

Translations of Latin Classics¹

Henry Moore records in his *Life of the Rev. John Wesley* a reminiscence of John about his brother Charles blundering around absent-mindedly during his student years at Oxford (1726–33), intent on nothing but versifying.² Most of these efforts were surely tied to the required exercises of translating classical poets from Latin and Greek. None of Charles’s creative religious verse can be reliably traced back this early, in part because very little manuscript material containing his poetic efforts prior to the late 1730s has survived.³

But we may have some traces of this student-years versifying. In his *Life of Wesley* Henry Moore cites five poetic English translations of Latin classical texts that he attributes to Charles Wesley.⁴ He describes these as selected examples of “extant specimens.” This could be read as implying that Moore had access to manuscript notebooks from Charles’s years in university. Circumstances would allow this possibility. Moore, who converted to Methodism in Dublin in 1777, was brought to London in 1784 as a preacher and to serve as John Wesley’s companion and amanuensis. He became a close friend of Charles Wesley as well, who could have shared with him such surviving notebooks. Alternatively, Moore could have joined John Wesley in sorting through Charles’s material after his death. Frank Baker cites Moore as evidence that there were indeed surviving notebooks of Charles’s early translations of classical writers. Baker further suggests that these notebooks were destroyed by John Pawson in 1796–97, along with John Wesley’s annotated copy of the works of Shakespeare and other such “worldly writings.”⁵

While Baker’s suggested scenario remains possible, it is striking that all of the specimens that Moore cites can be found in Part I of *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, which John Wesley published in 1757. Indeed, what Moore gives are the five longest (of ten total) poetic translations of Latin texts in Part I of *DOS*, in the same order as these appear scattered through Part I of *DOS*, and with no significant variants in either the Latin original or the English translation. This makes it just as likely that Moore has learned from one of the Wesley brothers that Charles was the source of the poetic English translations of Latin texts in Part I of *DOS*. John Wesley may have gathered the translations from Charles’s notebooks in the 1750s, but when Moore published *Life of Wesley* (1824) there is no compelling reason to assume that he meant any other source than Part I of *DOS* as the setting of the “extant specimens.”

Comparative analysis supports the likelihood that Charles Wesley is the author of the English poetic translations of Latin texts in Part I of *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, as well as two translations in Part II of this volume. On the one hand, the included translations differ from all current standard English poetic translations.⁶ On the other hand, when John Wesley quotes the same text in other of his writings

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²Henry Moore, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley* (London: J. Kershaw, 1824–25), 2:368–69.

³There is one brief poetic passage in his manuscript letter to John Wesley (January, 20, 1728), which he admits is an adaptation of lines written by John.

⁴Moore, *Life of Wesley*, 2:366–67.

⁵See Baker, *Representative Verse*, 258.

⁶Take as an example the excerpt of Lucan’s, *Civil War* (#VI below). The translation in *DOS* differs greatly from those of Sir Arthur Gorges (1614), Christopher Marlowe (1600), and Nicholas Rowe (1718); though there are some echoes of the translation of Thomas May (1631): “Nor now can Caesar a superior brooke, / Nor Pompey brooke a peere”

he provides a different translation—often his own rough (and unpoetic) literal translation.⁷ Moreover, a letter of John to Charles survives (written on December 7, 1764, a few years after *The Doctrine of Original Sin* was published) wherein John requests Charles to prepare English translations of the Latin and Greek verse in the *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* and the *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*.

While these various lines of evidence do not constitute irrefutable proof of Charles's authorship, the case is strong enough that we have chosen to include in this collection of Charles's poetry the English poetic translations of Latin texts published by his brother John in Parts I–II of *The Doctrine of Original Sin*. In addition to the five longer examples selected by Moore, this file includes seven shorter selections that meet the same criteria (poetic in nature, not found in standard sources, and not reproduced elsewhere by John Wesley). There is no discernible reason for differentiating between the author of the longer and shorter texts. The texts are presented in the order in which they appear in *The Doctrine of Original Sin*.

