

*Answer to Gill (1754)*¹

[Baker list, #207]

Editorial Introduction:

In 1751 John Wesley published *Serious Thoughts upon the Perseverance of the Saints*. This sparked a rebuttal from John Gill titled *The Doctrine of the Saint's Final Perseverance Asserted and Vindicated; in answer to a late pamphlet called Serious Thoughts on that Subject* (1752). John Wesley responded to Gill in *Predestination Calmly Considered* (1752), §§69–78.

In 1754 a second answer to Gill was published by “the Revd. Mr. Wesley,” in the form of three hymns excerpted from *Hymns on Love* (1742). It is unclear whether it was John or Charles Wesley who prepared this excerpt, but no significant textual changes were introduced.

This response was never reprinted.

Editions:

[Charles?] Wesley. *An Answer to All which the Revd. Dr. Gill has Printed on the Final Perseverance of the Saints*. London: sold at the Foundery, 1754.

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**An Answer
To all which
The Reverend Dr. Gill, etc.²**

1 O take away the stone,
 Jesu, the bar remove,
Th' accursed thing to me unknown,
 That stops thy streaming love:
 Thy grace is always free,
 Thou waitest to be good,
And still thy Spirit grieves for me,
 And speaks thy sprinkled blood.

2 Ah! Do not let me trust
 In gifts and graces past,
But lay my spirit in the dust,
 And stop my mouth at last.
 What thou for me hast done,
 I can no longer plead;
Thy truth and faithfulness I own,
 If now thou strike me dead.

²The first 23 stanzas reprise Hymn #3 in *Hymns on God's Love* (1742); stanzas 24–35 are a reprint of Hymn #4, and the last three stanzas are drawn from Hymn #5 (sts. 1, 3 & 9).

- 3 Surely I once believ'd,
 And felt my sins forgiven,
Thy faithful record I receiv'd,
 That thou hast purchas'd heaven
 For me, and all mankind,
 Who from their sins would part;
The peace of God I once could find,
 The witness in my heart.
- 4 But soon the subtle fiend
 Beguil'd my simple mind,
Darkness with light he knew to blend,
 Falshood and truth he join'd;
 Pride (he remember'd well)
 Had cast him from the skies:
By pride the first transgressor fell,
 And lost his paradise.
- 5 Arm'd with this fiery dart
 The enemy drew nigh,
And preach'd to my unsettled heart
 His bold presumptuous lie;
 “You are secure of heaven,”
 (The tempter softly says)
“*You are elect*, and once forgiven
 Can never fall from grace.
- 6 “You never can receive
 The grace of God in vain:
The gift, be sure, he did not give
 To take it back again;
 He cannot take it back,
 Whether you use, or no
His grace; you cannot shipwreck make
 Of faith, or let it go.

- 7 “You never can forget
 Your God, or leave him now,
Or once look back, if you have set
 Your hand unto the plow:
 You never can deny
 The Lord who you hath bought,
Nor can your God his own *pass by*,
 Tho’ you receive him not.
- 8 “God is unchangeable,
 And therefore so are you;
And therefore they can never fail
 Who once his goodness knew;
 In part perhaps you may,
 You cannot wholly fall,
Cannot become a castaway
 Like *non-elected* Paul.
- 9 “Tho’ you continue not,
 Yet God remains the same,
Out of his book he cannot blot
 Your everlasting name:
 Cut off you shall not be,
 You never shall remove,
Secure from all eternity
 In his *electing love*.
- 10 “If God the seed did sow,
 He sow’d it not in vain,
It cannot to perfection grow,
 But it must still remain:
 Nor cares, nor sins can choak,
 Or make the grace depart,
Nor can it be by Satan took
 Out of your careless heart.

- 11 “You must for ever live,
 If of the chosen race;
If God did but one talent give
 Of special, saving grace,
 You cannot bury it;
 He never can reprove,
Or cast you out into the pit
 For trampling on his love.
- 12 “God sees in you no sin;
 On his decree depend;
You who did in the Sp’rit begin,
 In flesh can never end:
 You never can reject
 His mercies, or abuse,
His great salvation none neglect,
 And death and evil chuse.
- 13 “If once the sp’rit unclean
 Out of his house is gone,
He never more can enter in,
 Or seize you for his own;
 You need not dread the fate
 Of reprobates accurst,
Or tremble lest your last estate
 Be worsers than the first.
- 14 “Surely the righteous man
 Can never more draw back,
He his own mercies never can
 With his good works forsake;
 That he should sink to hell
 In his iniquity,
God *may suppose it possible,*
 But it can never be.

- 15 “His threatnings all are vain,
 You fancy him sincere,
But spare yourself the needless pain,
 And cast away your fear.
 He speaks with this intent
 To frighten you from ill
With sufferings, which he only meant
 The reprobate should feel.
- 16 “He only meant to warn
 The damn’d, devoted race,
Back from his ways lest they should turn
 Who never knew his ways;
 He only cautions all
 Who never came to God
Not to depart from God, or fall
 From grace, who never stood.
- 17 “His threatnings are a jest,
 Or not design’d for you;
He only means them for the rest,
 And they shall find them true,
 Who slight his mercy’s call,
 Which they could ne’er embrace:
He warns th’ apostates not to fall
 From common (*damning*) grace.
- 18 “Gainst those that faithless prove
 He shuts his mercy’s door,
And whom he never once did love
 Threatens to love no more;
 From them he doth revoke
 The grace they did not share,
And blot the names out of his book
 That ne’er were written there.

