Abstract:
In this article, the author explores John Wesley’s perspectives on marriage and how these views related to his practice of ministry. Specifically, the author examines Wesley’s developmental journey from believing he could not marry to actually contracting a marriage with Mary Vazeille. Following exploration of Wesley’s perspectives on marriage, the author discusses these issues in relation to two observed patterns in his significant intimate relationship with Sophy Hopkey, Grace Murray and Mary Vazeille; namely that for the most part, Wesley cultivated these relationships out of travel and illness. The author concludes that even though Wesley moved from a position of celibacy to contracting a marriage, he never truly resolved the conflict between conjugal and ministry obligations. In fact, Wesley largely operated out of the belief that ministry obligations must always take primacy over marital responsibilities. Finally, the author draws out the implications of this stance for Wesley’s ministry and marriage and the lessons current clergy might learn from his example.

Key terms: ministry, marriage, occupational conflicts, John Wesley, developmental stages, sect-type clergy, church-type clergy

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Across the years, Wesley’s intimate relationships with Sophy Hopkey, Grace Murray and his eventual marriage to Mary Vazeille have intrigued several authors (Abelove, 1990; Frank Baker, 1966; F. Baker, 1977; Caswell, 1903; Collins, 1993; Ethridge, 1971; Maser, 1977; Rogal, 1988). To suit their purposes, some authors have largely focused on one relationship, with less attention to the others. However, some have highlighted common patterns across the relationships (Collins, 1993; Rack, 1989). For example, in his *Reasonable Enthusiast*, Rack (1989) considered patterns across John’s relationships with Hopkey and Murray. He highlighted this similarity in the following words:

> Like all matters concerning Wesley’s relationship with women, the Murray affair is one which has rather embarrassed Methodist biographers. It is still difficult to unravel the process by which this sad affair muddled its way to catastrophe. For the student of Wesley’s character, however, his conduct of the affair and his private account of what happened so closely resembles the earlier episode with Sophy Hopkey as to give rise to the suspicion that this was not simply a tragedy of errors but further evidence of some deep-rooted psychological disability in his nature as regards relationships with women (Rack, 1989, p. 257).

Similar to Rack, the author believes this approach of considering Wesley’s significant relationships together can yield interesting parallels. In fact, the author has discussed such themes in a recent book on John Wesley (Headley, 2010). However, in this article the author will limit the discussion to understanding Wesley’s major beliefs about ministry and marriage. In addition, two major patterns will be discussed in relation to these beliefs. These discussions will allow the author to connect the latter patterns to John Wesley’s philosophy of marriage in relation to ministry. Before delving into his philosophy and patterns, a brief review of Wesley’s developmental views on marriage is warranted.

**Developmental Stages in Wesley’s Views on Marriage**

In *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, Heitzenrater (1984) provided an account of the development stages through which Wesley progressed as he considered marriage to Grace Murray. A review of this document reveals five principal beliefs around which his philosophy of marriage revolved. These beliefs
were laid out and countered in 27 points. Because the points reflected his beliefs about marriage, the author has made them more pronounced by stating them in statement form and providing a brief summary of each.

1. **I will never find a wife like my father had** — From age six through seven, John possessed an idealized view of his mother as the perfect mate against whom all potential marriage partners would be measured.

2. **I am unable to keep a wife** — From age 17 through twenty-six or twenty-seven, he continued his intention of not marrying because he believed he was unable to keep a wife.

3. **It is unlawful for a priest to marry** — Based on his misperceptions of the practice in the early church, he thought it unlawful for a priest to marry. From his reading of the mystic writers, he concluded that “marriage was the less perfect state,” and that the marriage bed tainted the mind. Reading from Paul’s Corinthian epistles, convinced Wesley that a married man would be distracted in service.

4. **Marriage would become an extra expense which would detract from using my resources in ministry** — He thought marriage would consume the resources he now gave away.

