

MS Helen Durbin¹

Henry Durbin (c. 1719–99) was an apothecary in Bristol and a member of the Baldwin Street religious society even before John Wesley’s first participation in the revival in Bristol. Durbin and his wife became early members in the Wesleyan work in Bristol, with Henry serving as a trustee of the New Room chapel. They were also close friends with Charles and Sarah Wesley during their years in Bristol.

The Durbins had three daughters. Mary (1752–86), the eldest, married John Horton on September 21, 1780, with John Wesley performing the service (see his *Journal* on this date). Mary would die six years later (see the three drafts of Charles’s verse on her death elsewhere on this site). The youngest daughter, Alice (1757–1834), struggled with significant mental issues for most of her adult life. This set of verse relates to Helen (or “Nellie”), the middle daughter.

Sally Wesley Jr. indicates the originating situation in a note added to the copy of the verse in MS Miscellaneous Verse 1786, p. 21: “For Miss H. D. when she refused to return to her Father and was said to be attached to Mr. Horton.” Helen had been living with Mary and John Horton in Highbury, perhaps assisting during Mary’s illness. After Mary’s death, Helen refused her father’s request that she return to Bristol to assist him in dealing with Alice and in facing his advancing age. More to the point, there is the clear suggestion that a romantic relationship was growing between Helen and John Horton (her brother-in-law). Charles Wesley clearly sides with the perspective of Henry Durbin in his poetic reflections on this situation, worried about the “scandal” of the apparent relationship (see Hymn IV, stanza 3). By December 1786 the situation has resolved itself, with Helen returning to her father’s house (see John Wesley’s *Journal* comment for 17 December 1786, in *Works* 23:427).

A looseleaf manuscript of the five hymns Wesley wrote on this situation is part of the collection in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, accession number MA 1977/583/26 (Charles Wesley Notebooks Box 4). The transcription of this set is provided below with permission of the Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

Also present in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre is a manuscript version of the second hymn by itself: accession number DDCW 3/3. Rather than reproducing this manuscript separately, it is reflected in notes on variances below.

We have placed this set of verse in the “family” subsection of this collection both because the Durbins were close family friends and because of the light it casts on Charles Wesley’s view of family relationships.

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.

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Written
in July 1786.²

[I.]³

- [1.] Jesus, we thy Promise claim,
 We who touching This agree,
Grace to challenge in thy Name,
 Peace, and perfect liberty,
Life for One Insensible,
Life for One Thou lov'st so well.
2. By the smooth Seducer's skill,
 By the cunning of the Foe,
Drawn to follow her own will,
 Urged in nature's paths to go,
Her we mourn, a Captive blind,
Casting all thy words behind.
3. Pains which might a Father aid,
 Pains which first to Him she owes,
Corban call'd, with-held, delay'd,
 Lo, on Others she bestows;
Comfort to his age denies,
Till he gives her up—and dies!
4. Deaf to his expiring prayers,
 Unconcern'd his grief she sees,

²Added in Sally Wesley Jr.'s hand: "On Miss Nelly Durbin when forming an attachment contrary to her Father's wish."

³Appears also in MS Miscellaneous Verse 1786, 21–23. Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:243–44; cited as MS CW I (p), xii.

Thus repays a Father's cares,
Thus relieves his last distress,
Fixt to please herself alone,
Thus she hastes to be undone!

5. Who can stay her violence? who
Can arrest her as she flies?
Lord, we know not what to do,
But to Thee we lift our eyes:
Love, almighty Love Thou art;
Turn her disobedient heart.
6. Now with thorns hedge up her way,
From her fatal purpose hide,
Stop the unsuspecting Stray,
By thine eye the Wanderer guide,
Without pain (if that can be)
Bring her gently back to Thee.
7. From her eyes the Scales remove,
From her stubborn heart this Stone,
Taught by wisdom from above
That she may thy counsel own,
See the depths of hell laid bare
Scape the fiend's or [Horton's]⁴ snare!

⁴Wesley draws a long dash, rather than specifying the name of Miss Durbin's tempter.

8. Jesus, spoil him of his prey,
Her thy lawful Captive claim,
That with all thy Church we may
Magnify thy Saving Name;
Purchase dear of blood Divine
Seal her now for ever Thine.
9. To a father's fond embrace
Both his Fugitives restore,
Wipe the sorrow from his face,
That he may thy hand adore;
That he may thy Goodness prove,
Give him back his former love.
10. Quench not the last spark of hope
In thine aged Servant's heart,
But whene'er Thou call'st him up,
Bid him, Lord, in peace depart;
Bid his children *live* forgiven
Live, and follow him to heaven!

