

Samuel J. Rogal

*John and Molly: A Methodist Mismatch*

**Abstract:**

While not much is known about Mary (Molly) Goldhawk Vazeille, the wife of John Wesley, her story has been interpreted in many ways, and often incorrectly over time. This article explores the historical evidence of her life as a wealthy widow with children who married the founder of Methodism later in life. This contentious relationship is often little understood because of the lack of solid documentation and the multiple interpretations often overlaying the story, which were added by writers with other agendas. It does seem clear that John's brother Charles was especially unhappy with this marriage in the beginning, and the subsequent events in the relationship led to divisions between the couple that have been open to numerous interpretations.

**Keywords:** Mary (Molly) Goldhawk Vazeille, John Wesley, Charles Wesley, Methodism, marriage

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Perhaps the lowest point, both literally and figuratively, within the long life of John Wesley (1703-1791) occurred on Monday or Tuesday, February 18 or 19, 1751. A week earlier, Sunday, February 10, on his way, on foot, to preach to the Methodist congregation at Snowfields chapel, the forty-eight-year-old Wesley proceeded to cross London Bridge, where he suffered a hard fall on the ice, “the bone of my ankle lighting on the top of a stone.” Several unidentified persons helped him to the chapel, where he managed to endure through the delivery of a sermon, after which a surgeon bound his leg and “made a shift,”<sup>1</sup> enabling him to stumble to the Methodist chapel in West Street, Seven Dials, where he preached again. From there he took a coach to the home of his friend and financial adviser, Ebenezer Blackwell (1711-1782) in Change Alley, then by chair to the Foundry, Upper Moorfields. However, the sprain and the pain worsened, forcing him into a week of rest, prayer, writing,<sup>2</sup> and conversation at the Threadneedle Street<sup>3</sup> home of forty-one-year-old widowed Mrs. Mary (Molly) Goldhawk Vazeille (1710-1781). Whatever the substance of the conversation, the two of them united in marriage a week later, with Wesley struggling down the aisle on his knees—that fact supported by the Methodist leader noting in his journal for Monday, March 4, 1751, that “Being tolerably able to ride, though not to walk, I set out for Bristol.”<sup>4</sup> The exact aisle proves a matter for debate: Luke Tyerman<sup>5</sup> and Nehemiah Curnock<sup>6</sup> determined that the ceremony went forth at the church of the Rev. Charles Manning,<sup>7</sup> a mutual friend of the couple, at Hayes, Middlesex, while John Telford<sup>8</sup> opted for Wandsworth, a section of London where Mrs. Vazeille owned a country house. Although the groom soon would recover, the marriage would remain in a predominately crippled state until, three decades later, the bride passed on to the higher world.

Molly Vazeille Wesley, of Huguenot descent and a resident of London, had been, at some point prior to her marriage to the Methodist leader, a member of a Methodist society in that city. Her union to Anthony<sup>9</sup> Vazeille the elder (?-1747), an affluent London merchant, also of Huguenot descent, had produced four children: Anthony Vazeille the younger (1740?-1754?) appeared to have died prior to his mother’s passing in 1781, since her will provided that his younger brother, Noah Vazeille (1746?-?), then residing in Stratford, Essex, receive the house in Threadneedle Street. A third son, not identified by name, died in 1754, while a daughter, Jane (Jeanne) Vazeille Matthews Smith (1736-1820), had married, first, John Matthews (?-1764) of London, and they produced two children—John Matthew the

younger and Jane Matthews the younger (1760?-?), the daughter having been baptized by John Wesley in 1760). Jane Matthews Smith then married William Smith (1736-1824), a native of Corbridge, Northumberland, and eventually a steward of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Methodist circuit—the marriage resulting in the births of Jane Smith (1770-1849) and Mary Smith (1769-1795).<sup>10</sup> In addition to children, Mary Goldhawk Vazeille brought to her second marriage the sum of £10,000 (according to John Telford) settled upon her and her children by way of the departed Anthony Vazeille the elder, that yielded £300 yearly from the Three per Cents—money invested in British government securities and yielding 3% per year. However, later editors of Charles Wesley’s correspondence reduced that total sum to £3000.<sup>11</sup>

At this point, before the discussion of this “mismatch” can go forward, one must be aware of the problems concerning the evidence available. First, there exists nothing in the way of primary sources from Molly Wesley, herself, which, of course, prevents her from offering any defense of her actions. One must remain content to view her through the eyes and minds of others. Secondly, the same holds true for her son, Noah Vazeille, who plays a minor role in the drama. Thirdly, the published editions of John Wesley’s journals, as thorough as they might appear, represent *extracts*—volumes issued years after the actual events and edited by Wesley for publication, but revealing omissions of and gaps in matters that he did not wish to share with his readers. Indeed, the entries for February 18-20, 1751 of those published journals contain no references to the marriage, while entries for February 21-23 simply do not exist. John Telford, who edited eight volumes of John Wesley’s correspondence, did not have access to, or chose not to include, all of the letters, while the most recent and thoroughly improved edition of those letters, currently crawling its way to finish line, extends (as of this writing) only to 1765. Finally, Charles Wesley plays no small part in the affair, but the fairly recent two-volume publication of his manuscript journal, which he never intended for others’ consumption, comes to an abrupt halt after November 1756, and even that collection has serious gaps. The first volume of the most recent edition of his correspondence extends from 1728 to 1756, and (again as of this writing) demonstrates no evidence of a second birth in the near future. One should approach the Wesleys’ biographers with caution, and certainly need not bother consulting nineteenth-century editions of the works by either brother.

In any event, Mary Goldhawk Vazeille's introduction to the Wesleys came by way of the brothers' friend, Edward (Ned) Perronet (1721-1792), a native of Sandridge, Kent—the Perronet family themselves of Huguenot descent. The cryptic journal comment by Charles Wesley, entered for Thursday, July 20, 1749, seemingly establishing the tone for the entire affair: "At Ned Perronet's met Ms. Vazeille, a woman of sorrowful spirit."<sup>12</sup> That same summer, the family of Marmaduke Gwynne the elder (1694?-1769), Charles Wesley's father-in-law, beset with financial problems, removed from Garth, Brecknockshire, Wales, to a house in Brand Lane, Ludlow. Sarah Gwynne Wesley, in February 1750 traveled to Ludlow to be with her family. One suspects that Mrs. Vazeille had intensified her Methodist interests and activities during the fall and winter of 1749-1750, both in London and Bristol, for on Tuesday, May 15, 1750, Charles Wesley "set out [from Bristol] with Mrs. Vazeille, &c., for Ludlow, and the next day saluted our friends there. During our nine days' stay, they showed her [Mary Vazeille] all the civility and love that they could show, and she seemed equally pleased with them." From Ludlow, the group, including Mrs. Vazeille, made their way to Oxford, then on to London, and on Saturday, June 2, 1750, Charles and Sarah Gwynne Wesley "took up our quarters for eight or nine days at Mrs. Vazeille's house in Threadneedle Street."<sup>13</sup> Thus, for the remainder of the year, Mrs. Vazeille found herself upon a number of occasions a welcome member of Charles Wesley's Methodist circle.