We have placed this file in the collection of Charles Wesley's *manuscript* poetry, even though it was published during his life, for two reasons. First, it was not published directly by Charles (who was publishing his material independent of John by this time) or publicly claimed by him. Second, it is included here as the (likely) remaining traces of an early body of manuscript verse that has not survived in any other form.

Readers should bear in mind that the text which follows is presented as it was published by John Wesley, who may have edited the (potential) manuscript source at points.

⁷See, for example, the different translation provided of Horace, *Epistles*, I.xviii.111–12 (#IV below) in Sermon 62, “The End of Christ's Coming,” §3, *Works*, 2:473. Or compare the varying translations given of Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi.726–27 (#V below), in *Earnest Appeal*, §19, *Works*, 11:51; Sermon 74, “Of the Church,” §13, *Works*, 3:50; and Sermon 77, “Spiritual Worship,” I.5, *Works*, 3:92.

[I]⁸

*Fuit ante Helenam mulier teterrima Belli
Causa: Sed ignotis perierunt mortibus omnes
Quos Venerem incertam rapientes, more ferarum,
Viribus editior caedebat, ut in grege taurus.*⁹

Full many a war has been for woman wag'd,
Ere half the world in Helen's cause engag'd;
But unrecorded in historic verse,
Obscurely died those savage ravishers:
Who, like brute beasts, the female bore away,
Till some superior brute re-seiz'd the prey,
As a wild bull, his rival bull o'erthrown,
Claims the whole subject-herd, and reigns alone.

[II]¹⁰

*Pudicitiam Saturno rege moratam
In terris ...*¹¹

Chastity did once, I grant, remain
On earth, and flourished in old Saturn's reign.

[III]¹²

*Turpe pecus, glandem atque cubilia propter
Certabant pugnis, dein fustibus atque ita porro
Pugnabant armis, quae post fabricaverat usus.*¹³

The human herd, unbroken and untaught,
For acorns first and grassy couches fought;
With fists, and then with clubs, maintain'd the fray,
Till, urg'd by hate, they found a quicker way,
And forg'd pernicious arms, and learn'd the art to slay. }

⁸John Wesley, *Doctrine of Original Sin* (Bristol: Farley, 1757), Part I, §I.7, p. 16. Attributed to Charles Wesley in Moore, *Life of Wesley*, 2:366; *Representative Verse*, 258–59; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:393.

⁹Horace, *Satires*, I.iii.107–110; changing original “*cunnius*” to “*mulier*” and “*illi*” to “*omnes*.”

¹⁰*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part I, §I.7, p. 16.

¹¹Juvenal, *Satires*, vi.1–2.

¹²*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part I, §I.7, p. 17. Attributed to Charles Wesley in Moore, *Life of Wesley*, 2:366; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:393.

¹³Horace, *Satires*, I.iii.100–102, changing original “*Unguibus et*” to “*Certabant*.”

[IV]¹⁴

*Haec satis est orare Jovem, quae donat et aufert,
Det vitam, det opes, aequum mi animum ipse parabo.*¹⁵

Enough for common benefits to pray,
Which Jove can either give, or take away.
Long life or wealth his bounty may bestow,
Wisdom and virtue to myself I owe.

[V]¹⁶

[...] *Vastam* [...]
*Mens agitans molem, et magno se corpore miscens*¹⁷

... the all-informing soul
That fills the mighty mass, and moves the whole.

[VI]¹⁸

*Nec [...] Caesar ferre priorem,
Pompeiusve parem potuit*¹⁹—

Nor Caesar could to a superior look:
Nor patriot Pompey could an equal brook!

¹⁴*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part I, §I.12, p. 22.

¹⁵Horace, *Epistles*, I.xviii.111–12.

¹⁶*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part I, §I.13, p. 22.

¹⁷Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi.726–27, which reads ‘...*totamque infus per artus
Mens agitans molem, et magno se corpore miscet*’.

¹⁸*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part I, §I.17, p. 29.

