

MS Samuel Wesley, R.C.¹

Charles Wesley was offered the use of a house in Chesterfield Street, Marylebone in 1770. He soon was living there with Charles Jr. (b. 1757), to provide access to larger musical opportunities for his eldest son. His wife Sarah and the younger children divided their time between the home they retained in Bristol and this London address until 1778, when the entire family settled at Chesterfield Street. With this final move, Samuel (b. 1766) began attending Roman Catholic services at the embassy chapels in London, because they were the settings of the most elaborate and sumptuous church music at the time. By November 1780, Samuel was composing Latin church music for use in these chapels. While Charles would hardly have encouraged such intermingling with Roman Catholic influences, there is no indication that he sought to prevent it. If he had any fears, they came to fruition in May 1784, when Samuel formally converted to the Roman church, marking the event by composing an elaborate setting of the mass which he dedicated to and dispatched to Pope Pius VI.²

In his later years Samuel would deny having been a real convert, attributing his interest only to the Gregorian music, but at the time it was a grievous blow to his father. Charles poured out his pain and fears in verse, composing a total of thirteen manuscript poems. Their tone, indicative of his initial response, is sharp and bitter—accusing his son of parricide and treating him as essentially dead. Perhaps more than anything else that survives, these poems should be read as expressions of Wesley's inner state. There is no indication that he shared them with Samuel, and he certainly did not intend their publication. It is also important to note that Wesley's bitterness softened over time.³ Samuel continue to live with his parents and on his deathbed Charles said to Samuel: "I shall bless God to all eternity that ever you was born; I am persuaded I shall." This, despite the fact that Samuel forsook the Roman Catholic faith only after Charles's death.

MS Samuel Wesley, RC is a sewn gathering of 24 quarto pages. The first two pages are missing, which contained the first poem and nearly three-quarters of the second poem. Sally Wesley Jr. has added a note on the cover of the collection: "By the Revd. C. Wesley/ Verses on his Son Samuel/ on being made acquainted/ He had embraced the/ Roman Catholic Religion."

MS Samuel Wesley, RC is part of the collection in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, accession number MA 1977/583/12 (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. Last updated: August 1, 2010.

²For more details on this and the larger life of Charles Wesley's youngest son, see Philip Olleson, *Samuel Wesley: The Man and His Music* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003).

³See the note on verses 4–5 of Hymn III.

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[II]⁴

... To save his wandring soul from sin,
The healing balm of grace pour in,
The antidote of love.

7 Surely Thou hast in Babylon,
Where Satan fills his favourite throne,
Thy worshippers sincere
Who pure as Lot in Sodom live,
Glory to their Redeemer give
And love the God they fear.

8 To These my murder'd (?) son unite,
Give him with these to walk in light,
Where hellish darkness reigns,
To dwell in Thee and keep thy word
Till through []⁵
The heavenly crown he gains.

III⁶

1 Farewell, my all of earthly hope,
My nature's stay, my age's prop,
Irrevocably gone!
Submissive to the will divine
I acquiesce, and make it mine;
I offer up my Son.

2 But give I God a sacrifice
That costs me nought? my gushing eyes
The answer sad express,
My gushing eyes and troubled heart
Which bleeds with its belov'd to part,
Which breaks thro' fond excess.

⁴Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:303. Pages 1–2 of the manuscript are missing, containing all of Hymn I and the earlier portion of Hymn II.

⁵The line is incomplete.

⁶Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 8:422–23 (lacking stanza 5); *Representative Verse*, 366–67; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:304–305.

- 3 Yet since he from my heart is torn,
Patient, resign'd, I calmly mourn
The darling snatch'd away:
Father, with thee thy own I leave;
Into thy mercy's arms receive,
And keep him to that day.
- 4 Keep (for I nothing else desire)
The bush unburnt amidst the fire,
And freely I resign
My Child for a few moments lent
(My Child no longer!) I consent
To see his face no more.
- 5 Receive me! and accept my pain!
Nor let him view my parting scene
Or catch my parting breath!
Nor let the hast'ner of my end,
Th' unconscious Parricide, attend
To trouble me in death!⁷
- 6 But hear my agonizing prayer
And O, preserve him, and prepare
To meet me in the skies
When thron'd in Bliss the Lamb appears,
Repairs my loss and wipes the tears
For ever from my eyes!

⁷Verses 4 and 5 are scored out in the manuscript, apparently by Charles Wesley after his initial bitterness had softened. Sally Wesley Jr. deciphered them on a separate sheet of paper as "Made out through the Blots."