The question now arises as to when John Wesley entered upon the stage. Unfortunately, specificity does not always have a part in this drama, and one must be prepared to engage in speculation. John Wesley might easily have met Mrs. Vazeille upon one of six occasions, either at London or Bristol, prior to his journey to Ireland in June 1750: July 20, August 1, 1749, at Bristol; August 1-28, 1749, London; October 28- November 8, 1749, Bristol; November 10, 1749- January 29, 1750, London; February 3-27, 1750, London; March 2-20, 1750, Bristol. Thus, his initial letter to her from Dublin, Ireland, dated June 19, 1750 and addressed to her home in Threadneedle Street, could not be considered an initial step upon virgin ground, epistolary or otherwise. Further, the tone and the substance of that letter suggest strongly that the two had met and had exchanged words—conversations that had absolutely nothing to do with the romantic throbbings of the heart. What wended its way through the primitive eighteenth-century British postal system proved nothing less than an epistolary homily:

## My Dear Sister

I am glad to hear that you have been with my brother at Ludlow. Sally Perrin<sup>14</sup> sent me a little account of what passed there, and of her proposal to you of taking a longer journey together, if the way should be made plain. I believe riding, so far as your strength will allow, will much confirm your bodily health. And the conversing with those in various parts who know and love God will greatly strengthen your soul. Perhaps, too, he who sendeth by whom he will send<sup>15</sup> may make you useful to some of them. If it be so, I trust it will humble you to the dust: you will so much the more be vile in your own eyes,<sup>16</sup> and cry out, 'Not unto me, O Lord, but unto thy name give the praise!'<sup>17</sup> O let us work for our Lord while the day is: the night cometh, when no man can work.<sup>18</sup> I have gone through calms and storms,<sup>19</sup> rough weather and smooth, since I came into Ireland. But all is good while he walks with us<sup>20</sup> who has all power in heaven and earth.<sup>21</sup> I hope you have some time daily for meditation, reading, and prayer. My dear sister, peace be with your spirit! Next month I hope to be in Bristol...<sup>22</sup>

—which, most likely, will provide an opportunity for another meeting. Indeed, John Wesley arrived in Bristol on Tuesday, July 28, 1750, remaining there until Monday, the 30<sup>th</sup> of July.

If there exist portraits of Mary Goldhawk Vazeille before or after her marriage to John Wesley, few have been blessed to locate and gaze upon them. Among the fortunate, Mrs. G. Elsie Harrison, among the corps in the between-the-wars parade of biographers of John Wesley,<sup>23</sup> described, after her own fashion, one of those portraits:

At the Methodist Mission House [London] today [c1937-1938] there hangs a picture of the lady. She [the portrait] is discreetly disposed of behind a door in the room which gives the pre-eminence to large representations in colour of John Wesley escaping from the fire [at Epworth rectory, Lincolnshire] and escaping to heaven from his death-bed. Her station is not far removed from Threadneedle Street, which she might glimpse over the head of the modern Methodists as they administer Wesley's World Parish<sup>24</sup> in that great Committee Room. There is a certain dash about her carriage and a look in her eye as of Mona Lisa's enigmatic glance,<sup>25</sup> but the prevailing face is the face of a shrew.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, after reading those lines, one still has not a clear vision of Mrs. Vazeille's physical qualities. Consultation with additional biographers

of John Wesley requires one to consider the idiosyncrasies and agendas of each, and then to tread carefully through the observations that will follow. According to Henry Moore (1751-1844), Methodist itinerant preacher and one of the three of John Wesley's literary executors, Mrs. Vazeille, whom he likely knew and observed, "appeared to be truly pious, and was very agreeable in her person and manners. She conformed to every company, whether of the rich or of the poor; and had a remarkable facility and propriety in addressing them concerning their true interests."<sup>27</sup> Richard Watson (1781-1833), formerly president of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, an historian of Wesleyan Methodism, and a defender of John Wesley, portrayed Mrs. Vazeille as "a woman of cultivated understanding, as her remaining letters testify;<sup>28</sup> and that she appeared to Mr. Wesley to possess every other qualification, which promised to increase both his usefulness and happiness, we may conclude from his having made choice of her as his companion."<sup>29</sup> Thomas Jackson (1783-1873), Methodist itinerant preacher and eventually chair of Divinity at the Theological College, Richmond, Surrey, cast a dark shadow over the character of Mrs. Vazeille, claiming that, "Neither in understanding nor in education was she worthy of the eminent man to whom she was united; and her temper was intolerably bad. During the lifetime of her first husband, she appears to have enjoyed every indulgence; and, judging from some of his letters to her, which have been preserved,<sup>30</sup> he paid an entire deference to her will. Her habits and spirits were ill adapted to the privations and inconveniences which were incident to her new mode of life, as the travelling companion of Mr. John Wesley."<sup>31</sup>

In reviewing the entire affair, Rev. John Hampson the younger (1753-1819), rector of St. John's Church, Sunderland, Durham, and not always a friendly biographer of John Wesley, nonetheless sought a middle ground when he declared, at the outset that,

The connection was unfortunate. There never was a more preposterous union. It is pretty certain that no love lighted their torches on this occasion; and it is as much to be presumed, that neither did Plutus<sup>32</sup> preside at the solemnity. Mrs. Wesley's property was too inconsiderable, to warrant the supposition that it was a match of interest. Besides, had she been ever so rich, it was nothing to him; for every shilling of her fortune remained at her own disposal; and neither the years, nor the temper of the parties could give any reason to suppose them violently enamoured. That this lady accepted his proposals, seems much less surprising

than that he should have made them. It is probable, his situation at the head of a sect,<sup>33</sup> and the authority it conferred, was not without its charms in the eyes of an ambitious female. But we much wonder, that Mr. Wesley should have appeared so little acquainted with himself and with human nature. He certainly did not possess the conjugal virtues. He had no taste for the tranquility of domestic retirement: while his situation, as an itinerant, left him little leisure for those attentions which are absolutely necessary for the married life.<sup>34</sup>

Two to five years later, John Whitehead (1740-1804), Methodist itinerant preacher turned Quaker and physician, then returned to Methodism, underscored Hampson's observations:

Mr. Wesley's constant habit of travelling, the number of persons who came to visit him wherever he was, and his extensive correspondence, were circumstances unfavourable to that social intercourse, mutual openness and confidence, which form the basis of mutual happiness in the married state. These circumstances, indeed, would not have been so very unfavourable, had he married a woman who could have entered into his views, and have accommodated herself to his situation. But this was not the case. Had he searched the whole kingdom, he would hardly have found a woman more unsuitable in these respects, than she whom he married.<sup>35</sup>

"In no respect was she a helpmeet for him," complained John Wesley's principal nineteenth-century biographer, Luke Tyerman (1820-1889). "At home she was suspicious, jealous, fretful, taunting, twittering, and often violent. Abroad, when itinerating with him, it too generally happened, that nought could please her."<sup>36</sup> Tyerman also found, in his subject's unfortunate marriage, an opportunity for an adult Sunday school lesson, the subject—marriage: "Was there ever a marriage like John Wesley's?" he asked the class.

