CHARLES WESLEY AND THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

By Donald Baker

It is possible to derive Charles Wesley's views on the American War of Independence from two main sources. One is a manuscript notebook entitled "Hymns and Verses on Modern Patriotism, & the American Rebellion and Independancy [sic] etc. Miscellaneous Poems." The other source is the long poem entitled "The American War under the Conduct of S[i]r W[illiam]. H[owe]," which is extant in two manuscripts having minor textual differences.

The notebook, which is listed in Sharp's "... A Catalogue of Wesleyana," is written in Charles Wesley's hand, but has been worked over at some time by his daughter, Sarah, better known as Sally, who states in her own handwriting on the first fly-leaf, "Revised by his Daughter Sarah Wesley, 1824." It is apparently Sally who has carried out one drastic piece of "revision" by pasting a blank sheet of paper over three poems dealing with Charles Fox, a politician whom her father attacks with great vehemence in several of the poems contained in the notebook. Perhaps Sally's textual alterations were inspired by a reverence for King George IV, a reverence which was certainly as great as the devotion of her father to George III. Thus, when reading her father's adverse comments on the Prince of Wales, who had openly associated with members of the parliamentary opposition in which Fox took a prominent part, she may have felt bound to alter them, now that the prince had become king. This seems to be the reason for the alteration in a poem entitled "American Independancy [sic]," where Sally has changed her father's:

Your country sold by his (George III's) own sons.

to:

Your country sold by Briton's sons.

It is not clear whether Sally revised the notebook with a view to publication. In actual fact the poems on the American War with which we are now directly concerned have never been published, except for eight poems which were printed in G. Osborn's Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley, five of these having previously appeared in various issues of The Arminian Magazine. More recently Dr. Frank Baker has reproduced in his Representative

2 "Hymns and Verses on Modern Patriotism & the American Rebellion & Independancy etc. . . ." MS Notebook, p. 104. I have referred to this Notebook as HP throughout; the numbering of the poems is mine, the pagination refers to Wesley's own in the Notebook.
Verse of Charles Wesley seven poems from the main section of
the notebook, and several examples on various topics from the
miscellaneous section.

The long narrative poem, "The American War . . . ," provides us
with the second source of Wesley's comments on the subject of
independency. In 1780, John Wesley had published under the main
title of Political Extracts various passages from the work of Joseph
Galloway, a delegate from Pennsylvania to the First Continental
Congress. Galloway seems to have been strongly pro-British, but,
for reasons I shall discuss later, violently opposed to the British
army commander, Sir William Howe. John Wesley's Political
Extracts ran through five editions in 1780, a fact which testifies to
its popularity. From possible references in the poem to historical
events, and from similarities in phraseology to Galloway's pam­
phlets, it seems likely that "The American War" represents Charles
Wesley's somewhat pedestrian versification of these curious, but
interesting essays in political pamphleteering. Furthermore, it is
probable that Wesley's information about the war was drawn
not only from his brother's reproduction of Galloway's work, but
also from Sir William Howe's defense of his campaigns which he
gave before the House of Commons in April, 1779. I think it is
fairly certain that all of Wesley's poems on the American War
date from the latter part of that year, a deduction made partly
from his own dated poems and partly from internal evidence in
the poems themselves. Thus it can be said that Charles Wesley
seems to have become interested in the question of American
independence some four or five years after hostilities had actually
broken out. We must briefly sketch in the events of these years,
and attempt some explanation for their happening at all.

On September 3, 1783, the final draft of the treaty between
Britain and the thirteen colonies in America were signed, thus
ending a war which both sides had become too exhausted to
fight. After a long and painful period of misunderstanding and
diplomatic failure, war had broken out, a conflict fraught with
incongruous situations between the opposing sides, situations that
alternated between hatred and amity.

The war itself was primarily due to a political theory which
George III refused to recognize as outdated, although to many
Englishmen, including Charles Wesley, this refusal was based on
a very solid theological doctrine of kingship. In many ways the
war in America was a struggle for principles similar to those at
issue in the English Civil War of the previous century. The
American Revolution may have had fiscal manifestations, but its

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3 Charles Wesley wrote several collec­
tions of verse on national events; the
events are usually viewed as divine
punishments or rewards, the tone of the
poems being strongly apocalyptic.
temper and inspiration were religious. It is a significant fact, which certainly did not escape the notice of the British government, that many of the colonists were men who had found life under an arbitrary political or religious authority impossible and in America had established a tradition of religious freedom. For example, Macrabie, brother-in-law to Philip Francis, remarked: "The Presbyterians should not be allowed to become too great. They are of republican principles. The Bostonians are Presbyterians." In fact, the established church in Boston was Congregational, but the system of church government in the two denominations is not dissimilar. The established church to most Englishmen could, however, mean only one thing, the Church of England with its doctrine of apostolic episcopacy.

There seems little doubt that party politics in Britain and the Revolution in America were largely religious in inspiration. "Party strife in English politics," says E. R. Taylor, "has been conditioned by a peculiarly English division—that between Church and Dissent." Dissent of the Presbyterian or Congregational variety, to Charles Wesley and other Tories, suggested some form of democracy, of social equality and government by consent. The Civil War was largely the practical expression of religious beliefs in the individual conscience or "the inner light," which explains Charles Wesley's hatred of "Cromwell and the good old cause," to use a phrase from one of his own poems.

No doubt Charles Wesley could see, as did many others of similar doctrinal persuasion, among whom we must include Samuel Johnson, that the Puritan theology, mainly Calvinistic in tenor, stood for the emphasis of the individual and set him in the immediate presence of God. The Bible and the individual interpretation of it became the source of authority in place of the church, but John and Charles Wesley, brought up in an atmosphere of high church doctrine, could have little to do with a system of belief that set the value of the organic church so low. In spite of this, however, both Wesleys retained a measure of Puritanism in their thinking with their emphasis on individual experience. When this experience was carried over into the realm of politics, the brothers seemed to boggle. As H. B. Workman has pointed out, "To some extent . . . the antipathy to the doctrine (of individual experience) was political. The staunch Toryism of the age felt that there was a danger to the Constitution in the presumption of ignorant underlings to a knowledge denied to their betters." In America, the Presbyterian form of church government was

obviously the model on which the colonies were attempting to base themselves and where the Presbyterian population was large, it appeared quite clear to the Tories that Oliver Cromwell's ghost had risen and that the horrors of civil war would be reenacted. The parallel between Cromwell's commonwealth and the proposed independent American colonies was being continually drawn by contemporary writers, and the attitudes expressed by Charles Wesley in the "Hymns on Patriotism" were echoed many times by contributors to the daily press.

It is not surprising that the political reformers and nonconformity were so closely linked in thought. The differences in outlook between the Anglican Tory and the nonconformist "Patriot"—as the Whig sympathizers with the Americans were often ironically termed—were social differences whichsprang from essential divergences of religious opinion. "The Church of England," says Herbert Butterfield, "and the body of dissenters had come to represent remarkably differing types of mentality and outlook. The cleavage was widened by the educational cleavage which separated schools like Eton and Universities of Oxford and Cambridge from the dissenting academies." The controversial reformers were often men who had little or no contact with the world of tradition represented by the Tories and the Anglican Church. They were men who believed in "common sense" and, influenced greatly by the French "philosophes," they were intent on applying it to the government of the country.

In America nonconformity was an integral part of the revolutionary cause, and in Britain, localized opposition to the government was often in the hands of nonconformists. In December, 1779, a correspondent to the Public Advertiser drew a clear and direct parallel between the political associations in America and Britain: "The Associations in America . . . have set an example before Freemen how to act when oppressed. This example has been followed by Ireland . . . When James II was driven into Exile it was by a National Association . . . Association becomes the duty of all." 8

Charles Wesley is naturally horrified with the state of affairs in which the established church, its bishops and political adumbrations are under attack:

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Religion pure is chas'd away,
General ungodliness succeeds
And treason walks in open day,
And unprov'd rebellion spreads . . . (HP6, Part II, 17-20) p. 12.
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He constantly refers to Cromwell and the commonwealth in hymns written during this period:

*In solemn League with death and hell*
  The saints against their King conspir'd,
  With passions fierce, fanatic zeal
  With avarice and ambition fir'd
  O'turn'd the government and laws
  The Parent State and Church subdued,
  And sought the Lord in Satan's cause,
  And wash'd their hands in Royal blood. (HP6, 17-24) p. 11.

