

MS Funeral Hymns for Hannah Butts¹

Hannah Witham (b. 1720) was the daughter of Thomas Witham (d. 1743) and Elizabeth Witham (d. 1747), supporters of the Wesley brothers and active in the Methodist Society in London. In 1746 she married Thomas Butts, another active participant in the London Methodist Society, who occasionally accompanied both John and Charles Wesley on preaching tours in the 1740s. Thomas Butts also served as the first steward of John Wesley's book room in London from 1753–59. While Charles Wesley does not record the date of Hannah's death, other records suggest it was in 1762.

The looseleaf manuscript containing the hymns below is part of the collection in the Methodist Archives and Research Centre, accession number MA 1977/583/28 (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.
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Table of Contents

[Untitled]	1-2
On being desired to write an Elegy for Mrs. Hannah Butts	3
Funeral M[rs.] Butts	4

[Untitled.]²

- [1.] Most gentle of all the soft kind,
I cannot allow Thee to part,
So deeply engraven I find
Thy form on my desolate heart!
Still, still the desire of my eyes
Thy bright apparition I see:
It beckons me up to the skies,
It waits—to be happy with me.
2. Thy voice ever-sounding I hear!
The harmony lulls me to rest,
It speaks my deliverance near,
It calms my tumultuous breast,
It bids me a moment endure
Resign'd in affliction and pain,
To make my inheritance sure,
A share of thy glory to gain.
3. O could I attain to the grace
That³ richly resided in thee,
A number of sorrowful days
Would seem but a moment to me;

²Also appears in MS Funeral Hymns, 33–35, identified as a funeral hymn for Hannah Butts.
Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 6:332–33.

³Ori., “Which.”

So swiftly I then should remove,
Where sorrow and sighing are o're,
And find my companion above,
And meet to be parted no more.

4. O Jesus, in pity appear,
Thy peace to a mourner impart,
Thy kingdom of righteousness here,
And whisper it into my heart;
Partaker at last of my hope,
With mercy a sinner embrace,
And out o'⁴ the valley take up,
And bless with the sight of *thy* Face.

meekness and humility, modesty patience and reasonableness
industry fidelity piety godliness sincerity

the best wives apprentices mistresses friends Christians,
the more known, the more admired⁵

⁴Ori., "~~there from~~" changed to "out o'."

⁵These two sets of descriptive terms are written in shorthand at the bottom of the page. They appear to be a "brain-storming" collection of possible descriptors to use in composing the poem that begins on the next page. The shorthand was expanded by Dr. Timothy Underhill.

**On being desired to write an Elegy
for Mrs. Hannah Butts.⁶**

- [1.] Can I describe a worth like thine,
Transcript of excellence divine,
Tho' friendship urge, and love demand
The tribute of so mean an hand?
Thy loveliness from far I see,
Thy height of Christian dignity,
But fail to utter that⁷ thou art,
Or show thine image in my heart.
- [2.] Could I like rapid Young⁸ aspire
Transported on his car of fire,
Or flow with Academick ease,
Smooth as our own Isocrates,*
Beautiful words I should not find
Expressive of so fair a mind,
But want an Angel's tongue to paint
The glories of an humble saint.
- [3.] O were they all on me bestow'd
The form and lineaments of God,
His image on thy soul imprest
His love that fill'd thy faithful breast!
How gladly then should I ascend,
With Thee to view our heavenly Friend,
In rapt'rous strains his praise repeat,
And sing triumphant at thy feet!

* Mr. [the Revd. James] Hervey.⁹

⁶Appears also in MS Funeral Hymns, 32–33. Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 6:331–32.

⁷“That” has “all” written in the margin as an alternative.

⁸The poet Edward Young (1683–1765).

⁹James Hervey (1713–58), wrote prose poetry.

Funeral M[rs.] Butts.¹⁰

- [1.] Hark, hark, tis a Voice from the tomb!
Come, mourner, it cries, come away!
The grave of thy children hath room,
To rest thee beside their cold clay;
Thy burthen of sorrow lay down,
Escape to the harbour so nigh;
Thy course of affliction is run,
And mercy permits thee to die.
2. The hope of a sudden release,
The token of good I receive,
The blisful assurance of peace
Which Jesus is ready to give;
It reaches a soul in the deep,
It points to that heavenly shore:
And there I no longer shall weep,
And there I shall suffer no more.

¹⁰Also appears in MS Funeral Hymns, 33. Published posthumously in *Poetical Works*, 6:332. Wesley added the title vertically in the margin.