It was one of the greatest blunders he ever made. A man who attains to the age of forty-eight, without marrying, ought to remain a bachelor for life, inasmuch as he has, almost of necessity, formed habits, and has acquired angularities<sup>37</sup> and excrescences,<sup>38</sup> which will never harmonize with the relationships and the duties of the married state. Besides, if there ever was a man whose mission was so great and so peculiar as to render it inexpedient for him to become a benedict,<sup>39</sup> Wesley

was such a man. His marriage was ill advised as well as ill assorted.<sup>40</sup> On both sides, it was, to a culpable extent, hasty, and was contracted without proper and sufficient thought. Young people entering into hurried marriages deserve and incur censure; and if so, what shall be said of Wesley and his wife? They married in haste and had leisure to repent. Their act was, in a high degree, an act of folly; and, properly enough, to the end of life, both of them were made to suffer a serious penalty. It is far from pleasant to pursue the subject; but perhaps it is needful. In a world of danger like this, we must look at beacons, as well as beauties.<sup>41</sup>

In the century following, the agendas of Methodists clerics' reactions to the marriage had given way to the dreams and fantasies of writers who found the distinct line between fiction and biography extremely difficult to locate. For one example, the prolific historical novelist and writer of children's fiction, Gabrielle Margaret Vere Campbell (1886-1952), publishing as "Margaret Bowen,"<sup>42</sup> tried her hand at biography in 1938 and produced a *Life of John Wesley*. Bowen obviously had read Henry Moore and at least had skimmed the pages of Samuel Richardson's epistolary novel *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740-1741), and someone, perhaps, had schooled her on the details of eighteenth-century widow's garb. Further, as with a number of psychologists and social historians who have admired John Wesley, Bowen joined with her nineteenth-century predecessors in expressing her displeasure at John Wesley having failed to secure for himself the hand of Grace Norman Murray (1716-1803), the woman he *should have married*, chose, on the rebound, as it were, to settle for Mrs. Vazeille. Thus, Bowen adorned her pages with this overly dramatic image of John Wesley's mate:

She was middle-aged, seemed of a quiet disposition, meek and pious; she was neither well-educated nor intelligent and had less than the usual share of feminine tact and duplicity; though she was 'able to accommodate to any company in which she found herself.' Molly Vazeille was like Pamela,<sup>43</sup> a servant who had married her master, but she had not the virtues of that fictitious heroine; her husband had pampered her and she had been put to no test of character. She was well off and pious, because a widow could be little else without causing a scandal, and Molly was orthodox with the orthodoxy of the stupid female who thinks her dignity is one with respectability. She had joined the Methodists, as so many women did, for the pleasure of cosy tea-drinkings



with fellow-sinners, and that delightful meddling with other people's businesses which is so delicious to her type when glossed over with religion. John [Wesley] stayed at her house, found her cosy deferential, ardent in good works, a not unworthy successor to his other diaphanous<sup>44</sup> loves. How familiar was that widow's garb worn by his mother<sup>45</sup>, Lady Huntingdon,<sup>46</sup> and Grace Murray!<sup>47</sup> Mary's bland features looked out from a high pleated cap; she was modestly swathed to the neck in crape, with black robes and sad-coloured shawls. In this attire, suggestive both of the grave and of the angelic garments of the heavenly hosts, women surely looked their best. John [Wesley], who dreaded fine ladies and painted *belles*, found these meek, drab widows the acme of feminine perfection.<sup>48</sup>

Mrs. G. Elsie Harrison's "study" of John Wesley—another fictional recreation under the guise of biography and published in the same year as Mrs. Bowen's effort—emphasizes the women in John Wesley's life.<sup>49</sup> She presented a different portrait of Mary Goldhawk Vazeille—a woman possessed of a keen degree of perception and fully capable of engineering the machinery of villainy, of manipulating Charles Wesley, and of seizing the advantages to be gained from John Wesley's inherent human weaknesses. "Molly Vazeille was ever in the habit of calling a spade a spade," claimed Mrs. Harrison, never one to avoid a cliché. "She had once reigned in Threadneedle Street as a banker's wife,<sup>50</sup> and she was at home in that region of hard currency, of obvious cash and clear-cut values. With the clearest of clear eyes, she saw those early Methodists just as they were and not at all as they fondly<sup>51</sup> hoped they were in the recesses of their own minds." Mrs. Harrison, perhaps more upset at Charles Wesley and his outspoken opposition to his brother's marriage than had been Mrs. Vazeille, harps long and loud as she filters the younger Wesley through the eyes and mind of her *character*, Mrs. Vazeille. In contrast to John Wesley's hard work and self-sacrifice on the Methodist itinerancy, she sketches Charles Wesley within the context of "the fat, rounded face of the complacent and well-fed. . . The Methodists must still see the haloes on their saints, but it is more likely that the picture of Charles Wesley is as clear as Molly Vazeille saw him." Insofar as concerns John Wesley and the constant bickering that came with their marriage, Mrs. Harrison maintained, simply, that "Mrs. Vazeille saw John Wesley as a man and a husband and not at all as God's messenger of salvation."<sup>52</sup>

Actually, biographical and critical perspectives have not undergone radical changes over the more than eight decades following the publications of Mrs. Bowen and Mrs. Harrison. Writing in 1990, Professor Henry Abelove strained his imagination to view the diminutive John Wesley through a gay stereopticon, focusing upon the notion that “with Wesley, religion retained its libidinous and even sexual component.” Nonetheless, through whatever the instrument, Abelove cast no new light upon Mrs. Vazeille, generating the currents of his arguments from the usual antiquated fuses: Hampson, Moore, and Jackson, with a generic spark or two from such surveys as Lawrence Stone’s *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (1972). Thus, in the language of the 1990’s, Professor Abelove could only inform his readers, as writers before him had conveyed to their readers, that prior to the marriage, Mrs. Vazeille had been on the fringes of the Methodist movement, “Now she observed close up the love that his followers felt for him, and like many others, she could account for a love so deep only on the supposition that Wesley was misbehaving sexually. She grew fretful and jealous, opened his mail, spied on him, forbade him to meet his women followers in private, beat him, and, eventually after seven years of marriage, left him.”<sup>53</sup>