From his own point of view Charles Wesley's hatred of the commonwealth was quite justified. He rightly associated the regime with republicanism and often referred to it under the popular term, "the good old cause."

The horror of the good old cause,
The hate of Kings and Church and laws

In his own note to the line, he equates "the good old cause" with the solemn league and covenant signed in Edinburgh in 1643 for the express purpose of imposing a Presbyterian Church and a new form of government inspired by Presbyterianism in England.9

In a penetrating essay, E. Gordon Rupp has clearly shown that the key to John Wesley's politics is in the Epistles of St. Paul. I think it is also justifiable to include Charles in this respect, for Rupp's remarks seem equally applicable to both Wesleys:

The fundament is in the Epistles of St. Paul, in the balanced duties of husband and wife, parents and children, master and slave, citizens and magistrates (Col. 3, 18-4, 1; Eph. 6, 1-9; Rom. 13, 1-9). This doctrine in the first place is a theological, not a political or social doctrine of a hierarchy of balanced duties, and persists in almost every classic treatment of the theme . . . (i.e.) The High Church doctrine of Divine Right, Passive Obedience, and Non-Resistance. . . .10

Upon this principle Charles Wesley takes his stand and his poetical comments on the politics of this period must be interpreted with the principle of Christian obedience as opposed to the doctrine of the rights of man clearly in mind. To Charles Wesley the Christian

9 The Solemn League was signed in 1643 in Edinburgh. The Scots wished to lead England to "the reformation of religion in the Church of England according to the example of the best reformed churches"; in other words, according to Presbyterianism. The Covenant was sworn by the House of Commons on November 25, 1643. In the Committee of Correspondence in Boston there originated a "Solemn League and Covenant," which bound all covenanters in Massachusetts to suspend communication and intercourse with Great Britain until "the Intolerable Acts" were repealed. Charles Wesley associated quite rightly, therefore, the Solemn League or "Good Old Cause" with republicanism.

had responsibilities of obedience before he had rights of individual judgment. Anything which savored of the latter, as events in America and the opposition's support for them in Britain seemed to do, was to be suppressed as symptomatic of theological anarchy. Failure to obey could only lead to apostasy and chaos. We may sum up this argument in the words of the French historian, Halevy: "The High Churchmen were Tories who supported the prerogative and denounced rebellion as sinful." 11

Edmund Burke had warned the House of Commons that the enemies of episcopacy in America were not feeble folk. The central colonies had many Huguenot families, while along the western frontier lived Irish Presbyterians of Scottish descent. More numerous than these were the descendants of the old English Puritans who had equal cause to distrust bishops. "Dislike and dread of Episcopacy intensified American opposition to the fiscal policy of Parliament; and the Non-importation Agreement, in all but the unanimous view of its promoters, held good against Bishops as well as against all other British products." 12 Thus Charles Wesley sees the Revolution not only as political, but theological anarchy, an anarchy too closely resembling "Cromwell with his desperate crew" (HP10, 25; p. 20) to allow a high church Englishman to be complacent.

It is difficult for us to sympathize with the obviously wrong-headed approach of the administration under Lord North toward the American colonies, even though North himself was, for most of the time, carrying out the king's instructions with great reluctance. The colonists, according to the Tories, were not Americans, but Britons living beyond the seas, a view which showed a complete unawareness of the composition of the colonial population, one-third of which was non-English. Thus it is not surprising that these people cared little for the historic traditions of a country they had never seen. Moreover, many of those who had undoubted English origins had grown away from the mother country in thought. 13

We may draw obvious parallels between the American Revolution and the events of the present century, particularly of the past twenty years, when Britain has realized the existence of the changed political and social situation in Asia and Africa, and by this realization has transformed, albeit imperfectly, an empire into a commonwealth. The comparison becomes even more interesting when we note that at the beginning of the verbal war between Britain and the American colonies, a delegate from Pennsylvania to the first Continental Congress, Joseph Galloway, recommended

12 Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 299.
13 William A. Hamm: From Colony to World Power.
a kind of dominion status for America. It was Galloway who later became an ardent loyalist and British spy, and who so impressed John Wesley when they met in November, 1779.\textsuperscript{14}

Charles Wesley was equally impressed with Galloway's pamphlets on the conduct of the American war and many of his adverse comments on Sir William Howe can be traced to the vitriolic writings with which the exiled loyalist employed himself during his enforced stay in Britain. Galloway never seems to have forgotten that during the whole of the British occupation of Philadelphia and while living next door to Howe, the General called only once.\textsuperscript{15} Whatever may be the reasons for Galloway's comments on Howe, his picture of the British general in the pamphlets, parts of which John Wesley thought worth collecting in his volume of \textit{Extracts},\textsuperscript{16} is grossly exaggerated and unfair. In Galloway's \textit{Letters to a Nobleman on the Conduct of the War in the Middle Colonies}, Sir William Howe is depicted as a voluptuary, gambler and drawing room soldier. Charles Wesley could not refrain from using such gifts of valuable ammunition as this against Howe of whom he had already formed a preconceived opinion since they were of opposing political parties. The direct source of the long narrative poem, "The American War," is almost certainly John Wesley's \textit{Political Extracts} from Galloway. There are many echoes of Galloway's phraseology in this long poem, as indeed in the "Hymns on Patriotism..." as a whole.

It also seems probable that it was Galloway who supplied Charles Wesley with material for his comments on the plight of the loyalists, a theme to which Wesley returns again and again in "Hymns on Patriotism...", as we shall see.

In spite of Galloway's uncompromising attitude in criticizing the British government's conduct of the war in general and the British generals' characters in particular, his proposal regarding dominion status for America was ingenious, and had it been accepted, or had the British government been more discerning, the American colonies might very well have been "founder members" of the British commonwealth. It is certainly true that the colonies themselves in the early stages of the dispute were not considering rebellion, and Congress was merely called to take various collective measures for the recovery of their rights and


\textsuperscript{15} Claude, Halstead Van Tyne: \textit{The Loyalists in the American Revolution}. New York, Peter Smith, 1929. P. 246.

\textsuperscript{16} All of Galloway's pamphlets were condensed by John Wesley and published under the main title of \textit{Political Extracts}. I have worked over the fifth edition of 1780; Sharp gives the date of the first edition as also 1780, so that the work must have been extremely popular.
liberties, which they held to have been violated by a series of unpopular acts of the British government. These acts culminated in a number of repressive measures directed against Massachusetts, but were interpreted as implying threats against all the colonies.

Charles Wesley’s attitude toward the colonists was far more rigid than that of his brother, who showed, at least at the beginning of the controversy, a marked degree of tolerance and understanding. John Wesley’s famous letter to Lord North is written in quite a different spirit from that of Charles’ strong, often violent, high church Toryism, which fills the political poems. Compare, for example, John’s plea for a commonsense approach to the problem contained in his letter, with some of Charles’ apocalyptic outbursts in the poems. John writes:

I do not intend to enter upon the question whether the Americans are right or wrong. Here all my prejudices are against the Americans. For I am a High Churchman, the son of a High Churchman, bred up from my childhood in the highest notions of passive obedience and non-resistance. And yet in spite of all my long rooted prejudices, I cannot avoid thinking (if I think at all) that these, an oppressed people, asked for nothing more than their legal rights; and that in the most modest and inoffensive manner which the nature of the thing would allow.

Charles was also the son of a high churchman, but if we are to believe John Pawson, one of the preachers excluded by Charles from the City Road pulpit on account of his non-episcopal ordination, we need not be so surprised at the sentiments he expresses. Pawson says, “That Mr. Charles Wesley was of a very suspicious temper, is certainly true; and that Mr. John Wesley had far more charity, in judging of persons in general (except the rich and great) than his brother had is equally true . . .” Pawson goes on to give a clue to the understanding of the violent expressions: “Mr. Charles was inclined to find out and magnify any supposed fault in the lay preaching; but his brother treated them with respect, and exercised a fatherly care over them.” If Charles tended to magnify the faults of his lay preachers, his magnification of the faults of Britain’s rebellious sons across the sea was even greater. Disobedience was not to be met with charity but punishment, both corporal and capital:

Britons their bleeding brethren see
Beneath their saws and axes torn,
Left to their savage cruelty;
Nor deign to sympathise or mourn
Till by a common doom they fall,
And wrath divine destroys them all. (HP40, Part I, 31-36) p. 84.

