

MS Brothers¹

MS Brothers is an octavo notebook (about 8 in. by 5 in.), containing on its first three pages a copy of John Wesley's "Letter to ... the Brethren in North America," dated Bristol, Sept. 10, 1784, which John sent over with Thomas Coke and the preachers that John had just ordained.² This is followed by a short extract from William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants* (1664) cautioning against schism. Regrettably, the next several pages have been cut out. There remains one manuscript poem (identified as the ninth in a series), on pages numbered 31–35, which laments John's decision to ordain, viewing it as an act of separation from the Church of England. The remainder of the notebook is blank.

See as well the closely related items: MS Ordinations, MS Revd —, and Assorted Verse on 1784 Ordinations.

MS Brothers is part of the collection in the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, accession number DDCW 9/3. 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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²This letter is present in various editions of John Wesley's *Works*, including online editions.

IX³

Happy the days, when Charles and John
 By nature and by grace were One
 The same in office as in name,
 Their judgment and their will the same: [4]
 True Yokefellows, they join'd to draw
 The galling burthen of the Law,
 And urg'd with unremitting strife
 Each other on, to work for life: [8]
 Chearful beneath the Legal Load,
 Joyful to do imperfect good,
 And all the Lord's commands t'obey,
 Before they knew in Christ The Way. [12]

In infancy their hopes and fears,
 In youth, and in their riper years,
 Their hearts were to each other known
 Attun'd in perfect Unison. [16]
 No private End, no selfish art
 Did then the faithful Brothers part,
 No flatterer the Friends divide,
 Who each from each could nothing hide, [20]
 Neither enjoy'd a good alone,
 Or call'd what he possess'd his own,
 Their good supream with humble zeal
 To know, and do the Master's will. [24]

To both at once their Lord reveal'd
 His counsel from the Wise conceal'd,
 His will to chuse the weak and base
 And save a much-lov'd world by grace. [28]

³Published posthumously in *Representative Verse*, 371–74; and *Unpublished Poetry*, 3:82–86.

To the highways and hedges sent
 They both with one Commission went,
 Zealous immortal souls to win,
 And force the Vagrants to come in. [32]
 He bad them first for England care,
 And to her Church the truth declare
 To love his own Jerusalem,
 To spend, and to be spent for Them, [36]
 Outcasts of men, a thoughtless Herd,⁴
 Who sinning on with conscience sear'd,
 Rush'd down the steep, by Satan driven,
 As far from God, as hell from heaven. [40]

Jesus, who sent them out by pairs,
 Prosper'd his gospel-messengers,
 HE their united labours bless'd,
 Their flock abundantly increas'd, [44]
 Increas'd their word-begotten Sons,
 And preachers rais'd from stocks and stones.

But rais'd out of the people's lees,
 Raw, in experienc'd Novices, [48]
 They soon their low Estate forgot,
 And of themselves too highly thought,
 While the ambitious Fiend stole in,
 And poisoning them with his own sin, [52]
 Used as his Agents to inspire
 With lofty thoughts their flatter'd Sire.

They urg'd the Elder Presbyter
 Himself a Bishop to declare, [56]
 And then to answer their demands
 By laying on his hasty hands;

⁴Ori. "Croud."

The mighty Babel to erect,
And found a new Dissenting Sect, [60]
His Mother-Church to rend, disclaim,
And brand the Party with his Name.
But for a length of years he stood,
By a whole Army unsubdued, [64]
By friendship kept, refus'd to yield,
And all their fiery Darts repel'd,
And check'd the Madness for a space
Of Corah's bold, rebellious race, [68]
Who heard, like Eli's sons unmov'd,
His words too tenderly reprov'd,
"In vain you tempt me to do ill
"For separate I never will— [72]
"Will never with my Brother break,
"Will never die a Schismatic!"

O had he died *before* that day,
When W[esley] did himself betray, [76]
Did boldly on himself confer
The Apostolic Character!
O that we both had took our flight
Together to the realms of light, [80]
Together yielded up our breath,
In life united, and in death!
Leaving an honest Name behind,
We then assur'd that Rest to find [84]
Had past the valley undismay'd,
Nor fear'd to meet a Father's shade,

A Cloud of Witnesses inroll'd
 In heaven, the sheep of England's fold, [88]
 A noble host of Martyrs too
 Who faithful unto death, and true,
 Spent their last breath for Sion's good,
 And strove resisting unto blood. [92]

God of unbounded power and grace,
 Whose pleasure is to save and bless,
 At whose omnipotent Decree
 Things most impossible shall be, [96]
 Who only, cancelling our sin,
 Canst make it as it ne'er had been;
 Thine energy of love exert
 And change thy favour'd Servant's heart, [100]
 Thy own prevailing Plea we plead—
 In ignorance he did the Deed,
 The Deed with endless mischiefs fraught,
 Alas, he did he knew not what. [104]
 Pity the Blind who went astray
 And turn'd the Lame out of the way;
 Whom still Thou dost vouchsafe to own—
 Undo the evil he hath done, [108]
 Incline him humbly to revoke
 The fatal Step his haste hath took,
 And his true heart again shall be
 Turn'd back to England's Church and Thee. [112]

Stir up thy faithful people, Lord,
 To urge their suit with one accord,

And rescue thro' the Strength of prayer
Their Father, Guide, and Minister. [116]
His prayers for us have reach'd thy throne,
And brought us many a blessing down:
Thy blessings all on Him be shed;
With glory crown his reverend head. [120]
Found in the way of righteousness
There let him stay, and die in peace:
Let all the children of his prayers,
Seals of his Ministerial cares, [124]
To him by his Redeemer given,
Compose his Crown of joy in Heaven!