A year later, a more reasonable and more informed critical eye appeared to have placed the entire matter into proper context. W. Reginald Ward, an *emeritus* professor of modern history and one of the editors of John Wesley’s journals, contended that

On the surface, Mrs. Vazeille looked to be a suitable candidate for J[ohn]W[esley]’s hand. She was past the age at which she might be accused of evoking a juvenile passion in the great man; she was comfortably provided for, and, by arranging for her property to be settled upon her and her children, JW avoided the reproach of marrying for money encountered by George Whitefield; she had no connection with the gossips of Bristol or Newcastle; and JW repeatedly assured Henry Moore “that it was agreed between him and Mrs. Wesley, previous to their marriage, that he should not preach one sermon less on that account. ‘If I thought I should,’ said he, ‘my dear, as well as I love you, I would never see your face once more.’” (Moore, *Wesley*, 2:173) This was a rash undertaking on the part of a woman who, unlike Grace Murray, had no first-hand experience of the rigours of itinerant life, and one which casts a curious light on JW’s commitment to the union. In any case, the marriage began under the worst possible auspices.<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately, this survey of contemporary and later reactions to the “mismatch” will come to its end with a statement relative to “beauty,” set upon a page of a biography published in the bicentennial year of John Wesley’s birth. Rev. Ralph Waller, a Methodist minister described as “a leading authority on the Wesleys,” simply and cryptically, and without documentation, described Mary Goldhawk Vazille as “an attractive woman.”<sup>55</sup> Obviously, the well-intentioned Reverend might easily fall into line among those of his predecessors who had, as he, taken their eyes away from Luke Tyerman’s “beacon.”

If biographers and historians agree, at best, to interpret the marriage between a Mary Vazeille and John Wesley as social tragedy, they should, as quickly and easily, identify the preliminaries to that union as something akin to stage-like humor. By at least January 1751, if not before, John Wesley most probably had reached a decision to marry. Now, in the natural ways of a well-ordered world, two approaches to reaching such a decision appear most expedient:

- (1) man meets woman, they love each other, they marry;
- (2) man or woman determines to marry, he or she consults a catalogue of available potential candidates with whom to unite, selects a mate, proposes marriage, and they marry.

However, English Methodists of the eighteenth century, led and encouraged by John Wesley, complicated the process considerably, particularly as concerned its preachers, by establishing rules. Initially, the preacher had to consult the leadership of the society within his circuit, then with the London Methodist society, and, at some point, seek permission of his intended’s parents. In John Wesley’s case, he, as a Methodist preacher, also needed to send a letter to all of his preachers and to all of the Methodist societies, stating his reasons for the marriage and asking them for their prayers. Two years earlier, such a bureaucratic labyrinth had delayed, and then presented Charles Wesley with the opportunity to destroy John Wesley’s prospect of marriage to Grace Murray. Therefore, the Methodist leader, on January 26, 1751, while at Oxford, circumvented his own process and wrote to his friend Vincent Perronet of Shoreham, Kent, concerning his marital intentions. Returning to London, Wesley noted in his journal for Saturday, February 2, 1751, “Having received a full answer from Mr. Perronet, I was clearly convinced that I ought to marry. For many years I remained single because I believed I could be more useful in a single than in a married state. And I praise God, who enabled me so to do. I now as fully believed

that in my present circumstances I might be more useful in a married state, into which, upon this clear conviction, and by the advice of my friends, I entered a few days after.”<sup>56</sup> Note that the journal extract entry failed to mention the name of Wesley’s intended bride—a strange but not entirely surprising omission. The published journal *Extract* did not reach the press until 1756, at which time relations between John Wesley and his wife had not yet reached the uncomfortable stage.

In any event, on that same Saturday of February 2, 1751, John Wesley sent for Charles Wesley, informing him that,

...*he was resolved to marry!* I [Charles Wesley] was thunderstruck, and could only answer he had given me the first blow, and his marriage would come like the *coup de grace*. Trusty Ned [Edward] Perronet followed, and told me the person was Mrs. Vazeille! One of whom I never had the least suspicion. I refused his [Edward Perronet’s] company to the chapel and returned to mourn with my faithful [wife] Sally [Sarah Gwynne Wesley]. Groaned all the day, and several following ones, under my own and the people’s burden.<sup>57</sup> I could eat no pleasant food, nor preach, nor rest, either by night or by day.<sup>58</sup>

Edward Perronet, in all probability, had received his information from his father, Vincent Perronet, that in the letter to the elder Perronet in late January 1751, John Wesley had mentioned the name of Mrs. Vazeille as his intended wife. It also means, without the same degree of probability that Mrs. Vazeille had agreed to marry John Wesley prior to his seeking advice from Vincent Perronet. No matter who had mentioned what to whom, nor when, the effect of the news upon Charles Wesley proved considerable, particularly in view of having succeeded in having thwarted his brother’s efforts at matrimony at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1749. Further, he found his already expressed burden intensified by an excessive cough and a severe sore throat, his wife accompanying him with her own expressions of sympathy. On Wednesday, February 6, 1751, John Wesley “met with the single men [of the London Methodist society] and showed them on how many accounts it was good for those who had received that gift God to ‘remain single for the kingdom of heaven’s sake’<sup>59</sup> unless where a particular case might be an exception to the general rule”<sup>60</sup>—the general rule being his own.