In another example, where the sentiments are reminiscent of

\[17\] John Wesley, op. cit., Vol. VIII, pp. 325 ff.
\[18\] Ibid., p. 325.
Jewish eschatology, Charles Wesley considers no fate bad enough for the Americans:

But will not God the Just arise
Their depths of treason to display,
Scatter their evil with his eyes,
Drag out the fiends to open day,
Blast all the sons of wickedness
And save us in our last distress? (HP40, Part II, 49-54) p. 86.

There is no doubt about Charles' attitude toward the war or the peace settlement. The latter was a calamity, a catastrophe from which Britain would not or could not ever recover. It was to him not so much a rebellion as a blasphemy. He takes his stand with the heritage of divine right and king's prerogative behind him, perhaps fearfully and prophetically aware of the rumblings ahead, soon to rise to a crescendo in the horrors of the French Revolution. The peace of 1783 marks the end of a theological epoch in which politics were theocentric, even though this had been theoretically disputed. America, it appeared, was a practical demonstration of Thomas Paine's political theories described in his "Rights of Man," and thus politics had now become anthropocentric and democratic.

The first stage of the war opened in a desultory fashion; it was rather a culmination of incidents than an open declaration of hostilities. Most of the somewhat disorganized and sporadic riots against British authority followed the passing of the Stamp Act in 1765. Two years later duties were imposed on tea, paper, glass, and painters' colors by the Townsend Act, a measure which produced economic boycotts by groups of merchants, and in some colonies English imports fell by nearly one-half. The boycott movement ended in 1770 when the Townsend Act was repealed, but in the same year occurred an incident which was instrumental in making open conflict between the colonies and the mother country almost unavoidable.

The "Boston Massacre," as the incident came to be called, arose out of the growing tension between the populace of Boston and the British troops quartered in the town. Apparently some soldiers fired on a crowd which had been taunting them, and four Bostonians were killed. Samuel Adams and Paul Revere exaggerated the incident beyond all bounds, and with the aid of some colored engravings circulated an account of it which showed British troops shooting innocent Americans. By means of such propaganda the issues of the potential revolution reached a much wider public, a public which perhaps was not entirely clear about the political questions involved, but which understood guns and death only too well.

Three years later, in December, 1773, Boston was the scene of
the notorious "Tea Party," following which Britain retaliated with five drastic measures, known by the people of Massachusetts against whom they were directed, as "the Intolerable Acts." The most repugnant of the acts was the one which altered the cherished charter of the state and made the military commander, General Thomas Gage, governor with powers of quartering troops in the homes of the populace. These acts were instrumental in bringing the first Continental Congress of America into existence.

The Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774, every colony except Georgia being represented. Its express purpose was to discuss the measures to be taken in combating the latest example of British oppression. Two courses of action were adopted which made the final breach between the two countries almost inevitable. The first was an agreement between the states' committee undertaking to enforce the regulation; the second was the passing of a resolution which threw open defiance in the face of the British administration. The resolution declared that if force were used against the people of Massachusetts, "all America ought to support them."

Following the first Continental Congress, arms were bought all over the country and groups of "minutemen" began drilling in preparation for the war which now seemed imminent. In the spring of 1775, General Gage, the military commander in Boston, decided to seize a quantity of ammunition he believed to be hidden at Concord, some twenty miles from Boston. He also hoped to capture Samuel Adams who was staying at Lexington, which lay between the two towns. On their return from an abortive visit to Concord, the British troops were subjected to a demoralizing attack by American guerillas, suffering 293 fatal casualties. Gage wrote an account of the action, but before the letter reached England, reinforcements under Generals Henry Clinton, John Burgoyne, and William Howe had arrived in America.

Thus opened the second stage of the war, one particular aspect of which, the apparently dilatory manner in which Howe pursued the campaign, is the subject of many of Charles Wesley's poems. The number of references to Howe and the length at which Wesley deals with his conduct, serve to emphasize the importance one must attach to this stage in the war as a whole and the perplexing nature of Howe's conduct itself. Wesley was not alone in being puzzled about Howe's curious military behavior; it remains one of the controversial points of history, and here we can do no more than outline the events, which Howe himself tried to

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10 The total effect of the five acts was to trespass, as the people of Massachusetts thought, on their rights and privileges, especially as the first of the acts altered the state charter.
do at the official inquiry held before the House of Commons between April and June, 1779. These historical events form the main content of Wesley's narrative poem, "The American War..."

On May 10, 1775, the second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia and decided to make one more effort at conciliation. A loyal address to the king was prepared. In June occurred the Battle of Bunker Hill from which it may reasonably be said the British never wholly recovered, and it may well be that Howe's extreme caution in future actions was conditioned by the memory of this battle. The action demonstrated very clearly the ineffectiveness of preconceived British military strategy, which was founded on the honorable tactic of men advancing shoulder to shoulder in disciplined lines. The British casualties were about 1,000, while the Americans lost some 500. On the strength of this the Americans claimed a victory, and the war entered a period of stalemate, during which Sir John Burgoyne whiled away the time by writing the prologue and epilogue of the tragedy, "Zeus". At the same time, Congress awaited a reply to the loyal address without result. The king issued a proclamation calling the Americans "rebels," and warning all persons against giving them aid and comfort.

During the first half of 1776, Howe was forced to abandon Boston. Burgoyne arrived in Canada in order to carry out his part of a plan that had been worked out while the British had been besieged in Boston. During the progress of these military operations, political developments of a major and far-reaching importance were gathering momentum. The various movements attained their object on June 7, when Richard Lee, on behalf of the Virginia delegation, submitted to congress a resolution which stated that "these United States are, and of right ought to be, free independent States... and all connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and of right ought to be, totally dissolved." Congress passed the resolution. It was the prelude to the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4.

The Declaration of Independence is based largely on the work of John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and John Milton, and in Britain the document was criticized on the ground of plagiarism. It falls into two parts, the first expressing a theory of government

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21 At the head of the MS of "The American War..." Wesley quotes from Virgil, a translation of which runs: "A single man restored our fortunes by delay." The reference to the Quintus Fabius Maximus, nicknamed "Cunctator" (Delayer) who, during the victories over the Romans, followed a policy of dogging Hannibal's footsteps but resolutely re-fusing a pitched battle. The parallel to Howe's campaign is clear and, for Wesley, Howe became the "Delayer."

22 This fact is pointed out by Carl Becker in his article, "Declaration of Independence"; James Truslow Adams, A Dictionary of American History, New York, Scribners', 1951.
which argued that it was legitimate in natural law for the colonies to separate themselves from Britain at any time desirable to them; the second part gave a list of specific acts on the part of the king which made it necessary in the interest of the colonies to do so. Undoubtedly, the obstinacy of the king in the pursuance of his policy of personal government, which he had carefully built up since 1760, was the main reason for the war in America.23

Charles Wesley does not mention the Declaration of Independence even in his long reflective poem, “The American War . . . ,” his narrative there beginning with the New York campaign of Sir William Howe. It is possible that, as is so often the case, those who lived close to the events themselves did not realize their tremendous historical significance, and that the Declaration of Independence was not taken very seriously. Its long list of grievances stated nothing new, and from the British point of view, the proposal that a group of rather disreputable colonists should cut themselves off from “the parent state” was not only impossible, but ridiculous.

It is indeed curious that Charles Wesley found nothing in these American affairs to comment upon, although his brother, with a more acute and perhaps prophetic political insight, had written to Lord North warning him of the dangerous situation in America and pleading for a more conciliatory attitude toward the colonists.24

It may be that Charles Wesley, with his belief in a high church doctrine of kingship and the proper relationship that ought to prevail between the mother country and her territorial offspring across the Atlantic, did not yet consider serious rebellion from that quarter a possibility. Indeed, it is perhaps his disbelief in this possibility which creates the atmosphere of amazement and horror in the poems on American independence. One has the feeling that, when writing in 1779, he is completely at a loss to explain events in America, simply because they are beyond the range of human possibility; the American colonists, therefore, are to him no longer human but savage, barbarous and primitive; they must be treated as children who have not learned to submit to parental authority. It is this note of horror which inspires such lines as:

Why do the Christen’d Heathen rage,
And furiously their power engage
Against the Lord most high. . . . (HP1, 1-3) p. 2.

or:

Ye vipers who your Parent tear,
With evil all our good requite . . . (HP9, 25-26) p. 18.

and:

Justice hath given the Rebels up,
Their own inventions to pursue,

23 Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 164. 
24 See John Wesley’s letter to Lord North, quoted above.
The British people were not really alarmed by the war in America until Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga in October, 1777, an event which awakened Britain to the seriousness of the situation. By that time, however, General Sir William Howe was already embarked on a campaign, defending the strategy of which gave Lord North so much trouble in the House of Commons and provided Charles Wesley with so much material for poetical comment.

