

MS Death of William Hitchens¹

James Hitchens, a blacksmith at Gwennap, Cornwall was an early convert to Methodism. Four of his sons became lay preachers, suffering significant hardship and persecution for their labor. John Wesley published accounts of the deaths of two sons: *A Short Account of the Death of Sam Hitchens* (1746); and *A Short Account of the Death of Thomas Hitchens* (1747). The present manuscript funeral hymn is for William Hitchens (d. 1773), a third son. William served as an itinerant preacher 1745–58. In 1757 he was “pressed for a soldier” and briefly imprisoned at Bradford-on-Avon. He subsequently married, left the itinerancy, and settled in Bristol as a hatter (serving as a local preacher).

This manuscript hymn is found on the first of a set of loose pages assigned accession number MA 1977/583/32 in the Methodist Archives 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.

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.

**On the Death of W[illiam] Hitchins,²
Oct.³ 29, 1773.**

- [1.] Rejoice, who bow to Jesus' Name!
The righteous man by God approv'd
Meek follower of the patient Lamb,
If from our Vale of tears remov'd;
His days of pain and grief are o're:
Rejoice for Him who weeps no more.
2. Void of offence toward God and man
With care he kept his Con[science] here,
Good works industrious to maintain,
A simple Israelite sincere
Thro' life he Israel's King confess'd⁴
God over all for ever blest.
3. Faithful to death he own'd his Lord,
An heir of sure salvation seal'd,
The kingdom to his soul restor'd
The earnest in his heart reveal'd
By more than words he testifies,
And gasps for Jesus in⁵ the skies.
4. Come my beloved Saviour, come,
Thou seest me to thy will resign'd⁶
Made ready for my heavenly home
Lover of Thee and all mankind,
Conqueror of hell and death and sin,
Open thine arms and take me in.

²MARC, MA 1977/583/32, #1. Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:340–41; cited as MS CW I (q), i. Charles typically spells the name “Hitchins,” while John spells it “Hitchens.”

³Ori., “Sept.”

⁴Ori., “Jesus Thro' life he Israel's King confess'd.”

⁵Ori., “from.”

⁶Ori., “~~Receive~~ me to thy will resign'd.” Wesley wrote shorthand in the margin to change the line to that found above.

