

MS Death of Hannah Butts¹

Hannah Witham (b. 1720) was the daughter of Thomas Witham (d. 1743) and Elizabeth Witham (d. 1747), supporters of the Wesley brothers and active in the Methodist Society in London. In 1746 she married Thomas Butts, another active participant in the London Methodist Society, who occasionally accompanied both John and Charles Wesley on preaching tours in the 1740s. Thomas Butts also served as the first steward of John Wesley's book room in London from 1753–59. While Charles Wesley does not record the date of Hannah's death, other records suggest it was in 1762.

This hymn on the death of Hannah Butts is found on pages 18–24 of a small gathering of pages in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, accession number MA 1977/583/14 (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.

¹This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under the editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the diligent assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: June 19, 2012.

**On the Death of
Mrs. Hannah Butts.²**

[Part I.]

1. Happy, pure, impassive Soul!
 Ended are her³ mournful days,
She hath reach'd the heavenly goal,
 She hath won the glorious race;
'Scap'd out of this stormy deep
 Angels welcome her to shore:⁴
For ourselves alas, we weep,
 Not for Her that weeps no more.

2. Early from our vale of tears
 Snatch'd by her Redeemer's love,
Ripe for God, she now appears
 With the spotless church above;
Mixt with that triumphant quire,
 Still the pitying Saint looks down,
Bids us after her aspire,
 Win the fight, and claim the crown.

3. In the morning of her day,
 Call'd to seek an hidden God,
Chearful she pursued her way,
 In the paths of duty trod;
(Guided by paternal hands,
 Stranger then to Christ her Peace,)
Ran the way of his commands,
 Follow'd after righteousness.

²Appears also in MS Funeral Hymns, 35–41. Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 6:333–38.

³Ori., “thy.”

⁴Ori., “above” changed to “to shore.”

- 4.⁵ One of those distinguish'd few
From their childhood sanctified,
Wash'd by Christ, she never knew
When the blood was first applied:
Favour'd of the Lord and blest,
Nothing could his handmaid say,
Only by her life confest
He had born her sins away.
5. Silent follower of the Lamb,
Him in deed and truth she lov'd,
Priz'd the odour of his name,
Never from his statutes rov'd;
Track'd the footsteps of his flock,
With his poor disciples stay'd
Follow'd by their guardian Rock
Safe in his Almighty shade.
6. Humble like her Lord and meek
Did she not herself abase?
Swift to hear, and slow to speak
Still she chose the lowest place,
Glad to be accounted least,
Each she to herself prefer'd,
Far beyond her fellows blest,
Always blest, who always fear'd.

⁵Ori., "3"; an error.

Part II.⁶

1. Sinners she with pity saw
Of their own perfection proud,
Pleas'd the public eye to draw,
Forward, turbulent, and loud,
Witnesses of their own grace,
Instantaneously secure,
Choicest of the chosen race,
Pure at once, entirely pure!

2. Calm from such she turn'd away,
Left them to their God unknown,
Them to judge she could not stay,
Busied with herself alone;
Free from proud, or bitter zeal,
Nature's wild, or fierce excess,
Studying to be quiet still,
Still she kept her love and peace.

3. Walking in her house with God,
Portion'd with the better part,
She her faith by actions show'd,
Martha's hands and Mary's heart:
Labouring on from morn to night
Still she offer'd up her care,
Pleasing in her Saviour's Sight,
Sanctified by faith and prayer.

⁶Part II published in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:338–39, because *Poetical Works* omitted stanzas 1–2.

4. Taught of God, himself to please,
Daily she fulfill'd his word,
By⁷ her meanest services
Ministring unto the Lord;
Happy, if her constant smile
Might⁸ but ease the sufferer's load,
Soften a Companion's toil,
Win her little ones to good.

5. Gently she their will inclin'd,
Diligent her house to build,
Wisely, rationally kind
With divine discretion fill'd;
Far remov'd from each extream,
Conscious why her babes were given,
Heirs of bliss, she liv'd for them,
Liv'd to train them up for heaven.

6. Principled with faith unfeign'd,
Blest with Jesus' quiet mind,
Every part she well sustain'd,
Bright in every function shin'd;
Simple love with lowly fear
Kept possession of her breast,
Made her every act appear
Wisest, virtuousest, and best.

⁷“By” has “In” written in the margin as an alternative.

⁸Ori., “Can.”

Part III.

- [1.] Born, that others might rejoice,
Sweetly she their cares beguil'd;
Listning to her⁹ tuneful voice
Grief was hush'd, and anguish smil'd:
Clouds she scatter'd with her eye,
Welcom as the peaceful dove;
Vanquish'd by her soft reply
Anger melted into love.
2. More esteem'd as nearer view'd,
More belov'd as longer known,
Good, without pretension, good,
Smooth and swift her race she run;
Patiently her soul possest
When his blessings she restor'd,
God in every stroke confest,
Meekly own'd, It is the Lord!
3. Witness her companions here
How she wail'd her infants dead,
You who saw the tender tear¹⁰
When her dearest comforts fled!
Did she not the murmurer shame,
Teach the sufferer to submit,
Bless her great Redeemer's name,
Weep in silence at his feet?

⁹Ori., "their."

¹⁰Ori., "~~Did she not the murmurer sham[e]~~" changed to "You who saw the tender tear."

4. Smiling on his mourner there,
Ready all her tears to dry,
Israel's Strength and Comforter
Whisper'd her deliverance nigh:
Messenger of lasting peace,
Pain, immortalizing pain
Hastens to her soul's release,
Gives her back¹¹ her babes again.

5. Anguish if her Lord employs,
Shall she not his choice approve?
Mark'd for everlasting joys,
Summon'd to her place above,
Happy in the arms of death,
Lo, the lovely victim lies,
Rachel gasping out her breath,
Finishing her sacrifice!

6. LIFE is to her rescue come,
In her mortal pangs sustains,
By the Fruit of Mary's womb
She the full salvation gains:
Every promise is fulfil'd,
Every grace and blessing given;
Now the glorious heir is seal'd,
Ripe¹² for all the joys of heaven.

¹¹“Gives her back” has “Joins her to” written below it as an alternative.

¹²“Ripe” has “Meet” written below it as an alternative.

7. Heaven expanded in her heart
Love ineffable, divine
Makes the soul and body part,
Swells, and bursts the earthy shrine!
Wafted by th' Angelic powers,
In an extasy of praise,
To her Saviour's arms she soars,¹³
Finds¹⁴ his throne, and sees his face!

¹³Ori., "fl[ies]."

¹⁴"Finds" has "Mounts" written below it as an alternative.