

## **MS Death of Prudence Box<sup>1</sup>**

Prudence Box (c. 1740–78) was the nanny for the children of Charles and Sarah (Gwynne) Wesley from the late 1760s until her death. The children were surely troubled by the significant pain accompanying her illness that culminated in death in January 1778 (see stanza 2 below). The record of her burial listed her as 38 years old. Once again, Charles marked the occasion of the death of a close family friend with a hymn.

The form of the hymn transcribed below is a looseleaf draft that was surely Wesley's initial working copy, laden with numerous revisions. A more polished form was included in MS Funeral Hymns.

MS Death of Prudence Box is part of the collection in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, accession number MA 1977/583/16 (Charles Wesley Notebooks Box 4). The transcription below is provided with permission of the Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

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<sup>1</sup>This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the diligent assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: August 1, 2010.

**On the Death of  
Prudence Box,  
Jan. 9, 1778.<sup>2</sup>**

- [1.] HE's come!—to set the prisoner free,  
The<sup>3</sup> dear Redeemer's come!  
To give<sup>4</sup> the final Victory,  
And take<sup>5</sup> his Servant home;  
To wipe the sorrow from her eyes,  
To end her mourning days,  
And shew her soul the glorious prize,  
In<sup>6</sup> his unclouded Face.
2. Long in the toils of death she lay,  
Nor fear'd the ghastly<sup>7</sup> king,  
When Christ had borne her sins away,  
And spoil'd him of his sting:  
Lingring she drank the bitter<sup>8</sup> cup  
Of grief and<sup>9</sup> pain extreme,  
And fill'd his after-passion up  
And *tasted* death<sup>10</sup> with Him.

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<sup>2</sup>A more polished manuscript draft appears in MS Funeral Hymns, 89–91. Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 6:339–41; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:327–29 (which includes both versions of stanza 5 found in this draft).

<sup>3</sup>Ori., “The”; changed to “Her,” and finally changed back to “The.”

<sup>4</sup>Ori., “And gives.”

<sup>5</sup>Ori., “takes.”

<sup>6</sup>Ori., “And.”

<sup>7</sup>Ori., “grizly.”

<sup>8</sup>Ori., “Yet still she *tasted* death, the.”

<sup>9</sup>Ori., “He drank with.”

<sup>10</sup>Ori., “~~shared the grief~~”; changed to “*tasted* death.”

3. Seeing the<sup>11</sup> great Invisible  
Her Saviour and her Friend,  
She suffer'd all his righteous will,  
And suffer'd to the end:  
Thro' a long vale of misery<sup>12</sup>  
She walk'd with Christ her Guide,  
And bleeding on the sacred tree  
Confess'd the Crucified.
4. With all the Spirit's powers she pray'd  
With infinite desire,  
To bow, her weary fainting<sup>13</sup> head,  
And on his cross<sup>14</sup> expire:  
The agonizing prayer<sup>15</sup> was heard,  
For everlasting peace;  
While yet<sup>16</sup> her gracious Lord defer'd  
To sign her soul's release.
- [5.<sup>17</sup> She languishes<sup>18</sup> in life detain'd,  
Superior grace<sup>19</sup> to prove,  
Unshaken hope and<sup>20</sup> faith unfeign'd  
And all-victorious<sup>21</sup> love.  
Love, heavenly love her heart o'reflows  
Immense and unconfi'd  
To friends and relatives and foes  
Imbracing all mankind.]

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<sup>11</sup>Ori., "~~th<sup>2</sup> In~~" changed to "the." The strikeout "~~In~~" is the first two letters of "Invisible," which Wesley decided to put at the end of the line.

<sup>12</sup>Ori., "~~agony.~~"

<sup>13</sup>Ori., "~~like Him her dying~~"; changed to "her weary fainting."

<sup>14</sup>Ori., "~~in his arms.~~"

<sup>15</sup>Ori., "~~wish for holiness~~"; then changed to "~~prayer importunate~~"; and finally to "agonizing prayer."

<sup>16</sup>Ori., "~~Yet still.~~"

<sup>17</sup>Wesley made several changes to this first draft of stanza 5, then drew three vertical lines through the entire stanza and started over on p. 3.

<sup>18</sup>Ori., "~~She languish'd still.~~"

<sup>19</sup>Ori., "~~Her gratitude.~~"

<sup>20</sup>Ori., "~~Her patience meek her.~~"

<sup>21</sup>Ori., "~~all-embracing.~~"

5. He holds her, still in life detain'd,  
Her ripen'd grace to prove,  
Her stedfast hope, and faith unfeign'd,  
And all-victorious love;  
To emulate<sup>22</sup> his sacrifice  
Obtain a richer<sup>23</sup> crown,  
And point us to the opening skies,  
And pray<sup>24</sup> the Saviour down.
6. "Unutterable things I see—  
The purchase of his<sup>25</sup> blood,  
The place He hath deserv'd<sup>26</sup> for me,  
Come, O my Lord, my God!<sup>[27]</sup>  
"I dare [not]<sup>27</sup> murmur at thy stay;  
"But to depart is best:<sup>[28]</sup>  
Come, O my Jesus, come away,  
And take me into rest.<sup>28</sup>
7. Into thy hands my soul<sup>29</sup> receive,  
That Thee my soul may bless,  
May thee intirely love<sup>30</sup> and live  
To thine eternal praise.  
She speaks, and hears the joyful<sup>31</sup> word  
Come up my ready bride—  
And angels waft her to her Lord  
And seat her at his side!

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<sup>22</sup>Ori., "~~United with.~~"

<sup>23</sup>Ori., "~~To win a brighter~~"; changed to "Obtain a richer."

<sup>24</sup>Ori., "~~bring.~~"

<sup>25</sup>Ori., "~~That purchase of thy.~~"

<sup>26</sup>Ori., "~~That place Thou hast prepar'd~~" changed to "The place He hath deserv'd."

<sup>27</sup>Ori., "~~cannot~~"; changed to "dare." Wesley likely meant to retain "not."

<sup>28</sup>Ori., "~~to thy breast.~~"

<sup>29</sup>Ori., "~~Now in thy mercy's Arms.~~"

<sup>30</sup>Ori., "~~Intirely love my God.~~"

<sup>31</sup>Ori., "~~He speaks, and hears the Saviour's.~~"