

MS Travail¹

A poignant personal item of Sarah (Gwynne) Wesley that has survived is a much-thumbed gathering of 6 in. by 3.5 in leaves (originally loose and unnumbered) containing seven hymns. The first five hymns are in Sarah's hand, and she supplies the title: "Hymns for a Woman drawing near the time of h[er travail]."² The remaining two hymns are in the hand of Charles Wesley. Most of these hymns were composed in the 1750s, and used devotionally by Sarah during her pregnancies. Charles and Sarah's last child was born in 1767, the same year that the hymns found publication in *Family Hymns*. The published location is indicated in [blue font](#) in the Table of Contents.

The folder containing this set of hymns is part of the collection in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, accession number MA 1977/583/5 (Charles Wesley Notebooks Box 4). The transcript below is provided with permission of the Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester. Since the papers are unnumbered, we have ignored occasional blank pages.

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.

²The corner containing the last two words is torn off.

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**Hymns, for a Woman
drawing near the Time of h[er Travail.]**

[L.]³

- [1.] At this Solemn turn of fate,
Looking for my painful Hour,
Lord, on thee I meekly wait,
Wait to prove thy Gracious p[ower:]
From the Eye of Man conceal['d,]
Lo! to thee my GOD, alone
I my Soul, and body yield;
Let thy will on both be do[ne.]
2. Here I give myself to prayer
Commune with my Heart and Th[ee,]
Learn to cast on GOD my care
Long thy Saving-Health to See:
Might I thy Salvation feel
Might I Abba Father cry
Ready then for all thy will
Meet I were to live, or die.
- [3.] O for Love and pity Sake,
Look on thy Unconscious Chi[ld,]

³Published in *Family Hymns* (1767), 49–50.

[Cast m]y Sins behind thy back,
[Tell] me, thou art reconcil'd,
[Let] me in thy Strength rejoyce,
[Le]t me feel my Sins forgiven,
[Ans]wer to the Shepherd's Voice,
[Kn]ow my name inroll'd in Heaven.

[4. N]ow explain thy full design,
[F]rom my Earliest infancy
[Why] did'st thou my will incline,
[Dr]aw my Simple heart to thee?
[Wh]erefore did I haunt the shad[e,]
[S]ad disconsolate alone,
[Eve]r of thy frown afraid,
Wretched for a GOD unknown[?]

[5.] Shew me what I wanted then
Give me what I still require
[Fa]irer than the Sons of Men
[M]e with thy pure love inspire;
[Thou] my long-sought happiness,
[Sum] of my desires thou art,

Breath the Spirit of thy Grace,
Breath thyself into my Heart.

[II.]⁴

**A Hymn, for a Woman
drawing near the Time of her Travail.**

- [1.] Full of trembling Expectation,
Feeling much, and fearing more,
[A]uthor, GOD of my Salvation,
I thy timely Help⁵ implore;
[Su]ffering Son of Man be near me,
All my Sufferings to Sustain,
By thy Sorer Grievs to Chear me,
By thy more than mortal Pain.
- [2.] Call to mind thy unknown Anguish
In thy days of Flesh below
When thy troubled Soul did languish
Under a whole World of Woe,
When Thou didst our Curse Inherit,
Groan beneath our Guilty Load,
[B]urthen'd with a wounded Spirit,
Bruis'd by all the Wrath of GOD.

⁴Published in *Family Hymns* (1767), 50–51.

⁵Ori., “aid.”

3. By thy most Severe Temptation
 In that dark Satanic Hour,
By thy last mysterious Passion
 Skreen me from the Adverse Power,
By thy Fainting in the Garden,
 By thy Bloody Sweat I pray,
Write upon my Heart the Pardon,
 Take my Sins and Fears away.

4. By the Travail of thy Spirit
 By thy Outcry on the Tree,
By thine Agonizing Merit
 In my Pangs remember me,
By thy Death I Thee Conjure,
 A weak dying Soul befriend,
Make me patient to Endure
 Make me Faithful to the End.

[III.]⁶
Another
[A Hymn, for a Woman
drawing near the Time of her Travail].

1. T]o whom should I for Succour fly,
[W]hile Danger, Pain, and Death are nigh
And Nature's Fears return?
Jesus, my only Sure Relief,
[I] tell to Thee my Secret Grief,
And in thy Bosom mourn.
2. I fear lest in my Trying Hour,
The Strength of Pain should quite o'erpow'r
My Soul's Infirmary,
Least when my Sorrows most prevail,
My Patience, and my Faith should fail,
And leave me void of Thee.
3. Ev'n now I faint o'erwhelm'd with Dread,
I tremble, at my greatest Need
Lest Thou shou'd'st hide thy Face,
Afflict me more, than I can bear,
And then withhold the Aid of Prayer,
The Power to cry for Grace.

⁶Published in *Family Hymns* (1767), 48–49.

