

MS Death of Mary (Durbin) Horton¹

(Drafts 1, 2, & 3)

Mary Durbin (1752–86) was the eldest daughter of Henry Durbin (1718–99), an apothecary in Bristol, and his wife Hester (Thrilby) Durbin (d. 1759). They were member of the Baldwin Street religious society even before John Wesley’s first participation in the revival in Bristol, and became early members in the Wesleyan work there, with Henry serving as a trustee of the New Room chapel. They were also close friends with Charles and Sarah Wesley during their years in Bristol.

Mary Durbin married John Horton on September 21, 1780. John Wesley performed the service (see his *Journal* entry for the day). The closeness of Charles Wesley to the family, and his respect for Mary’s exemplary Christian life is evident in the verse he wrote on the occasion of her death, just six years into her married life. Charles composed first a single hymn and a brief epitaph (draft 1 below). Sometime later he revised the initial hymn, extending it into a five-part tribute, which exists both in a rough working form (draft 2 below) and a polished form (draft 3 below).

The aftermath of Mary’s death created a situation involving her sister, Hester Durbin, that Charles also found himself compelled to address—see MS Hester Durbin.

All three drafts of Wesley’s hymn on the death of Mary Horton are part of the collection in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre. The transcriptions below are provided with permission of the Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

(The drafts are presented in consecutive order—draft 2 beginning on overall page 5; draft 3 on overall page 15).

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: November 23, 2021.

On the Death of Mrs Horton

May 4, 1786¹

[draft 1]

- [1.] It is the Lord, whose will is done!
Jehovah hath requir'd his Loan,
 Jesus hath claim'd his bride!
Who went her mansion to prepare,
Hath brought her home, his joy to share,
 And triumph at his side.
2. Her mourning days are ended soon,
Her Sun of life is set at noon;
 Yet why should we complain
That Mercy hath abridg'd her years,
And snatch'd her from our vale of tears,
 In endless Bliss to reign?
3. To keep her here in vain we strove:
She mounts! she claps her wings above!
 She grasps the glittering Prize!
In answer to our mended prayers,
Enjoying, with salvation's Heirs,
 The life that never dies!

¹MARC, DDCW 3/9 (looseleaf unnumbered pages). Appears also in drafts 2 & 3 (below). The most extended version was published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 6:356–63.

4. And can we now our Loss regret,
Or wish to tear her from her seat,
 Where high enthroned she sings?
No: rather let us strive t' increase
That multitude of witnesses,
 Whom Death to Glory brings.

5. Pursuing Her, as She her Lord,
And labouring for a full reward,
 Our Friend we soon shall join;
The praise of our salvation give
To Him that doth for ever live,
 And to the Lamb Divine.

6. Hastning the universal Doom,
When wilt Thou, Lord, thy power assume,
 In majesty come down?
The number of Thy saints compleat,
And us thro' faith and patience meet,
 With joy eternal crown!

Epitaph²

A meek and lowly Follower of the Lamb,
She more than conquer'd all in Jesus name,
Wash'd in his blood, and kept her garments white,
And blameless walk'd in her Redeemer's sight,
Till fill'd with Love she fainted on his breast,
And found within his arms her everlasting Rest!

²Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 8:437; and *Representative Verse*, 375.

**On the Death of
Mrs. Mary Horton, May 4, 1786,
Aged 34 year[s], a month, and 11 days.¹**
[draft 2]

[I.]

- [1.] It is the Lord, whose will is done!
He to the end hath loved his own,²
 And now requir'd³ his Bride;
Who went, her mansion to prepare,
Hath brought her home, his joy to share,
 And triumph at his side.
2. Her mourning days are ended⁴ soon,
Her sun of life gone down⁵ at noon;
 But⁶ why shoud we complain
That Mercy hath abridg'd her years,
And snatch'd her from our vale of tears
 In endless bliss to reign?
3. To keep her here in vain we strove;
She mounts! she claps her wings above!
 She grasps the glittering prize!
In answer to our *mended* prayers,
Injoying with salvation's heirs
 The life that never dies!
4. And can we now our Loss regret,
Or wish to tear her from her seat,

¹MARC, accession number MA 1977/583/19 (Charles Wesley Notebooks Box 4). Appears also in draft 1 (above) and draft 3 (below). Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 6:356–63.

²Ori., "~~Jehovah hath revok'd his Loan~~" changed to "He to the end hath loved his own."

³Ori., "~~Jesus hath claim'd~~" changed to "And now requir'd."

⁴"Ended" has "finish'd" written above it as an alternative.

