AN HITHERTO "UNPUBLISHED LETTER" OF
CHARLES WESLEY
FREDERICK E. MASER

(Neither the date nor the place where the letter was written is stated, a characteristic of many of Charles Wesley's letters. The brief closing, ending with the initials CW, is also common to many of Wesley's letters, and a further mark of the authenticity of this letter.)

Dear Fred,

I only wish my brother's tribute to my ability in writing letters were true when he wrote, "I am very sensible that writing letters is my brother's talent rather than mine." My letters have always lacked his concise, terse sentences, although they may be more expressive of my love. Of my affection, you can be sure without further expression of it; but because of our mutual affection I wish to express through you, to those responsible, my great joy in knowing that there is a likelihood that all my works - poetic and prose - will one day be published to stand beside the complete works of my brother. This gives me great satisfaction for many reasons, but especially because I believe it is important for Methodists to know on what points and for what reasons my brother and I disagreed, at times strongly but always with affection.

My brother believed that my form of Christian Perfection was unattainable. His form of Perfection, however, seemed to some so easily attained that hundreds claimed to have reached that goal whose later conduct belied their profession. My thoughts on Christian Perfection are fully set forth in my hymns. I trust they will now be fully published without errors, so that the Methodists will understand my viewpoint.

Although the views of my brother and myself on the American Revolution were similar, we expressed them quite differently. Only recently, a complete statement of my ideas in poetic form was published through the patience and unerring scholarship of our friends S T K., Jr. and O. A. B. A glance at the opening poem will clearly show that it was the selfish careless leadership of General Howe that "made AMERICA independent." The poems also show for the first time my deep concern for the loyalists, many of whom were financially ruined after the colonies became a separate nation. [Charles Wesley is here undoubtedly referring to Vol. One of the three volume edition of The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley, edited by S T Kimbrough, Jr. and O. A. Beckerlegge.]
My brother and I differed also in our priorities. My chief concern on earth was the preservation of the Church of England; my next that of the Methodists; my third, that of the preachers. If any of these ever came into competition I would give up the preachers for the good of the whole body of the Church of England. I was not opposed to lay preaching, but I doubted the wisdom of taking a man from his trade to make him a preacher until both my brother and I had heard him preach with our own ears and had talked with him at length. My brother's judgment was not always the best; and I had to send some preachers back to their trades. A friend of ours, without the counsel of God, took a tailor and made him a preacher, but with the help of God, I made him a tailor again. But my conduct was caused not by my opposition to lay preachers but by my love for the Church. I made it clear that nothing could ever force me to leave the Methodists but their leaving the Church. My brother took the longest step in this direction when he ordained men for the American work. I did not know of his intentions or I would have staunchly opposed him, pointing out that ordination is separation. But of this I could not convince him.

Now, however, since in your day the Methodists are slowly losing their character and their power, should not my view be more widely known? Even yet - at this late date - there can be a union between the Anglicans and the Methodists and other denominations to restore the body of Christ to its fullness, and win a world for the Saviour.

I hear reports that you are living in a place that lays less and less stress upon family life, and with the break-up of family life there has come a loss of respect for authority and the Church and God. My brother's family life was by no means exemplary. When I first heard of his marriage to the woman he had unwisely chosen without my advice, I retired with my dear Sally, my wife, to mourn for my brother and the repercussions his marriage would have on Methodism. Certainly my brother lacked a certain tenderness and understanding necessary to every successful marriage. He seemed to dislike expressions of physical love, especially when used in connection with the name of God, and possibly for this reason he omitted my hymn Jesus, Lover of My Soul from his Collection of Hymns . . . published in 1780. On the other hand, his wife seemed to lack every Christian grace and was as different from my dear Sally as a cloudy night is from a sunny day. It was impossible to talk with that woman without the sparks flying upward. Once, however, we did have a lengthy conversation without a cross word between us - a conversation that lasted all of three minutes. Of my brother's differences with his wife, it could not be said Amantium irae, amoris integratio est.

My own family life was a happier experience, possibly because I entered into the marriage arrangement only after carefully weighing, with my brother, the merits of several possible choices. My brother had pro-
posed three persons to me: Sally Perrin, Molly Wells, and Sally Gwynne, and he entirely approved when I chose the last. I then fell deeply in love with her, and I began to write to her every day and sometimes twice a day. My home life was a comfort to my soul even as a restored family life would be a helpful antidote for all the temptations that face your young people who, having no family life and no church life, are wandering like lost sheep. I am sure the publication of my many letters to my dear dear Sally, including a picture of our happy relationship with our three surviving children would arouse among your people a desire for a similar experience. The letters are especially valuable because I discussed all my Methodist activities with Sally.

Therefore, go on in the good work of publication which is the work of God - no matter what the cost. Follow the leading of Brother Kimbrough whom God has raised up for this great purpose. *Aquila non capit muscas*. What funds you cannot immediately raise God will provide in His own good time and way. Faith and works will carry the day.

An now, dear Fred, I am happy to hear of your wife’s good health. But admonish her and her friends to cease jogging - a strange form of exercise, peculiar to America, which is neither walking nor running. Remind her that she is eighty-two years of age and that a brisk walk through the park is far more appropriate and far more beneficial for one of her advanced years.

I am told that many joggers pursue their demonic form of exercise with their faces contorted as if in great pain. Surely, this cannot be of God who wishes for all His children that happiness and joy that come from proper exercise and a steadfast reliance upon His will. Believe me, in all this, I am your best friend and your

faithful old CW

Editor’s note: The two Latin quotations are further evidence of the authenticity of this letter since both the Wesleys were familiar with the Greek and Roman poets and playwrights. The first quotation is from Terence, Andria 111, 3, 23 and means *Lovers’ quarrels are love’s renewal* which was not true of John and his wife. The second quotation is a common Latin expression meaning *An eagle does not catch flies*. The letter itself was found in a secret compartment of an antique desk stored, for a time, in an old warehouse in Philadelphia. The desk was purchased by Dr. Richard P. Heitzenrater who, when he discovered the letter, immediately recognized the handwriting of Charles Wesley. Dr. Heitzenrater believes that Fred, to whom the letter is addressed, is Frederick E. Maser, former Executive Secretary of the World Methodist Historical Society.