DOMESTIC PIETY IN THE MINISTRY OF
JOHN ANGELL JAMES

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A Dissertation
Presented to
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Philosophy

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by
Jeffery Steven Wright
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APPROVAL SHEET

DOMESTIC PIETY IN THE MINISTRY OF

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

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Shawn D. Wright

Date ______________________________
To my parents,
Kennith and Linda Wright,
Always faithful in their love and encouragement.
Especially to Tina,
The love of my life.
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PREFACE

As I reflect upon the writing of this dissertation I have one initial and prevailing thought: I am a debtor without adequate means to repay and thank everyone who has walked with me on this journey. Throughout these years many friends have supported and exhorted me, and their encouragement has allowed me to complete this task.

Providence Baptist Church and First Baptist West Palm Beach have supported me during this time and have made possible the time away for seminars and study. I have been shaped by the ministries of these churches and encouraged during difficult days. These wonderful churches have supported my marriage, my family, and my ministry. Words cannot express my gratitude.

The School of Church Ministries at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has been steadfast as an example of biblical community since the beginning of my study in the fall of 2009. Without exception, every professor has invited me and my classmates into their homes, and each has become a lifelong friend. I want to thank particularly my supervisor, Timothy Paul Jones, as well as my other committee members, Randy Stinson and Shawn Wright. These men provided counsel, feedback, and encouragement and continually made themselves available to me during this work. The humility and eagerness to serve that these men exhibit remain a shaping factor in my life.

Kennith and Linda Wright, my father and mother, have been a weekly source of encouragement and inspiration. Their sacrifice and love for me has garnered an unquenchable desire to honor their and make them proud, and to this end I have labored. Next to the grace extended to me by Christ, my wife, Tina is without exception God’s greatest gift. She has patiently endured and made endless sacrifices that far exceed the
work of this dissertation. May we live the next seasons of our lives focused to make the name of our Lord great and not our own.

Finally, I thank God for rescuing me and giving me the opportunity to pursue this degree. May this work build the church and bring praise and glory to the Lord.

Jeffery Steven Wright

West Palm Beach, Florida

May 2013
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

On Friday, October 7, 1859, the streets of Birmingham, England, were lined with more than ten thousand mourners.¹ Long before the funeral cortège left the James residence, the streets of Birmingham began to fill. The town stood still as every business ceased from work and men, women, and children of every grade stood street-side to pay homage to this admired pastor.² The route of the funeral procession, overflowing with spectators, was so long it would be difficult to estimate its distance end to end.³ Among the throng of mourners was the Queen of England.⁴ The venerable John Angell James was buried later that day in a special vault under the pulpit in Carrs Lane church.⁵ It was


⁴James, The Life and Letters, 529; John Waddington, Congregational History (London: Jackson, Walford, and Hodder, 1866), 301; Guest, A Tribute of Grateful Love, 19. The fact that Queen Victoria attended his funeral was no trivial matter. She reigned for sixty-three years and seven months (i.e., the Victorian Era). She remains the longest ruling female monarch in world history. James was a non-conformist, which meant that he was not associated in any way with the Church of England. Furthermore, much of his ministry would have been in opposition to the Queen’s Church of England.

⁵Robert Kirkup Dent, Old and New Birmingham: A History of the Town and its People (Birmingham: Houghton and Hammond, 1880), 582. The practice of burying a pastor near his pulpit was a way churches paid tribute to a pastor they respected. Two
said of James’s notoriety, “Perhaps it is not too much to say, that more persons in this
country have heard of Birmingham as the residence of John Angell James, than as the
seat of manufacturing and commercial enterprise. One righteous man exalted a city.”

Historians Davidoff and Hall have said that John Angell James’s influence is hard to
overstate, “The public and private life of Birmingham’s best known nonconformist
minister, he was dubbed the unofficial bishop of Birmingham.” Prominent nineteenth
century religious leader Thomas De Witt Talmage said of James, “England never
produced a better man.” The ministry, writings, and life of John Angell James exerted an
influence far beyond the city of Birmingham; this influence extended throughout his
nation and into the furthest reaches of the world.

John Angell James lived at the time that Benjamin Franklin was introducing
the world to bifocals, Napoleon was graduating from the military academy, and 15-year-
old Beethoven was publishing his first sonatas. On occasion renowned preachers such as
Charles Spurgeon would travel to Birmingham to hear James preach. Spurgeon said he
“never forgot James’ message” and later called James “that eminent servant of God.”

examples are Reverend Caleb Warehurst, who was buried at the foot of Cannon Street in
1765 in Birmingham, England, and Reverend William Aldridge who was buried under
his pulpit at Jewry Street Chapel in London.

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8T. DeWitt Talmage, Social Dynamite; or the Wickedness of Modern Society (Chicago: Standard, 1889), 181.


10Ibid., 326.
Spurgeon later stated that of the 12,000 volumes of books that he collected, it was James’s book *Anxious Inquirer* that greatly affected him.  

J. C. Ryle was also touched by James’s influence. Such contemporary pastors as Robert Dale, William Jay, Spurgeon, William Patton of New York, and many others held James in high esteem. James was respected for his mental genius as he was presented three Doctor of Divinity degrees from Princeton, The University of Glasgow, and Jefferson College. He kept these prestigious doctoral degrees locked privately in a drawer. The admired James began his ministry virtually anonymous, in a small town in a relatively nameless congregational church that had recently split and was battling for its very existence.

After ten years of James being unknown, people began flocking to Carrs Lane by the thousands to hear him preach. Shortly after their new 1,800-seat chapel was complete, Carrs Lane was asked to host the Birmingham Auxiliary of the London Missionary Societies annual event. So large a crowd gathered for an annual meeting of the London Missionary Society that the gallery of the new church began to crack. Fortunately, the gallery did not fall, sparing thousands from injury or death. The


13 S. M. Coombs, *History of Carrs Lane, A Retrospect: 1898* (Birmingham: Press of Hudson & Son, 1898), 33; James, *The Life and Letters*, 7. James did not think it proper to hold the title “Doctor” because it implied preeminence. He did not feel it was right because of the Lord’s injunction to his disciples that they were not to be called “Rabbi.” When degrees were awarded and sent to James, he would keep them locked in a drawer, never mentioning them to anyone.

reputation of John Angell James and his church after this pivotal missions gathering began to spread further than anyone could have ever imagined. Historian Robert Dent wrote of James’s impact as an author: “This John Angell James did, to a degree and effect which no other minister, of any denomination, has attained for the last century.”15 James’s influence extended far beyond Birmingham and the walls of Carrs Lane to churches of every denomination and throughout the world. The Evangelical Magazine said of James’s influence, “All denominations of Evangelical Christians have reaped the fruits of his labors; and from the four continents of the globe, testimony has flowed in to the abundant benediction vouchsafed to his earnest, faithful and prayerful teachings.”16 Any scholarly research of Christianity in England during the nineteenth century would be deficient without the inclusion of James. His contemporaries and historians alike have held James in high regard as a figure of great historical significance.