5. **Marriage would hinder the preaching of the gospel** — For the twelve years (prior to writing this argument) Wesley thought a dispensation of the gospel had been committed to him and that marriage would directly or indirectly hinder the preaching of the gospel (Heitzenrater, 1984, pp. 181-183).

From this developmental account it appears that at various stages, Wesley resisted marriage for a variety of reasons. Because developmental stages are rarely linear and discrete, several of these stage beliefs likely existed concurrently. However, Wesley was able to move beyond some of his initial prohibitions against marriage through historical, biblical and experiential proofs. In the rest of the steps in his marital developmental journey, Wesley allowed us to see how he was able to counter his early beliefs sufficiently to consider marriage to Grace Murray. Much of his seminal thoughts about his journey were captured in point number 8 – 12. For example, to counter his first belief about his inability to find a wife like his mother, Wesley discovered that, though few, women existed who could match his mother in knowledge and piety. Furthermore, in reference to his second belief, he realized keeping a wife did not solely depend on him but on the woman’s ability and willingness to keep with him. Readings from significant sources such as St. Paul and Beveridge’s Codex Conciliorum helped shift his perspectives. Speaking of Paul’s writings, Wesley wrote: “St. Paul slowly and gradually awakened me out of my mystic dream; and convinced me, “The bed is undefiled and no necessary hindrance to the highest perfection.” Though still I did not quite
shake off the weight, till our last conference in London” (Heitzenrater, 1984, p. 182). Ever dependent on experiential proofs, Wesley discovered men such as Dr. Koker who found that rather than being a care and a distraction, marriage facilitated ministry when one’s partner was able and willing to help carry the burden of ministry (Heitzenrater, 1984).

**Wesley’s Persisting Belief: The primacy of ministry before marriage.**

However, even though Wesley resolved his beliefs sufficiently to consider marriage to Grace Murray, this author argues that he did not resolve them all. Wesley seemed to have mostly resolved his first fours beliefs (finding a wife like his mother; his ability to keep a wife, ecclesial prohibitions against marriage and use of his resources in marriage). However, this author believes Wesley did not fully resolve his belief that marriage might pose a hindrance to preaching the gospel. As we will see, Wesley tried to avoid such hindrance by laying out a rule for his marriage: namely, he would not travel one day less or preach one less sermon while married (Heitzenrater, 1984; Telford, 1887). As the same time, this rule amply demonstrates that he placed ministry obligations above marital responsibilities. Several authors have noted his elevation of celibacy for ministers above marriage (Abelove, 1990; Collins, 1993; Curnock, 1999; Ethridge, 1971, Heitzenrater, 1984) and the evidence from his significant relationships supports this conclusion. Celibacy would be a way to solve the possible conflict between conjugal and ministry obligations. It would largely allow for the unconditional absorption of a clergy person in ministry activities (Simmel, 1955).

When one considers his first relationship with Sophy Hopkey, it seems clear Wesley placed ministry considerations above his desire to marry this young woman. In regards to Sophy, Wesley thought such a marriage would hinder his mission to the Indians. Moreover, he also raised the specter of his inability, noting his incapability of bearing the complications marriage would bring (Curnock, 1999). It is likely this latter thought formed a large part of his belief that he could not keep a wife. Apparently, he had not yet fully worked out that part of his belief system. One sees similar reservations with Grace Murray suggesting the primary concern for ministry above marriage. Before he would marry Grace, he would need to address questions about the use of his resources, and whether Grace would prove a distraction and hindrance to ministry. Until he settled these he would not consider marriage. However, Wesley reasoned that since he was already supporting Grace Murray who worked at his Orphan House in Newcastle, there would be no further expense. He further reasoned that any children from the marriage would be educated at his school at Kingswood and therefore not constitute added expense. Wesley then dealt with the objection that marriage to Grace Murray would prove a distraction or hinder the gospel. Based on his keen observation of her over
several years, three of which were spent under his roof, Wesley concluded 
Grace “would exceedingly further me in the work of the Gospel” (Heitzenrater, 1984). Clearly, Wesley’s rationale for marriage to Grace was primarily founded on pragmatic and utilitarian foundations. Furthermore, Wesley deemed Grace an appropriate help mate for him since she would fulfill the following roles:

15. First as a housekeeper....
16. As a nurse....
17. As a companion....
18. As a friend....
19. Lastly, as a fellow labourer in the Gospel of Christ (the light wherein my wife is to be chiefly considered)....” (Italics mine) (Heitzenrater, 1984, p. 183).