For more than an entire month, even before the marriage actually occurred, Charles Wesley could not free himself from the reality of his brother's marriage to Mrs. Vazeille, fearing that it would impose severe limitations on the Methodist leader's activities and reduce his stature and effectiveness as the leader of the Methodist organization. For example, on Sunday, February 3, 1751, he "Gave the Sacrament, but without power or life. No comfort in it, no singing between, no prayer after it." Two weeks later, on Sunday, February 17, he "Dragged myself to the [Methodist] chapel, and spoke in those words, 'Thy sun shall no more go down,' etc."<sup>61</sup> The whole congregation seemed infected by my sorrow. Both under the word, and at the Sacrament, we wept and made supplication.<sup>62</sup> It was a blessed mourning to us all. At the Foundery heard my brother's lamentable apology<sup>63</sup> [for his forthcoming marriage], which made us all hide our faces. Several days afterwards I was one of the last that heard of his marriage." Following administration of the Sacrament on Sunday, February 24, Ebenezer Blackwell "fell upon me in a manner peculiar to himself, beating, driving, dragging me to my dear sister." That action on the part of Ebenezer Blackwell might have been an attempt by the Wesleys' friend to reconcile Charles Wesley to his brother's marriage and, at least, to recognize his new sister-in-law. However, Charles Wesley's journal entry for that day ends abruptly, followed by a gap of four days. On Friday, March 1, a Miss Hardy, a London resident and undoubtedly a member of the London Methodist society meeting at the Foundery, related to Charles Wesley "my brother's apology that 'in Oxford he had an independent fellowship, was usually honoured, etc., but left all<sup>64</sup> for the people's sake, returned to London, took up his cross,<sup>65</sup> and married; that at Oxford he had no more thought of a woman than any other animal upon earth, but married to break down the prejudice between the world and him!' His easily won lady sat by. He said, 'I am not more sure than God sent his Son into the world,<sup>66</sup> than it was his will I should marry.'" By Saturday, March 9, Charles Wesley evidenced signs of improvement, stating that he "Felt great emotion in the word, both morning and evening," and on Thursday, March 14, he "Saw the necessity of reconciliation with my brother, and resolved to save the trouble of umpires."<sup>67</sup> Finally, and mercifully, on Saturday, March 16, 1751, Charles Wesley "Called on my sister; kissed and assured her I was perfectly reconciled to her, and to my brother."<sup>68</sup>

A principal problem underlying this marriage began to appear almost immediately following its outset, the source being none other

than John Wesley himself. On Tuesday, March 19, 1751, he left Bristol for London, having been “desired by many to spend a few days there before I entered upon my northern journey.” Thus, he arrived at London on Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> and remained until Wednesday the 27<sup>th</sup>. “I cannot understand,” he opined, “how a Methodist preacher can answer it to God to preach one sermon or to travel one day less in a married than in a single state. In this respect surely ‘it remaineth that they who have wives be as though they had none.’”<sup>69</sup> Arriving on that same day at Tetsworth, Oxfordshire, approximately forty miles from London, Wesley attempted to compensate for the separation of time and distance between his wife and him. “My dear Molly, do I write too soon? Have not you, above all the people in the world, a right to hear from me as soon as possibly I can? You have surely a right to every proof of love I can give, and to all the little help which is in my power. For you have given me even your own self.” However, John Wesley, at age forty-eight, cannot play extended chords upon the linguistic strings of romance. He quickly falls back upon what he knows best—the sound and the sense of Holy Scripture. “O how can we praise God enough for making us help meet for each other!”<sup>70</sup> I am utterly astonished at his goodness. Let not only our lips but our lives show forth his praise!”<sup>71</sup> For the remainder of this letter—three of its four paragraphs—Wesley directs his wife to matters of Methodist business that he has left to his wife’s charge. The epistle might just as well have been directed to a Methodist itinerant preacher or to a Methodist society elder. How would it have been received by a woman recently married to a man who had spent, during the five weeks or so of their union, more time on the back of his horse than in their marriage bed?

One cannot cite often enough those qualities that dominated the marriage of Molly Vazeille to John Wesley: misunderstanding, jealousy, and outright incompatibility.<sup>72</sup> For example, on Wednesday, January 13, 1771, at London, John Wesley noted, “For what cause I know not to this day, [Mary Wesley]<sup>73</sup> set out for Newcastle [to stay with her daughter, Mrs. Jane Vazeille Smith], proposing ‘never to return.’ *Non eam reliqui, nn dimisi; non revocabo* [I did not desert her; I did not put her away; I will not recall her.]” However, more than a year later, according to Wesley’s journal entry for Tuesday, June 30, 1772, Mrs. Wesley had returned to her husband, residing with him in their residences at Bristol and London, and even traveling with him.<sup>74</sup> Then followed six more years of haggling and bickering before Mary Wesley departed from her husband a third time (the second instance in

1775), apparently without informing him in advance of her plans. Thus, he wrote to her one last time, from Bristol on October 2, 1778:<sup>75</sup>

As it is doubtful, considering your age [68] and mine [75], whether we may meet any more in this world, I think it right to tell you my mind once for all without anger or bitterness. . . . Ever since (and, indeed, long before) you have made my faults the constant matter of your conversation. Now, suppose an husband has many faults, is it the art of a prudent wife to publish or conceal them? You have published my (real or supposed) faults,<sup>76</sup> not to one or two intimates only (though perhaps that would have been too much), but to all Bristol, to all London, to all England, to all Ireland. Yea, you did whatever in you lay to publish it to all the world, thereby designing to put a sword into my enemies' hands. . . . If you were to live a thousand years, you could not undo the mischief that you have done. And till you have done all you can towards it, I bid you farewell.<sup>77</sup>

Interestingly enough, Molly Wesley might not always have acted alone in the display of her “mischief.” Late in the game, Noah Vazeille, her youngest child, at some point prior to his mother’s death in 1781, assumed residence in Stratford, Essex. Should readers wish to embrace all or parts of Elsie Harrison’s soap-opera dramatics within her biography of John Wesley, Noah Vazeille rises as one of the villains of the piece, a devious associate of his equally devious mother. Unfortunately, in scoring the few pages of information about the children of Anthony and Mary Vazielle, one must consider what one discovers and sift it critically through an especially fine strainer. Mrs. Harrison, however, tended to rely upon a process of threading the few crumbs of such facts through her highly charged imagination and projecting before her readers such scenarios as this:

The whole of the Miss Sophy episode<sup>78</sup> was conned over<sup>79</sup> by Mrs. John Wesley in the company of her son, Noah Vazeille. Together they decided it would make fine printed matter for the papers, and looked for more incriminating manuscripts in the fastness of his [John Wesley’s] private desk. The bureau in Wesley’s room was broken open and his papers stolen, and there, as one glorious find, the whole of that long treatise on Grace Murray came to light.<sup>80</sup> Noah Vazeille took possession on the instant and carried it in triumph<sup>81</sup> away from the Foundery.<sup>82</sup> Later he gave it to a friend, and later still it found its way into the British Museum. It is from that old manuscript with its corrections in the well-known

hand of [John] Wesley that the evidence comes from the friendship of this man and this woman with the background of Alexander [Murray, Grace Murray's husband] the sea captain and wonders of the Grace of God in that unemotional museum collection of England's treasures this strange document holds its place. It is right that it should be there with Diana's Temple and the relics of primitive man, for it is eloquent of the ageless love of man and woman and of their unconquerable faith in the love of God.<sup>83</sup>