Feeling that James’s life would impact many generations to come, John Campbell, a James biographer, envisioned the impact that James’s life might have one hundred years after his death:

Anticipating the flight of time, we may place ourselves among the men of 1959, with their eyes survey the present generation, and place in the balances the venerated man of whom we are speaking. Can there be a doubt as to the place which, among the men of the present age, they will assign to him, and the estimate which they will form of his services? When our living generation shall come to be thoroughly sifted, the objects of contrast and comparison will, after all, not be numerous. Few are in the way to fame: the mass of those who now people these Isles will each repose in a nameless grave. They will leave no trace of their existence, but be “dead men out of mind. “Such will be the lot of the bulk even of great and useful characters now living; although ably and honorably” serving their generation by the will of God,” future renown on earth will make no part of their reward. Posthumous celebrity of

15 Dent, Old and New Birmingham, 582.

an enduring character cannot be severed from posthumous usefulness of some sort; and a chief means of that is Christian literature.\textsuperscript{17}

Sadly, Campbell was incorrect. While men of James’s day noted his influence, the truth remains that John Angell James is scarcely known in evangelical circles today. This dissertation was written in the hope that pastors, churches, parents, and those preparing for ministry will be shaped positively by the exhortations and ministry of James. Despite all the above-mentioned accolades, James personally maintained a rather refreshing, humble perspective during his life and ministry. From the beginning to the end of his ministry, James did not consider himself or his deeds extraordinary. He said of himself and his ministry success that his results were but a “mere plodding using old implements with some industry and following old methods with a kind of dogged perseverance and considerable success.”\textsuperscript{18} Shortly before James’s death he wrote,

\begin{quote}
I set out in my ministry, even when a student, with the idea of usefulness so deeply imprinted on my heart, and so constantly present to my thoughts, that I could never lose sight of it long together: and I mean usefulness of one kind, that is, the direct conversion of souls. I have perhaps been in danger, and I now feel it, of restricting that idea within too narrow a circle. There are various kinds of usefulness. He is eminently useful who writes a defense of our holy religion against the cavils of infidelity, or a commentary upon a portion of Scripture, or a clear statement of Christian doctrine, or a valuable criticism on some disputed passage, or a religious tract, or anything else connected with divine truth. The priesthood of letters are eminently useful. The press is one of the two main pillars of the temple of truth. So in the conversion of souls, though the pulpit is the main instrument in effecting this, yet the tract distributor, the Sunday school teacher, the Bible reader, are all useful, and every person should study his talents, his means, and his opportunities for usefulness. In reference to myself, however, I meant usefulness in the way of direct conversion of souls.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18]James, \textit{The Life and Letters}, 7.
\item[19]Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Nearing the close of his fifty-four years of ministry, James wrote in his autobiography,

Now, there is nothing in my life that could exempt a memorial of me from this lot, and therefore I do not at all desire, what probably no one will think of writing, a published biography. I believe, without vanity I may say it, that my life has been in some measure a useful one, but even that has been in a very common method of procedure. I have been no comet in the solar system of Christianity but one of the planets revolving in the attraction and reflecting a little of the light of the Sun of righteousness. No one could say more about me than that for fifty years I was the pastor of one church, preached the gospel, wrote some books and was honored of God to save many souls.\(^{20}\)

James’s life and ministry serve as an exemplary model for pastors and ministry leaders of every age.

**Thesis**

Precisely what was James’s intention from his lifelong emphasis and priority on domestic piety? This proposed dissertation argues that domestic piety functioned as a central means of gospel proclamation and Christian formation in the life and ministry of John Angell James. The argument is substantiated through a comprehensive examination of James's writings, sermons, and ministry. For James, domestic piety required a persistent and unrelenting priority that he kept before fathers and mothers. In James’s view, parents could not delegate their spiritual, eternal responsibility to anyone. James argued,

> Here fix your center; here direct your aim; here concentrate your efforts, your energies, and your prayers. Remember, their religious education is your business. Whatever aids you call in from ministers or teachers, you never must, you never can, you never should, delegate this work. God will hold you responsible for the religion of your children. A child can soon be made to know and feel the distinction between right and wrong, and taught to be a law to himself. Inspire a reverence for yourself: be you, in a sense, to the child in the place of God as His representative, before he can understand who and what God is. Train even the little child to obedience, to surrender his will to a superior will.\(^{21}\)

\(^{20}\)Ibid., 8.

\(^{21}\)John Angell James, “A New Year’s Address to Parents and Ministers on the Religious Education of Their Children,” *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* (1846): 12.
This understanding, James persisted must be attended to by Christian parents through domestic piety. At the heart of James’s exhortations to parents was the importance of the “immortal souls” of their children. Throughout James’s ministry he implored Sunday School teachers, pastors, churches, and parents to remember that children’s eternal souls must be the chief aim of their labor.

Failure of Christian families to engage in a lifestyle of domestic piety was a concern shared among many evangelicals during the nineteenth century. English Baptist pastor Charles Haddon Spurgeon himself asked, “See how the families of many professors are as dressy, as gay, as godless as the children of the non-religious! How can we hope that the kingdom of our Lord is advanced when His own disciples do not teach His gospel to their own children?”

James not only practiced and proclaimed domestic piety; domestic piety became a prominent emphasis of his sermons, writings and ministry. From the start of James’s ministry until the conclusion, he persisted in exhorting fathers and mothers, sons and daughters to live by God’s design of discipleship in their homes. This dissertation is not contending that James’s expression of domestic piety was unique in its methodology or emphasis. Evangelicals during James’s era shared a collective conviction that the home possessed an eternal and redemptive purpose through domestic piety.

Beneath such a remarkable career there was one specific aspect of James’s ministry focus that garnered my attention. I was only able to find one previous work that examined the life of John Angell James. This 1957 dissertation by J. R. Kennedy of Edinburgh focused on “The Life, Work and Thought of John Angell James.” Kennedy’s work did not consider James’s emphasis on domestic piety as a central aspect of his ministry.

ministry. Domestic piety has not been researched related to James. This dissertation provides a survey of the life of John Angell James with a particular emphasis on domestic piety. James’s unalterable conviction toward family ministry spanned his entire life. This dissertation researches James’s sermons and writings regarding his exhortations directed toward domestic piety. Unfortunately, until now, there has not been a scholarly research documenting James’s rhetoric exhorting the redemptive, God-given purpose of discipleship within the family. An examination of James’s ministry, sermons and writings can provide a beneficial model for parents, pastors, and churches for the sake of the gospel. This dissertation on John Angell James gives consideration to his sermons and writings, as well as his ministry through the expanse of his faithful ministry at Carrs Lane over fifty-four years.

Definitions of Terms

In many of his writings and sermons, James used the term “domestic piety.” The term appeared rarely until the late 1700s although the term “family piety” appeared in literature as early as the 1600s. While domestic piety is the focal point of this

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23 The following works contain examples of how the term “domestic piety” was used in the late 1700s: John Martin, “Public and Domestic Devotion United,” The Monthly Review 61 (1779): 432; Jonas Hanway, Domestic Happiness: Promoted in a Series of Discourses (London: J. Sewell, F. Cornhill and C. Rivington, 1786), 64-72.