⁵Ori., "~~is set~~" changed to "gone down."

⁶Ori., "Yet."

Where high-inthron'd she sings?
No: rather let us strive t' increase
The Cloud of Jesus' Witnesses,
Whom Death to Glory brings.

5. Pursuing Her, as She her Lord,
And labouring for a full reward,
Our Friend we soon shall join;
The praise of *our* salvation give
To Him that doth for ever live,
And to the Lamb Divine.
6. Hastning the universal doom,
O woudst Thou, Lord, thy power assume
And bring the kingdom down,
The number of thy saints compleat,
And us, thro' patient faith made⁷ meet,
With joy eternal crown.

II.

- [1.] O that our residue of days
We all might spend in prayer, and praise
For our Translated Friend,
Contemplating her Converse here,
Her Course of piety sincere,
And her consistent End!

⁷Ori., "faith and patience" changed to "patient faith made."

2. Her Piety with life begun,
Servant⁸ of the God unknown
 She trembled, and ador'd,
Kept by her Parents hallow'd⁹ cares
From sin, the world, and Satan's snares,
 And nurtur'd for the Lord.
3. While only led by purest¹⁰ grace,
Even she walk'd in pleasant ways,¹¹
 Far from the thoughtless croud
A stranger to their hopes and fears,
Remembring in her tenderest¹² years
 Her Maker and her God.
4. In wisdom as in years She grew,
Nor selfish guile, or evil knew,
 Or gay diversion's round:
Like Eve in her Creator's Sight,
Her pure, and innocent delight
 She in a garden found.
5. Her precious time employing there
In useful works, and praise, and prayer,
 She priz'd her happy Lot;
Her cup of earthly bliss ran o're,
Yet still she sigh'd for something more
 And sought She knew not what.

⁸Ori., "A Follower."

⁹Ori., "tenderest."

¹⁰Ori., "~~Upheld by unresisted~~ grace." Next changed to "~~Prevented and restrained by~~ grace," and finally changed to "While only led by purest grace." The word "purest" is quite uncertain; Wesley may have been searching for a shortened form of "prevenient" In the margin he suggests in shorthand the alternative line (adopted in draft 3) "Allur'd by his prevenient grace."

¹¹Ori., "She walk'd in quiet, pleasant ways" changed to "Even she walk'd in pleasant ways."

¹²Ori., "earliest."

6. She knew not, till the God unknown
Had drawn her, weary, to his Son,
 The Lord her righteousness,
Who paid her ransom on the tree,
From all iniquity to free
 And save a world by grace.
7. Jesus beneath the figtree saw
His handmaid, labouring by the law
 Herself to justify,
And show'd Himself the Way to God,
And graciously the Gift bestow'd
 Which she could never buy.
8. The harmless youth* who freely loved
He her sincerity approv'd,
 And touch'd her simple heart;
She then with Lydia's ease believ'd,
A pardon seal'd with joy receiv'd
 And Mary's better part.
9. Yet tho'¹³ † she chiefly chose to sit
Transported at the Master's feet,
 And listening to his word,
She ran the way of his commands
And ministred with Martha's hands
 To all that serv'd her Lord.

* Mark 10:21

† in the Gospel

¹³Ori., "while."

10. Her genuine faith by works was known,
Her light with spreading lustre shone¹⁴
Impartial¹⁵ unconfin'd;
Her meat and drink his will to do,
And trace his steps, and close pursue
The Friend of humankind.

III.

- [1.] Say, ye companions of her youth
With what alacrity¹⁶ and truth,
How free from fear, or shame,
Christ, and his members she confess'd,
And thro' a blameless life express'd
The tempers of the Lamb.
2. How did she put his bowels on,
And answer every plaintive groan
Of poverty and pain!
In sad variety of grief
The Wretched sought from Her relief,
Nor ever sought in vain.
3. She flew, preventing their request,
To seek, and succour the distrest,
The reconciling word

¹⁴Ori., "Her ~~growing~~ light ~~impartial~~ shone" changed to "Her light with ~~growing~~ lustre shone." Next, "~~growing~~" is replaced with "~~gradual~~." Finally, Wesley suggests "spreading" as an alternative in shorthand; this suggestion is adopted in draft 3.

¹⁵Ori., "~~As pure as~~." Next changed to "~~And pure as~~," and finally changed to "Impartial."

¹⁶Ori., "~~simplicity~~." While Wesley does not cross out "alacrity," he suggests immediately after it the alternative "sincerity" in shorthand. This alternative is adopted in draft 3.