4. Yet tho' I am Sometimes afraid,
On Thee my feeble mind is Stay'd,
My trust is in the Lord:
I hold Thee with a trembling Hand,
And borne above myself I Stand,
Supported by thy Word.
5. In GOD my Saviour I confide,
Whose Truth and Love are on my side
If *now* for Help I pray,
Thou in the Depth of my Distress
Wilt send a word of Heavenly Peace,
And Save me thro' that Day.
6. Thou wilt, I humbly trust, impart
The Sense of Pardon to my Heart,
The witness of thy Love,
Thy Love shall all my Griefs Controul,
Thy Love shall calm my fluttering Soul,
And hide my Life above.

7. Arm'd with thy Love and patient mind,
I come, to thy blest will resign'd,
For all Events prepar'd,
Soon as *I know* my Pardon Seal'd
Assur'd that Jesus is my Shield
And Infinite Reward.

[IV.]⁷

To—"And is the Lovely Shadow fled?"

- [1.] Father and Friend of Human-kind,
Supporter of this tottering Clay,
I rest on Thee my feeble mind
On Thee my Shrinking Flesh I Stay,
And call'd thy Chastisement to bear
Pour out a calmly pensive Prayer.
2. My Life I know Secur'd above,
Hid in those Gracious Hands Divine;
But O! my heavier care remove
And Claim my unborn Child for Thine,
The Burthen of my womb receive
Thine, only Thine to die, or live.

⁷Published in *Family Hymns* (1767), 55–56.

3. If fore-ordain'd to See the Light,
It bursts into a World of Woe,
Seize the Young *Sinner* as thy Right
Before it Good or Evil know,
And Cleanse by the Baptismal Flood,
And wash my Babe in Jesu's Blood.

4. Ev'n from the Sacred Laver take
And guard its favour'd Infancy,
Nor ever Lord thy Charge forsake,
Nor let thy Charge depart from Thee,
But walk in all thy Righteous ways,
Till meet to See thy Glorious Face.

[V.]⁸
Another.

- [1.] Lord, I magnify thy Power
Thy Love and Faithfullness,
Kept to my Appointed Hour
In Safety and in Peace:
Let thy Providential Care
Still my Sure Protection be,
Till a Living Child I bear,
And give it back to Thee.
2. Who so near the Birth hast brought
(Since I on Thee rely)
Tell me Saviour, wilt Thou not
Thy farther Help Supply?
Whisper to my list'ning Soul
Wilt Thou not my Strength renew,
Nature's Fears and Pains Controul
And bring thy Handmaid thro'?

⁸Published in *Family Hymns* (1767), 53–54. Charles sent this poem in a letter to Sarah on 17 May 1755, concerning the pending birth of their daughter Martha Maria. Sadly, the child died shortly after her birth.

3. Father in the Name I pray
Of thy Incarnate Love,
Humbly ask, that as my Day
My passive Strength may prove:
When my Sorrows most increase
Let thy Strongest Joys be given:
Jesus, come, with my Distress
And Agony is Heaven!

4. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
For Good remember me,
Me, whom Thou hast caus'd to trust
For more than Life on Thee:
With me in the Fire remain
Till like burnish'd Gold I Shine
Meet thro' Consecrated Pain
To See the Face Divine.

[VI.]⁹

- [1.] Jesus, Thou Son of Mary,
Thou Son of the Most-high,
Low at thy feet I tarry,
And on thy word rely:
In painful expectation
Of my distressing hour,
I look for thy salvation,
For all thy mercy's power.
2. On Thee my Health in sickness¹⁰
My feeble soul is stay'd:
Thy Strength in human weakness
Is perfectly display'd:
Thou never wilt forsake me
Who on thy love depend,
But to thy bosom take me
Till¹¹ pain with life shall end.

⁹Published in *Family Hymns* (1767), 53. This copy is in the hand of Charles Wesley.

¹⁰Ori., "weakness."

¹¹Ori., "When."

[VII.]¹²
For a sick Child.

- [1.] Thou God who hear'st the prayer
Of supplicants distrest,
With pity mark the care
In a fond parent's breast:
I cannot, Lord, dissemble;
I all my weakness own:
Thou knowst for whom I tremble—
My Son, my only Son!
2. Thou gav'st on this condition
That I should ready be
To bow with meek submission,
And yield him back to Thee:
To all thy dispensations
I would, I would submit,
And weep with humble patience,
And tremble at thy feet.
3. I must, I do restore,
If Thou revoke the loan,
And silently adore
Or cry, Thy will be done:
To Thee his great Creator
I with my darling part—¹³
But O! Thou knowst my nature
Thou readst a father's heart!
4. My bowels of compassion
Thou dost vouchsafe to feel,
With earnest deprecation
While nature's wish I tell,¹⁴

¹²Published in *Family Hymns* (1767), 104–5. This copy is in the hand of Charles Wesley. It was written concerning their first child, John, born in August 1752, who died 7 January 1754.

¹³Ori., “darling ~~Isa~~ part.”

¹⁴The next page, containing the remainder of the hymn, is missing. The complete poem is available in *Family Hymns*.