

MS Preachers Extraordinary¹

The 1750s were a period of growing discomfort for Charles Wesley concerning the use of lay preachers in the Methodist cause. While open to this in principle, Charles was convinced that his brother John encouraged far too many who had neither the gifts nor the grace to take up the calling. Moreover, many lay preachers chafed at the restriction from administering the sacraments. Charles increasingly suspected that John was ready to open this door to them, which would have amounted to separation from the Church of England. Charles's concern found public expression in his poetic *Epistle to John Wesley* (1755), and again in early 1760 when he republished John's essay "Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England," adding to it seven "Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Preachers."² These published hymns reflect a larger body of verse in manuscript.

Three collections are of note: MS Preachers, MS Miscellaneous Hymns (pp. 109–33), and MS Preachers Extraordinary. These collections overlap. All of the verse in MS Preachers appears in the other two settings. Textual comparison suggests that MS Preachers predates both "Hymns for the Methodist Preachers" (1760) and the other two manuscript collections, placing its composition in the late 1750s. MS Preachers contains only six of the seven published hymns. The seventh appears in the other two manuscript collections, along with three additional items not found in MS Preachers. The order of the resulting thirteen items is identical in both collections. The few textual variations hint that the section in MS Miscellaneous Hymns may have preceded and be the source for MS Preachers Extraordinary. But both of these clearly postdated "Hymns for the Methodist Preachers" (1760), as two of their additional hymns are from MS Preachers 1779.

MS Preachers Extraordinary is a gathering of 25 quarto-sized pages. It is part of the collection at the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, accession number MA 1977/583/8 (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.

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²For more details, see the Introduction to "Hymns for the Methodist Preachers" (1760) on the portion of this site devoted to Charles's published poetry.

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**Hymns
for Preachers extraordinary.**

[L.]³

- [1.] Arise, thou jealous, God, arise,
Thy sifting power exert,
Look thro' us with thy flaming eyes,
And search out every heart.
2. Our inmost souls thy Spirit knows;
And let him now display
Whom thou hast for thy glory chose,
And purge the rest away.
3. Th' Apostles false far off remove,
The faithful labourers own,
And give us each himself to prove,
And know as he is known.
4. Do I presume to preach thy word,
By Thee uncall'd, unsent?
Am I the servant of the Lord,
Or Satan's instrument?
5. Is this, great God, my single aim
Thine, wholly thine to be,
To serve thy will, declare thy name,
And gather souls for Thee?

³Appears also in a Journal Letter (September 10, 1751); and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 109–11.
Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 8:404–405; and *Representative Verse*, 277–78.

6. To labour in my Master's cause,
Thy grace to testify,
And spread the victory of thy cross,
And on thy cross to die?
7. I once unfeignedly believ'd
Myself sent forth by Thee:
But have I kept the grace receiv'd
In simple poverty?
8. Still do I for thy kingdom pant,
Till all its coming prove,
And nothing seek, and nothing want
But more of Jesus' love?
9. If still I in thy grace abide,
My call confirm, and clear,
And into thy whole counsel guide
Thy poorest messenger:
10. Unite my heart to all that bear
The burthen of the Lord,
And let our spotless lives declare
The virtue of thy word.
11. One soul into us all inspire,
And let us strongly move,
In fervent flames of pure desire
To glorify thy love:

12. And which we cordially agree
 To make thy goodness known,
Thy love the bond of union be,
 And perfect us in one.

II.⁴

- [1.] Lord of the gospel-harvest, hear
 The souls around thy seat,
And suffer mine, ev'n mine t' appear,
 Self-loathing, at thy feet.
2. I mix with theirs my feeble cry,
 On Thee for mercy call,
Meanest of all thy servants I,
 Less than the least of all.
3. Less than the least in my own sight
 O may I ever be,
My one employment and delight
 To serve thy Church and Thee:
4. With all the servants of my Lord,
 Whom on my heart I bear,
I fain woud live, to preach thy word,
 A life of faith and prayer.
5. The power of praying faith and love
 Into our souls infuse,

⁴Appears also in MS Preachers, 1–2; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 111–12. Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:35–36.

With gifts and talents from above
Prepare us for thy use:

6. But O, to every messenger
The guardian grace impart,
The lowly self-abasing fear,
The meekly humble heart.
7. Only preserve us, Lord, from pride,
And we shall never stray;
And I shall never start aside,
Or fall a castaway.
8. The high, and lofty God shall stoop
To every contrite One,
And lift his abject servant up
To his eternal throne.

