

MS Henderson¹

John Henderson (1757–88) was born in Ireland, the son of a Methodist preacher, Richard Henderson. He received his early education at Kingswood School and showed such academic promise that by the age of twelve he was teaching Greek at Trevecka College. After further cultivation by Hannah More and Dean Tucker of Gloucester, he matriculated at Pembroke College Oxford in 1781, where he quickly acquired a reputation for eccentricity and intellectual brilliance. But Henderson took at Oxford a turn that undercut his early promise and contributed to his death two years after receiving his B.A.

The Wesleyan world attributed Henderson's downfall to the study of mystical writers like Jacob Boehme and Johann Kaspar Lavater, as well as astrology. He also became addicted to smoking, heavy drinking, and experimenting on himself with opium and mercury. These changes were clearly painful for Charles Wesley, who viewed Henderson like a son. When Charles heard of an early bout of Henderson's illness in April 1787, he penned a hymnic prayer for his recovery (#I). On initial signs of recovery, Charles penned a hymn of thanks (#II). He added two hymns cast in the first person, as if guiding Henderson in offering thanks and owning his need for spiritual healing as well. When it became clear that the physical illness continued, Charles penned yet one more prayer (#V) and two more hymns of resignation cast in Henderson's voice.

MS Henderson is a gathering of four quarto-sized sheets with writing on both sides. The recto of the first sheet is numbered "11" and contains the epitaph for Mary Horton, demonstrating that it was cut out of the back of the notebook that Baker designated "MS Death" (the remnants of the removed sheets are apparent in the notebook). The first of Wesley's hymns for Henderson begins on the verso of the first sheet. The subsequent hymns are squeezed together on the remaining sheets, with some text written sideways. None of the pages after that containing the epitaph are numbered. We have restored the epitaph to its appropriate place in MS Death of Mary Horton (draft 3) in this collection. The pagination of the remaining hymns proved too unwieldy to replicate, so they are transcribed below accurate in detail but not in page breaks. Readers might want to cite them by hymn number instead of page number. For reference, the hymns are located as follows in the original manuscript:

page 1: as below

page 2: as below

page 3: Hymn II – Hymn III, st. 4

page 4: Hymn III, st. 5 – Hymn V, st. 2

page 5: Hymn V, st. 3; Hymn VII (renumbered); Hymn VI (renumbered), st. 1–2

page 6: Hymn VI (renumbered), st. 3–4

MS Henderson is part of the collection in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, accession number MA 1977/594/1 (Charles Wesley Notebooks Box 6). The transcription below is provided with permission of the Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

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**For John Henderson.
April 8, 1787.**

[I.]²

- [1.] Lover of Lazarus, and Friend
Of all that on thy love depend,
 With yearning bowels see
A chosen Vessel of thy grace,
Who only for thy Coming stays,
 And gasps to die in Thee.
2. His precious soul in life detain,
And raise him from a bed of pain
 To minister thy word,
To spread the wonders of thy Name,
And thro' a listning world proclaim
 His dear, redeeming Lord.
3. Why were thy Gifts on him bestow'd,
But that the Messenger³ of God,
 Preacher of righteousness,⁴
His various⁵ Talents might⁶ improve,
By⁷ labours of unwearied love,
 And show forth all thy praise?
4. If hitherto, intirely Thine
He has not answer'd thy Design,
 Or liv'd for God alone,
But stoop'd admiring Crouds⁸ to please;
Thy Servant, Lord, this moment seize,
 And seal him all thine own.

²There is a separate looseleaf copy of this first hymn in the Methodist Collection at Drew University (Wesley Family Letters; 2135-6-4:12). It is a more polished draft; adopting the corrections suggested here. Its few variants are noted below. Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:344–45.

³Ori., “Instrument.”

⁴Ori., “~~The Steward of thy grace~~”; then changed to “~~Might preach thy righteousness~~”; before deciding on “Preacher of righteousness.”

⁵Ori., “numerous.” The Drew copy reads “many.”

⁶Ori., “might”; then changed to “~~manifold~~”; before changing back to “might.”

⁷Ori., “In.”

⁸Ori., “~~a fawning world~~”; then changed to “~~admiring Fools~~”; before deciding on “admiring Crouds.”

