

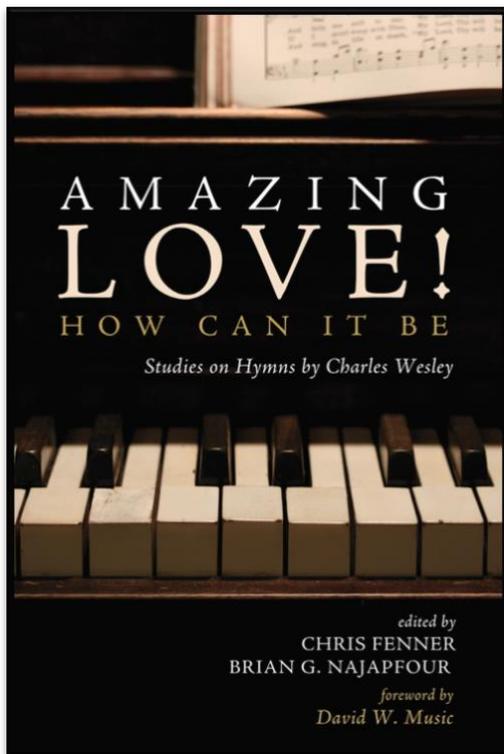
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact Information:

Dr. Roger Duke
rogerdduke@aol.com
901-752-4580

Amazing Love! How Can It Be: Studies on Hymns by Charles Wesley
edited by Chris Fenner & Brian G. Najapfour
Resource Publications, an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers
978-1-7252-6475-5 / paperback / \$26
www.wipfandstock.com

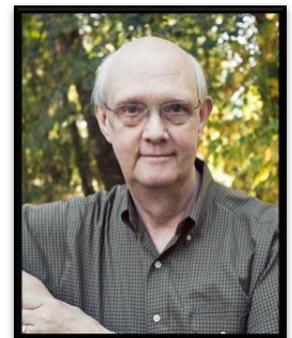
New Title edited by Chris Fenner & Brian G. Najapfour
Amazing Love! How Can It Be: Studies on Hymns by Charles Wesley



The present collection of essays examines specific texts by Charles Wesley in multiple dimensions (theological, poetical, historical, biographical, etc.), demonstrating both the profound nature of the hymns and their continued relevance for Christians today. The discussions are organized by theological/liturgical topics, and each essay treats us to the hymn in its complete original form (noting significant variants as necessary), explains the historical context of its composition, provides a theological interpretation, and relates it to the life and faith of the believer.

In the pages of this book, the reader will find both information and inspiration. Scholars of hymnody and of Charles Wesley will appreciate the depth of inquiry in the chapters. Just as importantly, laypersons and hymn lovers (as well as scholars) will find much spiritual benefit from the study of hymns they know and love, as well as texts with which they may be less familiar. This exploration of these profound hymns will surely lead to a deeper understanding of the “amazing love” responsible for changing the course of Charles Wesley’s life, who in turn changed the course of Christian worship.

Roger D Duke, a contributor of this volume, retired early from Baptist College of Health Sciences after eighteen years of classroom teaching ministry. He is now a free-lance writer. Duke received his doctorate from The University of the South at Sewanee. Subsequently he has also taught at various colleges and graduate schools and seminaries. He has authored or contributed to volumes on John Albert Broadus, John Bunyan, William Carey, Basil Manley, Jr., and John Paul II.



What made you want to contribute to a volume of essays of Charles Wesley's hymns?

First I have always loved Wesley's hymns. I grew up in church singing them. Then, they are so worshipful. The one I helped to write, "Love Divine All Loves Excelling," is so lively and full of spirit. And they teach experiential theology to those who sing them. They are a catechism to those who sing it in worship..

2. Why do an exposition of "Loves Divine: All Loves Excelling"?

"Love Divine" is one of the great hymns, not only of Wesley but of the Church. It tells of the Father "Almighty" as the Apostle's Creed. It tells that Jesus is "all compassion." And it also speaks of the "loving Spirit." It speaks of the Trinity in its make up.