24 Samuel Cradock, Knowledge & Practice: A Plain Discourse of Chief Things (London: Printed by J. Hayes for John Rothwell at the Fountain, 1659), 389, 399, 384; John Wilkins, A Discourse Concerning the Gift of Prayer (London: J. Lawrence and A. Churchill, 1690), 263; Desiderius Erasmus, A Playne and Godly Exposytion or Declaration of the Commune Crede (London: Robert Redman, 1533), 10. The concept of domestic piety or family piety can be traced back to ancient Judaism and it played a significant role in spiritual formation during the Jewish Diaspora. For many Jews, family and religion were one entirety. “Domestic piety” became increasingly popular as a term of preference in the 1800s. John Barton, Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah (New York: Continuum International, 2010), 135; Mark Avrum Ehrlich, ed., Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 265-66; Lawrence H. Fuchs, Beyond Patriarchy: Jewish Fathers and Families
dissertation the word “piety” was beginning to be commonly used in and after the 1500s to express one’s true reverence and devotion for God.25 “Piety” as a term has lost much of its original historical meaning.26 The etymology of “piety” comes from the Latin term pietas, which referred to a person who is devout and genuine in his or her faith. During the nineteenth century the term continued to be used to pay the highest compliment or honor to the genuineness of one’s faith.

Today, “piety” has become a pejorative term.27 This negative connotation


26John Foxe, Foxe’s Book of Martyrs (Hong Kong: Forgotten, 1563). Foxe’s Book of Martyrs was written as a tribute to believers who should be paid the highest tribute throughout Christian history. In John Foxe’s book, the term used most often to define these great men and women of the faith was “piety.” Valentine Cockan, Lord Winceslaus, Giles Tollemann, Eugenius, Paul Garnier, Antoninous, Sansala, Egidio, John Hooper, Stanislaus, Alphage, Don Carlos, Somerset, Count Vespiniani, Don Pablo, Maximilian Hostialick, Earl of Rugenia, and John de Boscane were all commended for their “piety.”

27Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012), 848.
refers to someone’s false pretense of only outward expressions of their devotion to God.

John Calvin saw piety as a positive attribute in a believer's life as it connected reverence to God and theology: “I called ‘piety’ that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces.”

William Gouge wrote concerning the importance of piety in 1622:

“There is a necessity that children be taught piety, because they are not born but made Christians: by nature they are utterly destitute of all piety: for by nature every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart is only evil continually (Gen 6:5) and in respect man is born like the wild ass's colt (Job 1:12) so as man were better to be inborn than not taught piety.”

In 1675, Philip Spener wrote the seminal work on the piety movement called *Pia Desideria*. In it Spener urges the need for repentance, the new birth, putting faith into practice and close fellowship among true believers. Repentance, new birth, a practiced faith, and biblical community among believers became four distinct characteristics that became the framework in which true piety became defined.

Piety was not used only as a standard for the sincerity of the laity. John Angell James felt so strongly concerning the characteristic of piety that he would hold it as the chief consideration in selecting a pastor:

I trust our churches will ever consider piety as the first and most essential qualification in their pastors, for which talents, genius, learning, and eloquence, would and could be no substitutes. It will be a dark and evil day when personal godliness shall be considered as secondary to any other quality in those who serve at the altar of God. No ministry will be really effective, whatever may be its education, which is not a ministry of strong faith, true spirituality, and deep earnestness. I wish

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28 Ibid.


this golden sentence could be inscribed in characters of light over every professor's chair, over every student's desk, and over every preacher's pulpit.\textsuperscript{31}

That ardent piety should be held as a qualification for the gospel ministry seemed consistent from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Schaff refers to what he believes were the commonly held qualifications of ministers in 1584: “They must possess good natural and acquired abilities, deep and ardent piety, be specially called of God to the work, and ordained by the laying on of hands. These are, to preach the word, administer the ordinances of the gospel.”\textsuperscript{32} James held piety as a fundamental qualification for the highest office in the church and equally essential to every church member. Jonathan Edwards’s and John Angell James’s words were brought together in a book to encourage new believers, entitled \textit{A Casket of Four Jewels: For Young Christians}. In it Edwards and James both encourage young Christians to seek eminent piety: “Do not make the average piety of professors the model or standard of your own; but look to the standard set up in the word of God. Consider not what professors are, but what they should be.”\textsuperscript{33} It is important to note that the word piety was held in high regard by authors and pastors alike to indicate utmost respect and admiration to the one to whom this endearing term was directed.

It has been suggested by Delbert Burkett that in the first century that “family piety consisted of patriarchal values. The precise requirements of duty depended on one’s place in society. Piety meant duty and devotion towards one family, friends, country, and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31}John Angell James, \textit{An Earnest Ministry: The Want of the Times} (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1847), 9.
\item \textsuperscript{33}Jonathan Edwards, John Harris, and John Angell James, \textit{A Casket of Four Jewels: For Young Christians} (Boston: Gould, Kendall & Lincoln, 1842), 43.
\end{itemize}
Pacificus Baker was identified as the first author to use the term “family piety” in written literature. In Erasmus’s commentary on Acts he mentions a book entitled *The Devout Christian’s Companion* that was written in 1535. Erasmus wrote of this book’s thesis as it referred to family piety: “Designed for the promotion of family piety, in order to a truly religious life.” One can read in Erasmus’s description of Baker’s work that those who held to the practice of family piety would live a “truly religious life.” While Pacificus Baker mentions family piety in his book, it is Philip Goodwin’s 1665 work *Religio Domestica Rediviva: or Family-Religion Revived: or A Treatise as to Discover the Good Old Way of Serving God in Private Houses* in 1667, that is domestic piety’s first dedicated book. Richard Allestree wrote concerning a major issue facing Christianity. His distress was aimed at piety, and so he wrote “The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety.” Piety, the seldom-mentioned word in the Bible, was becoming the chosen term that defined the highest compliment paid to authentic Christ followers. In *The Devout Christian’s Companion*, Baker writes, “Piety of parents is to be admired” and “parents are encouraged to learn their duty and offer their children to the Lord. From whence Parents may learn their Duty, to offer up their Children in their Infancy to God, and to be careful to imprint in their tender Minds Principles of Virtue and Piety”

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38 Pacificus Baker, *The Devout Christian’s Companion for Holy-days* (London: J. P. Coughlan, 1765), 133, 318. This is a later publication of *The Devout Christian Companion*. It is important to note that this may be the first book written to instruct
Authors like William Cogswell, Pastor of South Church in Dedham, Massachusetts, began writing resources that were very practical in nature. In his 1827 work *The Assistant to Family Religion: In Six Parts*. . . , he lays a theological foundation and clear argument for family religion and then provides practical examples of morning and evening family worship.39 John Angell James’s first use of the term “domestic piety” as an author was in 1824. This work, directed to fathers, was called *The Christian Father’s Present to His Children*.40 In it he uses the term “domestic piety” in the following way:

That in many cases the means employed by Christian parents for their children's spiritual welfare are unsuccessful, is a melancholy fact, established by abundant, and, I fear, accumulating evidence. I am not now speaking of those families—and are there indeed such?—Where scarcely a semblance of domestic piety or instruction is to be found, where no family altar is seen, no family prayer is heard, no parental admonition is delivered! What! This cruel, wicked, ruinous neglect of their children’s immortal interest in the families of professors!! Monstrous inconsistency! Shocking dereliction of principle! No wonder that their children go astray. But I am now speaking of the failure of a religious education, where it has been, in some measure, carried on; instances of which are by no means infrequent.41

One begins seeing, in James’s writings, the continued use of the term “domestic piety” after his 1824 usage of the term.42 In James’s subsequent works he describes one’s Christian faith being lived out with authenticity and zeal within the home and family parents concerning their role in domestic piety. This book came in two parts—the first part is a manual of devotions for most concerns for human life and the second is designed specifically for the promotion of family piety.


