

MS Preachers¹

The 1750s were a period of growing discomfort for Charles Wesley concerning the use of lay preachers in the Methodist cause. While open to this in principle, Charles was convinced that his brother John encouraged far too many who had neither the gifts nor the grace to take up the calling. Moreover, many lay preachers chafed at the restriction from administering the sacraments. Charles increasingly suspected that John was ready to open this door to them, which would have amounted to separation from the Church of England. Charles's concern found public expression in his poetic *Epistle to John Wesley* (1755), and again in early 1760 when he republished John's essay "Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England," adding to it seven "Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Preachers."² These published hymns reflect a larger body of verse in manuscript.

Three collections are of note: MS Preachers, MS Miscellaneous Hymns (pp. 109–33), and MS Preachers Extraordinary. These collections overlap. All of the verse in MS Preachers appears in the other two settings. Textual comparison suggests that MS Preachers predates both "Hymns for the Methodist Preachers" (1760) and the other two manuscript collections, placing its composition in the late 1750s. MS Preachers contains only six of the seven published hymns. The seventh appears in the other two manuscript collections, along with three additional items not found in MS Preachers. The order of the resulting thirteen items is identical in both collections. The few textual variations hint that the section in MS Miscellaneous Hymns may have preceded and be the source for MS Preachers Extraordinary. But both of these clearly postdated "Hymns for the Methodist Preachers" (1760), as two of their additional hymns are from MS Preachers 1779.

MS Preachers is a set of two foolscap sheets (8.5 in. by 13.5 in.). Given the large size of the source pages, the transcription below does not try to replicate the original pagination or page breaks. Readers might want to cite by hymn number instead of page number. For reference, the hymns are located as follows in the original manuscript:

sheet 1, front: Hymn I – Hymn IV, st. 3
sheet 1, back: Hymn IV, st. 4 – Hymn VIII, st. 1, ln. 4
sheet 2, front: Hymn VIII, st. 1. ln. 5 – Hymn IX

At some point the bottom half of the second sheet tore at the fold and was separated from the rest of the set. Fortunately, it remains in the collection at MARC and is restored in the transcription.

MS Preachers is part of the collection at the Methodist Archive and Research Centre. The main set is accession number MA 1977/583/32, item #8 (Charles Wesley Notebooks Box 4); the bottom half of the second sheet is now accession number DDCW 6/80. 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: August 1, 2010.

²For more details, see the Introduction to "Hymns for the Methodist Preachers" (1760) on the portion of this site devoted to Charles's published poetry.

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**Hymns
for the M[ethodist] P[reachers].**

I.³

- [1.] Lord, of the Gospel-harvest hear
The Souls around thy Seat,
And suffer mine, ev'n mine t' appear
Self-loathing at thy Feet.
2. I mix with theirs my feeble Cry,
On Thee for Mercy call,⁴
Meanest of all thy Servants I,
Less than the least of all.
3. Less than the least in my own sight
O may I ever be:
My one Employ, my sole Delight
To serve thy Saints and Thee.
4. With all the Servants of my Lord
Whom on my Heart I bear
I fain woud live to preach thy word,
A Life of Faith and Prayer.
5. The Power of praying Faith and Love
Into our Souls infuse,
With Gifts and Talents from above
Prepare us for thy Use.
6. But O! to every Messenger
The guardian Grace impart,
The lowly self-abasing Fear,
The meekly humble Heart.
7. Only preserve us, Lord, from Pride,
And we shall never stray,

³Appears also in MS Preachers Extraordinary, 3–4; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 111–12.
Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:35–36.

⁴Ori., “On Thee ~~with theirs~~ for Mercy call.”

And I shall never start aside,
Or fall a Castaway.

8. The high and lofty GOD shall stoop
To every Contrite One,
And take his abject Servant up
To his Eternal Throne.

II.⁵

- [1.] Master of the Gospel-feast,
Thy meanest Servants own,
Joining in the same Request
Who now besiege thy Throne:
To the Hedges and High-ways
Us if Thou indeed didst send,
Bless the Vouchers of thy Grace,
And keep us to the End.
2. Keep us, O Thou lowly Lamb,
Like Thee, opprest and poor,
Simple men without a Name,
And joyfully obscure;
Small, and vile in our own eyes,
While the wise, and rich, and great
As the trodden Dirt despise
And spurn us at their Feet.
3. Let us thy great Glory seek,
And not our own Applause,
Still believe, and therefore speak
The Wonders of thy Cross,
Still proclaim thy Sovereign Grace
Fully our Commission prove,
Spend our latest Breath in Praise
Of All-redeeming Love.