- 19 “But you may rest secure,
 And safely take your ease,
If you are once in grace, be sure
 You always are in grace:
 Cast all your fears away,
 My son, be of good cheer,
Nor mind what Paul or Peter say,
 For you *must* persevere.
- 20 “And did they fright the child,
 And tell it, it might fall?
Might be of its reward beguil’d,
 And sin, and forfeit all:
 Might to its vomit turn,
 And wallow in the mire,
And perish in its sins, and burn
 In everlasting fire!
- 21 “What naughty men be they
 To take the children’s bread,
Their carnal confidence to slay,
 And force them to take heed!
 With humble useless doubt
 The fearful babes they fill,
Compell’d with trembling to work out
 Their own salvation still.
- 22 “Ah poor misguided soul!
 And did they make it weep!
Come, let me in my bosom lull,
 Thy sorrows all to sleep:
 Thine eyes in safety close,
 Secure from all alarms,
And take thine undisturb’d repose,
 And rest within my arms.

- 23 “They shall not vex it so,
 By bidding it take heed;
You need not as a bulrush go,
 Still bowing down your head:
 Your griefs and fears reject,
 My *other* gospel own,
Only believe yourself elect,
 And all the work is done.”
- 24 ’Twas thus the subtle foe
 Beguil’d my foolish heart,
While weak in faith I did not know
 His false ensnaring art:
 I listen’d to a lie
 Which nature lik’d so well,
Believ’d the soothing fiend that I
 Could never fall—and fell.
- 25 The tempter now withdrew,
 And left me free from care,
His own advantage well he knew;
 My soul was in his snare:
 Secure, and lull’d in ease,
 Sin vex’d me now no more,
My sorrows end, my trouble cease,
 And all my pangs are o’er.
- 26 Freed from the inward cross,
 Of all corruption full,
A prophet of smooth things I was
 To my own wretched soul;
 Unchang’d and unrenew’d,
 Yet still I could not fall:
Daub’d with untemper’d mortar stood
 The tottering, whited wall.

- 27 My wound I slightly heal'd,
 And quieted my grief,
With all the false assurance fill'd
 Of damning unbelief;
 One of the happy sect,
 Who scoff at mourners poor,
That will not dream themselves elect,
 Till they have made it sure.
- 28 How happier far was I,
 From grief and scruple free,
Who could from all conviction fly
 To God's *suppos'd* decree!
 O what a settled peace,
 What comfort did I prove,
And hug me in my sins, and bless
 His sweet electing love!
- 29 What if I sinn'd *sometimes*
 In this *imperfect* state,
It was not like the damning crimes
 Of a lost reprobate;
 Sin was not sin in *me*,
 God doth not blame his own,
Doth not behold iniquity
 In any chosen one.
- 30 What if I *fouly* fell,
 I *finally* could not;
His grace is irresistible,
 And back I *must* be brought:
 What if in sin I liv'd,
 The firm decree is past,
I *must* be at my death receiv'd,
 I *must* be sav'd at last.

- 31 How could my folly dare
 Satan and sin to slight?
The judgments of my God were far
 Above out of my sight:
 His wrath was not for me,
 And therefore I defied
Mine enemies, from danger free,
 In self-electing pride.
- 32 Not all his threaten'd woes
 My stubborn heart could move;
His threatnings only were for those
 Who never knew his love:
 He cannot take away
 His covenanted grace,
Tho' I rebel, and disobey,
 And mock him to his face.
- 33 He cannot me pass by,
 Or utterly reject,
Or judge his people, or deny
 To save his own elect;
 He swore to bring me in
 To heaven; 'twere perjury
For God to punish me for sin,
 For God to pass by me.
- 34 'Twas thus my wretched heart
 Abus'd his patient grace,
Provok'd his mercy to depart,
 His justice to take place:
 Unconscious of its state,
 In death my soul abode,
Nor groan'd beneath its guilty weight,
 Nor knew its fall from God.

- 35 I could not be restor'd,
 By pard'ning grace renew'd,
While trampling on his written word
 Self-confident I stood:
 He only saves the lost,
 Which I could never be,
I never *could* be damn'd, but *must*
 Be sav'd by his decree.
- 36 O my offended God,
 If now at last I see
That I have trampled on thy blood,
 And done despite to thee,
 If I begin to wake
 Out of my deadly sleep,
Into thy arms of mercy take,
 And there for ever keep.
- 37 I can no longer trust
 In my abuse of grace,
I own thee merciful and just,
 If banish'd from thy face:
 Tho' once I surely knew,
 And felt my sins forgiven,
Faithful I own thee, Lord, and true,
 If now shut out from heaven.
- 38 But O! Forbid it, Lord,
 Nor drive me from thy face,
While self-condemn'd, and self-abhorr'd,
 I humbly sue for grace:
 For thy own mercy's sake
 My guilty soul release,
And now my pardon give me back,
 And bid me die in peace.³

³Line in *Hymns on God's Love* (1742): "And give me back my peace."