Editorial Introduction:

In 1751 John Wesley published *Serious Thoughts upon the Perseverance of the Saints*. This sparked a rebuttal from John Gill titled *The Doctrine of the Saint's Final Perseverance Asserted and Vindicated; in answer to a late pamphlet called Serious Thoughts on that Subject* (1752). John Wesley responded to Gill in *Predestination Calmly Considered* (1752), §§69–78.

In 1754 a second answer to Gill was published by “the Revd. Mr. Wesley,” in the form of three hymns excerpted from *Hymns on Love* (1742). It is unclear whether it was John or Charles Wesley who prepared this excerpt, but no significant textual changes were introduced.

This response was never reprinted.

Editions:

[Charles?] Wesley. *An Answer to All which the Revd. Dr. Gill has Printed on the Final Perseverance of the Saints*. London: sold at the Foundery, 1754.

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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: Dec. 3, 2007.
An Answer
To all which
The Reverend Dr. Gill, etc.²

1 O take away the stone,
   Jesu, the bar remove,
The accursed thing to me unknown,
   That stops thy streaming love:
   Thy grace is always free,
   Thou waitest to be good,
And still thy Spirit grieves for me,
   And speaks thy sprinkled blood.

2 Ah! Do not let me trust
   In gifts and graces past,
But lay my spirit in the dust,
   And stop my mouth at last.
   What thou for me hast done,
   I can no longer plead;
Thy truth and faithfulness I own,
   If now thou strike me dead.

²The first 23 stanzas reprise Hymn #3 in Hymns on God’s Love (1742); stanzas 24–35 are a reprint of Hymn #4, and the last three stanzas are drawn from Hymn #5 (sts. 1, 3 & 9).
3 Surely I once believed,  
   And felt my sins forgiven,  
Thy faithful record I received,  
   That thou hast purchased heaven  
For me, and all mankind,  
   Who from their sins would part;  
The peace of God I once could find,  
   The witness in my heart.

4 But soon the subtle fiend  
   Beguiled my simple mind,  
Darkness with light he knew to blend,  
   Falsehood and truth he joined;  
Pride (he remembered well)  
   Had cast him from the skies:  
By pride the first transgressor fell,  
   And lost his paradise.

5 Armed with this fiery dart  
   The enemy drew nigh,  
And preached to my unsettled heart  
   His bold presumptuous lie;  
   “You are secure of heaven,”  
(The tempter softly says)  
   “You are elect, and once forgiven  
   Can never fall from grace.

6 “You never can receive  
   The grace of God in vain:  
The gift, be sure, he did not give  
   To take it back again;  
He cannot take it back,  
   Whether you use, or no  
His grace; you cannot shipwreck make  
   Of faith, or let it go.
7 “You never can forget
   Your God, or leave him now,
Or once look back, if you have set
   Your hand unto the plow:
   You never can deny
   The Lord who you hath bought,
Nor can your God his own pass by,
   Though you receive him not.

8 “God is unchangeable,
   And therefore so are you;
And therefore they can never fail
   Who once his goodness knew;
   In part perhaps you may,
   You cannot wholly fall,
Cannot become a castaway
   Like non-elected Paul.

9 “Though you continue not,
   Yet God remains the same,
Out of his book he cannot blot
   Your everlasting name:
   Cut off you shall not be,
   You never shall remove,
Secure from all eternity
   In his electing love.

10 “If God the seed did sow,
   He sowed it not in vain,
It cannot to perfection grow,
   But it must still remain:
   Nor cares, nor sins can choke,
   Or make the grace depart,
Nor can it be by Satan took
   Out of your careless heart.
11 “You must forever live,
If of the chosen race;
If God did but one talent give
Of special, saving grace,
You cannot bury it;
He never can reprove,
Or cast you out into the pit
For trampling on his love.

12 “God sees in you no sin;
On his decree depend;
You who did in the Sp’rit begin,
In flesh can never end:
You never can reject
His mercies, or abuse,
His great salvation none neglect,
And death and evil choose.

13 “If once the sp’rit unclean
Out of his house is gone,
He never more can enter in,
Or seize you for his own;
You need not dread the fate
Of reprobates accurst,
Or tremble lest your last estate
Be worser than the first.

14 “Surely the righteous man
Can never more draw back,
He his own mercies never can
With his good works forsake;
That he should sink to hell
In his iniquity,
God may suppose it possible,
But it can never be.
15 “His threat’nings all are vain,
   You fancy him sincere,
   But spare yourself the needless pain,
   And cast away your fear.
   He speaks with this intent
   To frighten you from ill
   With sufferings, which he only meant
   The reprobate should feel.

16 “He only meant to warn
   The damned, devoted race,
   Back from his ways lest they should turn
   Who never knew his ways;
   He only cautions all
   Who never came to God
   Not to depart from God, or fall
   From grace, who never stood.