In spite of the peace mission's failure, the British army remained inactive from August 29 to September 16, 1776, when Howe broke the lull by attacking Manhattan Island. In this he gained a measure of success, although he did not conclude the action by joining battle with Washington's army, part of which was still in control of a considerable portion of the island.

An example of Howe's enigmatic behavior can be seen in the way in which he conducted his campaign in the latter part of 1776. Howe's army, commanded in the field by Lord Charles Cornwallis, had pursued the Americans across New Jersey over the Delaware and into Pennsylvania, the last American rearguard crossing the river as the British advance parties came into sight. Philadelphia now lay directly in the line of the British troops. The city was virtually defenseless and the Congress hurriedly departed for Baltimore. At this juncture Howe came to the curious decision that the campaign for 1776 was over and returned to New York, deferring the capture of Philadelphia until the following year.

Charles Wesley sums up the campaign of 1776 thus:

[Poetic text from Charles Wesley]

Although Wesley's own comments on Howe's conduct are all second-hand and very largely biased, he is probably right when he claims that Howe never intended to cross the Delaware and force home his undoubted advantage, since he had one eye on the policy of his own party, which was openly opposed to the war:

[Poetic text from Charles Wesley]
But if in Howe’s view the campaign of 1776 was over, Washington had other ideas. He expected Howe to cross the river when the ice was thick enough and in order to forestall such a move proposed a surprise attack on the two posts of Trenton and Bordentown which Howe, who had favored withdrawing to New Brunswick, had left occupied by his troops as a compromise with Cornwallis. Howe cannot be blamed for allowing Washington to surprise the garrison at Trenton, although he may have underestimated the audacity of the American commander and the capacity of the Hessians to enjoy their Christmas festivities to the full. The fact remains that during Christmas night, when Colonel Rahl, an arrogant and habitual drunkard, commanding the Hessian mercenaries at Trenton, had been carried to bed and his troops were in a similar state of intoxication, Washington crossed the Delaware and within forty-five minutes the Hessians surrendered. Wesley describes the action thus:

He [Washington] seiz’d the moment of success
The unsuspicious troops t’ oppress,
The river cross’d his glory bent on
And took them napping all at Trenton. ("The American War," 156-159)

Four days later Washington again crossed the river, but in the face of Cornwallis’ oncoming forces he was driven back in disorder. Cornwallis was loathe to press home the advantage in a night attack but during that same night, Washington’s army slipped away toward Princeton along an unguarded road. Brunswick was his next objective since it controlled the main road from New York to Philadelphia. His troops, however, were too exhausted to march the 17 miles to Princeton and take the British forces by surprise. After some guerilla warfare which was as exhausting to the Americans as the British, Washington took up his winter quarters at Morristown, well protected by mountain passes from Howe’s army lying at New York some 25 miles away, whither it had retreated.

Wesley condemns these tactics of Howe in no uncertain terms, particularly his failure to follow up the advantages of Cornwallis’ victory after the Trenton fiasco:

As swiftly back again he flew,
From Six to One the foes he knew,
Well able to retake the Post,
The Town, and Him, and all his Host;
But Howe th’ unkind attempt forebore,
Resolv’d the Province to restore,
Nor trust Loyalist or Hessian,
Or his own troops, to keep possession. ("The American War," 160-168)

It was true that the Hessians could not be trusted to respect the property of the inhabitants. In fact Clinton regarded the bad
feeling in New Jersey, occasioned by the billeting of Hessian troops during the winter of 1776-77, as one of the most lamentable problems he was called upon to face when he assumed command just over a year later. Howe claimed that he had done all in his power to prevent the devastation and plundering of the countryside, but on the authority of Hon. Thomas Jones, one of the royal judges in the supreme court of New York Province, who was an ardent loyalist, Howe was slow to punish his troops' excesses. Perhaps he shrank from the unpopularity, which a strict disciplinarian must always incur. "I am not much pleased with my friend Sir Wm. Howe neither," wrote Lady Sarah Bunbury, "for, though a most human man himself he has not contrived to keep strict discipline in his army." 25 Wesley has, therefore, some justification for his comments on the conduct of Howe's army, for on December 7, 1776, when the troops took possession of Princeton, the camp followers gutted the library:

He lets his valiant soldiers loose
To rob, and plunder, and abuse,
Whose mercy no distinction knows
Of age or sex, of friends or foe. . . ("The American War," 75-78)

The effect upon Howe of the Trenton reverses was to make him more cautious and to accord greater respect for Washington's army. Granted that Howe was perhaps not prosecuting his campaign as vigorously as he might on account of his political views, the practical support from London was apathetic, inefficient, and only given in accordance with preconceived and very mistaken ideas about the military situation as a whole. The American army was not, as the British government led the country in general, and Wesley in particular, to believe:

. . . a despicable Host
Who nothing had whereof to boast,
Undisciplin'd, half-arm'd, half fed,
To labor, not to battle bred,
Drag'd from their shops, or from the plow
To face th'unconquerable How [sic] . . . ("The American War," 182-187)

Perhaps the "despicable Host" was more used to "labor," but it had also given an extremely good account of itself in battle, as Howe knew far better than Charles Wesley or Lord George Germaine. In a letter from the colonial secretary to Howe on January 14, 1777, nearly every request for troops which Howe made was refused, while at the same time Germaine put forward a plan of his own. This consisted of Burgoyne following the route from Canada opened up in 1776 by General Guy Carleton, whom Wesley describes as:

In the meantime, Germaine's refusal of Howe's requests for reinforcements had caused the commander-in-chief to reduce his projected campaigns one by one, until he decided to proceed with the attack on Pennsylvania only. Burgoyne, with some impetuosity and over confidence after the success at Ticonderoga, struck across country instead of taking the easier route to Fort Edward, the next objective, by way of Lake George. His path lay through wild territory where over forty bridges had been destroyed by the retreating Americans, whose delaying tactics gave them time to prepare adequate defenses after regrouping their forces. When Burgoyne reached Fort Edward in July, 1777, his stores were almost exhausted and he did not dare to cross the Hudson River and make for Albany, where Howe was supposed to meet him. In the same month Howe had sailed for the Chesapeake, bent on conquering what he thought to be the loyalist stronghold of Pennsylvania. Wesley is especially sarcastic about this decision:

Ask Will, why he refus'd to join
And save the resolute Burgoyne
Marching (his rival to betray)
Their thousand miles another way? ... (HP48, 23-26) p. 102.

In "The American War," Wesley indirectly accuses Howe of treason in disobeying the king's instructions:

Commanded by his King to join
The brave, unfortunate Burgoyne...
... He flies impatient of delay,
But turns—and flies another way. ("The American War," 305-310)

Wesley's opinion merely reflects the administration's account of the disaster of Saratoga, an explanation which certainly does not fit the facts. Carleton, whose dislike of Germaine was reciprocated, wrote his own account in November: "This unfortunate event, it is to be hoped, will, in future, prevent ministers from pretending to direct operations of war, at 3,000 miles distance. ..." 26 Howe also claimed that he was acting with Germaine's and the king's approval and that Burgoyne knew he could not expect assistance of any kind from the southern army. Wesley is naturally critical of the Howe brothers, who, with certain justification, blamed the incompetence and obstinacy of the ministry for the surrender at Saratoga. He imagines the Whigs in Britain saying:

"Their Rivals, not the Noble Pair,  
"Prolong'd the dire destructive war;  
"The ministers, Burgoyne [sic], betray'd,  
"And captives all his army made; . . . (HP32, Part I, 42-45) p. 65.

It is true that many Whig ballads expressed exultation over the disaster, a sentiment which lent support to those who believed that the war was in the hands of generals whose sympathies lay with the rebellious colonists. But it is unfair to suggest that Howe deliberately left Burgoyne to his fate, as the letters between Howe and Germaine clearly show. The inefficiency of the administration needed a scapegoat and the commander-in-chief was the obvious choice.