After wiping away her own tears of sheer emotion, Mrs. Harrison provided her readers with yet another snippet of Noah Vazeille's chicanery, reporting that Molly Wesley "died in 1781 and was buried without Noah Vazeille informing Wesley of the event."<sup>84</sup> True. John Wesley's journal extract entry for Friday, October 12, 1781, reads, "I came to London and was informed that my wife died on Monday [October 8<sup>th</sup>]. This evening she was buried, though I was not informed of it until a day or two after."<sup>85</sup> Perhaps Noah Vazeille never extended any effort to inform his stepfather of Mary Wesley's death, but he certainly would not have been the only person aware of that event. Nonetheless, Mrs. Harrison proved herself not content to let the dog sleep. "There is a suggestion," she wrote, "of a blow given and received even at the very last by that angular woman [Molly Wesley]. . . . Well the plotters knew that the leaders of the Methodists ought to have been at his wife's funeral, for was he not known as the apostle of holiness?"<sup>86</sup> The "suggestion," of course, places Noah Vazeille among the plotters. The only problem, insofar as concerns Mrs. Harrison's story, points to the fact that no plot really existed.

Turning to the issue of John Wesley's manuscript account of his relationship with Grace Murray, Mrs. Harrison proved correct, but only on her own terms. Another among her bothersome biographical practices concerns her ignoring the specificity of such mundane items as names and dates. Not wishing to impede the swelling tide of her readers' tears, she clings to generalities—"Later he [Noah Vazeille] gave it [John Wesley's manuscript] to a friend, and later still it found its way into the safe keeping of the British Museum."<sup>87</sup> According to the editors of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB), Noah Vazeille retained Wesley's autograph account until some time prior to 1788, for in that year it proved to have been in possession of a friend of his, one Naphtaly Hart, who retained it until bequeathing it to the British Museum in 1829.<sup>88</sup> Umphrey Lee



(eventually president of Southern Methodist University), who printed a transcript of the manuscript in his 1928 biography (republished in 1954) of John Wesley, differed from the *DNB* account: “The one who gave the manuscript to the museum in 1788,” declared Lee, “certified to the fact that Noah Vazeille of Stratford, Essex, had been the original owner, and to the fact that some verses appended to the book are in the handwriting of John Wesley himself.”<sup>89</sup> Mrs. Harrison, proclaiming to the last the villainy of Noah Vazeille, maintained that in Grace Murray’s last years, she “wanted to get the story of her life which Mr. Wesley had written down from her mouth, but Noah Vazeille had been at his thieving work and that old manuscript found its way into the British Museum instead.”<sup>90</sup>

The details of the “mismatch,” upon the vehicles of fact, anecdote, and pure fiction finally ground its way to its obvious and only conclusion. John Wesley provided no evidence of his concern as to when or where his wife would be laid to her final rest. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* for October 1781 (51:49), however, most conveniently provided all interested parties with the information: “Died Mrs. M. Wesley, aged 71, wife of Mr. John Wesley, the celebrated Methodist, Oct. 8, 1781,” with burial in Camberwell<sup>91</sup> churchyard. Thus, in death, she remained firmly affixed to John Wesley and to Methodism. The inscription on her stone described her, simply and generically, as “a woman of exemplary piety, a tender parent, and a sincere friend.” Mary Vazeille Wesley bequeathed to her son, Anthony Vazeille, her money—the sum of which had been reduced from the original £10,000, left to her by her first husband, to £5000. To John Wesley she left a ring!

What came of all of this? From one perspective, not much. Mary Goldhawk Vazeille Wesley managed a leading role in a single scene within the long dramatic narrative of John Wesley’s life and work. Their eventual separation deposited her into the deepest bowels of historical oblivion. John Wesley—married, separated, and widowed—continued to lead Methodism as a principal participant in the eighteenth-century evangelical movement; he continued to travel, to preach, to write, to edit, and to educate. He sought to ease poverty, to advance his views on politics, on war, on revolution. He held fast to his determination “to live and to die in the Church of England.” Nineteenth-century biographers of John Wesley managed to enlarge their volumes by a chapter, while later biographers and historians of eighteenth-century Methodism extended their works anywhere from a paragraph to a single sentence. From a more significant perspective, perhaps, the

“mismatching” of Mary Goldhawk Vazeille to John Wesley would provide a significant essay by a broadly educated sociologist or psychologist in a large anthology of “mismatches” between the notables of world history. If nothing else, it would satisfy the insatiable appetites of those who feast upon the failures of others.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Shift” here equals “an expedient device necessitated by circumstances.”

<sup>2</sup> The writing consisted of work on the eleven-page *A Short Hebrew Grammar* (1751) and the eighty-two pages of thirty-five Biblical *Lessons for Children, Part IV*, which would not reach the press until 1754.

<sup>3</sup> Threadneedle Street initially recorded in 1598 as Three-Needle Street, then as Thred-Needle-Street in 1616, as Thridneedle Street in 1656, and Threed Needle Street in 1666. Possibly named from the “three needles” that appear in the arms of the Needlemakers’ Company, or, more likely, from the thread and needle in the arms of the Merchant Taylors’ Company, particularly because the Merchant Taylors’ Hall has stood on this street since the fourteenth century. See A.D. Mills, *A Dictionary of London Place Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 227.

<sup>4</sup> See W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (eds.), *The Works of John Wesley. Journal and Diary III (2743-1754)* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 20:378-379.

<sup>5</sup> Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. Founder of the Methodists* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1872), 2:101.

<sup>6</sup> Nehemiah Curnock (ed.), *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1909-1916): 3:515.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Manning (1714-1799), B.A. Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge (B.A., 1736); vicar of Hayes, Middlesex (1738-1756); sympathetic to the Wesleys and the Methodist cause; John Wesley preached in Manning’s church on at least fifteen occasions. See Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries III*, in *Works*, 20: 263, 321, 487.

<sup>8</sup> John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1886): 253.

<sup>9</sup> Professor Ward identified him as “Anthony” Vazeille—Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries III*, in *Works*, 20:484; John Telford labeled him “Ambrose” Vazeille—John Telford (ed.), *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.* (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 3:63.

<sup>10</sup> Ward and Heitzenrater, *Works*, 5:369.

<sup>11</sup> Telford, *Letters*, 3:63; Kenneth G.C. Newport and Gareth Lloyd (eds.), *The Letters of Charles Wesley. Volume I, 1728-1756* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 449.

<sup>12</sup> S.T. Kimbrough, Jr., and Kenneth G.C. Newport (eds.), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.* (Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon Press, 2007-2008), 2:578.

<sup>13</sup> Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*, 2:594.