As one reads this excerpt, the entirely utilitarian and unromantic rationale for his marriage to Grace appears pronounced (Headley, 2010). One is struck by the utilitarian emphasis on housekeeping and nursing, followed by relational considerations of Grace as a companion and friend. One is also struck by the emphasis in point 19; namely that Grace would serve as a fellow labourer in the gospel. Wesley further emphasized this by his bracketed qualifier that Grace’s potential as a fellow labourer was the chief qualification for his wife. Indeed, this qualifier was not simply about Grace but pertained to any person considered a potential wife for Wesley. Anyone legitimately considered would need to meet this benchmark. Thus, for Wesley, the role of fellow labourer in the gospel took precedence over all other roles such as housekeeper, nurse, companion and friend (Headley, 2010).

Wesley likely utilized this same pragmatic thinking, reflecting the priority of ministry, in pursuing a marriage to Mary Vazeille. A few considerations support this conclusion. First, Wesley’s primary concern for a marriage which would serve ministry rang true in his reasoning for considering marriage to Mary Vazeille. He noted: “For many years I remained single, because I believed I could be more useful in a single than in a married state.... I now as fully believed that in my present circumstances I might be more useful in a married state” (Curnock, 1909, Vol. 3, p. 512). The emphasis in this rationale clearly focused on usefulness. Wesley decided on marriage because it would prove most useful to his ministry, given his changing circumstances. No doubt the aspersions cast upon him as a “bachelor rake,” might have contributed to his new attitude towards marriage (Abelove, 1990).

Second, as mentioned earlier, Wesley sought to avoid marriage becoming a hindrance by crafting a rule whereby he could continue his pace in ministry. Some weeks after his marriage, following intense travel and preaching, he wrote: “I cannot understand how a Methodist preacher can answer to God to preach one sermon or travel one day less in a married state than in a single
state. In this respect surely ‘it remaineth that they who have wives be as though they had none’ (Telford, 1887, p. 254). Wesley evidently took some pride in his ability to continue his ministry habits despite his marriage. Additionally, these spoken words might have been meant as a veiled slap at his brother Charles, whose marriage to Sarah Gwynne had led to a curtailment of his ministry practices (Lloyd, 2002; Tyerman, 1872). Significantly, Wesley repeated similar words to his wife, telling her: “If I thought that I should (that is preach one sermon less or travel one day less), my dear, as well as I love you, I would never see your face more” (Telford, 1887, p. 254). Moreover, according to words ascribed to one Henry Moore, Wesley had apparently struck such a pact with his wife (Telford, 1887). By taking these steps, Wesley believed Mary would not become a hindrance but a help in ministry. Initially Mary obliged: she traveled extensively with John Wesley during the first four years of the marriage (Collins, 1993, Telford, 1887).

Third, in terms of his consideration for wise use of his resources in ministry, marriage to Mary made sense: she would pose no additional strain on his resources, given her affluence. Her husband, Anthony Vazeille had left her in good financial shape with some 10,000 British Pounds, in addition to a house on Threadneedle St. and a home in the country (Heitzenrater, 1984, Rogal, 2001).

