL 60187, through a grant from The Lilly Endowment. The ISAE exists to encourage and support research on evangelical Christianity in North America.

Jesus, Lover of My Soul

or

Watchman, Tell Us of the Night

SATB, organ, brass quartet, timp., and opt. cong.

Charles Wesley, 1740
John Bowring, 1825

ABERYSTWYTH, Joseph Parry, 1879;
 setting by Carl Schalk, 2000

$\text{♩} = 54$

The musical score is written for piano in 4/2 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of four systems of music, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system includes a tempo marking of quarter note = 54. The score features various percussion parts: Timp. (Timpani) and Tbps. (Tubas) in the first system, and pts. (Percussion) in the second system. The piano accompaniment is characterized by a steady, rhythmic accompaniment in the bass line and a more melodic line in the treble. A large, diagonal watermark reading 'For review only' is overlaid across the middle of the score.

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4

19 **A** *mf* Choir + cong.

Je - sus, — Lov - er of my soul, let me to thy
Watch - man, — tell — us of the night, what its signs of

22

bos - om fly, while the — near - er wa - ters roll,
prom - ise are. Trav - 'ler — o'er — yon moun - tain's height,

25

while the — tem - pest still is high: hide me, O my
see that — glo - ry - beam - ing star. Watch - man, does its

f

28

Sav - ior, — hide, till the storm of life be — past;
 beau - teous — ray aught of joy or hope fore - tell?

31

safe in - to the ha - ven guide, O re - ceive — my
 Trav - 'ler, yes; it brings the day, prom - ised — day — of

34

(B)

soul at last.
 Is - ra - el.

Tpts.

Tbns.

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6

38

S.A. *p*

Oth - er — ref - uge
Watch - man, — tell — us

T.B. *p*

41

have — I — none, — hangs my help - less soul — on — thee;
of — the — night; — high - er yet that star — as - cends.

44

leave, ah! — leave — me — not — a - lone, — still sup - port and
Trav - 'ler, — bless - ed - ness — and light, — peace and — truth its

47

mf

com - fort me! All my trust on thee is stayed;
course por - tends. Trav - 'ler, will its beams a - lone

mf

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8

58

rit. *f*

sha - - - dow, the sha - dow of thy wing.
bursts o'er all the earth.

61

65

Descant *f*

Plen - teous grace is found,
Tell us of the night,

f Congregation and Choir

Plen - teous grace with thee is found,
Watch - man, tell us of the night,

68

grace to cleanse from ev - 'ry sin, let the
 for the morn - ing seems to dawn. Dark - ness

grace to cleanse from ev - 'ry sin; let the — heal - ing
 for the morn - ing seems — to dawn. Trav - 'ler — dark - ness

71

streams a - bound, make and keep me pure with - in.
 takes its flight, doubt and ter - ror are with - drawn.

streams a - bound, make and — keep me pure with - in.
 takes its flight, doubt and — ter - ror are with - drawn.

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10

74

Thou of life the fountain art, free - ly let me
Watch - man, let thy wan - d'rings cease, bie thee to thy

Thou of life the fountain art, free - ly let me
Watch - man, let thy wan - d'rings - cease; bie thee to thy

77

take of thee: spring thou up with - in my heart, *div.*
qui - et home. Trav - ler, lo, the Prince of Peace, *div.*

take of thee: spring thou up with - in my heart,
qui - et home. Trav - ler, lo, the Prince of Peace,

80

S.A. rise to all e - ter - ni - ty.
lo, the Son of God is come!

T.B.

Brass

83

Carl Schalk

Carl Schalk is Distinguished Professor of Music Emeritus at Concordia University, in River Forest, Ill., where he taught graduate courses in church music since 1965. Previously, he was a teacher and director of music at Zion Lutheran Church in Wassau, Wisconsin, and director of music for the International Lutheran Hour. He was editor of the journal *Church Music* from 1966-1980. He has served on various boards and committees for The Hymn Society, the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, and the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, which prepared the *Lutheran Book of Wor-*

ship. His choral compositions and hymn settings for congregational use are widely used. He has written over 80 hymn tunes and carols.

Schalk was born in Chicago in 1929. He earned a B.S. in Ed. from Concordia College, River Forest, Ill., and advanced degrees from the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York, (M.Mus) and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (M.A.R.). He has received several honorary degrees and is a Fellow of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada. In 1999 he was honored with the Wittenberg Award for his contribution to Lutheran church music.