<sup>14</sup> Sarah (Sally) Perrin (fl. 1735-1780), initially a resident of Bradford, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and a Quaker evangelical, moved to Bristol, Gloucestershire, where she eventually became John Wesley's housekeeper. She married John Jones, one of John Wesley's preachers, corresponded consistently with Charles Wesley, and became a leader within Methodist women's bands and prayer meetings.

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 4:13—"And he [Moses] said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." (KJV)

<sup>16</sup> Psalms 15:4—"In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changest not." (KJV)

<sup>17</sup> Psalms 115:1—"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise: for thy loving mercy, and for thy truths sake." (BCP) "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." (KJV)

<sup>18</sup> John 9:4—"I [Jesus Christ] must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (KJV)

<sup>19</sup> Luke 8:24—"And they [Jesus Christ's disciples] came to him [Jesus Christ], and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish, then he rose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm." (KJV)

<sup>20</sup> Galatians 5:25—"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (KJV) Philippians 3:16-17—"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me [Paul], and mark them which walk so as ye have us an example." (KJV)

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 28:18—"And Jesus came and spake unto them [the disciples], saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (KJV)

<sup>22</sup> Frank Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley. Volume 26. Letters II, 1740-1755* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982): 429-430.

<sup>23</sup> *Son to Susanna. The Private Life of John Wesley* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1938), by G. Elsie Harrison, daughter of Dr. J. S. Simon,

principal of Didsbury College, and the wife of Rev. Archibald Walter Harrison (1882-1946), Methodist minister and educator.

<sup>24</sup> “I look upon *all the world as my parish*: thus far I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation.” John Wesley, Monday, June 11, 1739 (Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal ad Diaries II*, in *Works*, 19:67). See, also, in the Book of Common Prayer (BCP, 1662 edition), “Communion,” Exhortation 3: “To him [Jesus Christ] therefore with the Father, and the holy Ghost, let us give (as we are most bounden) continual thanks, submitting our selves to his body will and pleasure, and studying to serve him in trust holiness and righteousness all the dayes [*sic*] of our life. Amen.” (Brian Cummings [ed.]. *The Book of Common Prayer. The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 398-399)

<sup>25</sup> *Mona Lisa*, the portrait by the Florentine painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, and scientist, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), in the Louvre, Paris, France (stolen in August 1911, recovered in December 1913); reportedly represents “La Gioconda,” the wife of the Florentine Francesco del Giocondo.

<sup>26</sup> Harrison, *Son to Susanna*, 318-321.

<sup>27</sup> Henry Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley* (London: Kershaw, 1824-1825), 2:172.

<sup>28</sup> According to one source, “only three letters of hers [Molly Vazeille Wesley] survived the Methodist shredders.” Stephen Tompkins, *John Wesley, a Biography* (Oxford, England: Lion Publishing, 2003; rpt. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003): 137.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Watson, *The Life of John Wesley, A.M.* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1831), cited in Tyerman, *Life of John Wesley*, 2:102.

<sup>30</sup> Who knows where those letters might be preserved?

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Jackson, *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A., Some Time Student of Christ Church, Oxford. Comprising a Review of His Poetry; Sketches of the Rise and Progress of Methodism; with Notices of Contemporary Characters*, 2 vols. (London: John Mason, 1841; American edition, New York: G. Lane and P.P. Sandford, 1842), 2:568.

<sup>32</sup> Plutus, in Greek mythology, the personification of wealth; a son of Iasion and Demeter, and intimately associated with Irene, goddess of peace; she often represented in art as holding the infant Plutus; supposedly blinded by Zeus so that he might not bestow his favors exclusively on good men, but should distribute his gifts without regard to merit; by a number of accounts, however, Plutus received a cure and thus gave wealth only to those whom he could perceive as being honest.

<sup>33</sup> Technically, eighteenth-century Methodism under John Wesley cannot be termed a “sect,” for Wesley never separated his loosely entwined religious organization from the Church of England, nor himself from the priesthood of that Church. Hampson, and a large majority of his clerical colleagues, assumed a contrary view, even though he had embraced Methodism prior to his episcopal ordination.

<sup>34</sup> John Hampson the younger, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M., with a Review of His Life and Writings and a History of Methodism from Its Commencement in 1739 to the Present Time 1791* (Sunderland, Durham: James Graham, 1791), 2:124.

<sup>35</sup> John Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Collected from His Private Papers and Printed Works; and Written at the Request of His Executors. To Which Is Prefixed, Some Account of His Ancestors and Relations; with the Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A. Collected from His Private Journal, and Never Before Published* (London: S. Couchman, 1793-1796), 2:263. Dr. Whitehead attended the dying John Wesley, his patient refusing to allow any other physician to come to his bedside.

<sup>36</sup> Tyerman, *Life of John Wesley*, 2:114-115.

<sup>37</sup> “Angularities” here means relating to one’s manner and acquired habits, particularly stiffness, formality, and lack of accommodation.

<sup>38</sup> “Excrescences” here means natural outgrowths or appendages.

<sup>39</sup> “Benedict” here means a newly married man; a confirmed bachelor who marries.

<sup>40</sup> “Assorted” here means suited, matched.

<sup>41</sup> Tyerman, *Life of John Wesley*, 2:106.

<sup>42</sup> “Marjorie Bowen” being but one (yet the best known) of her several pseudonyms.

<sup>43</sup> Suggesting comparisons and contrasts between Molly Vazeille and Samuel Richardson’s Pamela Andrews suggests one’s total ignorance of both.

<sup>44</sup> “Diaphanous” here means permitting light and vision to pass through; perfectly transparent or translucent; vague or insubstantial.

<sup>45</sup> Susanna Annesley Wesley (1669-1742).

<sup>46</sup> Selina Shirley Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon (1707-1791), patroness of George Whitefield and the Calvinist Methodists.

<sup>47</sup> Grace Norman Murray Bennet (1716-1803), John Wesley’s second serious love, who, also for the second time, hesitated in a direct

proposal of marriage and thus lost (through a concerted effort by brother Charles Wesley) the game to a rival.

<sup>48</sup> Marjorie Bowen, *Wrestling Jacob. A Study of the Life of John Wesley and Some Members of the Family* (London: The Religious Book Club, 1938): 299-303.

<sup>49</sup> Henry D. Rack referred to Mrs. Harrison's "overblown style and cavalier treatment of facts" (*Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [London: Epworth Press, 2002]:x), while Richard P. Heitzenrater (*The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003]:382-383) considered that in Mrs. Harrison's *Sons to Susanna*, the writer "manipulated historical facts rather loosely to fit her own psychological preconceptions in her somewhat sensationalist view of Wesley's relationship with his parents. It seems the psychohistorians have always been better psychologists than historians. . . ."