III.⁵

- [1.] Master of the gospel-feast,
Thy meanest servants own,
Joining in the same request
Who now besiege thy throne:
To the hedges and high-ways
Us if thou indeed didst send,
Bless the heralds of thy grace,
And keep us to the end.

⁵Appears also in MS Preachers, 2; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 112–13. Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:36–37.

2. Keep us, O thou lowly Lamb,
Like Thee distrest and poor,
Simple men without a name,
And joyfully obscure,
Small, and vile in our own eyes,
While the wise, and rich, and great
As the trodden dirt despise,
And spurn us at their feet.⁶

3. Let us thy great glory seek,
And not our own applause,
Still believe, and therefore speak
The wonders of thy cross,⁷
Still proclaim thy saving grace,
Fully our commission prove,
Spend our latest breath in praise
Of all-redeeming Love.

IV.⁸

- [1.] O Thou, whose soul-transforming grace
By foolish things, and weak, and base
Ev'n now thy work revives,
Open our mouth, to preach thy word,
And help us, O almighty Lord,
To preach it by our lives.

⁶Ori., “~~thy~~ feet.”

⁷Ori., “word.”

⁸Appears also in MS Preachers, 3–4; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 113–15. Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 13:262–63.

2. The solemn thoughtfulness impart,
Composing every serious heart
 Into a solid frame:
O' rewhelm us with an awful sense
How great the gospel to dispense,
 And speak in Jesus Name!
3. Give us to walk as in thy sight,
To order all our converse right,
 By Jesus presence awed:
No idle word, or laughter vain,
Or gesture light, debase the man,
 The messenger of God.
4. The mirth of fools, the jest unfit,
The trifling levity of wit
 Far off from us remove;
Throughout our even lives appear
The power of godliness sincere,
 The dignity of love.
5. In all our intercourse below
O may our whole deportment show
 The tempers of our Lord:
Lowly our hearts, like his, and meek
Our words, our looks, our silence speak
 The virtue of the word.

6. The word which we declare and feel
In us O let it richly dwell,
 Yet outwardly exprest
In purest flames of fervent love,
While all our hallow'd actions prove
 The fire within our breast.
7. Here may it ever, ever burn,
Our souls into thy likeness turn,
 Till perfectly restor'd
With joy our glorious course we end,
And in the prophet's car ascend
 To meet our smiling Lord.

V.⁹

- [1.] Shepherd of souls, the great, the good,
For the dear purchase of thy blood
 To thee in faith we pray,
The lambs and sheep of England's fold
Now in the book of life inroll'd
 Preserve unto that day.
2. Whom Thou by us hast gather'd in
Defend the little flock from sin,
 From error's paths secure:
Stay with them, Lord, till we depart,
And guard the issues of their heart,
 And keep their conscience pure.

⁹Appears also in MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 115–17. Published under the title “The Preacher’s Prayer for the Flock,” in “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760), 21–22.

3. Soon as their guides are taken home,
 We know, the grievous wolves will come,
 Determin'd not to spare;
 The straglers from thy wounded side
 The wolves will into sects divide,
 And into parties tear.

4. Ev'n of ourselves will men arise
 With words perverse, and soothing lies
 Our children to beset,
 Disciples for themselves to make,
 And draw for filthy lucre's sake
 The sheep into their net.

5. What then can their protection be?
 The virtue that proceeds from Thee,
 The power of humble love,
 The strength of all-sufficient grace,
 Receiv'd in thine appointed ways
 Shall land them safe above.

6. Now, Saviour, clothe them with thy power,
 And arm their souls against that hour
 With faith invincible,
 Teach them to wield thy Spirit's sword,
 And mighty in the written word
 To chase both earth and hell.

7. When I, from all my burthens freed,
Am numbred with the peaceful dead
 In everlasting rest,
Pity the sheep I leave behind,
My God unutterably kind,
 And lodge them in thy breast.

8. Ah never suffer them to leave
The Church, where Thou art pleas'd to give
 Such tokens of thy grace!
Confirm them in their calling here,
Till ripe by holiest love t' appear
 Before thy glorious face.

9. Whom I into thy hands commend,
Wilt Thou not keep them to the end,
 Thou infinite in love?
Assure me, Lord it shall be so,
And let my quiet spirit go
 To join the Church above.

10. Sion my first, my latest care,
The burthen of my dying prayer
 Now in thy arms I see,
And sick on earth of seeing more,
I hasten home, my God t' adore
 Thro' all eternity.