II.⁵

- [1.] Besieging still thy gracious throne
For our deluded Friend,
We pray, and plead, and wrestle on
Till Thou deliverance send:

⁵A separate looseleaf draft of this hymn is present in MARC: DDCW 3/3 (variants noted below). Appears also in MS Miscellaneous Verse 1786, 23–24. Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:245; cited as MS CW I (p), xii.

2. Beguil'd like poor, unwary Eve,
By the old Serpent's art,
No more permit him to deceive
Or blind her simple heart.
3. Dissolve the charm which long hath held
A soul that woud do right,
Disperse the cloud⁶ which hath conceal'd
Her Duty from her sight.
4. Duty and inclination, Lord,
Must struggle⁷ in her breast,
Till Thou pronounce the powerful word
Which turns⁸ her to her Rest.
5. O woudst Thou now thine Arm display
On which our hopes depend,
The strong Delusion chase away,
The hour of darkness end!
6. Her sins of ignorance forgive,
That, when thy mind is known,
She may to Thee intirely live,
And serve thy will⁹ alone.

⁶DDCW 3/3 reads: "Scatter the mist"

⁷DDCW 3/3 reads: "Are struggling"

⁸DDCW 3/3 reads: "And turn"

⁹DDCW 3/3 underlines "serve thy will," suggesting as an alternative: "die to Thee."

III.¹⁰

- [1.] O might the prayer of faith prevail
T' effect the thing impossible!
O might thy grace her heart incline
To give up her own will to Thine!
2. Who can against thy counsel stand?
Lay on her soul thy mighty hand,
Bend by resistless love, or break
The iron sinew in her neck.
3. Then let her, conscious of her fall,
Out of the deep for mercy call,
From every fond attachment free,
And yield her heart intire to Thee.
4. But when she wakes in dread surprize
And sees her state with open eyes,
And faints beneath the tortring pain,
Do Thou her fainting soul sustain.
5. Do Thou restrain the baffled Foe,
Nor let him deal a parting blow,
Or drive her, scap'd out [of] his snare,
To death, distraction, or despair.
6. Her danger *past* O may she see
With thanks, and deep humility,

¹⁰The first two lines appear also in MS Miscellaneous Verse 1786, 24. Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:240; cited as MS CW I (p), xii.

And meek in all thy footsteps move
Or'ewhelm'd with shame, and lost in love.

IV.¹¹

- [1.] Israel's God and Strength, arise
To scatter all thy foes,
Human, hellish enemies
Who Thee and Thine oppose!
Blast the world's malicious aim,
Who watch to see us halt, or fall,
For the sin of One to blame
And pour reproach on all.
2. Shall the haters of the Lord
Thy hallow'd Name prophane?
No: the honor of thy word
And Church Thou wilt maintain;
God of truth and jealousy,
Thou wilt thy righteous Cause defend:¹²
Sure of this, we trust in Thee
And calm expect the end.
3. Pity to the Tempted show
Who wanders far from home:
Save her from the threaten'd woe,
Nor let the scandal come:
Lest from Thee she farther stray,
And fall the Tempter's easy prize,

¹¹Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:241; cited as MS CW I (p), xii.

¹²Ori., "depend."

Hide her from the evil day
Secure in paradise.

4. But Thou canst redeem her here
From sin and Satan's wiles,
Ignorant, yet still sincere,
And struggling in the toils:
Speak, and she shall now be freed,
From passion's fascinating power
Saints shall wonder at the deed,
And all thy hosts adore!

V.¹³

- [1.] Lord, we will not let thee go,
Till thine Arm, reveal'd below,
Captive leads captivity,
Sets the ransom'd prisoner free.
2. Tho' she takes the Tempter's part,
Well Thou knowst, her simple heart
Doth no evil thing intend,
Woud not wilfully offend.
3. By thy Spirit's power convince
One who ignorantly sins,
Darkness still mistakes for light,
Fondly thinks that Wrong is Right.

¹³Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:242–43; cited as MS CW I (p), xii.

4. Willing made her God t' obey
Bring her back into thy way:
Thine the pleasant way of peace,
Duty, love, and happiness.
5. Now avenge her of her Foe,
Now release, and let her go,
Free indeed, renew'd, restor'd,
All devoted to the Lord.
6. Let her, as thy laws require,
Wait on her respected Sire,
Cherish him with pious care,
Gladly all his burthens bear:
7. Staff of his declining age
Sent, his sufferings to assuage,
Aid to minister, and ease,
God, by pleasing Him, to please.
8. Make her Duty her delight,
Acceptable in thy sight,
That she may thy glory see
Find her full reward in Thee.