<sup>50</sup> Scholars generally have agreed upon Anthony Vazeille's occupation as a merchant (and an affluent one at that), not a banker.

<sup>51</sup> "Fondly" here means foolishly.

<sup>52</sup> G. Elsie Harrison, *Son to Susanna*, 318-321.

<sup>53</sup> Henry Abelow, *The Evangelist of Desire: John Wesley and the Methodists* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990): 36-37.

<sup>54</sup> Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries III*, in *Works*, 20:378.

<sup>55</sup> Ralph Waller, *John Wesley: A Personal Portrait* (New York: Continuum, 2003): 100.

<sup>56</sup> Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries III*, in *Works*, 20:378.

<sup>57</sup> Numbers 11:11—"And Moses sad unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all the people upon me?" (KJV) See, also, Numbers 11:17.

<sup>58</sup> Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*, 2:602.

<sup>59</sup> Matthew 19:12—"For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." (KJV)

<sup>60</sup> Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diary III*, in *Works*, 20:378.

<sup>61</sup> Isaiah 60:20—"Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." (KJV)

<sup>62</sup> 1 Samuel 13:12—“Therefore said I [Samuel], the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.” (KJV)

<sup>63</sup> “Apology” here means a justification and/or explanation.

<sup>64</sup> Once the holder of a university fellowship either at Oxford or Cambridge entered into marriage, he had to resign that office. John Wesley’s resignation letter (in Latin) “To the Rector and Fellows of Lincoln College, Oxford” dates June 1, 1751. See Baker, *Letters II*, in *Works*, 26:462.

<sup>65</sup> Matthew 16:24—“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (KJV)

<sup>66</sup> John 3:17—“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (KJV)

<sup>67</sup> “Umpire” here the word has not changed in meaning since its introduction into the English language in the middle of the fifteenth century. It continues to refer to one, in government or law, for instance, who serves as a mediator between or among contending parties. In the United States, one rarely sees the word outside of the gates of a sporting arena. The English poet William Cowper found room for the word early in his lengthy poem, “Tirocinium; or, a Review of Schools (1785)—

For her [the soul] the Judgment, umpire in the strife  
That Grace and Nature have to wage through life,  
Quick-sighted arbiter of good and ill,  
Appointed sage preceptor of the Will. . . . (29-32)

<sup>68</sup> Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*, 2:602-604.

<sup>69</sup> Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries III*, in *Works*, 20:380. See, also, 1 Corinthians 7:29—“But this I [Paul] say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; . . .” (KJV)

<sup>70</sup> Genesis 2:18—“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I shall make him a help meet for him.” (KJV)

<sup>71</sup> Baker, *Letters II*, in *Works*, 20:453-454

<sup>72</sup> One might raise the question as to why the couple simply did not seek divorce early in the marriage and be done with it. The answer is even simpler: until 1857, a divorce in England could be obtained only through a private Act of Parliament—although in Scotland divorce proved easier to secure. In 1857, the English Divorce Court eased access to divorce, granting separation to men who could prove their wives’ adultery, and to women on grounds of their husbands’ adultery, as well as to husbands’ cruelty. The Court also assessed a cost. In 1968, an Act significantly liberalized the divorce laws.

<sup>73</sup> Wesley omitted his wife's name from the published extract (1777) of this entry.

<sup>74</sup> Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries V*, in *Works*, 22:262, 339.

<sup>75</sup> In a brief article, "John Wesley's Ordination of Dr. [Thomas] Coke As Bishop for America," *Methodist Recorder*, December 8, 1898, 4, the London publisher, Rev. Charles H. Kelly, referred to a letter by John Wesley that sold at a London auction on November 4, 1898 for £12.10s. "Is this a part of that letter?" inquired John Telford.

<sup>76</sup> A number of those private papers appeared in *The Gospel Magazine*, edited by one of John Wesley's antagonists, Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778), of whom Wesley once pronounced, "I do not fight with chimney-sweepers." See Telford, *Letters*, 5:192; Arnold Lunn, *John Wesley* (New York: The Dial Press, 1929): 276.

<sup>77</sup> Telford, *Letters*, 6:273-274, 321-322.

<sup>78</sup> John Wesley's abortive love affair with the teenage Sophia Christiana Hopkey in Savannah, Georgia, during his equally abortive mission there in 1735-1737.

<sup>79</sup> "Conned over" here means studied, learned, inspected, investigated, examined. The editors of the *Oxford Universal Dictionary* cite a most apt statement from Jonathan Swift—"Conning old topics like a parrot," while William Shakespeare's lines from *Julius Caesar* fit as well: "All his faults observ'd,/Set in a notebook, learn'd and conn'd by rote." (4:3:95-96).

<sup>80</sup> See J. Augustin Leger, *John Wesley's Last Love* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1910): 1-2, 66, 83, 97, 136, 139, 143, 188.

<sup>81</sup> The reason for Noah Vazeille's state of "triumph" has never come to light. Again, one becomes hard pressed to distinguish between reality and Mrs. Harrison's imagination.

<sup>82</sup> More than likely from West Street Chapel, London, where John Wesley had established his residence.

<sup>83</sup> Harrison, *Son to Susanna*, 329-330.

<sup>84</sup> Harrison, *Son to Susanna*, 331.

<sup>85</sup> Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries VI*, in *Works*, 23:225.

<sup>86</sup> Harrison, *Son to Susanna*, 331-332.

<sup>87</sup> Harrison, *Son to Susanna*, 329.

<sup>88</sup> "Wesley, John," in *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB).



<sup>89</sup> Umphrey Lee, *The Lord's Horseman: John Wesley the Man* (New York and London: The Century Company, 1928): 267.

<sup>90</sup> Harrison, *Son to Susanna*, 355.

<sup>91</sup> Camberwell, London, south of Walworth, east of Brixton, west of Peckham, and north of Herne Hill—currently within the London borough of Southwark; in the eighteenth century, a village surrounded by fields and known for its flowers and fruit trees; the parish church, in Church Street, dedicated to St. Giles, patron saint of cripples and mendicants, destroyed by fire in 1841. “In the churchyard,” announced either Weinreb or Hibbert, “now [c. 1983] cleared as a public open space, are buried John Wesley’s shrewish wife, Mary, who died in 1781; Miss Lucy Warner, who was 32 ins. high and ran a local school; and James Blake, who sailed the world with Captain [James] Cook.” See Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert (eds.), *The London Encyclopaedia* (London: Macmillan, 1983; rpt. Bethesda, Maryland: Adler and Adler, Publishers, Inc., 1986): 114.



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