Howe's plan to attack Pennsylvania had the full support of the British government, but of this Wesley was obviously ignorant at the time. Germaine was particularly eager to punish "that seat of Congress" and considered it would be a fitting example to the rest of the colonies. Consequently Howe sailed for the Chesapeake in July, 1777:

To seek and fight with Washington,  
The man, already found to seek,  
By sailing round the Chesapeake . . . ("The American War," 312-314)

One advantage of Howe's seemingly strange decision to take to sea was that Washington did not know where he was going and thus the Americans were kept marching and counter-marching across the country as various conflicting reports came in.

The British disembarked at Head of Elk and marched to Wilmington, Washington's strategy being to allow them to get a fair way from the ships before attacking. Accordingly he decided to make his stand at Brandywine Creek where the road from Philadelphia to Wilmington forded the stream. Cornwallis crossed the stream at an unguarded point lower down and turned the American flank, but fortunately for Washington darkness fell and he was able to retreat. Wesley comments:

His victory at Brandywine  
Bears witness to the man divine,  
Who skillfully surrounds his foes,  
Attacks, o'erpowers them, and o'erthrows . . . ("The American War," 365-369)

A week after the action at Brandywine, Washington again sought to bring the British to action, but torrential rain prevented it. A few days later an American force under Anthony Wayne was wiped out and once again Philadelphia was in danger and the streets rang with the cry: "The British are coming!"

When Howe suspends his conquering power  
Discourag'd by a sudden shower,  
And thre' the interposing rain  
The runaways are say'd again. ("The American War," 396-399)
Thus, Wesley caustically commented. But perhaps he was unaware that it was extremely difficult to fire an eighteenth century gun in heavy rain.

On September 18, Congress had been warned that Howe was preparing to cross the Schuylkill and that since the city could not be defended, Congress and population should be evacuated. This fact somewhat contradicts Wesley's account, which is almost certainly based on Galloway's exaggerated and biased views:

Thick planted on the adverse side,
To guard the interdicted tide,
And every ford secure,
The thundering implements of war
The' impracticable passage bar,
And make destruction sure. (HP45, 7-12) p. 96.

Wesley is probably anxious to emphasize the importance of the loyalist cause, one of his major themes throughout poems on America. As if to point out his moral regarding the value of loyalists, he introduces the enigmatical Richard Swanwick 27 as a guide who enabled "twice ten thousand men" to cross "the secret ford":

The loyal Swanwick goes before
And saves the British Host! (HP45, 29-30) p. 96.

But it was not until September 25, that Howe entered the city.

In the meantime, Burgoyne did not feel that his position was safe. Short of supplies and in face of a headlong American rush led by Benedict Arnold, Burgoyne's troops fell back. A few miles away at Saratoga the British were almost completely surrounded. Belatedly 28 a relief column started from New York up the Hudson, taking Forts Montgomery and Clinton and, although failing in its main objective of relieving Burgoyne, the expedition had the effect of modifying the terms of surrender, which were concluded between General Horatio Gates and Burgoyne in an atmosphere of great cordiality.

Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga convinced Howe that another battle with Washington should be sought, and consequently he attacked the two forts on the Delaware which had been holding up shipping transport to the port of Philadelphia. They fell after a siege lasting two months and Howe rode out to the American camp at Whitemarsh in an attempt to destroy Washington's army. For

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27 See p. 35 for discussion of Swanwick.
28 Clinton praises the men under his command when attacking Forts Montgomery and Clinton, but deprecates the opinion of those who said it should have been done earlier. See The American Rebellion—Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782, with an Appendix of Original Documents, ed. William B. Wilcox. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954. Pa. 81.
five days he studied the position, decided that battle conditions were unsuitable, and returned to his comfortable quarters in Philadelphia. Wesley makes some characteristic comments on these events:

With valor equally discreet
Again at the White Marsh they meet,
Or might have met, for full three days
They looked each other in the face;
But neither showed much appetite
Or passionate desire to fight,
One General, because he could not
O' ercome, and One because he would not.
So having gain'd their different ends,
The both drew off, and parted friends. (“The American War,” 403-412)

Howe’s conduct of the war at this point must have appeared inexplicable. Being out of sympathy with the whole business, he was perhaps half hoping that the rebellious colonists would come to reason without further bloodshed. But more important still he had tendered his resignation to the government, considering it the opportune moment to retire from America, since he viewed the prospects of war, especially after Saratoga, with little optimism. In Philadelphia he passed the time in theatrical entertainment and social intercourse, in which apparently his next door neighbor, Joseph Galloway, a prominent Philadelphia citizen and loyalist, was not invited to participate. Howe’s mode of life and strange inactivity at this time must have caused the loyalists some concern. He claimed that their loyalty was in doubt, although, as Wesley ironically remarks, he did entrust a regiment to Galloway:

To doubt their [loyalists] faith the Chief affects,
Their needless services rejects,
Unwilling his own sloth should be
Comp’rd with their activity;
He will not therefore give consent
For raising of a Regiment;
Yet rashly in an evil day,
Intrusts a Troop to Gallow[ay] . . . (“The American War,” 482-489)

Howe’s army then lay in comfort during the winter of 1776-77,

Dissolv’d in luxury and ease,
With fulness of superfluous bread,
With choicest delicacies fed. (“The American War,” 511-513)

On the other hand, Washington’s forces, entrenched at Valley Forge, suffered appallingly from a shortage of food and clothing.

Valley Forge was nothing more than a village consisting of thatched huts. Washington used the time well, however, employing the services of General Frederick William Von Steuben to drill

²⁹ Van Tyne, op. cit., p. 246.
and discipline his remaining army, so that when spring came Washington's troops were equal to the British regulars. Wesley sums up this period of the war thus, ironically explaining Howe's reluctance to pursue the war in view of his political sympathies:

Why should he crush the hutter Few,
The famish'd sick to death pursue,
Or their Commander seize,
To give their Cause a mortal wound,
His patriotic friends confound,
And his proud Rivals please? (HP57, Part II, 37-42) p. 131.

Howe's conduct of the war was officially examined before the House of Commons from April to June, 1779. In his speech on April 29, he defended himself again and again, but none of his excuses is really satisfactory. He had restrained Cornwallis from pursuing Washington to the Delaware until he arrived at the front with reinforcements, and while there was still time to attack Philadelphia, he had delayed so long that Washington had destroyed or seized every boat on the river. His speech to the House of Commons devoted much time to the operations of the winter of 1776 and the reasons for abandoning the Jerseys. He claimed that his posts were too extended and that he wished to protect those loyal inhabitants who had come over to the British side on the strength of his own proclamation on November 27. Whatever the explanation, Howe always seemed to err on the side of caution. Yet his personal courage was beyond question. Whenever faced by Washington, Bunker Hill seemed to loom large in Howe's memory. "As an executive officer," says George O. Trevelyan, "Howe was all fire and activity, brave and cool as Julius Caesar," and in support of this opinion he quotes from The Character of General Howe, written by Charles Lee, while in prison awaiting court martial. "But he was seldom left to himself. McKensey, Balfour Galloway were his counsellors; they urged him to all acts of harshness. They were his scribes. All the damned stuff which was issued to the astonished world was theirs. I believe he scarcely ever read the letters he signed." 31

Howe's desultory prosecution of the war was traced to two sources by his opponents. First, it was said that, as a member of the opposition, he disliked pursuing a policy with which his party was in violent disagreement and which, if successful, would bring it into disrepute, and there are at least some grounds for believing this explanation. Samuel Kirk of Nottingham, one of Howe's constituents, wrote to the General charging him "with a breach of

promise in accepting of the command of the forces about to be
to America for suppressing the rebellion." 32 The letter con-
tinues: "I do not wish you may fail, as many do, but I cannot say
I wish success to the undertaking." 33 Charles Wesley refers to
this and other letters in a note added in the margin of "The
American War," where he remarks on the political aspect:

Unless for patriotic reason
He meant to lose the fighting season
And confidential friends content
With the disastrous war's event. ("The American War," 349-352)

The second source of Howe's conduct sprang, it was said, from
his fear of losing his appointments, if the war were over quickly.
With this view Charles Wesley agrees, but he was probably follow-
ing the lead of his brother, whose editorial comment in the
Extracts dissociates himself from Galloway's point, "That there
are those who imagine the war was procrastinated for lucrative
views. But from this charge I acquit the General." 34 It seems more
reasonable to believe Galloway here, since this is one of the very
few occasions when he is prepared to concede a point to Howe.
Charles Wesley sums up what he claims to be the mercenary and
political explanations of Howe's conduct thus:

If Congress is destroy'd my friend,
The war and my appointments end
And the war's fortunate conclusion
Brings my own Party to confusion ... (HP44, 23-26) p. 94.