From this evidence, the author concludes that Wesley continued to harbor his persistent belief that marriage must take a back seat to ministry. Not surprisingly, a few days after his marriage, Wesley spoke to the single young men and admonished them to remain single for the kingdom’s sake (Curnock, 1909). For a man recently married, the words seem incongruous. However, further thinking reveals they are not. Wesley evidently believed ministry considerations must always take precedence over any decision to marry (Headley, 2010). This held true in his case and he only came to a decision to marry once he was able to satisfy himself that marriage would not hinder his ministry in any fashion. According to his reasoning, when one is not able to ensure marriage’s detraction from ministry, one should remain celibate “for the kingdom of heaven’s sake.” For Wesley, though a priest could marry, celibacy was the most appropriate stance when full devotion to ministry could not be guaranteed. Thus, although Wesley moved from a position of celibacy for priests to one which freed him to marry, one consistent belief remained: Ministry considerations must always come before marriage, even if this meant remaining celibate (Headley, 2010). Given this stance, the next two patterns in Wesley’s relationships make perfect sense. Here I refer to the fact that his relationships largely seem to have been cultivated in illness and travel.

**Attractions Fostered in Illness**

This author finds it significant that Sophy Hopkey, Grace Murray and
Mary Vazeille each nursed John Wesley during some illness. Speaking of his illness and the nursing provided by Sophy Hopkey, Dobree (1997) wrote:

Moreover she had nursed him through a fever due to his having taken a little meat and a dash of wine at Oglethorpe’s request, who was afraid that his abstention might be misconstrued (p. 28).

We find a similar situation involving illness in John Wesley’s relationship to Grace Murray. Grace Murray had nursed Wesley back to health in August 1748 when he fell ill in the Newcastle Orphan House Baker (Frank Baker, 1966; Lloyd, 2002; Rogal, 1988). Dobree (1997) described the occasion in rather florid language:

And then, 1748, across these scenes of effort and strife, of dust and turmoil, of ceaseless journeyings, amid the tense concentration of constructive work, there floated into Wesley’s vision the beckoning figure of Grace Murray, promising succour and she was so refreshing as a nurse, that if the itinerant preachers fell sick, they did so more often at Newcastle than anywhere else. Wesley himself was slightly ill there in this year and, considering his nurse — so good a worker, so cheerful, so neat — he thought that she would be the very wife for him (p. 69).

Finally, we have John’s severe ankle problems which led to being nursed by his future bride, Mary Vazeille. Baker (1966) suggested this relationship was likely a reactive response to the loss of Grace Murray, but also indicated the role of his illness in its formation when he wrote: “As for the bereft John Wesley, yet another convalescence gave him leisure to study yet another widow who used a gentle hand in nursing him, and to whom he proposed marriage.” (p. 188).

Given these parallels, one is led to ask: “What is there about illness which made Wesley more likely to fall in love and consider marital commitment?” Several possibilities present themselves. Along with Baker (1966), one could surmise that “... his enforced leisure gave him more appreciative eyes for his housekeeper, who also served as his nurse” (p. 177). Consumed as he was with ministry in terms of his time, energy and emotion, only a forced leisure would allow Wesley the time to consider women and a potential intimate relationship. This reasoning fits nicely with the primacy he placed on ministry above marriage. However, one might entertain other considerations. For example, illness might have created a physical vulnerability which forced him to consider his mortality and along with it the human need for care and companionship. In this context, one should remember that in the developmental account of his decision to marry, Wesley carved out a prominent place for both nurse and companion. Indeed, these two formed his points 16 and 17 respectively (Heitzenrater, 1984). Furthermore, it does not appear to
be a leap of logic to suggest that his sense of mortality could unearth a concomitant emotional vulnerability. This would allow him to entertain, even if briefly, his emotional need for a female friend and companion.

