

MS Prayer for Truth (drafts)¹

This file contains rough drafts of the first three hymns in MS Prayer for Truth (see the introduction there for context). They are looseleaf and unpaginated, intermixed with the more polished draft in the collection at the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, accession number MA 1977/583/25(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.

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, and Dr. Timothy Underhill consulting on the shorthand. Last updated: August 20, 2010.

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**The Prayer
of One Seeking the Truth²**

- [1.] O Thou that dost in darkness shine,
With clearest evidence divine
 Inform me who Thou art,
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.

² Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:205–206.

4. Thou know'st my feebleness of mind,
My³ 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 woud 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
Till following Him with faith sincere
I reach the heavenly hill.⁴

³Ori., "Thy."

⁴There are some shorthand phrases at the bottom of the page, many crossed through, which may have been primers for these hymns but do not represent draft lines.

[Hymn] II.⁵

- [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 perform⁶ 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 willing⁷ 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 WORD that always shall endure,
 The ROCK that cannot fail.

⁵Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:206–207.

⁶Ori., “to do.”

⁷Ori., “Determin’d.”

5. The Word proceeding from that Rock,
Which Jesus, God incarnate spoke
And his Apostles too,
Can it not save and sanctify,
If He th' ingrafted word apply,
And prove the record true?⁸
- 6.⁹ The word in which I woud believe,
Thou didst¹⁰ 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.

⁸An initial draft of stanza 5 is written in shorthand at the top of the page. In this draft line 2 reads: "A word which God incarnate spoke"; line 5 reads: "If Thou the incarnate word supply."

⁹Wesley drafted stanza 6 in shorthand, with several cross outs and corrections, at the bottom of the page before writing the final version as it appears here in longhand.

¹⁰Ori., "dost."

[Hymn III.]
Before reading the Scripture.¹¹

- [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 Truth¹² 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
Bear record to sacred page,
And hand it down to me.¹³
3. Not one particular alone
The universal Church I own
But all with one accord¹⁴
The Church diffus'd from east to west
Conspire unanimous t' attest
The heaven-descended word.
4. The fact¹⁵ historical is plain
But standing¹⁶ on the words of man
I am not satisfied,
I want a more substantial ground,
A Rock on which my faith to find
Which always shall¹⁷ abide.

¹¹Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:172–74.

¹²“Sense” is written in the margin as an alternative to “Truth.”

¹³Wesley supplies an alternative for the last two lines in the margin, in shorthand: “Have safe preserved the sacred page / And hand it down to me.”

¹⁴Ori., “But all ~~who call thee Lord~~.”

¹⁵“Proof” is suggested in the margin as an alternative to “fact.”

¹⁶Ori., “~~building~~.”

¹⁷“May” is suggested as an alternative for “shall.”

5. What is that Rock, but Christ alone:
O were He to my soul made known
The Truth infallible,
Son of the living God supreme!
The faith, the Church that's built on Him
Defies the gates of hell.¹⁸
6. His Spirit in these mysterious leaves
Unerring¹⁹ testimony gives
To Christ the Lord most high:
O woud He take of Jesus blood,
Blood of the true, 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 certify, 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!²⁰

¹⁸The first draft of this stanza, crossed out, read as follows:

What is that Rock but Christ Alone?
My faith, if Him my Lord I own,
The Truth infallible.
Built on a power deriv'd from Him
Son of the living God supreme
Defies the gates of hell.

¹⁹Ori., "Authentic."

²⁰At the bottom of the page are several phrases in shorthand, some obscure, but portions of which were incorporated into stanza 8.