40John Angell James, *The Christian Father’s Present to His Children* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1824), 16.

41Ibid., 7-8.

setting. During the 1700-1800s, “domestic piety” was viewed with primary importance and seen to be foundational to public worship. Family-religion became synonymous with domestic piety and was a frequent sermon topic that began to appear in print as well. Woodcut illustrations show Puritan families gathered for family worship during the sixteenth and seventh centuries. Puritans were also learning the practices of family piety through instruction manuals. Other authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries argued that domestic piety was God’s chief means of salvation for children. Christian authors used the term “domestic piety” routinely, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as an admired and cherished Christian practice that should be at the center of all Christian families. J. C. Ryle’s book, published in 1860, further illustrates the trend of pastors writing to exhort parents regarding gospel proclamation within their homes. Not once during my research did I find the term domestic piety used in a derogatory or negative sense.

My historical research of domestic piety clearly reveals two distinct definitions of this term. The practice of domestic piety for James and nonconformist evangelicals included biblical instruction, family worship, singing of hymns, discipleship, and prayer

43 de Pressensé, The Early Years of Christianity, 217.


for the expressed eternal purpose of passing one’s faith on to the next generation. For James, domestic piety centered on parental responsibility and the immortality of the human soul. Domestic piety as defined by the Victorian era stressed purity, temperance, and prudence as a moralistic process of creating a better society. The fashionable characteristics of Victorian piety were promoted through the means of poetry, music, instructional manuals and novels. It is paramount to note that the term “domestic piety” is used widely throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth has both a Christian and a trans-religious meaning. This trans-religious domestic piety began to shape families in Ireland, the United States, England, Russia, and throughout the world. Protestants and the Church of England alike agreed that piety was a commendable trait and beneficial for all of society. Piety was a non-denominational message. Its reach and influence was worldwide. Secular culture admired the traits of piety, therefore it appeared often in poetry, hymns, novels, and Victorian literature. Historian Timothy Whelan says, “Domestic piety became the emblematic standard for the home and the dominant Victorian norm as piety of the home took center stage.”


49 Timothy Whelan, interview by author, Jacksonville, FL, 9 November 2012. Whelan serves as a Professor in the English Department of Georgia Southern University. He is the Senior Visiting Fellow for Centre for Dissenting Studies at Queen Mary, University of London, and Senior and Visiting Fellow for Centre for Baptist History and Heritage at Regent’s Park College, Oxford University. In our interview Whelan said, terms like “Angel in the house” or “home as the first garden,” were descriptive terms that authors and pastors began to use in order to esteem the home and the roles of family members. Callum Brown says that during the Victorian Era women had indeed become divine, but now she was an angel confined to the house. Callum G. Brown, The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000 (New York: Psychology, 2001), 58.
always achieved as was seen in novels toward the end of this era. Toward the end of the Victorian Era piety began to become crystallized and institutionalized and the facade began to be exposed as hypocritical.

A historical examination of domestic piety, influenced by the church, reveals four norms that became the standard for Christian families. First, through domestic piety pastors held fathers particularly responsible for the discipleship of their families. Mothers, of course, had a significant spiritual role but fathers had been given a lead role. Second, domestic piety became a term of endearment, meaning that it became a standard by which families were considered “truly religious” and by it, piety, pastors were deemed as qualified or fit for the office of pastor. Third, domestic piety was held as an essential priority for the advancement of the gospel. Spurgeon felt that without the revival of “domestic religion” any hopes of evangelistic or missionary success would be bleak. Fourth, pastors admonished and taught every parent that the salvation of their children’s souls should be the highest aim of Christian parents. By doing so, pastors sought to engage parents in God’s grand redemptive plan to fulfill the Great Commission.

The healthy faith practices of the families in James’s congregation were of utmost importance. Family, to James, was much more than a socio-economic status, earthly relationships, success, or even merely a means to intimacy and childrearing. God ordained

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50As an example of how piety was emblematic and had reached American shores, Timothy Whelan shared with me Maggie—The Girl of the Streets. In this work, Maggie’s drunken parents kick her out of their home when she becomes pregnant. Victorian piety was emblematic for Maggie’s mother. Although she was a terrible parent and a drunk, she exclaims to Maggie upon kicking her out, “I can’t believe you did this after all we have taught you and done for you.” Stephen Crane, Maggie—The Girl of the Streets (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896), 54-65.

the family as a key institution in his redemptive mission. Much of James’s teaching, writing, and ministry was aimed at directing parents toward an eternal purpose. He seldom lost sight of the battle that raged over the souls of men in which the family should have a vested interest: “The institution that is most powerful of all in the formation of character, must be considered as set up with a special intention to prepare the subjects of it for glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life.”52 This high view of marriage and the institution of the family would fasten James’s life, ministry, writings, and sermons to connect domestic piety to God’s redemptive purpose for the world. He would add,

Family is a gift of God from heaven that could not be purchased with money, only God bestows it, as it grants refreshment through this pilgrimage through this wilderness to the celestial Canaan. It is an institution of God, was established in Eden, was honored by the personal attendance of Christ.53

So connected was James to his high view of the institution of family that his entire ministry, writings, and teachings never wandered far from this topic throughout his fifty-five years as a pastor.54

Domestic piety was a term utilized particularly in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries to describe household practices, facilitated by parents, which were intended to shape children as Christians. Domestic piety included planned practices of household worship, frequently termed “family religion,” as well as informal patterns of

52 James, The Family Monitor, 10.

53 Ibid., 14.

54 Dennis Smith, Union Congregational Church-Church Historian, interview by author, West Palm Beach, FL, 26 October 2012. Union Congregational Church began in 1894 and is the second oldest church in West Palm Beach. As we were talking about Carrs Lane and James’s tenure of fifty-four years, Smith replied, “That is absolutely remarkable because Congregationalists historically have the lowest pastoral tenure among Protestant denominations.” Contributing to this is Congregational polity, which limits and restricts pastoral leadership and authority.
parental example. The content and focus of the planned practices of household worship seem to have shifted in the century preceding the life of John Angell James. Prior to the Restoration, family religion had functioned primarily as a supplement and review of the content of public worship on Sundays. In the years following the Restoration, any act of worship occurring outside the established church could be viewed with suspicion, even though the Conventicle Act of the Clarendon Code allowed households to worship together as long as no one other than family members participated.\textsuperscript{55} During this time, family religion developed into a practice less dependent on public worship. Reviews of Sunday sermons persisted in many families,\textsuperscript{56} but family religion moved closer to the patterns that John Angell James included under the heading of “domestic piety.” Family religion included daily practices of prayer and Bible reading, typically shared by the family every morning and every night; singing of psalms also characterized family religion in many households, supplemented in some instances by catechesis.\textsuperscript{57}

**Background**

For the last ten years I have researched the subject of family discipleship. Twenty-five years as a local church pastor has allowed me to discover a disjunction between the church and the family. In 2006, I met Randy Stinson, the Dean of the Church Ministry School at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The growth of this


\textsuperscript{56}Oliver Heywood, *A Narrative of the Holy Life and Happy Death of That Revered, Faithful and Zealous Man of God, and Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Mr. John Angier* (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1685), 60-61.

relationship accelerated my rising passion for family discipleship. I later enrolled at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to pursue a Ph.D. in Family Ministry. My doctoral studies have served to expand and strengthen my passion for family discipleship.