One might even entertain a somewhat psychodynamic interpretation to explain the relationship of love and illness in Wesley’s life. By this, the author means that Wesley’s illnesses and subsequent nursing by these women replicated maternal care from his childhood. These occasions likely provided him an opportunity to see these women in gentle and caring roles similar to what he had experienced with his mother and thus made them more attractive (Headley, 2010). This way of thinking appears more plausible when one considers point 1 in Wesley’s developmental steps regarding marriage where he presents his mother as the quintessential mate. Similarly, in point 8, Wesley spoke of finding a few women who could match his mother in knowledge and piety (Heitzenrater, 1984). Clearly, Wesley pictured his mother as the idealized woman and the prototypical wife. Given this stance, he likely measured each potential mate against Susanna. Illness provided Wesley an opportunity to consider the gentle and caring roles these women displayed. This cast them to some degree in his image of the idealized woman and wife. This alone might have made them appropriate marital partners in his eyes (Headley, 2010).

**Attractions Fostered in Travel**

A final pattern involves the role of travel in the formation of Wesley’s intimate relationships. This pattern clearly appeared in his relationship with Sophy Hopkey and Grace Murray. Relative to Sophy Hopkey, Wesley provided an extensive account of this first significant relationship. According to Curnock (1909), Wesley wrote the account earlier and more briefly and hurriedly but later refined and finished it on March 12, 1738 at Oxford. This account included a detailed report of his travel from Frederica to Savannah in the company of Sophy. The account seems remarkable for a number of reasons. First, a synchronicity exists in the important dates relative to his relationship with Sophy. Wesley first met Sophy on March 13, 1736 and she married William Williamson on March 12, 1737. Wesley apparently made his final revision to the account of Sophy Hopkey on March 12, 1738 at Oxford (Curnock, 1909). From this perspective, Wesley’s account was an anniversary event, revisiting his first encounter with Sophy Hopkey and losing her to William Williamson the following year (Headley, 2010). In their book *Genograms in Family Assessment*, McGoldrick and Gerson (1985) devote some attention to anniversary reactions. For them, “Certain so-called coincidences can be understood as anniversary reactions, i.e., family members react to the fact that the date is the anniversary of some critical or traumatic event” (1985, pp. 92-93). From this perspective, the loss of his relationship with Sophy Hopkey was a traumatic experience
for Wesley, a reality supported by his intense and distressing emotions following the discovery of her engagement and subsequent marriage (Curnock, 1909; Heitzenrater, 1984). Furthermore, the experience was likely reawakened by the anniversary of the loss. From this perspective, the lengthy account was likely a way for Wesley to come to some kind of closure (Headley, 2010).

Second, being an anniversary event, the account provides candid insights into John Wesley and his relationship with Sophy Hopkey. Curnock believed the story was “transparently truthful” and reflected his personal experience. He considered it “a psychological review of motives and emotions by a man torn by inward conflict - a conflict between duty and affection” (Curnock, 1909, Vol. 1, p. 288). This is not surprising given the emotions which anniversary events can evoke, particularly when these events involve grief and loss.

Third, the account indicated the transformations which took place in the relationship during the journey from Frederica to Savannah. Wesley previously made veiled hints at marriage and on this trip he again came close to a marriage proposal. Curnock (1909) spoke about a quasi-engagement with Sophy although Wesley was still struggling “for freedom and a clear path of duty.” Concerning this veiled proposal, Wesley wrote:

> Feb. 3 [I was now in a great strait. I still thought it best for me to live single. And this was still my design; but I felt the foundations of it shaken more and more every day. Insomuch that I again hinted at a desire of marriage, though I made no direct proposal. For indeed it was only a sudden thought which had not the consent of my own mind.../ (italics mine). (Curnock, 1909, Vol. 1, p. 315)

This statement reveals a great deal about Wesley’s emotional dynamics during this trip. In the italicized sentence noted in his journal entry, we find the slippage of what has been termed “implicit working memory.” Namely, we have here a primary emotional response from his right brain, before his left brain could counteract it or dissent. According to Schore (2003), emotional responses centered in the right brain are far quicker than responses from the left brain which governs cognition, language and linear processing. Given Wesley’s consistent bias towards a rational approach to life, honed early in his life, he had likely somewhat slowed this quicker emotional response. But on this trip with Sophy, the closeness must have provoked such intensity of emotions that they overrode his usual cognitive bent before he could censure it. The emotional intensity engendered during the trip continued for sometime, for a few days later, Wesley wrote:

> [Tuesday 8 (Feb) - The next morning I was obliged to go down to Savannah. There I stayed about an hour; and there again I felt, and groaned under the weight of, an unholy desire. My
heart was with Miss Sophy all the time. I longed to see her, were it but for a moment.”] (Curnock, 1909, Vol. 1, p. 317)

But rationality eventually resurfaced and dictated against marriage for two reasons. Wesley reasoned marriage to Sophy would obstruct his mission to the Indians. Secondly, he thought he was not strong enough to bear the complications of married life (Curnock, 1909). Here again, in the first reason, we see his modus operandi: considerations of marriage must always take a back seat to ministry, and where such an action would hinder ministry, one should curtail marriage considerations. Furthermore, we see that he had not yet resolved his belief about his inability to handle the difficulties of marriage. He would later resolve this belief in his detailed rationale for marrying Grace Murray. But for now he yet struggled. Nevertheless, from our discussion above, it is clear that this trip with Sophy was a significant point in his relationship with her. It fully exposed the emotional dynamics at work in him and brought him to the brink of marriage.

In addition to his travel with Sophy Hopkey, Wesley also traveled a great deal with Grace Murray. In 1748, she traveled with him through Yorkshire and Derbyshire. Later, she accompanied him to Ireland in April 1749 and from Bristol, London and Newcastle for some five months. In fact, during this period, they were scarcely separated (Baker, 1966; Telford, 1887). These extensive travels permitted closer study of Grace’s attitudes and behaviors. Thus, in his rationale for marrying her, Wesley bolstered his argument with evidence supplied from close and long association with her. In point 14, he argued that given his experiences with Grace, she would in fact greatly further his work in the gospel (Heitzenrater, 1984).

Clearly, his travels with her and the years she spent under his roof provided more than enough opportunity for him decide on her suitability as wife. As indicated in a previous section, such close contact allowed him to see her as a fit mate in the mold of his mother. Moreover, travel with her allowed more time for intimate conversation and for his love for her to grow. In fact, Wesley declared: “The more we convers’d together, the more I lov’d her; &c, before I return’d from Ireland, we contracted by a Contract de praesenti “ (Frank Baker, 1966, p. 178).

Wesley’s near brush with marriage to Sophy Hopkey and Grace Murray likely influenced his marital union with Mary Vazeille. By the time he met the latter, he had evidently resolved his reservations about marriage. This might partly explain the absence of the vacillation evident in the earlier relationships. Furthermore, one might suggest that having addressed his reasoning processes in the previous relationship with Grace Murray, he was now in a position to have his normal caution overridden by emotion and care for Mary generated during his convalescence. This author suggests Wesley was likely overwhelmed with emotion because of the quickness of the marriage and
the ignoring of his own regulations concerning consultation prior to marriage (Headley, 2010).

Wesley’s Philosophy of Marriage and Patterns in his Intimate Relationships

From the review of Wesley’s three intimate relationships, the author now draws a few conclusions. First, it appears the formation of relationships cultivated in illness and travel derived from his philosophy of marriage. Because of his radical devotion to ministry, Wesley would not have allowed himself the luxury of space and time to consider a serious relationship. Illness and travel provided necessary and convenient occasions in which he could study these women for their qualities as a mate and primarily as a fellow-labourer in the gospel (Headley, 2010).

Second, Wesley’s belief that ministry must always take priority over marriage fits well with John Scanzoni’s model of how clergy resolve occupational and conjugal conflicts (1965). He described two types of clergy: sect-type and clergy-type. Sect-type clergy view their kin group as a competitor to ministry and give greater priority to the clergy role. In addition, such persons elevate ministry above marital and family roles, and are consumed with the former to the exclusion of the latter. Not surprisingly, in times of conflict between these roles, the clergyperson gives priority to the ministry role (pp. 396-398). In contrast, Scanzoni spoke about church-type clergy. These persons differ radically from sect-type clergy: They see their families as allies deserving support and give a greater priority to their marriage and family roles, although they also value the ministry role. In times of conflicting needs, such persons give priority to the family role. Besides this, these persons find time and opportunity to get out of their occupational roles and make space for fulfilling marital, family and expressive roles. They demonstrate a balance between work and home (Scanzoni, 1965, pp. 396-398).