The balm of Gilead to pour in,
Comfort, and sooth the bruise'd by sin,
And lead them to her Lord.

4. Guide to her Natural Allies,
Indear'd yet more by gracious ties,
She stirr'd them up¹⁷ to show
Their faith by every righteous deed,
And in the shining Steps¹⁸ to tread
Of God reveal'd below.
5. From them who did her¹⁹ Father's will
A thought she knew not to conceal,
Incapable of art,
Blest with a child's simplicity,
While chearful as the light and free
She pour'd out all her heart.²⁰
6. When call'd the Mystery to explain
Of Two in Christ, no longer twain,
An emblem of²¹ his Bride,
The meaning of the Nuptial Sign
The bond of charity²² Divine
She show'd exemplified.

¹⁷Ori., "~~urg'd them on~~" changed to "stirr'd them up."

¹⁸Ori., "And ~~close in all~~ the Steps" changed to "And in the shining Steps."

¹⁹Ori., "them who did ~~their~~" changed to "them who did her," with "those that" written above "them who" as an alternative.

²⁰Wesley originally wrote a new stanza 5 in the margin, but crossed it out. The replacement stanza appears in shorthand in the margin and longhand on page 10 of the manuscript, numbered to show that it was to be inserted here. For continuity, we have moved stanza 5 to this location and renumbered the stanzas that follow to fit, also moving one stanza onto the next page. The original stanza 5 that Wesley wrote but crossed out is as follows (including strikeouts, and a replacement in the margin):

Witness her zeal, ye happy few,
Whom as her ~~bosom friends she knew~~ distinguished friends she knew
Free from reserve and art
Did she not chear and bless your sight,
Her spirit open as the light,
And pure her childlike heart!

²¹Ori., "Of Jesus and"; changed to "A type"; then to "An emblem of."

²²Ori., "bond of ~~perfectness~~" changed to "bond of charity," with "truth" written above "bond" as an alternative.

7. To whom her plighted faith she gave
She with intire affection gave,
Nor e'er resum'd a part,
Yet²³ Jesus above all ador'd,
Still²⁴ rendring to her heavenly Lord
An undivided heart.
8. When God, to prove her faith sincere,
A Sacrifice than life more dear,
Did for her children call,
Her children freely she resign'd,
Bereav'd, yet happy still to find
That Christ was all in all.

IV.

- [1.] She thus, adorning every state,
Did with his true disciples wait
The Saviour²⁵ from above:
Death could not find her off her guard,
By prayer habitually prepar'd
By humble, active love.
2. Her life a testimony true
That heaven was always in her view,
Till earthly scenes were past,
That here she had not long to stay,
Who lived as every well-spent day
Were destin'd for her last.
3. Ready for her celestial home,
Whene'er the messenger should come,
Her Lord was sure to find
His handmaid in his work employ'd,
Who long had giv'n up²⁶ all for God,
And cast the world behind.

²³Ori., "But."

²⁴Ori., "And."

²⁵"Bridegroom" is written in the margin, most likely as an alternative to "Saviour."

²⁶Ori., "her."

4. Unwarn'd of her release so²⁷ near,
Insensible of pain, or fear
 She needed not to know
The moment fixt for her remove;
She could not doubt her Saviour's love
 Or dread a stingless foe.
5. The tyrant was not worth a thought,
When Christ had her salvation wrought
 And wholly sanctified,
When (half her race of glory run)
He sent Elijah's chariot down,
 He came to fetch his bride.
6. Like Moses caught to his embrace
Dissolv'd by his Discover'd Face,
 Whom only she desir'd,
The race she in a moment won,
And calm, without a lingring groan
 In Jesus sight²⁸ expir'd.
7. Yet mindful of her friends below,
Stronger than death her love to show,
 By a divine decree
Indulg'd to comfort them that mourn'd
She stopt her flaming car, and turn'd
 And shouted VICTORY!

²⁷Ori., "dissolution" changed to "her release so."

²⁸Ori., "arms."

V.

- [1.] O God, who dost the victory give,
The thanks of every heart receive,
Thro' thy beloved Son,
Who dost, for our Redeemer's sake,
Vile, sinful worms vouchsafe to make
The partners²⁹ of thy throne.
2. The grace which sav'd our happy Friend
Which made her faithful to the end,
And deck'd her head with rays,
We shall for us sufficient prove
And strive in humble fear and love
To perfect holiness.
3. Who did for Her the kingdom buy,
Jesus for us went up on high
Our purchas'd thrones to claim:
The same our Advocate with Thee
The same our trust thy face to see
Thro' that almighty Name.
4. Father, we on that Name depend:
Send then, for us the Convoy send,
For all with Jesus One
Consummate us³⁰ in endless bliss,
And by thy glorious Saints increase
The glory of thy Son.