Prior to my enrollment at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I had begun reading the works of nineteenth century nonconformist pastor John Angell James. A few years ago I was offered the opportunity to purchase the complete set of James’s books. By the completion of my Ph.D. coursework, I had researched John Angell James for almost a decade of my life. During this time, John Angell James began to feel like a close relative. Since 2009, Timothy Paul Jones, who has written extensively on the topic of family discipleship, provided tremendous theological perspective and historical context. I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to sit under one of today’s leading theological minds as part of my personal development and doctoral studies.

In my first semester of doctoral studies I studied Theological Anthropology under Timothy Paul Jones and learned much of God’s design for mankind as created in the Image of God. In my second semester, I had Jones for Models of Family and Student Ministry. During this study I was afforded the opportunity to conduct in-depth research of philosophical models of current models and methods of today’s churches. This study allowed me the opportunity to contrast current models of spiritual formation to that of John Angell James. In my third semester I studied Theology of Marriage and Family under Randy Stinson as well as Empirical Research under Michael Wilder. These classes helped me in two primary ways. Theology of Marriage and Family helped me gain great historical and theological insight regarding the family. Empirical Research Methods and Graduate Research seminars provided me with important practical research parameters that have been remarkably helpful to this study. Further seminars have been invaluable to shaping my theological perspective in relation to the family. Hal Pettegrew provided significant
guidance in helping me place James within a proper historical context. In his classes, I was given the opportunity to research beyond my comfort level and to receive critical reproofs and opportunities for corrective rewrites. Every seminar was beneficial as I was given complete access to each teaching professor. Without exception, every professor has invited my classmates and me into their homes as a way of making themselves available to our learning community.

During my doctoral studies I began to write and read regularly on the subject of family discipleship, especially as it pertains to the ministry of John Angell James. The writings of other pastors and authors such as Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, Richard Baxter, John Newton, John Owen, John Bunyan, Matthew Henry, William Jay, and Joe Knox have given me great encouragement with their exhortations concerning parental responsibility for the spiritual formation of their children. In 2006, while continuing my research, I ran across a book written in 1838 by John Angell James entitled The Young Man from Home. After reading this book I was captivated by the prolific writings of James. Pastors, parents, and church leaders have had a growing concern with the number of teens leaving their faith after they leave home. To find a book written in 1838 on this very subject was intriguing. My years of study on James’s life and ministry have not turned up any substantial scholarly research focused on his lifelong fervor on domestic piety.

**Methodology**

The argument proceeds as follows: introduction of John Angell James, biography of James, historical context, examination of his writings and sermons, his position on domestic piety, and implications for pastors and church leaders today. Each of these six areas was researched meticulously in order to comprehend the place of domestic piety in James’s life and ministry. This research methodology reveals the irrefutable impact on the families of James’s congregation, Carrs Lane’s missionary
efforts, the acceptance of his writings, and the impact of his ministry on the city of
Birmingham. This method of study answers the question, “Was domestic piety central to
James’s life and ministry?” in the affirmative.

Research Materials

Data were collected in three ways to support its thesis: primary sources, secondary sources, and personal interviews. I discovered and gained access to over seventy of James’s sermon manuscripts and twenty-two of his published books. In addition to these books and sermons I also found published tracks that were written by James on various topics. First, my argument required a substantial survey of James’s own work. Much of James’s life and ministry are accessible through primary sources accessible in the form of his books, sermons, and tracts. Careful study of these original sources was conducted, and consistent themes were carefully noted. I have personally collected all of James’s published writings and several of his published tracts. I also own James’s unfinished autobiography, later completed by his son Thomas. James’s autobiography also contains several of his personal letters. A substantial survey of James’s own works provided the bulk of significant support to gain an adequate understanding of his beliefs.

Secondly, my travel to James’s ministry city of Birmingham, England, allowed me the opportunity to view archived original sources. The original documents of Carrs

58 Appendix 4 includes a chronological listing of James’s sermons. Beginning March 25, 1810 and ending in 1859. James first published work was The Sunday School Teachers Guide in 1816, and his last was Life and Letters of John Angell James, an unfinished autobiography published after his death.

59 James had fifteen tracts that were published during his lifetime. Many of these tracts are well over one hundred pages in length. His first tract, “Attraction of the Cross,” was published in 1820 and his last was published in 1859. His 1835 tract, “The Flower Faded,” was 192 pages.
Lane’s church history and minutes are held at the Birmingham Library. These records have been well maintained and were made accessible to me during my travel to Birmingham. Carrs Lane also has separate records, books, and historical data that served to further my research. These resources provided great historical context in relation to James’s social and historical framework. The Birmingham Library’s archive allowed access to original documents including: biographical data, historical context, personal letters, church minutes and records, city time period records, related pictures, certificates, and other reflective work. These primary sources provided additional help in tracing James’s ideas within the contexts of his pastoral ministry at Carrs Lane. A plethora of primary and secondary resources mentioning James’s teachings and ministry presented pertinent research data. Several historians have studied England, Birmingham, and the social movements that impacted the world in which James lived, and their work provided a framework for understanding James in his own historical context.

Thirdly, there were four individuals with whom I conducted interviews concerning James. In order to be thoroughly confident as to the validity of my research I secured meetings with Tom Nettles, Michael Haykin, Timothy Whelan and John Briggs. Nettles and Haykin are highly regarded American historians from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. As I had hoped, my personal interviews with Nettles proved invaluable. Tom Nettles pointed me to many resources that were not originally in my bibliography. These works provided great perspective that helped me gain insight into Dissenters, Congregationalist, and Spurgeon’s assessments of James’s writings. Michael Haykin was born in James’s ministry city of Birmingham, England, and he took a great interest in this study. Academically, my time with Haykin was inestimable. His insight into piety, James, nonconformity, and Carrs Lane was incredibly beneficial. He directed me to Birmingham’s city archives that proved a rich resource regarding James and Carrs Lane’s original resources. Haykin gave me three books that he wrote. These resources provided great assistance throughout my research.
In addition, I interviewed Tim Whelan from Georgia Southern University. His study of Nonconformist in England from 1766-1840 overlaps much of James’s life and ministry. Whelan received the prestigious Research Fellowship at Ludwig Maximillans-Universitat, Munich for this research. My interview with Whelan provided great scholarly insight into James’s historical context especially in relation to the Victorian era. Whelan gave several tips that expanded my research while in Birmingham and increased my research exponentially. He also brought me his work on nonconformity and culture that will soon be published. Whelan introduced me to the National Registrar Archives, which is an instrumental tool for anyone doing scholarly historical research. My ability to conduct the required research for this dissertation was greatly strengthened by my time with Timothy Whelan. Whelan was kind to give me the name of John Briggs, a friend of his from Birmingham.