Given our previous discussion, Wesley’s approach to marriage and its relation to ministry clearly fit Scanzoni’s description of the sect-type clergy. This perspective explains several of John’s views regarding the relationship between ministry and marriage. It helps us make sense of his rather utilitarian approach to marriage and his sayings about not preaching one less sermon or traveling one less day in a married state than in a single one. It also explains his behavior when his wife became ill with the fever. His wife’s illness conflicted with ministry demands. Thus, after a somewhat cursory check, John proceeded to leave his wife and continue with his ministry journeys (Collins, 1993). These attitudes and actions clearly fit a sect-type model, in which marital and family considerations are always secondary to concerns about ministry. Although any minister should realistically evaluate how they would resolve conjugal and ministerial tensions, most would not make ministry the primary
consideration above marriage to the extent that Wesley did. In contrast to John’s style, a consideration of Charles Wesley’s marriage and ministry places him in the mode of a church-type clergy. Given his stance, Charles modified his travel schedule after his marriage and arrival of his children (Lloyd, 2002).

However, our discussion of Wesley also allows us to add to Scanzoni’s early thoughts. Scanzoni’s model addressed the resolution of conjugal and occupational roles in ministry and its impact on the marital relationship (Scanzoni, 1965). But Scanzoni did not address how this same philosophy impacts one’s own needs and sometimes leads to dire personal consequences. In considering Wesley’s relationships, we can point to the negative impact on the women with whom he related. However, his philosophy of ministry also led to severe consequences for his emotional life. This is evident in the significant turmoil he experienced following the loss of his relationships with Sophy and Grace (Curnock, 1909). One should also not forget the significant struggles he experienced in his tension-filled marriage to Mary Vazeille (Collins, 1993). In addition, his beliefs about marriage in relation to ministry did not allow him to consider the legitimate need for a marital companion unless it principally served ministry. Furthermore, his philosophy contributed to an apparent unconditional absorption in ministry (Simmel, 1955). Kenneth Collins (1993) was right in his conclusion about Wesley when he noted: “... a person so driven in the pursuit of ministry, like Wesley, so punctilious in his use and valuation of time, could only appear as unkind, cold, and neglectful to the suffering (and at times sick) spouse (Collins, 1993, p. 18). Later, Collins added the apt statement: “Wesley’s ministerial style, his particular balance of hearth and pulpit, can hardly serve as a model for contemporary married Methodist pastors” (Collins, 1993, p. 18). This author agrees entirely with this evaluation.

In light of these considerations, any philosophy of ministry must make space for conjugal, family and personal obligations. This thinking is line with this author’s emphasis on the need to reframe ministry (Headley, 2007). That is, ministry should not exclusively focus on serving others. It ought also to create space for rendering legitimate service to oneself and one’s family. Such a reframe would allow for a modification and expansion of one’s view of ministry, provide space for addressing one’s legitimate human needs and allow for the appropriate resolution of personal, conjugal and occupational roles. Such an understanding of ministry seemed largely absent in Wesley’s life and as a result, his potential marriages and the actual marriage to Mary Vazeille suffered immensely. Indeed, his model which placed ministry at a far higher level than marriage, wreaked havoc with his intimate relationships.
References
End Notes

1 Headley (2010), Family Crucible: The Influence of Family Dynamics in the Life and Ministry of John Wesley, Oregon: Wipf and Stock. In this manuscript, I discussed the developmental issues each woman faced. I also discussed the prior and present relationships each woman carried and the implications of those relationships for their connection to John Wesley, especially in terms of the potential for triangulation.