⁵Appears also in MS Preachers Extraordinary, 4–5; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 112–13.
Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:36–37.

III.⁶

- [1.] O Thou, whose soul-transforming Grace
By foolish things, and weak, and base
 Ev'n now thy Work revives,
Open our Mouths, to preach thy word;
And help us, O Almighty Lord,
 To preach it by our Lives.
2. The solemn Thoughtfulness impart,
Composing every serious Heart
 Into a solid Frame:
O'rewhelm us with an awful Sense
How great thy Gospel to dispense,
 And speak in Jesus Name.
3. Give us to walk as in thy Sight,
To order all our Converse right,
 By Jesus Presence awed:
No idle Word, or Laughter vain,
Or Gesture light, debase *the Man*—
 The Messenger—of GOD.
4. The Mirth of Fools, the Jest unfit,
The trifling Levity of Wit
 Far off from Us remove:
Throughout our even Lives appear
The Power of Godliness sincere,
 The Dignity of Love.
5. In all our Intercourse below
O might our whole Deportment show
 The Tempers of our Lord;
Lowly our hearts, like his, and meek,
Our Words, our Looks, our Silence speak
 The Virtue of the Word.

⁶Appears also in MS Preachers Extraordinary, 5–7; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 113–15.
Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 13:262–63.

6. The Word which we declare, and feel,
In Us O let it richly dwell,
 Yet outwardly exprest
In purest Flames of fervent Love,
While all our hallow'd Actions prove
 The Fire within our Breast.
7. Here may it ever, ever burn,
Our Souls into thy Likeness turn,
 Till perfectly restor'd
With Joy our glorious Course we end,
And in Elijah's Car ascend
 To meet our Smiling Lord.

IV.⁷

- [1.] O Lord, our Strength and Righteousness,
 Our Base, and Head- and Corner-Stone,
Our Peace with GOD, our Mutual Peace,
 Unite, and keep thy Servants one,
That while we speak in Jesus Name,
We all may speak and think the same.
2. That Spirit of Love to Each impart,
 That fervent Mind which was in Thee,
So shall we all our Strength exert,
 In heart, and word, and deed agree
T' advance the Kingdom of thy Grace,
And spread thine everlasting Praise.
3. O never may the Fiend steal in,
 Or one unstable Soul deceive;
Assail'd by our besetting Sin,
 And tempted sore the Work to leave
Preserve us, Lord, from Self and Pride,
And let nor Life, nor Death divide.

⁷Appears also in MS Preachers Extraordinary, 10–11; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 118–19.
Published in “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760), 13–14.

4. Pride, only Pride, can cause divorce,
Can separate 'twixt our souls and Thee,
Pride, only Pride is Discord's Source,
The Bane of Peace and Charity:
But us it never more shall part,
For Thou art greater than our Heart.
5. Wherefore to thine Almighty Hand
The keeping of our Hearts we give
Firm in one Mind and Spirit stand,
To Thee and to Each other cleave,
Fixt on the Rock that cannot move,
And meekly safe in humble Love.

V.⁸

- [1.] Forth in thy Strength, O Lord, we go,
Forth in thy Steps and loving Mind,
To pay the Gospel-Debt we owe
(Thy Word of Grace for all mankind)
To sow th' Incorruptible Seed
And find the Lost, and wake the Dead.
2. The wandring Sheep of England's Fold
Demand our first and tenderest Care,
Who under Sin and Satan sold
Usurp the *Christian* Character,
The Christian Character prophane,
And take thy Church's Name in vain.
3. Or hardned Advocates for Hell,
Their Crime they *Sodom*-like confess,⁹
Or varnish'd with a specious Zeal,
An outside Form of Godliness,
The Power they impiously blaspheme,
And call our Hope a Madman's Dream.
4. Haters of GOD, yet still they cry,
The Temple of the Lord are we,
The Church, the Church! who dare deny

⁸Appears also in MS Preachers Extraordinary, 11–12; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 119–20.
Published in “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760), 14–15.