John Briggs, who resides in Birmingham, England, was the Director of Baptist History at Oxford and Principal and Pro Vice-Principal of the University of Birmingham. His research interest involved Church and Society, especially the history of nonconformity and the ecumenical movement. His recent publications that added to this dissertation are *The Sunday School Movement*, *Studies in the Growth and Decline of Sunday Schools*, *Protestant Nonconformist Texts: Volume IV the Twentieth Century*, ‘Baptists and the campaign for the Abolition of the Slave Trade’ in *The Baptist Quarterly*, editor, *Pulpit and People: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Baptist Life and Thought.* He was also the general editor and contributor of *A Dictionary of European Baptist Life and Thought.* I spent three hours at Briggs’s home while I was in Birmingham and he was very familiar with James, his church, his denomination and his ministry.

Through my research of James, I was fortunate to also meet Blair Waddell, who has studied James extensively through his Ph.D. research. Blair is a graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who is nearing completion of his Ph.D. at Stirling University. Under David Bebbington’s supervision, Waddell is studying a contemporary
and friend of John Angell James, William Jay. I have had innumerable interviews, e-mail correspondences and Skype meetings with Waddell that have been invaluable to my research. My conversations with him have especially helped with placing James within his correct historical setting. Waddell’s research interest is William Jay’s church polity as a Congregationalist. Because of limited primary sources regarding Jay and his church, Blair has found himself studying James and Carrs Lane as an additional area of study for his dissertation. The contribution of Waddell concerning the nuances of James’s life, his church, his family, as well as his theological and philosophical positions has been incommunicable.

**Limitations**

Two limiting factors must be taken into account during this dissertation. First, it should be noted that there were many aspects of James’s life that are not being researched in this dissertation. Some aspects of James’s ministry that could be further studied are pastoral tenure, congregational polity, influence in congregational unity, or James’s complementarian perspective during the nineteenth century. It is acknowledged that all of the aforementioned aspects of James’s life shaped much of his ministry, but this work does not seek to expound on them in great detail.

Second, this dissertation seeks to draw upon factual data predominantly from primary sources in an effort to avoid unwarranted conclusions or authorial biases. The use of secondary sources were especially beneficial in attempts to place James in historical context. The author of this dissertation chose to look chiefly at primary sources. This means that much secondary literature on James’s general context was left unexamined even though all secondary literature about James himself was thoroughly covered. The degree in which the six historical movements (Nonconformist, Evangelicalism, Sunday School Movement, Industrial Revolution, Growth of Birmingham, Anti-Slavery) were considered actually impacted James’s life and ministry is still open to further study.
 CHAPTER 2

AN EXAMINATION OF JAMES’S EARLY LIFE
AND HIS HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To gain a correct and comprehensive perspective of James’s teachings, writings, and ministry impact, one must first seek a foundational understanding of the societal movements that surrounded him. This is particularly true realizing that these social movements helped shape the life and ministry of James. Attention will be given to reconstruct generally James’s childhood, college years, and his ministry calling while broadly considering six social movements of James’s day: nonconformity, evangelicalism, Industrial Revolution, growth of Birmingham, the abolition of the slave trade, and the Sunday school movement. Regarding James’s role in the moral and spiritual movements of his day, John Campbell said,

He was the pivot on which many moral and spiritual movements, both great and small, home and foreign, for the welfare of man and the glory of God, mainly turned. His lot was to be a leader of men; and hence he reflected luster on the town in which he spent his days, and the great community he lived and died in.1

The aforementioned movements formed the historical context that was shaping much of James’s ministry framework. Considerations given within this chapter will allow subsequent chapters to concentrate on specifics of James’s writings, sermons, and ministry in order to validate this dissertation’s overarching argument of the centrality of domestic piety to the ministry of John Angell James.

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Childhood

John Angell James’s childhood began in relative obscurity and with little fanfare. James was born in 1785 in Blandford Forum. Blandford is located in Southwest England, close to the English Channel. James’s small hometown had a population of fewer than 3,000 people at the time of his birth. He was the fourth child but the eldest son. He had three older sisters named Harriet, Jane, and Sarah, and two younger brothers named Thomas and James. This son of a draper said of his own upbringing, “I have nothing to boast of as regards the distinctions of earthly heraldry, none of titled, rank and fame can be found in the line of my ancestry. They were not men of wealth, but belonged to the yeomanry of the country.” James did not live under the pretense that he came from nobility, status, or from a prestigious family. James’s obscure and humble beginnings and his relentless spirit uniquely prepared him for a little known, small church that awaited him in Birmingham, England.

James considered his father as somewhat a common man that was not overly intellectual. James’s father was a linen draper and maker of wire buttons. In his unfinished autobiography James said of his father, “He had very little influence, and took comparatively little pains, in the formation of his children’s characters. Yet he was kind

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2Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of England*, 4th ed. (London: S. Lewis & Company, 1811), 4: 240. Blandford is located in the county of Dorset about 104 miles southeast of London. In 1811, the town had a population of approximately 3,109 people. This market town manufactured high quality lace and shirt buttons. Blandford’s economy was also driven by its agricultural market, which opens regularly to this day. In the 2001 census 8,760 people were living in Blandford.


to us, and concerned for our happiness, and generally sought our welfare. He was of a
peaceable disposition, and fond of my mother.”¹⁄⁶ James held his father with respect but no
support has been found in any of his writings for his father’s active involvement in his
spiritual formation. His father was an admirable, respectable, hard and loyal worker at the
drapery where he worked. Outside of his father’s attendance at church there was no
evidence of a spiritually renewed mind and it was not until later in life that he came to
Christ in repentance and faith.⁷ In the multitude of books, tracts, sermons, and letters that
James wrote, there is very little mention of his father.

It was James’s mother’s devout piety that shaped his spiritual formation during
his formative years. James considered his mother as someone with a sweet, loving,
peaceable, and gentle disposition.⁸ She was a woman of genuine piety and her private
prayer life was noticeably expressive. James wrote of his mother’s prayers: “She was a
woman of sincere piety. Her heart was beyond her head, as is the case, I believe, with
many of God’s children. She was so fervent in her private devotions, that she could be
heard far beyond the precincts of her closet. This is hardly *shutting the door* and praying
to our Father in *secret.*”⁹ James recalls how he later imitated her practice of prayers and
how he was mocked: “This was not confined to her, for I fell into the same fault in the
early part of my religious history, and occasioned some remarks, if not ridicule, by it.”¹⁰

James’s father died of diabetes at 59, about five years after James’s mother passed.
Congregational Minister, C. R. Howell, said of James, “Few names are better known to the religious public in England and America, than the name of the Rev. John Angell James. Mr. James’s mother was a most devout Christian woman; and to her prayers Mr. James was grateful.”11 Howell attributes James’s success and worldwide impact to his mother’s influence. James unequivocally substantiates the influence of his mother’s domestic piety:

I remember her taking me into her chamber, and pouring her fervent and pious breathings over my infant head. And who can tell how much of all that follows in my history is to be traced up to a mother’s prayers? How important a part in the working out of the great scheme of human redemption and the salvation of a lost world will, when the Divine scheme shall be revealed, appear to have been borne by pious mothers!12

James unquestionably valued the impact of his mother’s domestic example. Her genuine piety directed toward her children shaped James’s life.