IV⁸

1. Bereaved by His revoking word,
I will not sin against the Lord,
 To pray I will not cease
For the dear author of my woes,
Till death these weary eyelids close,
 And I depart in peace.
2. But while an exile here I live,
I live for a lost son to grieve,
 And in Thy Spirit to groan,
Thy blessings on his soul to claim,
Through Jesu's all-prevailing name,
 Presented at Thy throne.
3. Still let Thine eye his steps pursue,
And keep the fugitive in view,
 Where'er he rashly strays;
Control his violence of will,
Withhold him, Lord, from pleasing ill,
 And the destroyer's ways.
4. That poison of the Romish sect,
O let it not his soul infect,
 With close serpentine art,
With bitter, persecuting zeal;
But from those mysteries of hell
 Preserve his simple heart.
5. Surround him with Thy guardian power
When ended the Satanic hour,
 And darkness flees away,
When infidels without disguise
Tear open his unwilling eyes,
 And drag him into day.

⁸Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 8:423–25.

6. See the true ancient Church appears,
Peter's unerring successors,
 Who Christ and God disown!
Adulterers and murderers rise,
And monsters* of unnatural vice
 Adorn the Papal throne.

7. Shock'd at the hypocrites profane,
My son, when undeceived, restrain
 From worse, if worse can be;
Nor let him all religion cast
Behind, and shelter take⁹ at last
 In infidelity.

8. Father, for Thy own mercy's sake,
Let all my mournful prayers come back
 In that tremendous day,
While ready and resolved he is
To plunge into the dark abyss,
 And cast his soul away!¹⁰

9. Then in his soul the secret tell,
And answering for Thyself, reveal
 The Truth so long unknown,
The Way, which Thou in Jesus art,
And Life, eternal life, impart
 By giving him Thy Son.

* Formosus¹¹

⁹Ori., "~~seek~~."

¹⁰A later hand adds the comment: "Surely this prayer was answered in 1817, when in a state of frenzy he would have died."

¹¹Formosus (c. 816–896) was a notorious pope, occupying the See of Peter 891–96.

V¹²

- [1.] Jesus, our merciful High-priest,
Whose bowels yearn o're the distress
 With melting eye behold
And O! bring back a wandring sheep,
For whom I still in secret weep,¹³
 And keep him in the fold.
- 2 Thou pitiest all who go astray,
And miss, thro' ignorance, the way
 That leads to joys above,
Who leave the true religion pure,
Nor build on the Foundation sure
 The faith that works by love.
- 3 A stranger to that faith divine,
Preserve whom once I counted mine,
 Impatient to get free,
Far from his father's house to rove,
And in the distant country prove
 The sweets of liberty.
- 4 From drunken, riotous excess,
From vice, and open wickedness
 His giddy youth restrain,
While flattery soothes, and pleasure smiles,
And harlots spread their slighted toils,
 And glory courts in vain.

¹²Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:305–306.

¹³This and the previous line are reversed in the manuscript, but Charles indicates to switch as appear above.

- 5 Be with him in the lion's den,
From bloody, and deceitful men
His Guardian and his Lord,
From prophets false in error nurst,
From Sodom's hellish sons accurst,
By God and man abhor'd.
- 6 While in the firey furnace tried,
Let him unburnt, unscorch'd, abide,
Nor feel the harmless flame,
Till pure as gold Thou bring him forth
Account him worthy thro' thy worth
And stamp him with thy name.
- 7 Thou on his newborn soul impress
Thy character of holiness
Thy favourite name of love,
That glorious earnest in his heart
Which makes him ready to depart
And joyful to remove.
- 8 Then from the midst of Babylon
Call forth thy servant and thy son,
By God, not man, forgiven,
The Church of the First-born to join,
And find, redeem'd by blood divine,
His place prepar'd in heaven.

VI¹⁴

- [1.] Again, my soul, to Jesus turn!
The Comforter of all that mourn,
 My sorrowful request
Compassionately kind he hears,
And promises to dry my tears,
 And give the weary rest.
- 2 He bids me cast my care on Him,
The Lord Almighty to redeem,
 The helpless to defend,
To bring the blind by ways unknown,
And trusting in his word alone,
 I calmly wait the end.
- 3 My Son committed to his hands
Who earth, and heaven, and hell commands,
 The Object of my love,
The object of his own, I leave,
Assur'd I shall again receive,
 And see his face above.¹⁵
- 4 We both shall see our Saviour's face,
On which the saints and angels gaze
 With rapturous delight,
We both his praises shall repeat,
Or speechless fall before his feet,
 At that transporting Sight!

¹⁴Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:306–307.

¹⁵“Amen” written in the margin in another hand.

- 5 In view of such transcendant bliss,
I now my anxious grief dismiss,
 My ravish'd son forego,
No more indulge my fond complaints,
No more my burthen'd Spirit faints
 Beneath its hallow'd woe.
- 6 I count not fit to be compar'd
To that exceeding great Reward
 My light¹⁶ calamity,
My momentary loss and pain
Thro' which a glorious crown I gain
 And God for ever SEE!