²⁹Ori., "~~Partakers~~" changed to "The partners."

³⁰Ori., "~~Consummated~~" changed to "Consummate us."

Epitaph.³¹

A meek and lowly Follower of the Lamb,
She more than conquer'd all thro' Jesus Name,
Wash'd in his blood, and kept her garments white,
And blameless walk'd in her Redeemer's sight,
Till fill'd with love, she fainted on his breast,
And found within his³² arms her everlasting Rest!

³¹Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 8:437; and *Representative Verse*, 375.

³²Ori., “in Jesus” changed to “within his.”

**On the Death of
Mrs Mary Horton,
May 4, 1786, Aged 34 years.¹
[draft 3]²**

[I.]

- [1.] It is the Lord—whose will is done!
He to the end hath loved his own,
 And now requir'd his Bride;
Who went, her mansion to prepare,
Hath brought her home, his joy to share,
 And triumph at his side.
2. Her mourning days are finish'd soon,
Her sun of life gone down at noon;
 But why shoud we complain
That Mercy hath abridg'd her years,
And snatch'd her from our vale of tears
 In endless bliss to reign?
3. To keep her here in vain we strove:
She mounts! she claps her wings above!
 She grasps the glittering prize!
In answer to our mended prayers,
Injoying with salvation's heirs
 The life that never dies!

¹Appears also in drafts 1 & 2 (above). Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 6:356–63.

²This polished version of Wesley's hymn on the death of Mary Horton was inscribed at the end of the notebook (with pages 6.25 x 7.5 inches in size) that Frank Baker designated "MS Death," numbered separately from other parts of the notebook. The notebook is part of the collection in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, accession number MA 1977/578 (Charles Wesley Notebooks Box 3). At some point the hymn immediately following this one in MS Death (for John Henderson) was cut out of the notebook, taking with it on the opening page the epitaph for Mary Horton (see MS Henderson for details). We have restored the epitaph to its original location in this transcription.

4. And can we now our Loss regret,
Or wish to tear her from, her seat,
 Where high-inthron'd she sings?
No: rather let us strive t' increase
The Cloud of Jesus witnesses,
 Whom Death³ to Glory brings.

5. Pursuing Her, as She her Lord,
And labouring for a full reward,
 Our Friend we soon shall join,
The praise of *our* Salvation give
To Him that doth for ever live,
 And to the Lamb Divine.

6. Hastning the universal doom,
O woudst Thou, Lord, thy power assume,
 And bring the kingdom down,
The number of thy saints compleat,
And us, thro' patient faith made meet,
 With joy eternal crown!

II.

- [1.] O that our residue of days
We all might spend in prayer, and praise
 For our Translated Friend,

³Ori., "go."

Contemplating her Converse here,
Her Course of Piety sincere,
And her consistent End!

2. Her Piety with life begun,
Worshipper of the God unknown,
She trembled, and ador'd;
Kept by her Parents hallow'd cares
From sin, the world, and Satan's snares,
And nurtur'd for the Lord.
3. Allur'd by his prevenient grace,
Even she walk'd in pleasant ways,
Far from the thoughtless croud,
A stranger to their hopes and fears,
Remembring in her tenderest years
Her Maker, and her God.
4. In wisdom as in years she grew,
Nor selfish guile, nor evil knew,
Nor gay Diversion's round:
Like Eve in her Creator's sight,
Her innocent, and pure delight
She in a Garden found.

5. Her precious hours employing there
In useful works, and praise, and prayer
 She priz'd her happy lot;
Her cup of earthly bliss run o're;
Yet still she sigh'd for something more,
 And sought she knew not what.

6. She knew not; till the God unknown
Had drawn her, weary, to his Son,
 The Lord her Righteousness,
Who paid *her* ransom on the tree,
From all iniquity to free,
 And save a world by grace.

7. Jesus beneath the fig-tree saw
His Handmaid labouring by the law
 Herself to justify,
And show'd Himself the WAY to God,
And graciously the Gift bestow'd
 Which she could never buy.

8. The harmless youth who freely loved,⁺
HE her sincerity approv'd,
 And touch'd her simple heart;

⁺ In the Gospel, Mark 10:21.

She then with Lydia's ease believ'd,
A pardon seal'd with joy receiv'd,
And Mary's better part.