James’s mother was a woman of eminent prayer. Just as Timothy was admonished to remember the faith of his mother, James remembered the personal piety and faithful prayers of his mother. When considering Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Elizabeth, the mother of John; Eunice, the mother of Timothy; and Mary, the mother of Jesus, James said, “Mothers are the esteemed of all mankind.”13 Biographer John Campbell commented on the faithfulness of James’s mother’s prayers for each of her children:

His mother was a woman of eminent godliness, and to her care and her prayers, to his very latest years, he constantly expressed the largest and most grateful


12 James, *The Life and Letters*, 15.

acknowledgements. His mother used to take the children one by one to her chamber and pray with them there, and earnestly beseech God to take them into His family, and make them forever His own. The blessed result of this maternal piety was, that all the children who lived embraced the faith and became Christian people.14

His mother certainly had much to pray about as she considered this son, John Angell, as her chief trouble.15 There is no debating that James’s mother played a momentous role in the development of his earnest conviction toward domestic piety.16 Her faithful prayers, maternal piety, and model of obedience served as a noteworthy, memorable influence on James’s life during his early years. As a token of respect and affection, these words are inscribed upon his parents’ burial stone, “Their children shall rise and call them blessed.”17 James, his siblings and multiple authors all validate the eternal influence of his mother’s pious prayers.

**College and Calling**

Educationally, James’s career could not have started worse. James began grade school at Okeford in Blandford Forum. At the age of eight, having “contracted some improper associations,” he was sent to a boarding school that lacked educational credentials.18 As a student he was not considered bookish but it has been recorded by one of his teachers that he did excel in two areas: playground and practical jokes.19 At age ten


17James, *The Life and Letters*, 17.

18Ibid., 18.

19William Hendry Stowell, *The Eclectic Review* (London: Judd and Glass, 1860), 3: 181; James, *The Life and Letters*, 6-7, emphasis added. James himself did not consider himself to have above average intelligence. In his autobiography he gives four reasons why a biography should not be written on his life. His fourth reason was that his
he was moved to another boarding school where he was given a general education and learned Latin. James, along with the other lucky boarders of this school, was required to bathe each morning at a nearby brook in all types of weather.\textsuperscript{20} Bad companions, poor schools, excelling at playground and practical jokes, and being in his third school by age ten are not attributes that pointed to future educational aspirations.

James demonstrated early in his life that he was a fighter. A former schoolmate, years later, inquiring what had become of him “would exclaim in wonder, John Angell, What! Thank Dorsetshire for that thick headed fool, he was fit for nothing but fighting!”\textsuperscript{21} The editors of James’s autobiography received a note from a school fellow from Bingham that stated, “He had been in a battle-royal with James that lasted an hour and a half; however, they became friends almost immediately after the fight.”\textsuperscript{22} Ellen Rose in \textit{The Day of Rest} agreed with James’s schoolmates and recorded remembrances of his school years: “At school James was only distinguished for fighting. He gave one boy a terrible thrashing for calling him 3 pug-nosed Presbyterian.”\textsuperscript{23} Throughout James’s life and ministry he fought for the abolition of slavery, the souls of children, the gospel impact both in Birmingham and worldwide, and James fought for eternal impact of domestic piety.

\textsuperscript{20}E. L. Stow, “Famous Preachers of Birmingham, Angell James, He Brought Calm and Success to Carrs Lane,” \textit{Birmingham Weekly Post}, 5 November 1848; see appendix 1, figure A1.

\textsuperscript{21}Andrew Cameron, \textit{The Family Treasury} (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1861), 5, 6.

\textsuperscript{22}James, \textit{The Life and Letters}, 20.

\textsuperscript{23}Ellen Ross, \textit{The Day of Rest} (London: Strahan & Company, 1875), 746.
James’s early life was marked with failures, difficulties, and struggles but it was not an indicator of future gospel effectiveness. Many young boys of James’s day followed their father in his occupation. There was really nothing in James’s early years that gave indication of him pursuing higher education or becoming an author of multiple volumes. He lacked fatherly leadership, he had bad associations, he was removed from multiple schools, he was constantly fighting, and he became a school dropout before he ever attended high school. James’s life was heading in the wrong direction and his parents were anxious for his future and had sought on many occasions to guide their wandering son. James at age thirteen began his apprenticeship as a linen draper and wire button maker in Poole.\(^{24}\)

James began teaching boys Sunday School while living in Poole. It was while working as a Sunday school teacher as a teenager that James first felt the desire to engage in the work of Christian ministry.\(^{25}\) He longed to leave his apprenticeship as a draper so that he could train for ministry but his father urged him to reconsider and to serve God as a tradesman. His father was extremely unwilling that his son should pursue ministry and had made special arrangements to secure his son’s apprenticeship. Despite all his

\(^{24}\)Frank Moore Colby and Talcott Williams, *The New International Encyclopædia* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1918), s.v. “John Angell James”; John Waddington, *Congregational History, 1700-1800: In Relation to Contemporaneous Events, Education, the Eclipse of Faith, Revivals and Christian Missions* (London: Longman, Greene and Company, 1878), 178. During the Industrial Revolution, it was not uncommon for young boys to begin work in factories or join their father’s occupation. It was not uncommon for children to work long hours in atrocious conditions, which drove the Industrial Revolution. Parliament acts were introduced in 1802 and 1819 to regulate the use of children in the workplace. In 1833, the Factory Act passed making it illegal for children under nine to be employed in textile industries. England still had a long way to go.

struggles and all the things that appeared to stand in James’s way, God had a purpose and plan for James’s life.

In 1802, James left Poole and became a pupil of David Bogue at the Gosport Congregational Academy to train for the ministry. While attending Gosport, he was baptized and became a member of the Christian church. During his years of training to become a pastor, he became acquainted with a shoemaker named John Poole. Poole and his wife were genuinely pious and James counted his acquaintance with Poole as precious and hallowed. The authentic piety that James saw in this faithful man solidified his passion for the gospel ministry.

When at the zenith of his popularity, he delivered an address at a Sunday-school anniversary, from which we take the following excerpt: “During the latter part of my residence at Poole, the Sunday-school, by the instrumentality of gratuitous teachers, came into pretty general use. An application was made to many of the young people, and me among the rest, to come forward and assist in this work. I accepted the invitation, and took my place at the head of a class. The work was exceedingly agreeable to me, and I became much attached to my children, and much interested in their welfare. I needed no stimulating addresses from time to time to make me regular and punctual in my attendance; for the occupation was my delight. The other teachers were also devoted and in earnest. We loved the employment, and found stimulus and reward enough in the work itself to keep us going on with it.”

The impact of John Poole’s genuine piety and James’s introduction of the work of Sunday school were two early spiritually significant factors shaping James’s call into ministry.

James was only at the Academy for two and a half years. James wrote about

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26 Kenneth Scott LaTourette, *The Nineteenth Century in Europe the Protestant and Eastern Churches* (Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis, 1973), 2: 323. David Bogue established the Gosport Congregational Academy in 1780. Nonconformist were not able to attend nationally supported universities; schools like these were created to educate young pastors. This particular school became a college for training missionaries.