Perhaps the simplest explanation of Howe's controversial con-
duct of the war is that he was the instrument of a bilateral foreign
policy. He was a professional soldier, whose duty it was to carry
out the instructions of his government, but in this instance his
government did not have the unanimous support of the House of
Commons, and as a member of the opposition party he had naturally
great sympathy with the American cause. Consequently he was
continually hoping that by a show of force and limited military
action, the Americans would call off the struggle. In any case, the
whole miserable affair in America was conducted in a half-hearted
way from beginning to end by all except the king and his close
supporters, among whom for theoligico-political reasons was
Charles Wesley, whose comments on the Howe controversy form

33 Ibid. p. 99.
34 John Wesley's note: "The Editor of this Extract cannot agree. He fears, the enjoying his immense Appointment was the motive of his Delays." Extracts, p. 82.
such a considerable portion of the "Hymns on Patriotism . . . ".

The year of Howe's return to Britain not only saw the American army greatly improved in discipline and morale, but also the entry of France into the war on the side of the colonists, so that what Englishmen in general and the Whigs in particular had been saying for years had come to pass. As early as 1776, North was laughed at when he stated that there was complete understanding between Britain and France, and Burke had long advocated that peace with America was infinitely preferable to forcing the colonists into a French alliance. But while North was protesting the friendship of Britain and France in the House, the American high commissioner in Paris, Silas Deane, was procuring French aid in the form of engineers and French officers.

The peace terms which Lord North offered the United States in December, 1777, fearing an alliance between the Americans and the French, and the news of Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga, persuaded Vergennes, the French foreign minister, that it was time for France to enter the war, since, if peace were made, she would lose her opportunity of gaining redress of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Thus on February 6, 1778, treaties were signed between France and the United States. In the same month of February, Lord North brought up his conciliatory proposals in Parliament, but before their acceptance the bills were sent to America, with the government's promise that it would stand by the terms set forth in them. The Tories were shocked at these terms for they were in essence the points the Whigs had so long been advocating. 35 Congress, however, rejected the peace offer outright, demanding that independence be recognized and that all British troops be withdrawn before any negotiations could take place. The government did not wait to hear how the offer was received. Instead a royal commission was set up headed by Lord Carlisle with powers to negotiate peace. But before they left, the attitude of North toward the colonists had hardened. On their arrival they discovered that Henry Clinton, now commander-in-chief, had received orders from the government to evacuate Philadelphia, a move about which they had been kept entirely ignorant.

The evacuation was occasioned by the sailing of the French fleet under Charles H. D'Estaing for America and, since the position of the British in Philadelphia depended on maintaining command of the sea, it was considered safer to evacuate before D'Estaing could blockade the Delaware with his much more powerful fleet.

Wesley sees the evacuation under the new commander, Clinton, as a mere continuance of Howe's policy:

True followers of the gallant Howe,  
The cause of rebels they espouse,  
And vow to leave them free . . . (HP57, Part III, 19-24) p. 133.

Wesley was still convinced that, even though Howe had sailed for home, his successor was as self-seeking as he was.

With all his spoils the Hero sails!  
Yet private still alas prevails  
Above the public good . . . (HP57, Part III, 1-3) p. 132.

Clinton, however, had some concern for the army's good, since he disobeyed the order to embark his troops and proceed by sea to New York; instead he saved valuable time by marching overland to Sandy Hook, and then continuing the journey by sea.

Wesley's comments on the naval conduct of the war are based mainly on his brother's Extracts from Joseph Galloway's "Letter to the Rt. Hon. Lord Vincent Howe on his Naval Conduct of the American War." These comments bear little relation to the actual facts, which were truly appalling. That there was a British fleet to put to sea at all was an act of faith in rotting timbers on the part of the ships' commanders. But Wesley's views were colored by his belief that both the Howes only half-heartedly conducted their respective campaigns on account of their political persuasions. Wesley comments on the naval commander thus:

Or let his warlike Brother own  
What with his fleet he might have done,  
Block'd all their harbours up, and seiz'd,  
Or burst their ships, when'er he pleased,  
Their ragamuffin host compel'd  
Their Chief without a shot to yield,  
Reduc'd to desperate condition  
And starv'd into intire submission. (HP48, 15-21) p. 102.

Undoubtedly this was the ideal policy to follow, but where to get the instruments of that policy Wesley does not say. Lord Sandwich did not know either, but army and navy commanders merely carried out their government's orders in Wesley's opinion; they did not question the practicability of those orders.

Certainly the arrival of D'Estaing's fleet had upset the balance of sea power and allowed the American privateers free movement, thus endangering Britain's lines of communication. And in Europe, by preparing to invade Britain, France was hoping to achieve her purpose, a purpose which had nothing to do with helping aggrieved colonists. Britain's safety depended on her ability to control the Channel seas, but with the home fleet in a miserable condition, this was extremely doubtful. During the year 1779, by tremendous
efforts, 24 ships of the line in various states of seaworthiness were assembled to hold the Channel. Soldiers were pressed into naval service and of this strange assemblage of men and material, Admiral Augustus Keppel, a Whig, who like the Howe brothers made no secret of his disapproval of the American War, was put in command. In July he attacked the French fleet of Ushant, but his ships, ill-equipped and ill-manned, were unable to bring the French to a major engagement.

Subsequently, resignations of officers were so numerous that Sandwich was forced to bring aging and retired officers back into service. Thus did Britain face the anticipated French invasion, when in August, 1779, a French fleet appeared off Plymouth, and if disease and lack of coordination between the naval commanders had not intervened, the port would certainly have fallen. Without doubt the year 1779 represented as serious a crisis as had ever existed in the history of Britain. John Wesley, writing to Samuel Bradburn, stated, "It is the judgment of many, that, since the time of the Invincible Armada, Great Britain and Ireland were never in such danger of foreign enemies as they are at this day. Humanly speaking we are not able to contend with them, either by sea or land . . ." 36 In a poem written at the time, Charles Wesley strikes characteristic notes of pessimism and alarm:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The national calamity} \\
\text{With stony eyes can Britons see,} \\
\text{With stupid carelessness? . . .} \\
\text{Numberless hosts and fleets combin'd,} \\
\text{Rebellious Sects and aliens join'd,} \\
\text{With dire malicious joy. . . .} \\
\text{Our navies and our trade to seize,} \\
\text{Our church and government t' oppress,} \\
\text{Our country to destroy. (HP4, 1-3; 7-12) p. 7.}
\end{align*}
\]

While these critical events were taking place in Europe, the centers of battle in America moved to the western frontier of the United States and to the Carolinas in the south. Clinton was badly in need of reinforcements, his only encouragement being the instruction from Germaine to annihilate Washington's army. Clinton made one move from New York capturing a small outpost, which was later lost. During this period military operations were of a minor and often unfortunate nature. For example, Governor Tryon of New York descended upon New Haven, burning the town and plundering the inhabitants, an action which served no military purpose and only brought discredit on the British cause. It is this apparent lack of real activity which Wesley criticizes by imagining the loyalists' point of view:

None for our [Loyalists'] lives or safety cares,
When Congress drags to death, nor spares,
The feebleness of age:
Cl[inton] a tame indifference shows,
Nor dares retaliate on our foes,
Or check their bloody rage. (HP57, Part III, 43-48) p. 134.

In the south, however, General Prevost successfully withstood
the combined French and American attack at Savannah, which he
had taken in December, 1778. The French fleet under D'Estaing
sailed back to France, while the remnant of the American army
returned to South Carolina leaving the British to consolidate their
gains.

On December 26, 1779, Clinton, knowing that the French fleet
had departed, sailed for Charleston. He is at pains to point out
in his own account of the expedition that his fleet and army were
far inferior in numbers to that which was commanded by Howe.37
When the British had attacked the town in 1776, the defenses had
proved too strong, but this time, taking advantage of a heavy gale,
the British ships ran past the batteries and by April, 1780, Charles-
ton was completely surrounded. On May 9, the British opened a
terrific bombardment, which undermined the citizens' morale and
General Benjamin Lincoln sued for peace. This action, which was
quite a creditable performance, is given very grudging praise by
Charles Wesley:

But did he not at last awake,
And force the noble powers to quake
While on their troops he flew?
He beat their troops he took their town
And sated with immense renown
Back to his fort withdrew. (HP57, Part III, 55-60) p. 134.

