

MS Death of Prudence Box¹

Prudence Box was a young woman who served as maid or servitor for the Charles Wesley family through much of the 1770s. She was particularly close to the children, who were surely troubled by the significant pain accompanying her illness that culminated in death in January 1778 (see stanza 2 below). Once again, Charles marked the occasion of the death of a close family friend with a hymn.

The form of the hymn transcribed below is a looseleaf draft that was surely Wesley's initial working copy, laden with numerous revisions. A more polished form was included in *MS Funeral Hymns*.

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¹This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the diligent assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: August 1, 2010.

**On the Death of
Prudence Box,
Jan. 9, 1778.²**

- [1.] HE's come!—to set the prisoner free,
The³ dear Redeemer's come!
To give⁴ the final Victory,
And take⁵ his Servant home;
To wipe the sorrow from her eyes,
To end her mourning days,
And shew her soul the glorious prize,
In⁶ his unclouded Face.
2. Long in the toils of death she lay,
Nor fear'd the ghastly⁷ king,
When Christ had borne her sins away,
And spoil'd him of his sting:
Lingring she drank the bitter⁸ cup
Of grief and⁹ pain extreme,
And fill'd his after-passion up
And *tasted* death¹⁰ with Him.

²A more polished manuscript draft appears in MS Funeral Hymns, 89–91. Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 6:339–41; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:327–29 (which includes both versions of stanza 5 found in this draft).

³Ori., “The”; changed to “Her,” and finally changed back to “The.”

⁴Ori., “And gives.”

⁵Ori., “takes.”

⁶Ori., “And.”

⁷Ori., “grizly.”

⁸Ori., “Yet still she *tasted* death, the.”

⁹Ori., “He drank with.”

¹⁰Ori., “~~shared the grief~~”; changed to “*tasted* death.”

3. Seeing the¹¹ great Invisible
Her Saviour and her Friend,
She suffer'd all his righteous will,
And suffer'd to the end:
Thro' a long vale of misery¹²
She walk'd with Christ her Guide,
And bleeding on the sacred tree
Confess'd the Crucified.
4. With all the Spirit's powers she pray'd
With infinite desire,
To bow, her weary fainting¹³ head,
And on his cross¹⁴ expire:
The agonizing prayer¹⁵ was heard,
For everlasting peace;
While yet¹⁶ her gracious Lord defer'd
To sign her soul's release.
- [5.¹⁷ She languishes¹⁸ in life detain'd,
Superior grace¹⁹ to prove,
Unshaken hope and²⁰ faith unfeign'd
And all-victorious²¹ love.
Love, heavenly love her heart o' reflows
Immense and unconfi'd
To friends and relatives and foes
Imbracing all mankind.]

¹¹Ori., "~~th~~-~~In~~" changed to "the." The strikeout "~~In~~" is the first two letters of "Invisible," which Wesley decided to put at the end of the line.

¹²Ori., "agony."

¹³Ori., "~~like Him her dying~~"; changed to "her weary fainting."

¹⁴Ori., "~~in his arms~~."

¹⁵Ori., "~~wish for holiness~~"; then changed to "~~prayer importunate~~"; and finally to "agonizing prayer."

¹⁶Ori., "Yet still."

¹⁷Wesley made several changes to this first draft of stanza 5, then drew three vertical lines through the entire stanza and started over on p. 3.

¹⁸Ori., "~~She languish'd still~~."

¹⁹Ori., "~~Her gratitude~~."

²⁰Ori., "~~Her patience meek her~~."

²¹Ori., "~~all-embracing~~."

5. He holds her, still in life detain'd,
Her ripen'd grace to prove,
Her stedfast hope, and faith unfeign'd,
And all-victorious love;
To emulate²² his sacrifice
Obtain a richer²³ crown,
And point us to the opening skies,
And pray²⁴ the Saviour down.
6. "Unutterable things I see—
The purchase of his²⁵ blood,
The place He hath deserv'd²⁶ for me,
Come, O my Lord, my God!^[27]
"I dare [not]²⁷ murmur at thy stay;
"But to depart is best:^[28]
Come, O my Jesus, come away,
And take me into rest.²⁸
7. Into thy hands my soul²⁹ receive,
That Thee my soul may bless,
May thee intirely love³⁰ and live
To thine eternal praise.
She speaks, and hears the joyful³¹ word
Come up my ready bride—
And angels waft her to her Lord
And seat her at his side!

²²Ori., "~~United with.~~"

²³Ori., "~~To win a brighter~~"; changed to "Obtain a richer."

²⁴Ori., "~~bring.~~"

²⁵Ori., "~~That purchase of thy.~~"

²⁶Ori., "~~That place Thou hast prepar'd~~" changed to "The place He hath deserv'd."

²⁷Ori., "~~cannot~~"; changed to "dare." Wesley likely meant to retain "not."

²⁸Ori., "~~to thy breast.~~"

²⁹Ori., "~~Now in thy mercy's Arms.~~"

³⁰Ori., "~~Intirely love my God.~~"

³¹Ori., "~~He speaks, and hears the Saviour's.~~"