

OFTEN the public means of grace,
Thy thirsting people's meeting-place,
Oppressors have beset:
Attacked them in the house of prayer,
And prison-bondage made them bear,
Because with Thee they met.

2 But we from such assaults are freed,
Can pray, and sing, and hear, and read,
And meet, and part in peace:
May we such freedoms duly prize,
In their improvement make us wise,
And bless us with increase.

3 Unless Thy presence Thou afford,
Unless Thy blessing clothe the Word,
In vain our liberty!
What would it profit to maintain
A name for life, should we remain
Formal and dead to Thee?

4 Confirm the Word our peace allows,
Bless the provisions of Thy house,
In hunger we have come;
Drawn by Thine invitation, Lord,
Now from the fulness of Thy Word,
O send us thankful home.

John Newton, 1725-1807[†]