

MS Sarah Wesley (1754)¹

The first child of Charles and Sarah Wesley was a son named John, born September 1752. This son would live only a year and a half, dying in January 1754. Charles poured his grief, and hope, into an eight-part hymn, which he eventually published in *Funeral Hymns* (1759), 36–46. One of the most poignant surviving personal items of Sarah Wesley is a manuscript notebook containing the first five parts of this hymn in her handwriting. The manuscript is autographed “Sarah Wesley, June 17, 1754.”

This notebook is held in the collection at Drew University (Wesley Family Letters 2135-6-4:70). Drew has generously made the holograph of the manuscript available online:

<http://www2.atla.com/CDRIImages/WESLEYMS/00000523.pdf>

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On the Death of a Child.²

January 7, 1754

- [1.] Dead! dead! The Child I lov'd so well!
Transported to the world above!
I need no more my heart conceal:
I never dared indulge my love:
But may I not indulge my grief,
And seek in tears a sad relief?
2. Mine earthly happiness is fled,
His mother's joy, his father's hope,
(O had I dy'd in Isaac's stead!)
He shou'd have liv'd, my age's prop,
He shou'd have clos'd his father's eyes,
And follow'd me to paradise.
3. But hath not Heaven, who first bestow'd,
A right to take his gifts away?
I bow me to the sovereign GOD,
Who snatcht him from the evil day!
Yet Nature *will* repeat her moan,
And fondly cry, "My son, My son!"

²Sally Wesley Jr. has written at the top of the page: "On our dearest brother John Wesley."

4. Turn from him—turn officious thought!
 Officious thought presents again
The thousand little acts he wrought,
 Which wound my heart with soothing pain:
His looks—his winning gestures rise,
His waving hands, and laughing eyes!
5. Those waving hands no more shall move,
 Those laughing eyes shall smile no more:
He cannot now engage our love,
 With sweet insinuating power
Our weak unguarded hearts insnare,
And rival his Creator there.
6. From us, as we from him secure,
 Caught to his heavenly Father's brest,
He waits, till we the bliss insure,
 From all these stormy sorrows rest,
And see him with our angel stand,
To waft, and welcome us, to land.

2nd

- [1.] Farewell, (since heaven ordains it so)
 Farewell, my yearning heart's desire!
Stunn'd with the Providential Blow,
 And now beginning to respire,
I own (and bow me in the dust)
My GOD is good, and wise, and just.
2. He justly claims the first-born son,
 Accepts my costly sacrifice,
Dearest of *All* his gifts but one,
 At his command the Victim dies!
He but resumes what he had given,
He takes my sacrifice—to heaven.
3. His wisdom timed the *lingring* stroke,
 The mother first resolv'd to save;
The mother left, the Child He took,
 Nor let them share a common grave;
And still my better half survives,
Joseph is dead!—but Rachel lives!

4. His goodness towards us all design'd
 To save us from a world of care;
He knew his pleading spirit's mind,
 He heard in me his spirit's prayer,
And kindly hasten'd to remove
The Object of my fatal love.
5. The searcher of my heart can tell
 How oft its fondness I withstood,
When forc'd a father's joy to feel,
 I shrunk from the suspected good,
Refus'd the perilous delight,
And hid [me]³ from the pleasing sight.
6. The labour of my aching brest,
 The racking fears to GOD are known;
I cou'd not in his danger rest,
 I trembled for my helpless son:
But all my fears for ever cease,
My son hath gain'd the port of peace.

³“Me” is missing in this transcript, which throws off the metre.

7. The travail of my soul is past,
Severer than the mother's throes,
For lo! My child is *born* at last,
The glorious life of angels knows,
He bursts yon ambient azure shell,
He flies from us, with GOD to dwell.

8. Look down, Thou happy spirit, look down,
An eye of pitying love let fall
On us, who long to share thy crown,
Who for that spotless mantle call,
In which thou shalt for ever shine,
That robe of righteousness divine.

9. Great King of saints, to Thee alone,
For mercy, and for grace we pray:
Thy glorious grace hath sav'd the son,
The parents next to heaven convey,
Thy power and goodness to adore,
Where death, and parting is no more.

3rd

- [1.] Jesus, our sure support thou art,
Our only Hope in deep distress;
Thy comforts calm the troubled heart,
And cheer'd by thy victorious peace
The mourner gives her wailings o're,
And Rachel weeps her loss no more.
2. O might thy love our loss repair,
This Mountain-load of grief remove:
The burthen we with patience bear,
But cannot rest, without thy love,
But till we hear thy pardning voice,
We cannot in thy will rejoice.
3. If Thou hast wrought us, Lord, to this,
If now thy chastning hand we see,
Which strips us of our creature-bliss,
To make us seek our bliss in Thee;
On us thy pardning love bestow,
And bless us with that Heaven below.

4. If Thou hast torn our child away,
 To make thyself the larger room;
No longer, gracious Lord, delay,
 But to thy drooping servants come,
And take up all this aching void,
And fill our happy souls with GOD.

4th

- [1.] Why should our hearts for ever bleed,
 Why should we still as hopeless mourn?
The child is safe! The child is dead!
 And never shall to us return!
But we to Him shall soon arise,
And clasp the saint in paradise.
2. Who weeping build our infant's tomb,
 With joy we hasten to our own,
That happiest day will quickly come,
 When we shall lay *our* burthen down,
When loos'd from earth our souls shall soar,
And find, whom we shall lose no more.

3. No human heart can e'er conceive
 The transports of our meeting there,
Where pure departed spirits live,
 Where one we fondly deem'd *our* heir,
To full angelic stature grown,
Inherits an immortal crown.
4. Arriv'd above, the stranger stands,
 Incompast with acclaiming quires:
He hears, and waves his plausible hands,
 Transported with th' angelic lyres,
Expands his tuneful soul to prove
Th' harmonious Powers of heavenly Love.
5. And can we wish him doom'd again
 To childish ignorance and fears,
Obnoxious to disease and pain,
 Imprison'd in our vale of tears,
Expos'd to all we dread beneath,
Passion, and sin, and second death?

6. Ah! No, we would not have him back,
 But soon ourselves to him remove,
While meet his glory to partake,
 And perfected in patient love,
We see with ravish'd hearts and eyes
The Loss, which brought us to the skies.

[5th]

1. Angels rejoice, a Child is born,
 Into your happier world above!
Let poor short-sighted mortals mourn,
 While on the wings of Heavenly Love,
An everlasting spirit flies,
To Claim his kindred in the skies.
2. His few sad days of guiltless pain
 Are all irrevocably gone,
Escap'd from earth without a stain,
 My heart's desire, my darling son
Hath first attain'd his endless rest,
Hath reach'd his heavenly Father's brest.

3. And shall I for his bliss repine,
 And shall I for his absence grieve?
Or rather bless the choice divine,
 With awful joy and thanks receive
The period of my countless cares,
The answer of my thousand prayers!
4. My prayers are seal'd, my child is fled,
 Is safe on that eternal shore:
No longer I *his* dangers dread,
 The poisonous world's bewitching power,
The charms of sin, the tempter's art,
The fondness of a parent's heart.
5. No more my eyes with tears o'reflow,
 No more in deep distress I pray
"Ah! Save my child from endless woe,
 "Ah! Take him from the evil day,
"Nor let the *Man* his God deny,
"Nor let him live to sin, and die."
6. Who fill'd me with those humble fears,
 Who arm'd my heart with sad mistrust,
The GOD of love hath seen my tears,
 And never *can* the child be lost,
Whom GOD hath found, and claim'd for his,
And snatch'd to everlasting Bliss.