With the fall of the city, the whole of the South Carolina sought
terms with Clinton, who tried by leniency to win the population
to his side and insure allegiance to the British crown.

Clinton, however, thought it necessary to return to New York
in order to keep Washington in check, and this seems to be the
reference in the last line of the stanza quoted here. The effect of
Clinton's departure was soon apparent in the changed method of
administration in the captured town. Lord Cornwallis did not
carry out Clinton's instructions for establishing a board of police
and did not revive civil government; in fact a number of rebels were
hanged on Cornwallis' orders.38 Moreover throughout the province

37 "When I took this move, my army
was inferior to that my predecessors
actually had by at least sixteen thou-
sand men, the ships of war serving with
me were not equal to a third of the
number he had." Clinton, op. cit., p. 158.

38 Clinton places the blame for the
changes in his instructions upon Corn-
wallis, who was probably under the
impression that Clinton was shortly to
retire, leaving him as commander-in-chief.
Clinton, op. cit., pp. 182, 183.
Clinton’s policy did not meet with success simply because the loyalists, who had suffered for so long under patriot rule, began to avenge themselves on their former rulers so that very soon a minor civil war developed.

In spite of the unrest in South Carolina, Cornwallis contemplated further conquests and decided to attack North Carolina, where he hoped the loyalists would assist him. He utterly defeated General Gates at Camden on August 14, 1780, but suffered two defeats himself, one at King’s Mountain, the other at Cowpens. Despite these setbacks Cornwallis determined to root out the seat of disaffection, which he considered to be in Virginia.

At this time, Clinton, believing that Washington intended to attack New York with the aid of the new French fleet which had just arrived, asked Cornwallis for reinforcements, thus seriously weakening the British cause in the south, and directly contributing to Cornwallis’ disastrous capitulation at Yorktown in October, 1781. It was in the month preceding this disaster that the curious, but intriguing proposals noted by Charles Wesley at some length, were discussed by Clinton and Generals Arnold and Phillips:

Who has not heard of Rankin’s proffer
To bring the rebel Congress over,
At little York to take them napping
Without a mother’s son escaping . . . (HP44, 1-3) p. 94.

Rankin was a colonel of the militia in York County, Pennsylvania, and acted under the code name of “Mr. Alexander” as a loyalist spy. He proposed an attack on Philadelphia, with which Clinton was in agreement:

The chief his bold design approves . . . (HP44, 9) pa. 94.

Cornwallis, however, thought the whole venture impractical. Clinton had hoped to establish a post on the Delaware in order to control the greater part of the exports of Pennsylvania, as those of Virginia and Maryland were controlled by having command of Chesapeake Bay. Rankin was asked at a council of war in New York on September 17, about the state of the loyalists south of the Delaware, since Clinton hoped to enlist their support in a diversionary attack on Philadelphia. Washington’s purpose had become clear when he and Jean B. Rochambeau arrived at Yorktown and met Lafayette and other French forces. To add to

39 “Being in the place of General Philips, I thought myself called upon by you to give my opinion with all deference to Mr. Alexander’s proposals and the attempt upon Philadelphia. Having experienced much disappointment on that head, I own I would cautiously engage in measure depending materially for their success upon the active assistance from the country.” Cornwallis to Clinton, June 30, 1781. Clinton, op. cit., p. 535.
Clinton's troubles in the midst of preparations for an expedition to relieve Cornwallis, Prince William, the son of George III, arrived, and two days were devoted to parties and parades. Thus as the expedition sailed on October 19, Cornwallis was actually in the process of surrendering. When the British fleet appeared off Chesapeake on October 24, there was nothing for it to do but sail back to New York.

The calamity of Yorktown struck England a heavy blow and virtually ended the war. Lord North staggered about his apartment exclaiming wildly: "Oh God! It's all over!" Added to the military disaster was the apparent abandonment of the loyalists which the articles of surrender at Yorktown implied. Charles Wesley's great concern in the poems on America is the fate of the loyalists, and he comments on the Yorktown disaster, not so much with regard to its military aspect as on the fate of those unfortunate supporters of royalty whom nobody really wanted and who were obviously going to be an extremely awkward factor in any peace negotiations:

... Till headlong and precipitate
Cornwallis' rush'd upon his fate:
Yielding at once without a stroke,
And passing, tame, beneath the yoke,

He beg'd the haughty Foe to spare
His stulers and his tools of war,
But left the Loyalists to feel
The mercy of those Fiends from Hell ... (HP48, 55-62) p. 103.

It is this period immediately following the capitulation of Yorktown with which Charles Wesley is most concerned in his poems specifically dealing with the loyalists. The tenth article of Cornwallis' surrender terms, which asked that no inhabitant of York or Gloucester who had aided the British should be punished, was refused, and this seemed to set the tone for all future negotiations in which the loyalists' position was discussed.

During the months after the debacle at Yorktown, the king's attitude toward politics changed considerably. He seemed to realize that his efforts to enforce personal rule by exerting his influence on the British parliament had been utterly without success. The first three months of 1782 were characterized by the growing weight of attacks on the government, the most important single assault being the famous resolution moved by General Conway on February 22, "That a humble Address be presented to his Majesty
that the war on the Continent of America may no longer be pursued with the Impracticable Purpose of reducing the Inhabitants of the Country to obedience by Force." The division was remarkable—yeas 193, noes 194. Wesley's poem on this occasion is indicative of the general belief that the voting represented not only the end of the American War, but of Great Britain itself:

Shall the war be abandon'd, or still carried on?
(Now we come to the point, and the day is our own)
Shall Britain exist as a Nation or not?
It exists by a single, unfortunate vote . . . (HP26), 18-21) p. 52.

Conway put the same question on February 27, but introduced the phrase, "offensive war"; the motion was carried and Horace Walpole states that this was the decisive blow to Lord North's administration. In a poem entitled "Written after the Next Vote," Wesley describes the situation thus:

So they promise and vow, w[h]o triumphantly sing
For their victory over their Country & King;
The King they have conquer'd, & routed his friends,
In pursuit of their own diabolical ends,
By hard struggling and lying their purpose attain'd,
And by Treason—at last, a Majority gain'd! (HP27, 13-18) p. 53.

Wesley's claim that the opposition had gained their majority by means of "treason" is, of course, utter nonsense. General Conway was a Whig of great respectability and moderation and there was certainly nothing treasonable in the motion he carried except that it legitimately defeated the king's personal wishes, but in this defeat Wesley saw theological implications as the poems he dates from February 26 clearly show. One poem, which is in effect a prayer for the king, reiterates his belief in the doctrine of the divine right:

Preserv'd in perfect peace
By Thee his only Lord,
Till Britain's happiness he sees
With harmony restor'd.
United in Thy fear
Till all his subjects join
In George (thine Image) to revere
The Majesty divine. (HP15, 41-48) p. 34.

In March, to forestall further votes of censure, the North ministry resigned. Wesley writes:

With what madness and rage they now lay about 'em,
The old ministers threaten, and rage till they out 'em,
But the worst of them all, for whose horrible crime
His blood shall atone, is the Minister Prime! (HP27, 19-24) p. 53.

A new administration was formed under Lord Rockingham, whom the king detested, and the correspondence of George III
CHARLES WESLEY AND THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 33

shows the deep humiliation he felt at having to accept such a ministry and how completely he regarded it as a personal defeat of himself.

There are many references in Charles Wesley’s poems to the new ministry; the greatest number appearing in the long poem, "The Revolution," in which Wesley greets the Rockingham government with contemptuous irony:

All hail ye venerable Band,
Who nobly for your Country stand,
And from the yoke of tyranny
Set an indignant nation free
From Ministers that serv’d for gain,
From Influence, and a Tory reign! (HP32, Part II, 1-6) p. 66.

In the same poem Wesley notes the opposition’s contention that the North ministry was indirectly responsible for losing America on account of the misguided policies it pursued:

Mob undiscerning took their word
And turn them out with fury roar’d . . .
‘Turn them out, discard them all
Who lost America,’ they cried. . . . (HP32, Part I, 50-54) p. 65.

Rockingham died in June and it was his successor, Shelburne, who eventually negotiated the preliminary articles of peace which were signed on November 30, 1782. Wesley’s thought immediately turned to the “Patriots” in England, who he considered had now achieved their aim:

Spirits perturb’d, ye now may rest,
Nor stir the hell within your breast,
The Rebels have their purpose gain’d
Ye see your hearts desire obtain’d. (HP42, 1-4) p. 90.