5. The virtue of thy hallowing blood,
Thy Spirit's power, in strength renew'd
 This moment may⁹ he feel,
Body and soul to Thee present,
Strain up the steep of Excellent
 And scale the heavenly hill.
6. Wise to redeem the time below
Close in thy steps resolv'd to go,
 Support, and lead him on
From all the *arts of hell* secure,
To make his glorious calling sure,
 And win a brighter crown.
7. Point out the works for him prepar'd,
Till ready for¹⁰ a full reward
 Thy hoary labourer prove,
Thy character and mind express,
Mature in finish'd holiness
 And pure, consummate love.
- 8.¹¹ Then let the gates be open'd wide,
Then let him, with the Sanctified¹²
 Find his allotted place,
Enter into his Master's¹³ joy
And all eternity employ
 In rapt'rous hymns of praise.

⁹The Drew copy substitutes "may" for "let."

¹⁰Ori., "Till ready ~~made~~ for."

¹¹Ori., "6." Wesley renumbered his original stanza 6 to stanza 8 and wrote stanzas 6–7 below that. They are shown here in his corrected order.

¹²Ori., "~~Saviour, at thy side~~" changed to "with the Sanctified."

¹³Ori., "~~thy ripest~~" changed to "his Master's."

II.¹⁴

- [1.] Jesus, thro' every age the same
The virtues of thy Saving name
With thankful joy I own:
Thou hast, for thy own mercy sake,
Snatch'd him from death, and giv'n me back
My Son, my darling Son!
2. Accept from me the cordial praise,
From my Companions in distress
Who did his burthen bear,
Who still, around thy gracious seat,
Their suit¹⁵ importunate repeat,
And wrestle on in prayer.
3. Thy healing work in him begun
We ask Thee, Lord, to carry on,
Commanding him to live;
Fill with abundant life his soul,
Make his distemper'd body whole,
And perfect soundness give.
4. O let him by thy quickning word,
In thy appointed time, restor'd
To double health, arise,
Walk after Thee in all thy ways,
Take up his cross, his Lord confess,
And labour up the skies.
5. The Fever, which rebuk'd by Thee,
Has left him weak as infancy,
Prohibit its return,¹⁶
And still thy messenger supply
With strength to walk, to run, to fly
On wings of eagles borne.

¹⁴Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:345–46.

¹⁵Ori., “sims.”

¹⁶Ori., “~~Forbid it to refuse~~” changed to “Prohibit its return.”

6. So shall he magnify thy Name,
His Saviour, and the world's proclaim
To all so freely given,
Whose word both soul and body heals,
Whose blood the general pardon seals,
And speaks us up to heaven.

III.¹⁷

- [1.] And am I in the body still?
Reserv'd to know the Master's will,
And govern'd by his word,
To do whate'er his love ordains,
To suffer, and fill up the pains
Of my expiring Lord!
2. Saviour, who liftest up my head,
And callst me back as from the dead
A witness of thy grace,
To Thee, who bidst my soul arise,
My life be all a sacrifice
And every breath be praise.
3. But let me first with tears lament
My talents buried, or mispent,
My too obsequious mind,
My love of indolence and ease,
My nature's fond desire to please
Not benefit mankind,
4. When half my course alas, is run
A single soul I have not won,
Or *strove* my God t' obey,
But careless to perform thy will
Irresolute I linger'd¹⁸ still
And threw my life away.

¹⁷Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:346–48.

¹⁸Ori., "I ~~still~~ linger'd."

5. Idle I in the vineyard stood,
Or vain philosophy pursued,
 Eager, athirst to know
The mysteries of earth and sky,
And skill'd in *curious arts* to pry
 Into the depths below.
6. But lo! I from this moment turn
To Thee whom I have pierc'd, and mourn
 My sins and wandrings past,
And offering up my ministry
(If Thou vouchsafe to send by me)
 I yield, I yield at last.
7. All other gain I count but loss,
Study the mysteries of thy cross
 And in thy love abide,
(If Thou the constant mind bestow,)
Thee, only Thee resolv'd to know
 My Saviour crucified.
8. Be it thro' life my sole¹⁹ delight
The length and bredth, and depth and height
 Of Love to comprehend,
And then to praise with Those above
My Saviour's everlasting Love
 In songs that never end.

IV.²⁰

- [1.] Jesus, at thy command I come,
A sinner call'd out of my tomb
 Thy Orders to receive,
Confirm'd by thy own Spirit's Seal
Enabling me to serve thy will
 And for thy glory live.

¹⁹Ori., "soutt."

²⁰Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:348.