9. Yet tho' her Choice was still to sit
Delighted at the Master's feet
And listning to his word,
She ran the way of his commands,
And ministred with Martha's hands
To all that serv'd her Lord.
10. Her genuine faith by works was known
Her light with spreading lustre shone
Impartial, unconfi'd,
Her meat and drink his will to do,
And trace his steps, and close pursue
The Friend of human kind.

III.

- [1.] Say, ye Companions of her youth,
With what sincerity and truth,
How free from fear and shame,
Christ and his members she confess'd,
And thro' a blameless life exprest⁴
The tempers of the Lamb.

⁴Ori., "confess'd."

2. How did she put his bowels on,
And answer every plaintive groan
 Of poverty, and pain!
In sad variety of grief
The wretched sought from Her relief,
 Nor ever sought in vain.
3. She flew, preventing their request,
To seek, and succour the distress,
 The reconciling Word,
The balm of Gilead to pour in,
Comfort, and sooth the Bruised by sin,
 And lead them to their Lord.
4. Guide to her natural Allies,
Endear'd yet more by gracious ties
 She urg'd them on to show
Their faith by every righteous deed,
And close in all the steps to tread
 Of God reveal'd below.
5. From Those who did her Father's will
A thought she knew not to conceal,
 Incapable of art,
Blest with a child's simplicity,
While chearful as the light, and free
 She pour'd out all her heart.

6. When call'd the mystery to explain
Of Two in Christ, no longer twain,
A figure of his Bride
The meaning of the Nuptial Sign
The sacred Ordinance divine,
She show'd exemplified.
7. To whom her plighted faith she gave
She with intire affection gave
Nor e'er resum'd a part,
Yet Jesus above all ador'd,
Still rendring to her heavenly Lord
An undivided heart.
8. When God, to prove her faith⁵ sincere
A sacrifice than life more dear
Did for her children call,
Her children freely she resign'd,
Bereav'd, yet happy still to find
That Christ was all in all!

IV.

- [1.] She thus, adorning every state,
Did with his true disciples wait
The Saviour from above:

⁵“Love” is written above “faith” as an alternative.

Death could not find her off her guard,
By prayer habitually prepar'd,
By humble, active love.

2. Her life a testimony true
That heaven was always in her view,
Till earthly scenes were past,
That here she had not long to stay,
Who lived, as every well-spent day
Were destin'd for her last.
3. Ready for her celestial home,
Whene'er the messenger should come,
Her Lord was sure to find
His handmaid in his work employ'd,
Who long had given up all for God,
And cast the world behind.
4. Unwarn'd of her release so near,
Insensible of pain, or fear,
She needed not to know
The moment fixt for her remove:
She could not doubt her Saviour's love
Or dread a stingless foe.
5. The tyrant was not worth a thought,
When Christ had her salvation wrought,

Had wholly sanctified,
When (half her race of glory run)
He sent Elijah's chariot down,
He came to fetch his bride.

6. Like Moses, caught to his embrace,
Dissolv'd by his *discover'd* face,
Whom only she desir'd,
The race she in a moment won,
And calm, without a lingring groan
In Jesus Sight expir'd!
7. Yet mindful of her Friends below,
Stronger than death her love to show,
By a divine decree
Indulg'd to comfort them that mourn'd,
She stopt her flaming Car, and turn'd,
And shouted VICTORY!

V.

- [1.] O God, who dost the victory give,
The thanks of every heart receive,
Thro' thy beloved Son,

Who dost, for our Redeemer's sake
Vile, sinful worms vouchsafe to make
The partners of thy throne.

2. The grace which saved our happy Friend,
Which made her faithful to the end,
And deck'd her head with rays,
We shall for us sufficient prove,
And strive in humble fear and love
To perfect holiness.
3. Who did for Her the kingdom buy
Jesus for us went up on high,
Our purchas'd thrones to claim;
The same our Advocate with Thee
The same our Trust thy Face to see
Thro' that Almighty Name.
4. Father, we on that Name depend:
Send then for us the Convoy send,
For all with Jesus One,
Consummate us in heavenly bliss,
And by thy glorious Saints increase
The Glory of thy Son.

Epitaph.⁶
[On Mrs Horton. 1786.]

A meek and lowly follower of the Lamb,
She more than conquer'd all thro' Jesus Name,
Wash'd in his blood, and kept her garments white,
And blameless walk'd in her Redeemer's sight
Till fill'd with love, she fainted on his breast,
And found within his Arms her Everlasting Rest.

⁶Restored from MS Henderson (see details there). Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 8:437; and *Representative Verse*, 375.