Wesley penned this set of plaintive hymns one month after learning of his son Samuel’s conversion to the Roman Catholic Church (see MS Samuel Wesley, RC). This is surely the background for the prayer expressed throughout the hymns that God would guide the person in discerning the true religion, from amidst the various claimants—including the “partisans of Rome” (Hymn VII). Particular emphasis is given to the need for God’s Spirit to open up scripture, as a sure guide in assessing competing traditions. The hymns may reveal some of Charles Wesley’s struggle with his initial strong reaction to Samuel’s conversion, but they are more likely intended as a model prayer for Samuel.

The gathering of sheets containing this set of manuscript verse must be sorted and pieced together in their current setting. MARC, MA 1977/583/25 includes rough drafts of the first three hymns (presented separately in this collection) and pages 1–8 of the more polished draft that is transcribed below. The final two pages of the polished draft were separated from the rest and now reside in MARC, MA 1977/583/32, item #21.

Both settings of MS Prayer for Truth are part of the collection in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre (Charles Wesley Notebooks Box 4). The transcription below is provided with permission of the Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

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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.
### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Prayer of One Seeking the Truth</td>
<td>1–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Hymn] II</td>
<td>2–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Hymn] III: Before Reading the Scriptures</td>
<td>3–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymn IV</td>
<td>5–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymn V</td>
<td>6–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Hymn] VI</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Hymn] VI[I]</td>
<td>9–10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Prayer of One Seeking the Truth  
(Written June 26, 1784)²

1. O Thou that dost in darkness shine,  
   With clearest evidence divine  
   Inform my willing heart,  
   Appear the true, and living Way,  
   That Thee I simply may obey,  
   And love with all my heart!

2. This earnest wish if Thou bestow  
   Thy nature and thy will to know,  
   With heavenly wisdom bless,  
   That taught by thy unerring light  
   To serve, and worship God aright,  
   I may my Maker please.

3. A thousand different paths I view,  
   But which to shun and which pursue  
   Still unresolv’d I stand  
   Till Thou thy secret counsel show,  
   Direct me after Thee to go,  
   And reach me out thy hand.

4. Thou know’st my feebleness of mind,  
   My will perverse, my passions blind,  
   My reason immature;  
   But Thou, O God, if Thee alone  
   My Guide infallible I own,  
   Shalt make my footsteps sure.

5. Wherefore in self-mistrust I flee,
   My Guide Infallible, to Thee,
   To Thee my soul resign,
   And while for light I humbly pray,
   Thou wilt not let me miss my way
   Who would be led in thine.

6. Or if thro’ self-presuming pride,
   I have mistook, and turn’d aside,
   Misled by my own will,
   I now thy Spirit’s voice would hear
   Till3 following Him with faith sincere
   I reach the heavenly hill.

[Hymn] II.4

[1.] Father, that I thy child may be,
   That I may thy salvation see,
   Assist me to stand still,
   Thy kind instructions to receive,
   What to reject and what believe,
   And how perform thy will.

2. From Thee this good desire proceeds
   To follow truth where’er it leads,
   While open to the light
   All things impartially I weigh,
   Made willing God, not man, t’ obey
   And judge, and act aright.

3. I trust thy mercy to restrain
   My blind, implicit faith in man
   My rash, prejudging haste,
And every hindrance to remove,
That fully I may all things prove,
And find the Good at last.

4. Fast let me hold the Good I find,
No longer tost with every wind,
   With every specious tale,
But built on the Foundation sure,
The Word⁵ that always shall endure,
The Rock that cannot fail.

5. The Word proceeding from that Rock,
Which the Incarnate Godhead spoke
   And his Apostles too,
Can it not save and sanctify,
If He th’ ingrafted word apply,
And prove the record true?

6. The word in which I woud believe,
Thou didst by inspiration give;
   And if thy Spirit given
Again, with faith inspires my heart,
I know Thee, Saviour, who Thou art,
And find my way to heaven.

[Hymn] III.
Before reading the Scripture.⁶

[1.] O God, to whom for light I look
   How shall I know this ancient book,
      If it indeed be thine,
Unless thy Spirit breaks the seals,
And to my heart the Sense reveals
   As oracles divine.

2. The Church that did from Christ proceed
Whose many parts and members spread
Throughout the Earth I see,
   Not one, but all in every age
Have handed down the sacred page,⁷
   And left it pure to me.⁸

⁵Ori., “Rock.”
⁷Ori., “Have pure preserved the sacred page.”
⁸Ori., “And hand it down to me.”
3. Not one particular alone
   The universal Church I own
   But all with one accord
   Churches diffus’d from east to west
   Conspire unanimous t’ attest
   The heaven-descended word.

4. The Fact historical is plain
   But standing on the words of man
   I am not satisfied,
   I want a more substantial ground,
   A Rock on which my faith to found
   Which always may abide.

5. What is that Rock, but Christ alone:
   O were He to my soul made known
   The Truth infallible,
   Son of the living God supream!
   The faith, the Church that’s built on Him
   Defies the gates of hell.

6. His Spirit in these mysterious leaves
   Unerring testimony gives
   To Christ the Lord most high:
   O woud He take of Jesus blood,
   Blood of the true,⁹ eternal God,
   And to my heart apply!

7. The Witness of thy truth I need
   (Which whosoe’er believes indeed
   Doth in himself possess)
   To testify, that I am thine,
   To fill with righteousness divine
   And love, and joy and peace.

8. Possest of Him I doubt no more,
   But God in spirit and truth adore
   My Father and my Friend,
   Till the bright Image of his Sire
   I see with all his angel-quire,
   My glorious Lord descend!