17 “His threat’nings are a jest,
   Or not designed for you;
   He only means them for the rest,
   And they shall find them true,
   Who slight his mercy’s call,
   Which they could ne’er embrace:
   He warns th’ apostates not to fall
   From common (damning) grace.

18 “’Gainst those that faithless prove
   He shuts his mercy’s door,
   And whom he never once did love
   Threatens to love no more;
   From them he doth revoke
   The grace they did not share,
   And blot the names out of his book
   That ne’er were written there.
“But you may rest secure,
And safely take your ease,
If you are once in grace, be sure
You always are in grace:
Cast all your fears away,
My son, be of good cheer,
Nor mind what Paul or Peter say,
For you must persevere.

“And did they fright the child,
And tell it, it might fall?
Might be of its reward beguiled,
And sin, and forfeit all:
Might to its vomit turn,
And wallow in the mire,
And perish in its sins, and burn
In everlasting fire!

“What naughty men be they
To take the children’s bread,
Their carnal confidence to slay,
And force them to take heed!
With humble useless doubt
The fearful babes they fill,
Compelled with trembling to work out
Their own salvation still.

“Ah poor misguided soul!
And did they make it weep!
Come, let me in my bosom lull,
Thy sorrows all to sleep:
Thine eyes in safety close,
Secure from all alarms,
And take thine undisturbed repose,
And rest within my arms.
“They shall not vex it so,
By bidding it take heed;
You need not as a bulrush go,
Still bowing down your head:
Your griefs and fears reject,
My other gospel own,
Only believe yourself elect,
And all the work is done.”

'Twas thus the subtle foe
Beguiled my foolish heart,
While weak in faith I did not know
His false ensnaring art:
I listened to a lie
Which nature liked so well,
Believed the soothing fiend that I
Could never fall—and fell.

The tempter now withdrew,
And left me free from care,
His own advantage well he knew;
My soul was in his snare:
Secure, and lulled in ease,
Sin vexed me now no more,
My sorrows end, my trouble cease,
And all my pangs are o’er.

Freed from the inward cross,
Of all corruption full,
A prophet of smooth things I was
To my own wretched soul;
Unchanged and unrenewed,
Yet still I could not fall:
Daubed with untempered mortar stood
The tottering, whited wall.
My wound I slightly healed,
And quieted my grief,
With all the false assurance filled
Of damning unbelief;
One of the happy sect,
Who scoff at mourners poor,
That will not dream themselves elect,
Till they have made it sure.

How happier far was I,
From grief and scruple free,
Who could from all conviction fly
To God's supposed decree!
O what a settled peace,
What comfort did I prove,
And hug me in my sins, and bless
His sweet electing love!

What if I sinned sometimes
In this imperfect state,
It was not like the damning crimes
Of a lost reprobate;
Sin was not sin in me,
God doth not blame his own,
Doth not behold iniquity
In any chosen one.

What if I foully fell,
I finally could not;
His grace is irresistible,
And back I must be brought:
What if in sin I lived,
The firm decree is past,
I must be at my death received,
I must be saved at last.
31 How could my folly dare
Satan and sin to slight?
The judgments of my God were far
Above out of my sight:
His wrath was not for me,
And therefore I defied
Mine enemies, from danger free,
In self-electing pride.

32 Not all his threatened woes
My stubborn heart could move;
His threat’nings only were for those
Who never knew his love:
He cannot take away
His covenanted grace,
Though I rebel, and disobey,
And mock him to his face.

33 He cannot me pass by,
Or utterly reject,
Or judge his people, or deny
To save his own elect;
He swore to bring me in
To heaven; ’twere perjury
For God to punish me for sin,
For God to pass by me.

34 ’Twas thus my wretched heart
Abused his patient grace,
Provoked his mercy to depart,
His justice to take place:
Unconscious of its state,
In death my soul abode,
Nor groaned beneath its guilty weight,
Nor knew its fall from God.
I could not be restored,  
By pard’ning grace renewed,  
While trampling on his written word  
Self-confident I stood:  
He only saves the lost,  
Which I could never be,  
I never could be damned, but must  
Be saved by his decree.

O my offended God,  
If now at last I see  
That I have trampled on thy blood,  
And done despite to thee,  
If I begin to wake  
Out of my deadly sleep,  
Into thy arms of mercy take,  
And there forever keep.

I can no longer trust  
In my abuse of grace,  
I own thee merciful and just,  
If banished from thy face:  
Though once I surely knew,  
And felt my sins forgiven,  
Faithful I own thee, Lord, and true,  
If now shut out from heaven.

But O! Forbid it, Lord,  
Nor drive me from thy face,  
While self-condemned, and self-abhorred,  
I humbly sue for grace:  
For thy own mercy’s sake  
My guilty soul release,  
And now my pardon give me back,  
And bid me die in peace.  

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3Line in *Hymns on God’s Love* (1742): “And give me back my peace.”