VI.¹⁰

- [1.] O Lord, our strength and righteousness,
Our basis, head, and corner-stone,
Our peace with God, our mutual peace,
Unite, and keep thy servants one,
That while we speak in Jesus name,
We all may speak, and think the same.
2. That Spirit of love to each impart,
That fervent mind which was in Thee,
So shall we all our strength exert,
In heart, and word, and deed agree
T' advance the kingdom of thy grace,
And spread thine everlasting praise.
3. O never may the fiend steal in,
Or one unstable soul deceive:
Assail'd by our besetting sin,
And tempted sore the work to leave,
Preserve us, Lord, from self and pride
And let nor life nor death divide.
4. Pride, only pride can cause divorce,
Can separate 'twixt our souls and Thee;
Pride, only pride is discord's source,
The bane of peace and charity;
But us it never, Lord, shall part,
For Thou art greater than our heart.

¹⁰Appears also in MS Preachers, 4–5; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 118–19. Published in “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760), 13–14.

5. Wherefore to thine almighty hand
The keeping of our hearts we give,
Firm in one mind and spirit stand,
To Thee, and to each other cleave,
Fixt on the Rock which cannot move,
And meekly safe in humble love.

VII.¹¹

- [1.] Forth in thy strength, O Lord, we go,
Forth in thy steps, and loving mind
To pay the gospel-debt we owe,
The word of grace for all mankind,
To sow th' incorruptible seed,
And find the lost, and wake the dead.
2. The wandring sheep of England's fold
Demand our first and tenderest care,
Who under sin and Satan sold
Usurp the Christian character
The Christian character profane,
And take thy Church's name in vain.
3. Or shameless advocates for hell,
Their crimes they Sodom-like confess,
Or varnish'd with a specious zeal,
An empty form of godliness,
The power they impiously blaspheme,
And call our hope a madman's dream.

¹¹Appears also in MS Preachers, 5–6; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 119–20. Published in “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760), 14–15.

4. Haters of God, yet still they cry
 “The temple of the Lord are we!
 [“The Church, the Church!”] who dare defy
 Thy self-existent Deity
 Proudly oppose thy righteous reign,
 And crucify their God again.
5. ’Gainst these by Thee sent forth to fight,
 A suffering war we calmly wage,
 With patience meet their fierce despite,
 With love repay their furious rage;
 Revil’d, we bless; defam’d, intreat;
 And spurn’d, we kiss the spurner’s feet.
6. Arm’d with thine all-sufficient grace,
 Thy meek, unconquerable mind,
 Our foes we cordially embrace,
 (The filth, and refuse of mankind)
 We gladly all resign our breath,
 To save one precious soul from death.

VIII.¹²

- [1.] So be it, Lord: if thou ordain,
 We come to suffer all thy will,
 The utmost violence to sustain
 Of those that can the body kill,
 But having push’d us to the shore,
 The feeble worms can do no more.

¹²Appears also in MS Preachers, 6–7; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 120–22. Published in “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760), 15–17.

2. We come, depending on thy Name,
 For we have counted first the cost:
Let ease, and liberty, and fame,
 And friends, and life itself be lost,
We come, our faithfulness t' approve,
And pay thee back thy dying love.
3. Not in a confident conceit
 Of our own strength, and virtuous power,
We offer up ourselves, to meet
 The fierceness of that fiery hour;
Left to ourselves, we all shall fly,
And I shall first my Lord deny.
4. I first of ill o'recome shall yield
 Apostate from thy glorious cause,
Shall vilely cast away my shield,
 And hate the haters of thy cross,
Retort the sharp, opprobrious word,
Or smite with the offensive sword.
5. Strange fire will in this bosom burn,
 Unless Thou quench it with thy blood,
Impatient of the cruel scorn,
 My spirit will throw off the load,
And Baal's priests with wrath repel,
And send th' accursed brood to hell.

6. Or I shall gaul the *mitred* race
By satire keen, and railings rude,
By proud contempt, and malice base,
Scurrilous wit, and laughter lewd,
Laughter which soon itself bemoans,
And ends in everlasting groans.
7. But do not, Lord, from us remove,
While sin and Satan are so near,
But arm us with thy patient love,
That only to ourselves severe,
The world we may, like Thee, oppose,
And die a ransom for our foes.

IX.¹³

- [1.] Master, at thy command we rise,
No prophets we, or prophets' sons,
Or mighty, or well-born, or wise,
But quickned clods, but breathing stones
Urg'd to cry out, constrain'd to call
And tell mankind, HE died for all!
2. We speak, because *they* hold their peace
Who *shoud* thy dying love proclaim:
We must declare thy righteousness,
Thy truth, and power, and saving Name,

¹³Appears also in MS Preachers, 7–8; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 122–23. Published in “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760), 17.