⁹The word “one” is written above “true” as an alternative.
Hymn IV.\textsuperscript{10}

[1.] In search of the Religion true
O God, I know not what to do,
But humbly look to Thee,
Who only canst direct me right,
Illumine with celestial light
And give me eyes to see.

2. That truth I in the means may find
A candid, free, impartial mind
To me vouchsafe to give,
With judgment sound, and reason clear,
So shall I weigh, and read, and hear
And all thy mind receive.

3. Obstinate prejudice remove,
That I may all religions prove,
And hold the balance even:
Make me indifferent to the Way
(Whate’er it be) which safely may
Conduct my soul to heaven.

4. From sloth, and pride, and passion free
And wilful ignorance, to me
The worship pure make known,

\textsuperscript{10}Published posthumously in \textit{Unpublished Poetry}, 3:174–75.
Most acceptable in thy sight,
In which Thou chiefly dost delight,
And wilt with glory crown.

5. Thine Oracles the answer give,
They teach me to repent, believe,
And Christ my Lord confess,
My faith by my obedience prove,
Worship Thee in the Spirit of love
And truth of holiness.

6. While thus I worthily adore
My God, I can inquire no more,
Assur’d that mine Thou art,
Who dost in Christ thyself reveal;
I own thy manifested will
And give Thee all my heart.

Hymn V.\textsuperscript{11}

[1.] The word of God, by all confess
Of truth th’ indubitable test\textsuperscript{12}
My perfect Rule I own,
The Word which doth his mind reveal
To those that woud perform his will,
And worship Him alone.

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{11}Published posthumously in Poetical Works, 13:258–59; and Unpublished Poetry, 3:175–76.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{12}Or., “Of faith truth th’ indubitable test.”
2. Tis here I seek, and hope to find
   My Lord, who hath my heart inclin’d
   Himself to serve and please:
   I ask his Spirit’s promis’d light
   To guide my wandring feet aright
   Into the way of peace.

3. Scripture,” doth Christ The WORD declare,
   The Spirit, his own Interpreter,
   Doth testify of Thee;
   Son of the living God most high,
   Born for a sinful world to die,
   Thy death hath ransom’d me.

4. Thy Spirit doth the power infuse,
   Thro’ which I now my Chuser chuse:
   He breaks my heart of stone:
   From Him my holiness proceeds,
   My faith, and hope—and love that leads
   Directly to thy throne.

5. Thro’ Him the Crucified I know
   And let all other knowledge go,
   As trivial, void, and vain;
   And blest with evidence divine,
   And certified, that Thou art mine,
   Eternal life I gain.

Ori., “The word.”

Ori., “his.”
6. The Spirit doth the truth reveal,
The pledge, the witness, and the seal,
To all believers given,
Thy word of all-sufficient grace
Prepares me for that happy place,
And builds me up to heaven.

[Hymn] VI.\textsuperscript{15}

[1.] See, Lord, thy meanest servant set
Humbly attentive at thy feet,
Thy welcom will to prove;
Help me to chuse the better part,
And teach my inexperienc’d heart
The lessons of thy love.

2. Thou only knowst what is in man
Me, Saviour, to myself explain
And true repentance give;
Bid me from sin this moment cease
And then I follow after peace
And in thy presence live.

3. Author of faith, the grace bestow
Thro’ which I may my Saviour know,
And feel thy blood applied,
In Thee my Lord and God believe
And by thy hands and feet perceive
Jehovah crucified!

[4.] Me let thy dying love constrain
To love my loving Lord again
And walk in all thy ways,
And never from thy footsteps move
Till call’d to meet Thee from above,
I see thy heavenly face.

\textsuperscript{15}Published posthumously in Unpublished Poetry, 3:176–77.
[Hymn] VI[I].

1. O God who didst the Seers inspire,
If Thee sincerely I desire
To know, revere, obey,
Thy all-inlightning grace afford,
And by the Spirit, and the word
Point out my heavenly way.

2. While from fallacious man I cease,
To none, for real happiness,
But to Thyself I go:
They only find, who learn of Thee,
The science of felicity
And life eternal know.

3. In vain the Partisans of Rome
Divine authority assume
And all mankind condemn,
“God cannot help us to believe,
Unless implicit we receive
The written word from Them.”

4. But he that reads, thy Spirit perceives
Breathing throughout the sacred leaves
Interpreting thy will;
The soul o’rewhelm’d with doubts and fears
The voice of whispering Wisdom hears,
“To know thy God, be still!”

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16The two pages containing this last hymn are found in MARC, MA 1977/583/32, item #21. The pagination and theme make clear that they belong to this set. Published posthumously in Unpublished Poetry, 3:71–72.
5. Faith comes by hearing of thy word,
   And witnessing of Christ the Lord
   Thy Spirit seals it thine;
   Thou dost confirm thy word of grace,
   Which true believers all confess
   The Saving power divine.

6. Spirit and life, thy words, convey
   A power the Speaker to obey
   In all that Thou hast said;
   The evangelic faith impart
   To every unopposing heart,
   And bring to life the dead.

7. Wherefore, if thou the grace permit,
   Attentive at my Teacher’s feet
   I wait, till Christ appears!
   Now, Lord, eternally the same,
   Speak, and declare thy Father’s name,
   For now thy Servant hears.

8. Determin’d here I still abide,
   Scripture my rule, and God my Guide;
   And when my Lord I love,
   And when the Truth I fully know,
   In glorious liberty I go,
   To sing thy praise above.