In a poem entitled “Written on the Peace, 1783,” and probably composed in January of that year, Wesley accuses Shelburne of similar “crimes” to those with which he had earlier charged Sir William Howe, namely, that Shelburne, like Howe, had been more concerned with keeping his appointments than reducing the Americans to obedience:

But shoud not the First Minister
Make it his chief concern and care
To save the nation from disgrace?
“No truly: but to save his place
“And gratify the Factious tribes
“And sell three kingdoms for a bribe.” (HP46, Part III 6-12) p. 100.

The poem continues with a very inaccurate account of the negotiations. Wesley believed, as indeed many of his contemporaries must have done, that Shelburne had not only made no attempt to insist on restitution for the loyalists in any peace terms, but that he had
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prevented Richard Oswald, the British negotiator, from revealing the nature of those terms which Wesley imagined were bound to be adverse toward the loyalists. In fact, Wesley is quite wrong when he comments:

The truth let honest Oswald tell
Which knavish Sh[elburne] woud conceal,
To rebels, and arch—rebels prays,
And for an ignominious peace
In treats our natural enemies . . . (HP46, Part III, 13-18) p. 100.

That Oswald received definite instructions on the loyalist question is clear from the correspondence of George III. In a letter from Townsend to the king dated November 19, 1782, he informs the king that Oswald is to insist on “a Personal Amnesty to all who have adhered to Your Majesty without any exception; likewise upon payments of Debts due before 1775 and restitution of Property to all Real British Subjects, taking care to obtain as clear and as favourable a definition of that Term as possible.” 42

The fact of the matter was not, as Wesley believed, that Britain had disowned her faithful supporters, but that she was quite unable to enforce terms which were favorable to them. Moreover, Congress directed that each state should make restitution of property, but pointed out that Congress itself could only advise and not compel the states to do so; thus nothing was done. Wesley may be excused for his ignorance in regard to the matter, but he is certainly wrong in inferring that Shelburne cared little or nothing for the loyalists’ fate, as letters between negotiators clearly show. The treatment of the loyalists was the unfortunate result of an administration compelled to make peace on economic as well as political grounds. It could suggest rules of conduct toward the loyalists, but it was in fact powerless to enforce those rules.

Wesley’s political judgments may not have been sound, but his concern for the loyalists, whom neither side really knew how to deal with, was certainly charitable and right. His group of seven poems written toward the end of 1782 discusses the fate of the American refugees who had taken up residence in England, in extremely impecunious circumstances. A typical example reads:

So be it then! if God’s decree
Ordains, or suffers it to be
For wisest ends unknown,
The land from which our Fathers came
Our native sail we see, and claim
The country for our own. (HP36, 1-6), p. 75.

The poem goes on to point out the poverty of these people, many of whom had lost all their wealth and importance:

We who for all a table spread,
Are forc'd to beg our bitter bread . . . (HP37, 19, 20) p. 77.

Throughout the war the position of the loyalists had become steadily worse. At first the majority condemned the objectionable acts of the British parliament, but strongly opposed separation from the empire. Before April, 1775, few efforts were made to suppress the loyalists, but following the skirmish at Lexington, when war seemed to be inevitable, measures against them increased in severity.

The loyalists contributed about 60,000 men to the royal colors, organizing themselves in militia companies under commissions from the crown. Wesley gives the names of several such leaders, one of whom, Colonel Rankin, has already been mentioned. Another more enigmatic figure is that of Richard Swanwick, who was a customs officer in Philadelphia and who, due to his loyalist sympathies, had all his estates confiscated. Apparently Swanwick acted as a scout for Sir William Howe in the attack on Philadelphia in September, 1777, and enabled the British Army to cross the Schuylkill, a tributary of the Delaware, by means of a "secret ford":

Brought by a way they never knew,
Army and Chief their Guide pursue;
The secret ford is crost,
And twice ten thousand men pass on,
The loyal Swanwick goes before
And saves the British Host! (HP45, 25-30) p. 96.

Wesley has two other poems which, according to his own note, were transcribed from a portrait of Swanwick where, apparently, they had first been written "under the picture," but of this picture I have found no trace. Both poems eulogize the loyalty of Swanwick and draw attention to the fate which most loyalists suffered, namely, confiscation of property.

Galloway said that the loyalists who came into Philadelphia during the British occupation "had been plundered of everything in the world." Wesley comments:

Punish'd for their Leaders' ['] sin,
Scourg'd for madness not their own,
By infernal arts drawn in,
Hear the loyal sufferers groan
Who shall bid their sufferings cease,

It is true that the British abandoned the majority of the loyalists when Philadelphia was evacuated in 1778, but it is difficult to see what else they could have done. Worse still, however, several

unfortunate loyalist leaders fell victim to the harsh laws of the state which branded loyalists as traitors with the penalty of death without benefit of clergy. John Roberts, mentioned by Galloway in his examination, was one loyalist who suffered in this way, and Wesley, most probably using Galloway's information as raw material for the poem, uses him as an example of martyred loyalty:

Witness the venerable man  
Whose blood with that of thousands slain  
Beneath the altar cries:  
The martyr his reward receives  
But an eternal monument leaves  

It is estimated that 200,000 loyalists died, became refugees, or were exiled during the course of the Revolution.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that the loyalists were not all that Wesley seemed to imagine they were. Very often they could not be relied on; if things went badly they disappeared, as Burgoyne found to his cost when he advanced on Saratoga. Undoubtedly, some of the responsibility for their plight must rest upon themselves. Galloway testified that he had never heard of any loyalist association opposing the Whigs in any part of Pennsylvania. He went on to say that instead of becoming involved in colonial politics, they withdrew from "the noisy blustering and bellowing patriots." 44 He claimed that "in one place two men met, and one appointed the other [a] delegate to Congress," but this comment is probably soured by Galloway's own disillusionment. Nevertheless, whatever their faults may have been, the loyalists suffered great financial hardship. About 10 million pounds was probably seized, since this was the figure claimed from the commissioners. 45

On September 3, 1783, independence was recognized in the definitive treaty of peace signed between the United States and Great Britain. In a number of ways the recognition of independence marks the end of an epoch in which British politics had been largely theocentric and autocratic. Furthermore, this recognition seemed to be a practical demonstration of the theory of the "Rights of Man," and had now made politics anthropocentric and democratic. Charles Wesley may have been obscurantist and narrow in his attitude toward reform in terms of political affiliations between

44 Ibid., p. 87.  
45 The various authorities are not agreed on the exact amount which was confiscated, but this seems to be a fair estimate. The Penn family alone lost property worth 1 million pounds. About £3,282,452 was allowed by the Commissioners. "Confiscation of Property," article in A Dictionary of American History, ed. James Truslow Adams. New York, Scribner's, 1951.
the two countries, but at least he was aware of the dangers inherent in it. Characteristically, he sees the peace as the final blow to Great Britain’s existence:

Where is old England’s glory fled,  
Which shone so bright in ages past?  
Virtue with our forefathers dead,  
And public faith have breath’d their last  
And men who falsified their trust  
Have laid our honor in the dust. (HP54, 1-6) p. 112.

But it is difficult to see how either side could have continued much longer a war of which both were weary. In Britain, economic pressure, producing a national debt of enormous proportions, was forcing George III to conclude a peace on the best possible terms, while in America, many of General Nathaniel Greene’s men were almost naked and the government was practically bankrupt.

Charles Wesley may have been misguided in most of his judgments on the necessity for and the conduct of the war, which are all colored by his predominant high church Toryism and his almost fanatic adherence to the person of the king, but he was right in emphasizing the real sufferers in the struggle. The bitter rhetorical questions he caused an imaginary loyalist to ask, might well apply to those miserable streams of hopeless, and often stateless, refugees of all nationalities that seem to be the inevitable backwash of international peace making and diplomacy:

...“Where is your King, the scoffing crowd
Exclaim, and Where is now your God?” ... (HP56, Part II, 19-24) p. 127.

Wesley was also right in pointing out, over and over again, that no system of government is of any real value unless it is permeated with the love, power and justice of God. Therefore his advice “To the American Republic” is equally pertinent when applied to Britain, and is as relevant today as it was when the poem was first written:

Great Peacemaker ’twixt God and man,  
Who God and man hast join’d in one,  
Turn and unite our hearts again,  
That all Jehovah’s work may own,  
And Britons thro’ the world proclaim  
The wondrous powers of Jesus’ name. (HP9, 43-48) p. 20.