While the dumb ass with accent clear
Rebukes the silence of the seer.

3. But shall we e'er ourselves forget,
 And in our gifts and graces trust,
With wild contempt the prophets treat,
 Proudly against the branches boast,
Or dare the rulers vilify,
Or mock the priests of God most high?
4. *Let them alone*, thy Wisdom cries,
 If blind conductors of the blind:
Let them alone, our heart replies,
 And draws us to the work assign'd,
The work of publishing the word,
And seizing sinners for our Lord.
5. Here let us spend our utmost zeal,
 Here let us all our powers exert,
To testify thy gracious will
 Inform the world how kind thou art,
And nothing know, desire, approve
But Jesus—and thy bleeding love.

X.¹⁴

- [1.] Jesus, thy waiting servants see,
 Assembled here with one accord,

¹⁴Appears also in MS Preachers, 8–10; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 123–25. Published in “Hymns for the Methodist Preachers” (1760), 18–19.

Ready to be sent forth by Thee,
To preach, when Thou shalt give the word,
Now, Lord, our work, our province shew,
For lo, we come thy will to do.

2. O what a scene attracts our eyes!
What multitudes of lifeless souls!
An open vale before us lies
A place of graves, a place of skulls
The desolate Church of England's sons
A Church? a Charnel of dry bones!
3. The slaves of pride, ambition, lust
Our broken pale alas, receives!
The world into the temple thrust
And make God's house a den of thieves:
Her grief, her burthen, and her shame,
Yet all assume the Church's Name.
4. Her desolate state too well we know;
But neither hate her nor despise
Our bosoms bleed, our tears o'reflow;
We view her, Saviour, with thy eyes,

(O might She know in this her day!)
And still we weep, and still we pray.

5. We pray that these dry bones may live:
 We see the answer of our prayer!
Thou dost a thousand tokens give
 That England's Church is still thy care
Ten thousand witnesses appear,
Ten thousand proofs that God is here!
6. Here then, O God, vouchsafe to dwell,
 And mercy on our Sion show:
Her inbred enemies expel,
 Avenge her of her hellish foe,
Cause on her wastes thy face to shine,
And comfort her with light divine.
7. O Light of life, thy Spirit shed,
 In all his chearing quickning power,
Thy word that rais'd us from the dead
 Can raise ten thousand, thousand more,
Can bring them¹⁵ up from Nature's grave,
And the whole house of Israel save.

XI.¹⁶

- [1.] Great Guardian of Britania's land,
 To Thee we here present our blood,

¹⁵Ori., "us."

¹⁶Appears also in MS Preachers, 10–12; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 125–27. Published in "Hymns for the Methodist Preachers" (1760), 19–20.

Set forth the last, a desperate band,
Devoted for our Country's good,
Our brethren dear, our flesh and bone
We live, and die for them alone.

2. *Our brethren* tho' they still disclaim
And us despitefully entreat,
With scornful rage cast out our name
Trample, as dirt beneath their feet
Out of their synagogues expel,
And doom us to the hottest hell.
3. If Thou preserve our souls in peace,
Our brethren shall afflict in vain:
Most patient, when they most oppress,
We all their cruel wrongs sustain,
And strengthen'd by thy meekning power,
The more they hate, we love the more.
4. No; never shall their rage prevail,
Or force us the dry bones to leave:
The more they push us from the pale,
The closer we to Sion cleave,
And daily in the temple found
Delight to kiss the sacred ground.
5. If some defile the hallow'd place,
The truth and us with slanders load,
Or fiercely from their altars chase,
And rob us of the children's food,

We will not quit thy house and word,
Or loath the offerings of the Lord.

6. Shoud those who sit in Moses seat,
 Conspire thy little flock to harm,
Judge in their courts, and scourge and beat,
 And bruise us with the ruler's arm,
Matter of joy our shame we make,
And bear it, Saviour, for thy sake.
7. Or shoud they stir the people up
 Our goods to spoil, our limbs to tear,
Sustain'd by that immortal hope,
 Their lawless violence we bear;
Or laid in bonds, our voices raise,
And shake the dungeon with thy praise.
8. A gazing-stock to fiends and men
 When arm'd with thy all-patient power,
As sheep appointed to be slain,
 We wait the last, the fiery hour
Ne'er will from England's Church remove,
Till torn away to That above!