⁹Ori., “declare.”

Thy self-existing Deity
Proudly oppose thy righteous Reign,
And crucify their GOD again.

5. 'Gainst These by Thee sent forth to fight
A suffering War we calmly wage,
With Patience meet their fierce Despite,
With Love repay their furious Rage,
Revil'd we bless, defam'd intreat,
And spurn'd we kiss the Spurner's Feet.
6. Arm'd with thine all-sufficient Grace
Thy meek unconquerable Mind,
Our Foes we cordially embrace
The Filth and Refuse of Mankind
We gladly all resign our Breath
To save one pretious Soul from Death.

VI.¹⁰

- [1.] So be it, Lord! if Thou ordain,
We come to suffer all thy Will,
The utmost Violence to sustain
Of Those that can the Body kill
But having push'd us to the Shore
And kill'd the Flesh, can do no more.
2. We come, depending on thy Name,
For we have counted well the Cost,
Let Ease, and Liberty,¹¹ and Fame,
And Friends, and Life itself be lost,
We come with Joy thy Choice t' approve,
And pay Thee back thy dying Love.
3. Not in a confident Conceit
Of our own Strength, or Virtuous¹² Power,

¹⁰Appears also in MS Preachers Extraordinary, 12–13; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 120–22.
Published in “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760), 15–17.

¹¹Ori., “~~Goods, and Health~~” changed to “Liberty.”

¹²Ori., “gracious.”

We offer up ourselves, to meet
The Fierceness of that fiery Hour:
Left to ourselves we all shall fly;
And I shall first my Lord deny.

4. I first, of Ill o'recome, shall yield
A Scandal to thy glorious Cause,
Shall vilely cast away my Shield,
And hate the Haters of thy Cross,
Retort the sharp opprobrious Word,
Or smite with the defensive Sword.
5. Strange Fire will in this Bosom burn
Unless Thou quench it with thy Blood,
Impatient of their cruel Scorn,
My Spirit will throw off the Load,
And *Baals* Priests with Wrath repel,
And send th' accursed Brood to Hell.
6. Or I shall gaul the *Romish* Race
By Satir¹³ keen and Railings rude,
By proud Contempt, and Malice base,
Scurrilous Wit, and Laughter lewd,
Laughter, which soon itself bemoans,
And ends in everlasting Groans.
7. But do not, Lord, from us remove,
While Sin and Satan are so near,
But arm us with thy patient Love,
That only to Ourselves severe,
Like Thee, we may the World oppose,
And die a Ransom for our Foes.

VII.¹⁴

- [1.] Master, at thy Command we rise
No Prophets we, nor Prophets Sons,

¹³I.e., "Satire."

¹⁴Appears also in MS Preachers Extraordinary, 14–15; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 122–23.
Published in "Hymns for the Methodist Preachers" (1760), 17.

Nor mighty, nor well-born,¹⁵ nor wise,
But breathing Clods, but quickned Stones
Urg'd to cry out, constrain'd to call,
And tell Mankind—He died for All!

2. We speak, because *they* hold their peace,
Who *shoud* thy dying Love proclaim,
We *must* declare thy Righteousness,
Thy Truth, and Power, and Saving Name,
Tho' the dumb Ass with accent clear
Rebuke the Silence of the Seer.
3. But shall we e'er ourselves forget,
And in our Gifts and Graces trust,
With cool Contempt the Prophets treat,
Proudly against the Branches boast,
Or dare the Rulers vilify,
Or mock the Priests of GOD most high?
4. "Let them alone," thy Wisdom cries,
"If blind Conductors of the blind:"
Let them alone, our Heart replies,
And draws us to the Work assign'd
The Work of publishing the Word,
And seizing Sinners for our Lord.
5. Here let us spend our utmost Zeal,
Here let us all our Souls exert,
To testify thy gracious Will,
Inform the World, how kind Thou art,
And nothing know, desire, approve
But Jesus—and thy bleeding Love.

VIII.¹⁶

- [1.] Jesu, thy waiting Servants see,
Assembled here with one accord,
Ready to be sent forth by Thee,
To preach, when Thou shalt give the word,

¹⁵Ori., "rich, nor high" changed to "mighty, nor well-born."