VII¹⁷

- 1 Not that my sufferings can procure
(Coud I a thousand years endure)
 Or merit a reward:
Unprofitable servant, I
On the alone deserts¹⁸ rely
 Of my redeeming Lord.
- 2 Nor works, nor sufferings, can atone
Nor any pains except his own;
 My sins his blood require;

¹⁶Ori., “short.”

¹⁷Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:308–309.

¹⁸Ori., “deserts alone,” but Charles numbers to reorder as above.

His blood which cleanses from all sin
Shall make my inmost nature clean,
Without a purging fire.

3 Jesus, thy all-atoning blood
Brings back a wandring world to God,
And every grace imparts;
Thy blood be on my son and me,
To bless with peace and purity
To consecrate our hearts.

4 Wash us from every guilty stain,
That we may love our Lord again,
The Lover of mankind,
And in the all-uniting grace
The universal Church embrace,
The true religion find.

5 Give us that¹⁹ power of godliness
(Without the gaudy, pompous dress,
The pageantry and show)
That manna from the world conceal'd,
That life of God in man reveal'd,
That glorious bliss below.

6 Us to thyself by love divine,
To all thy living members join,
The saints by grace forgiven;

¹⁹Ori., "the."

We both are then for ever One
With all the saints around thy throne,
The Church in earth and heaven.

VIII²⁰

- [1.] Come, Holy Ghost, whose breath inspires,
And sinners fills with pure desires,
And gospel-grace imparts,
Descend in blessings from above,
And shed abroad the Saviour's love
In both our longing hearts.
- 2 Thou only canst in him and me
Reveal the depths of Deity;
The all-atoning blood
Thou only canst to both apply,
And with our spirits testify
That we are sons of God.
- 3 Thou dost Jehovah's children lead
And teach us every truth we need
For our salvation know:
Thro' Thee we Jesus call The Lord,
And to the Form Divine restor'd
In all his footsteps go.
- 4 Give us, of Thee reborn, to shine
With real holiness Divine,

²⁰Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:309–310.

In Thee to walk and live,
Thy fruits to bear, thy stamp to feel,
And peace, and joy unspeakable,
Thy kingdom to receive.

5 Then shall our vain contention cease
For different forms of godliness,
When Thou to us art given,
When one with Christ, and creatures new,
Our Father's will on earth we do,
As Angels do in heaven.²¹

6 Then all our blisful business here
Is but to wait till HE appear
And claim his ready Bride,
And add us to the Church above,
To all who in the Spirit of love
His followers liv'd, and died.

IX²²

[1.] Still for my Son Thou hearst me pray;
With him in his temptation stay,
Who always ready art
To seek, and save a wandring sheep;
Watch over him, O Lord, and keep
The issues of his heart.

²¹Ori., "As Angels do ~~above~~."

²²Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:310–11.

- 2 Thy power be in his weakness seen,
Nor let him the commands of men
 Rashly mistake for thine,
Nor heed to lying wonders give,
Or legendary tales receive
 As oracles divine.
- 3 Preserve, that he may never know
Those doctrines of the hellish foe
 Which contradict thy word,
Subvert the truth of holiness,
Or supersede the work of grace,
 The presence of his Lord.
- 4 Free from the partial, blind respect,
The shibboleth that marks his Sect
 Implicitly resign'd,
Give him thine only word t' obey,
And in the true, unerring Way
 His heavenly Teacher find.
- 5 Not like the simple croud misled,
Who leaning on a broken reed,
 Refuse a pardon *given*,
But hope the grace by works to *buy*;
Or on a friar's Cowl rely
 To carry them to heaven.
- 6 Pierc'd with his want of purity,
Convinc'd, thy face he cannot see,

Or know Thee as Thou art,
Without an inward change intire;
O may he after this aspire,
This holiness of heart.

- 7 Till wash'd, and thro' thy blood applied,
Of wrath, concupiscence and pride,
His soul is emptied here,
He cannot in the judgment stand,
Mixt with the sheep at thy right-hand,
Or in thy sight appear.
- 8 But if Thou here his Saviour art,
Possest of Mary's better part,
Attentive at thy feet,
If humbly he thro' life remain,
Thou wilt receive him up to reign,
The partner of thy seat.

X²³

- [1.] Thy counsel, Lord, shall stand alone,
Thy welcom will shall all be done,
Thy Name ador'd, and blest;
Assur'd of this I cast on Thee
My burthen of anxiety
And in thy pleasure rest.
- 2 The thing Thou dost I know not now
But with intire submission bow
To the award divine,

²³Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:312–13. Verses 3–6 appeared in *Poetical Works*, 8:425–26.

(Whate'er Thou dost, it *shoud* be so)
Suffice I shall hereafter know
Thy mercy's whole design.