[XII.]
For Some of the Preachers
Written in 1779¹⁷

- [1.] Lord over all, thy people hear
For every favour'd messenger
Whom Thou hast own'd for thine,
For every chosen instrument
Without our rules or orders sent
To serve the cause divine.
2. Sent forth they were to prophesy,
Their lack of service to supply
Who sit in Moses chair,
But love the world, and seek their own,
Neglect their ministry, and shun
The gospel to declare.
3. Because the prophets hold their peace,
The stones, thy quicken'd witnesses,
Cried out on every side,
In streets, and houses, and high-ways
They spread the news of pardning grace,
They preach'd the Crucified.
4. Their doctrine sinsick spirits heal'd,
The Lord himself their mission seal'd
By daily signs from heaven,
Blind souls their inward sight receiv'd,
The dead were rais'd, the poor believ'd,
And felt their sins forgiven.

¹⁷Appears also in MS Preachers 1779, 1–3; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 128–31 [which both specify it was written on Oct. 10]. Published posthumously in *Representative Verse*, 336–38; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:37–39.

5. By ceaseless toils of humble love
Thy servants sought their faith t' approve,
 They spake, and liv'd the word,
Simple and poor, despis'd of men,
They liv'd immortal souls to gain,
 And glorify their Lord.

6. With tears we own, They *did* run well!
But where is now their fervent zeal,
 Their meek humility,
Their upright heart, their single eye,
Their vows the Lord to magnify
 And live, and die for Thee?

7. The love of ease, and earthly things,
The pride from which contention springs,
 The fond desire of praise,
Have imperceptibly stole in,
Brought back the old besetting sin,
 And poison'd all their grace.

8. They now preeminence affect
Eager to form the rising Sect,
 Some better thing to gain:
Like hireling priests, they serve for hire,
And thro' ambition blind, aspire
 Without the cross to reign.

9. The flock they woud in pieces tear,
That each may seize the largest share,
May feed himself alone:
“Come, see my zeal” at first they cried,
But now they ask, “Who[’s] on my side
Will make my cause his own?”
10. The men who have their savour lost
Themselves against the branches boast,
And dignities despise:
Their greedy hopes the flock devour,
As all were left within their power
To glut their avarice.
11. But O thou Shepherd great and good,
The sheep redeem’d by thy own blood
Into thine arms receive;
If still with England’s Church Thou art,
True pastors after thy own heart
To thy own people give.
12. Thy flock out of their hands redeem,
Who of their own importance dream,
As God had need of man:
Send whom Thou wilt, in mercy send,
Thy cause and gospel to defend,
Thy glory to maintain.

13. And O their faithful hearts inflame
With love of our Jerusalem
Thy Church Establish'd here:
Still may they cry, and never rest,
Till Glory, in thy face exprest,
Throughout our land appear:
14. Till Thee, the Glory of the Lord,
In truth and righteousness restor'd
All flesh together see,
Salute Thee on thy great white throne
And sink in speechless raptures down,
For ever lost in Thee.

XIII.¹⁸

- [1.] Yet hear us, O thou patient God,
For those who once with grace endow'd,
Confess their faith's decay,
Renew'd unto repentance, Lord,
Send them again to preach thy word
And lengthen out their day.
2. Able thou art the proud t' abase
The men that love the highest place,
In mercy cast them down
And let them, groveling in the dust,
Own thy severest sentence¹⁹ just,
And tremble at thy frown.

¹⁸Appears also in MS Preachers 1779, 3–4; and MS Miscellaneous Hymns, 131–33. Published posthumously in *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:40–41.

¹⁹Ori., “judgm.”

3. If Thou the word of truth revoke,
And blot their names out of thy book,
 And leave them in their fall,
Out of the deep regard their cry
“Left in our sins, we justly die,
 “Our sins deserve it all.”
4. Them by thy Spirit now convince
Of sin, the root of all their sins,
 (Which nature fain woud hide,
Which turn'd the Seraph to a fiend)
From every heart the covering rend,
 And show the worms their pride.
5. Now let them to the dunghill look
From whence thy will mysterious took
 The basest of the croud—
Envious to rail at Levi's sons,
To vie with Bishops on their thrones,
 And hate the Church of God?
6. No: but Thou calldst them forth to be
A pattern of humility,
 Poorest and least of all:
In mercy then, not wrath, chastise,
And let them sink in their own eyes,
 And into nothing fall.

7. Repentance true on each bestow,
Tormenting fear, distracting woe,
Unutterable shame,
The anguish of a broken heart,
Which only Jesus can impart,
We ask in Jesus Name.

8. When prostrate in the dust they grieve,
And sad their punishment receive,
Thy people's prayer attend,
The humbled penitents restore,
Give back with faith their peace and power,
And love them to the end.