¹⁶Appears also in MS Preachers Extraordinary, 15–17; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 123–25.
Published in "Hymns for the Methodist Preachers" (1760), 18–19.

Now, Lord, our Work our Province shew,
And lo! we come, thy Will to do.

2. O what a Scene salutes our eyes!
What Multitudes of lifeless¹⁷ Souls!
An open Vale before us lies
A Place of graves, a place of Skulls,
The desolate House of England's Sons,
A Church, a Charnel of dry Bones!
3. The Slaves of Pride, Ambition, Lust,
Our broken Fence and Pale receives
The World into the Temple thrust,
And make our Church a Den of Thieves,
Her Grief, her Burthen, and her Shame
They all assume the Church's Name.
4. Her desolate State too well we know,
But neither hate her nor despise:
Our Bosoms bleed, our Eyes o' reflow,
We view her, Saviour, with thine Eyes,
(O might She know in this her Day)
And still we weep, and still we pray.
5. We pray, that these dry Bones may live,
We see the Answer of our Prayer:
Thou dost a thousand Tokens give,
That England's Church is still thy Care,
Ten thousand Witnesses appear
Ten thousand Proofs, that GOD is here.
6. Here then, O GOD, vouchsafe to dwell,¹⁸
And Mercy on our Sion shew,
Her inbred Enemies expel,
Avenge her of her hellish Foe,
Cause on her Wastes thy Face to shine,
And comfort Her with Light divine.

¹⁷Ori., "senseless."

¹⁸Ori., "stay."

- 7.¹⁹ O Light of life, thy Spirit shed,
 In all his chearing quickning power,
Thy word that rais'd us from the dead
 Can raise ten thousand, thousand more,
Can bring them up from Nature's grave,
And the whole house of Israel save.

Hymn IX.²⁰

- [1.] Great Guardian of Britania's land,
 To Thee we here present our blood,
Set forth the last, a desperate band,
 Devoted for our Country's good,
Our Brethren dear, our flesh and bone,
We live, and die for Them alone.
2. *Our brethren*, tho' they still disclaim
 And us despitefully entreat,
With scornful rage cast out our name
 Trample as dirt beneath their feet,
Out of their synagogues expel,
And doom us to the hottest hell.
3. If Thou preserve our souls in peace,
 Our Brethren shall afflict in vain:

¹⁹Stanza 7 is on the detached portion of the sheet now in MARC, DDCW 6/80.

²⁰Appears also in MS Preachers Extraordinary, 17–19; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 125–27. Stanzas 1–2, the first two lines of stanza 3, and the last four lines of stanza 8 appear on the detached portion of the page now in MARC, DDCW 6/80. Published in “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760), 19–20.

Most patient, when they most oppress,
We all their cruel Wrong sustain,
And strengthen'd by thy meekning Power,
The more they hate, we love the more.

4. No, never shall their Rage prevail,
Or force us the *dry Bones* to leave:
The more they push us from the Pale
The closer to the Pale we cleave
And daily with²¹ the Temple found
Delight²² to kiss the sacred Ground.
5. If *some* defile that hallow'd Place,
The Truth and Us with Slanders load,
Or fiercely from their Altars chase,
And rob us of the Children's Food,
We will not quit thy House and Word,
Or loath the offerings of the Lord.
6. Shoud those who sit in Moses Seat,
Conspire thy quiet Flock to harm
Judge in their Courts, and scourge, and beat,
And bruise us with the Ruler's Arm,
Matter of Joy our Shame we make,
And bear it, Saviour, for thy sake.
7. Or shoud they stir the People up,
Our Goods to spoil, our Limbs to tear,
Sustain'd by that Immortal Hope,
Their lawless Violence we bear;
Or laid in Bonds our Voices raise,
And shake the Dungeon with thy Praise.
8. A Gazingstock to Fiends and Men
When arm'd with thy all-patient Power

²¹Ori., "Daily ~~within~~" changed to "And daily with."

²²Ori., "Rejoice."

As sheep appointed to be slain
 We wait the last, the fiery hour,
And ne'er from England's Church will move,
Till torn away—to that above.