3 The blessed day of my release
(Shoud sorrow's pangs no sooner²⁴ cease)
Will swallow up my woe,
Make darkness light, and crooked strait,
Unwind the labyrinths of fate,²⁵
And all the secret show.

4 But while thy way is in the deep,
Thou dost not chide, if still I weep,
If still mine eyes run o'er:
The bitterness of death is past;
The bitterness of life may last
A few sad moments more:

5 Patient till death I feel my pain,
But neither murmur, nor complain,
While humbled in the dust
My sins the Cause of my distress
I feel, and mournfully confess
The punishment is just.

6 Wherefore with soft and silent pace
I measure out my suffering days
In view of joys to come,

²⁴Ori., "~~longer~~."

²⁵This and the preceding line are reversed in manuscript, but marked by Charles to appear as above.

In hope his plan to comprehend,
When Jesus shall with clouds descend,
And call me from the tomb.

7 Then, then this quicken'd dust shall rise,
And I shall meet him in the skies
On his great, azure throne,
And find, among the saints in light,
A glorious partner of my flight,
Who was — on earth — my Son!

8 Redeem'd from earth, renew'd in love,
To the Jerusalem above
By different paths we came,
To cast our crowns at Jesus's feet,
In endless raptures to repeat
The praises of the Lamb.

Hymn XI²⁶

- 1 God of unfathomable grace,
Thee to perfection who can know,
Or in the deep thy footsteps trace,
Or comprehend thy work below?
Struck with the thunder of thy power
We fall, and silently adore.

- 2 Thy judgments soar beyond our sight:
But shall not the Almighty Lord,
The Judge of all the earth, do right,
The faithful God fulfil his word,
And make his gracious counsels known
To them who love their God alone?

- 3 My God alone I fain would love,
And patient thy return attend
These clouds and mountains to remove
And give me an expected end,
Explain my life of misery
With all thy love's designs on me.

- 4 A Child of sorrow from the womb,
By sad variety of pain,
Weigh'd down, I sink into the tomb,
Yet²⁷ only of myself complain;
My sins the root of bitterness
I must in life and death confess.

²⁶Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:313–14. Stanzas 3–6 appeared in *Poetical Works*, 8:426.

²⁷Ori., “**But.**”

- 5 But trouble will not always last:
Affliction's child shall weep no more,
When thankful for my sufferings *past*,
Exulting on the heavenly shore
I tell th' acclaiming hosts above
That all thy paths were truth and love.
- 6 Come, Finisher of sin and woe,
And let me die my God to see,
My God, as I am known, to know,
Fathom the depths of Deity,
And spend, contemplating thy face,
A blest eternity in praise.

XII²⁸

- [1.] Infinite LOVE, and Truth, and Power,
All things are possible to Thee,
My God whom I in Christ adore,
Presenting in his name my plea;
To me for Jesus' sake impart
A lowly, meek, forgiving heart.
- 2 Against the instrument of ill
O may I no resentment find,
No wrong, vindictive temper feel,
Unfriendly wish, or thought unkind;

²⁸Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:314–15. Stanzas 2–5 are in *Poetical Works*, 8:427.

But put the yearning bowels on,
The tender mercies of Thy Son.

3 Still woud I keep The Lamb in view,
Harmless in thought, and word, and deed,
That LOVER of his Foes pursue,
Who suffer'd in his murderers' stead,
Expir'd HIMSELF, that They might live,
And meekly gasp'd in death, "FORGIVE!"

4 His Spirit into my soul inspire,
That, in true holiness renew'd,
With pure, benevolent desire,
For evil I may render good,
Kind to my Adversary prove,
And cruel hate requite with love.

5 If Thou forgive my debt immense,
I may forgive a trivial debt,
A fellow-servant's hundred pence
Against ten thousand talents set:
I *do* forgive, myself forgiven,
And haste to meet my Foe in heaven.

XIII²⁹

- 1 Give us this day our daily bread,
Fresh blessings now on me bestow:
Thy help I every moment need
To pardon, and embrace my foe,
My faith's sincerity to prove,
And emulate thy dying love.
- 2 Whom yesterday I could forgive,
I cannot, Lord, forgive to day,
Unless I from thyself receive
The constant power to watch and pray,³⁰
The grace³¹ which nature can controul
And form thy image in my soul.
- 3 My nature's weakness I confess,
Relapsing into angry pride,
Unless Thou still my faith increase,
Still in my loving heart reside,
Take full possession of thine own,
And make it thy eternal throne.
- 4 Come then, my loving heart's desire
And fill the consecrated place,
One with thy co-eternal Sire,
One with thy Spirit of holiness,
And seal my soul thy blest abode,
A temple of the Triune GOD!

²⁹Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:315–16.

³⁰Ori., “~~The grace for which I humbly pray.~~”

³¹Ori., “~~power.~~”