3. How do you occupy yourself since your retirement?

I retired as a college professor four years ago to follow the call to freelance writing. Since then I have published four e-books on Kindle. Besides this work I co-edited a work entitle *Spirit of Holiness* due out Sept 23. It can be found at www.amazon.com/gp/product/1683593243/ref=db_s_a_def_rwt_bibl_vppi_i7. My wife of 46 years and I are also heavily involved in the lives of our four grandsons. I continue to write and speak whenever I get a chance.

4. What is my background?

I am an ordained Southern Baptist minister and received my doctorate at The University of the South-Sewanee. I taught in the grad school, seminary, college, and university for 20 years before retiring in 2016. My expertise is in the areas of Religion, Communication, Christian Thought, and Ethics.

5. As a Baptist, what interests you in the Wesley brothers thought and hymns?

I have recently been reading about the Wesley brothers and the founding of Wesleyan Churches and found them to have more in common with my own theology and background that I had realized. The spiritual formation of the early Wesleyan movement was much like mine growing up and I did not even recognize it. The Evangelical Churches owe them a great deal in experiential holiness and applied theology.

6. How do the Methodists and Baptists differ from your point of view?

I suppose there are two basic ways: First, the Baptist branch coming from the Reformation believe, that it is not possible for the true believer to lose his/her salvation. But that is not the understanding of the Wesley brothers as I understand it. Secondly, the Baptists believe in a progressive sanctification rather than a time when we could be perfected in this life.

Love divine, all loves excelling

by Roger D. Duke & Chris Fenner

In the development of Methodism, John and Charles recognized the importance of using hymns to carry doctrinal messages; their extensive publishing venture was vital in that role. Since congregational singing can be used to teach basic tenets of the Christian faith, “The Wesleys understood . . . their hymnals to be handbooks of doctrine.” In many cases, they published small collections focused on particular themes.

In 1747, the Wesleys released *Hymns for Those that Seek and Those that Have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ*, containing 52 hymn texts. Each text referred in some way to matters of salvation. The first 24 hymns were designed to coordinate with the tunes in *Hymns on the Great Festivals* (1746). One editor of the Wesleys’ hymns, Randy Maddox, described the collection as “the work of [Charles] Wesley as a ‘practical theologian,’ charting a narrative for the spiritual journey of those reading and singing the verse.” Wesley scholar John Tyson saw this collection as also extending the Wesleys’ ongoing concern for holiness, asserting, “these compositions explore what sanctification looks like in everyday life.”

The most enduring of these hymns has been “Love divine, all loves excelling.” As hymn number nine, it was intended to be sung to the tune corresponding to “Jesus, show us thy salvation,” a rather ambitious melody by John Frederick Lampe (1703–1751).

Praise for *Amazing Love! How Can It Be: Studies on Hymns by Charles Wesley*

“This is a place where hymnologists and church historians congregate for fruitful spiritual reflection. And . . . these essays reflectively walk the reader, step by step, down the Christian way from conversion to and through holy living.”

—**John R. Tyson, Professor of Church History, Director of Methodist Studies, Colgate Rochester
Crozer Divinity School**

“*Amazing Love! How Can It Be* is a well-written and informative book—but more than that. With keen insights of history, this collection of studies on the hymns by Charles Wesley is heart-warming, spiritually edifying, and God-glorifying. The themes explored, such as conversion, spiritual struggle, Christ’s incarnation and resurrection, sanctification, and prayer of evangelism, serve the church, musicians, and the academy in new and refreshing ways.”

—**Adriaan C. Neele, Professor of Historical Theology, Director of the Doctoral Program, Puritan
Reformed Theological Seminary**

“This book represents a significant addition to the scholarly literature on Wesley’s hymns. It places twelve hymns in historical context, referring to other religious and literary texts (especially the Bible), events in Wesley’s life, Wesley’s correspondence and journal entries, eighteenth-century hymnbooks, and modern scholarship.”

—**Joseph Herl, Professor of Music, Concordia University, Nebraska**

“One of the best ways of studying the hymns of Charles Wesley is through a detailed commentary on individual hymns. This book will be a very useful contribution to an understanding of his art and his theology.”

—**J. R. Watson, Emeritus Professor of English, University of Durham; co-editor of *The
Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology***