¹⁹Cf. Lucan, *Civil War*, i.125–26:

*Nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarve priorem
Pompeiusve parem.*

[VII]²⁰

*Nondum praecipites cingebant oppida fossae; [...]
Non galeae, non ensis erat. Sine militis usu
Mollia securae peragebant otia gentes.*²¹

Steep ditches did not then the towns surround,
Nor glittering helm, nor slaughtering sword was found.
Nor arms had they to wield, nor wars to wage,
But peace and safety crowned the blissful age.

[VIII]²²

*Jupiter antiqui contraxit tempora veris,
Perque hiemes aestusque et inaequalis autumnos,
Et breve ver spatiis exegit quattuor annum.*²³

The God of nature, and her sovereign king,
Shorten'd the primitive perennial spring:
The spring gave place, no sooner come than past,
To summer's heat, and winter's chilling blast;
And autumn sick, irregular, uneven:
While the sad year, through different seasons driven,
Obey'd the stern decree of angry heaven. }

²⁰*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part I, §II.10, p. 61.

²¹Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, i.97, 99–100.

²²*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part I, §II.13, p. 81. Attributed to Charles Wesley in Moore, *Life of Wesley*, 2:366; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:394.

²³Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, i.116–18.

[IX]²⁴

*Irrupit venae peioris in aevum
Omne nefas; Fugère pudor, Verumque, fidesque;
In quorum subiere locum fraudesque dolique
Insidiaeque et vis, et amor sceleratus habendi.*²⁵

A flood of general wickedness broke in
At once, and made the iron age begin:
Virtue and truth forsook the faithless race,
And fraud and wrong succeeded in their place.
Deceit and violence, the dire thirst of gold,
Lust to possess, and rage to have and hold.

[X]²⁶

*Vivitur ex rapto: Non hospes ab hospite tutus: [...]
Filius ante diem patrios inquirit in annos;
Victa jacet Pietas; et Virgo caede madentes,
Ultima Coelestum terras Astraera reliquit.*²⁷

They live by rapine. The unwary guest
Is poison'd at the inhospitable feast.
The son, impatient for his father's death,
Numbers his years, and longs to stop his breath;
Extinguish'd all regard to God and man:
And Justice, last of the celestial train,
Spurns the earth drench'd in blood, and flies to heaven again. }

²⁴*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part I, §II.13, pp. 81–82. Attributed to Charles Wesley in Moore, *Life of Wesley*, 2:366–67; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:394.

²⁵Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, i.128–31; changing the originals: *inrupit* to *irrupit*, *fugitque* to *fugere*, and *dolusque* to *dolique*.

²⁶*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part I, §II.13, p. 82. Attributed to Charles Wesley in Moore, *Life of Wesley*, 2:367; *Representative Verse*, 259; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:395.

²⁷Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, i.144, 148–50.

[XI]²⁸

*Rari quippe boni: numero vix sunt totidem quot
Thebarum portae, vel divitis ostia Nili*²⁹

The good lie scattered in this barren soil,
Few as the gates of Thebes, or mouths of Nile.

[XII]³⁰

*Audax omnia perpeti
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas ...
Audax Japeti genus
Ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit.
Post ignem aethera domo
Subductum, macies, et nova februum
Terris incubuit cohors,
Semotique prius tarda Necessitas
Lethi corripuit gradum.*³¹

Lawless and unrestrained the human race
Rushes through all the paths of daring wickedness—
glances at the cause of it, in their fabulous manner: ...
Prometheus first provoked the heavenly Sire,
Purloining Jupiter's authentic fire.
Evil, from hence derived, and brooding pain,
And strange disease with all the ghastly train,
Poured in upon the wretched sons of men;
While hasty fate quickened the ling'ring pace
Of distant death, unveiled the monster's face,
And gave into his hands our whole devoted race.

²⁸*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part II, §VI, p. 217.

²⁹Juvenal, *Satires*, xiii.26–27.

³⁰*Doctrine of Original Sin*, Part II, §VI, pp. 217–18.

³¹Horace, *Odes*, I.iii.25–26, 27–33.