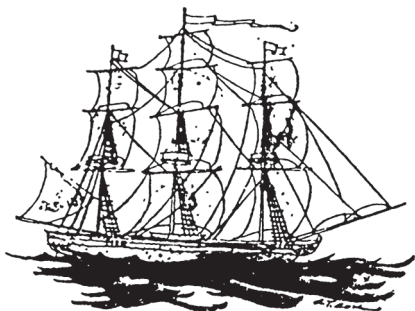


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DISCOVERY

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NEW JOHN WESLEY LETTER TO CHARLES WESLEY

A previously unpublished portion of a letter that John Wesley drafted to his brother Charles has been located. It appears on a single page in a set of loose letters and journal entries among John Wesley's papers in the Methodist Archives and Research Centre at The John Rylands University Library, Manchester.¹ The opening and closing sections of the letter are missing, with the surviving portion appearing on a page numbered "3."

This portion is an initial draft, as evidenced by the numerous strike-outs and changes (which are reproduced as they appear in the text). Like most of John Wesley's drafts, it uses a number of abbreviations. Richard Heitzenrater's expertise in Wesley's abbreviations enabled preparation of the transcription below, which expands these abbreviations.

Internal evidence makes it clear that this draft letter was intended for Charles Wesley, and that it should be dated around January, 1750. Consider the first line, particularly the word "April" that has been struck out. Charles Wesley married Sarah Gwynne April 9, 1749, and brought his wife to Bristol later that month. But he spent the first half of May, 1749 in London preaching, and was there again for much of July, 1749. From that point he stayed in Bristol (or visiting Sarah's family in Ludlow, Shropshire) through February, 1750. John apparently remembered these two interludes in London while drafting the letter, leading him to strike out "April," replacing it with "mid-summer." Likely prodded by this letter, Charles was back in London in early March, 1750. Similarly, Walter Sellon was moved from his position at

¹ Accession number MA 1977/157; the set of letters is labeled "JW III.7."

Kingswood by mid-1750.

Technically, we cannot be sure that John Wesley actually sent this letter to Charles, since the full final version is not extant and there is no reference to it in any other work. Even so, this portion can serve to illustrate the tensions between the brothers in the months after Charles's marriage.

Transcription of letter fragment:

[opening section missing]

One glaring instance of this is your staying spending so long much time at Bristol, since April last midsummer. I see no sense or reason in your staying being there more than four months in a year. That you have married a wife is not a sufficient cause, unless we refer the matter to flesh and blood.

Nay, sometimes you are so far from furthering, that you greatly hinder me in my work. I see such or such a thing to be for the general good of the Societies. You not only do not second me therein, but purposely weaken my hands. Take the instance of tea, which I had weighed some years before I determined anything. You can be was no judge of the merits <of the> cause, for you had not so much as read my reasons. Not to read them was an amazing instance proof both of unkindness and of unwillingness to be convinced. Your behaviour in this has made such a breach upon in my authority as you will scarce ever be able to repair. Your plea, "that you conformed, till I made it a matter of conscience," is not true. It did not stick [i.e., stop] you. Although 'tis true, I do make conscience of setting the people an example in all frugality and self-denial.

You have likewise often hindered me by breaking in upon my plan, and countermanding my orders. I send the preacher ~~you recall him. I recall, you send him~~ one way, and you another. In the same like manner you have hindered me at Kingswood. (1) I had have charged brother [Walter] Sellon not to stir out of the house. You have come and sent him to [remainder missing]