2. The only work on earth I have
Is, as thine Instrument to save
The creatures of my God
The precious souls thy hands have made
For whom Thou hast a ransom paid,
And lavish'd all thy blood.
3. If by thy Spirit moved I am
To preach redemption in thy Name
With life procur'd for All,
Incline the Porter by²¹ thy power
T' admit me thro' the Sacred Door
And recognize my Call.
4. Then, then intrusted with thy word
Th' acknowledg'd Servant of the Lord
Into thy vineyard send,
And present with thy labourers be
Till time commence Eternity
And faith in Vision end.

V.²²

- [1.] Father, to Thee our joint request
With meek submission we make known
Soon as thy will is manifest
Still ready to give up our own:
Our Friend, who on the altar lies
If now thy sovereign mercy claim,
We offer up the sacrifice,
Adore thy love, and bless thy name.
2. But if, before the fixt decree
Bring forth, we may his life desire,
If yet Thou mayst intreated be;
The prayer thy Spirit doth inspire,
The prayer presented thro' thy Son
Our powerful²³ Advocate, receive,
And send a peaceful Answer down,
And bid the dying Victim live.

²¹Ori., “thro^s.”

²²Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:349.

²³“Powerful” has “ceaseless” written at the bottom of the page as an alternative.

3. Were the last fatal moment come,
And death had seiz'd its willing prey
Father, thou canst his instant doom
Reverse, and lengthen out his day:
All things are possible to Thee
To us who trust in Jesus word,
And suppliant in his Name agree
And ask—Our Friend to life restor'd!

VI.²⁴

- [1.] Father, beneath whose Hand I groan
Submissive to thy just Decree,
Instruct thy long-afflicted Son
Wherefore dost Thou contend with me?
Who dost not put to needless pain,
Or crush a worm that feels his load,
Thy dealings with me now explain,
Explain the language of thy Rod.
2. What doth this grievous trouble mean
Which on my flesh so heavy lies?
Is it some unacknowledg'd sin
That forces mercy to chastize?
I fear the secret Cause to know,
But cannot from thy sight conceal;
Omniscient God the Evil show,
The mysteries of Hell reveal.
3. In an angelical disguise
If Satan did my soul deceive
Thou canst²⁵ detect his specious lies
And wisdom to thy Servant give:
Against the Israelitish race,
In vain the fiend his pow'r exerts
Thy Spirit shall the Demon²⁶ chase
And baffle all his curious arts.

²⁴Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:351–52. Wesley renumbered his original Hymn VI in the manuscript as Hymn VII and added after it this new Hymn VI. We are presenting the hymns in his corrected order.

²⁵“Canst” has “who” written above it as an alternative.

²⁶“Demon” has “Sorcerer” written above it as an alternative.

4. After my Lord resolv'd to go
And do whate'er thy laws require
I trample on th' infernal Foe,
And cast *his* books into the fire:²⁷
Thy Book my Rule and Study still,
Thy Spirit of truth, my only Guide,
Shall lead me into all thy will
And in my loving heart reside.

VII.²⁸

- [1.] But was it all a Dream
When late I seem'd to stand
Ready to pass o're Jordan's stream
To the Celestial Land?
I hoped (alas in vain!)
From earth and sin to fly,
An easy victory obtain,
And like a Coward die.
2. I have not yet receiv'd
The grace for me design'd:
I only to myself have lived,
And not to serve mankind;
Not to evince and prove
My faith's sincerity
Not to return my Saviour's love
Who lived and died for me.

²⁷Sally Wesley Jr. has added a note below this poem: "Before John Henderson died (on whom and for whom these Lines were written by the Revd Charles Wesley) He earnestly entreated that all his Books on Magic might be burnt. He expressed the utmost self abasement, and whole dependence on the blessed Redeemer, without whom (he said) Heaven would be no Heaven to him. He departed this Life in 1788, a few months after the Revd Charles Wesley—by whom He was beloved as a Son."

²⁸Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:349–50. This was originally Hymn VI in the manuscript, renumbered as above by Wesley.

3. My Ransomer He died:
Expending all his blood
His Father's Justice satisfied,
And paid my debt to God:
But still my debt to Man,
To Those who God revere,
I have not paid; and never can,
Unless I pay it here.

4. Surely the Sons of grace
So long ashamed for me
Who saw with grief my evil days
Shoud my repentance see:
Before from earth I go,
I *shoud* my faults retrieve,
Sober and just, and godly *show*
How pardon'd sinners *live*.

5. Wherefore with earnest cries
On Thee, O Christ, I call,
Restore me in thy people's eyes
Recover'd from my fall,
To spread the joyful sound,
"A Peace 'twixt earth and Heaven
"Mercy doth more than sin abound
"And all the world's forgiven!["¹"]