28 Ibid., 14: 478.
his time at Gosport as doing very little in way of preparing him for ministry. When he was older, James reflected back on the quality of the education that he received at the Gosport Academy with regret: “My literary advantages at Gosport were of a most slender kind. Bogue, though possessing a great mind and noble heart, was not a great scholar. His theology was exclusively dogmatic. Of hermeneutics we heard little, of exegesis, nothing.”

Historians Davidoff and Hall said that James was poorly educated and is best described as sketchy. When his younger brother inquired into ministry preparation at Gosport, James wrote him a letter of protest and suggested either Hoxton or Homerton as places he should study. James’s wrote in a letter, dated September 6, 1811, a protest to his brother,

I must enter my protest at once against Gosport. I have various objections to your going there. The plan of education is, and must be, from the shortness of the time and the important engagements of the tutors, exceedingly defective—this, therefore, I set entirely out of the question. The choice must lie between Hoxton and Homerton. On most accounts I prefer the latter. It forms no objection to it in my opinion, at least not a sufficient one to deter a pious young man.

James’s years at Gosport may have been a complete loss had James not met his mentor John Poole during this time.

At age seventeen, while at the Gosport Academy, James was put on the school’s preaching list and was sent out to preach in village congregations. Through the preaching assignments, James learned many lessons which opened countless opportunities. During James’s first preaching assignment he was confronted for delivering unsound

29 James, *The Life and Letters*, 51.

30 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 126.

31 James, *The Life and Letters*, 52.

theology.\textsuperscript{33} Once after a church service James was invited to a social event and joined the others in dancing. His dancing offended many in the church and they never again attended to hear him preach.\textsuperscript{34} As a young leader, James learned that he was always being watched and being held to a different standard. The preaching opportunities provided various learning experiences for the young James.

James became the pastor of Carrs Lane after a visit during his summer vacation in 1804. James was invited as a pulpit supply to this small, struggling church in Birmingham. Little did he know that he was being viewed as a possible pastoral candidate for the church. James so charmed the small membership of Carrs Lane that in a very short time they pressed him to stay amongst them.\textsuperscript{35} This small church observed James’s giftedness and confirmed his calling by inviting him to become their pastor (see appendix 3, figure A25). An unnamed church Lady and member of Carrs Lane recorded in her personal diary that James assumed the position of pastor on Sept 6, 1805.\textsuperscript{36} His first years of ministry were characterized by disappointment and failure, but after that things flourished.

\textsuperscript{33}James, \textit{The Life and Letters}, 56-58. It was determined that James had confused his thoughts and that he was not intentionally in theological error. These preaching assignments sharpened James as a young preacher in many ways.

\textsuperscript{34}Eliakim Littell and Robert S. Littell, “The Life of John Angell James,” \textit{The Living Age} 71 (1861): 133.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., 134. See appendix 3, figure A24. The Carrs Lane Church Book Meeting and Minutes from August 31, 1783 to August 1810 show James’s first visits and the church’s favored response.

\textsuperscript{36}See appendix 2, figure A7. This diary of an “unnamed Lady” was found in the Birmingham Library archives. Her diary records a September 1805 attendance at Carrs Lane, which just happened to be James’s first sermon as resident minister of Carrs Lane.
Social Movements

The six social movements that were prevailing in John Angell James’s ministry included: nonconformity, evangelicalism, Industrial Revolution, growth of Birmingham, the abolition of the slave trade, and Sunday school. There was not a day during James’s ministry years that he was not promoting or battling, writing or preaching concerning one of more of these social movements. These six social movements were ever before him throughout his ministry. One might argue that the movement to abolish slavery ended for James in 1833, with the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act. When slavery was abolished in England, James quickly turned his attention to the abolishment of slavery in America. In the subsequent sections of this chapter careful attention will be given to adduce evidence for why these are the six movements that best help one to gain a greater historical understanding of John Angell James.

Nonconformity

During the reign of Charles II, English Parliament passed a series of Penal Laws known as the Clarendon Code. Michael Haykin says, “The Clarendon Code made Nonconformists second-class citizens. This would have influenced later generations to want to become Anglicans to escape the stigma of being outside the Church of England.” These included the Corporation Act, the Act of Uniformity, the Conventicle Act and the Five Mile Act. The Corporation Act passed in 1661 and it excluded nonconformist from political office. The Act of Uniformity in 1662 required Anglican

37 Michael Haykin, Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality, e-mail correspondence with author, March 16, 2013.

ordination for all clergy, and nonconformists were unwilling to conform to this ruling. As a result, nearly 2,000 clergymen left the established church, in what became known as the Great Ejection. After the Act of Uniformity was passed by parliament, nonconformists were English subjects belonging to any non-Christian religion or non-Anglican church. In 1664, an additional code to the Act of Uniformity called “The Conventicle Act” was passed. This restricted many nonconformists to practice their public worship because this Act forbade the assembling of dissenters. Family worship, under “The Conventicle Act” was to be allowed, but more than five people beyond the members of the family could not attend the gatherings.

Domestic piety for nonconformist was not a luxury or optional spiritual discipline but rather a last resort for passing on their faith practice to the next generation. For seventeenth century nonconformist, John Rastrick, “These restrictions made family religion the only safe outlet for voluntary religion. Led by the householder and not an outside minister, family religion stopped just short of crossing the legal line between domestic piety and Protestant conventicle.” The Conventicle Acts imposed fines, imprisonment, and death on all persons over 16 years of age who attended worship in any


place where the liturgy was not used.  

44  Timothy Whelan comments on the Conventicle Act’s influence on nonconformist’s practice of family religion:

I think the primary reason the Conventicle Act stimulated family worship was that it was already a standard practice and prohibiting that would have violated Anglican principles as well. But did the Conventicle Act promote family religion? I would think it did because it became more of a necessity than ever for dissenters to perpetuate their cause.  

45 Additionally, this Act was followed in 1665 by The Five Mile Act, making it a penal offence for any non-conforming minister to be found within five miles of any town. It was the violations of the Conventicle Act that began John Bunyan’s work while in the Bedfordshire.  

46 The Test Act of 1673 made all holders of civil and military offices and places of trust under the Crown to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and receive the Anglican sacrament.  

47 Domestic piety for the nonconformist was not a luxury or optional spiritual discipline, but rather a last resort for passing on their faith practice to the next generation. These Acts were burdensome and suppressing for nonconformists and would shape their religious practice for centuries to come. While these Acts significantly affected nonconformists, it was the Clarendon Code that influenced later generations of dissenters.

One hundred and fifty years later, James and other prominent nonconforming pastors remained convinced that churches should be autonomous from governmental
These pastors embraced what they believed was a scripturally supported, self-governing, church polity:

They have held from the beginning that the proper organized form of the Church is not national, syndical or diocesan, but in self-governing congregations—hence the name, Congregationalism. Each of these congregations—or, more properly, churches—is to be composed exclusively of members of professed Christian faith and experience, united one to another, and to their Lord, by a covenant, assent to which is required on admission to the church. Of each congregation Christ is the immediate Head, hence no superior human authority can interfere with its control of its own concerns. It chooses its own officers, regulates its own worship, formulates its creed and covenant in words of its own selection, and conducts all its business by the votes of its membership, either directly or through committees. Hence, Congregational Church government is spiritual democracy.

Nonconformist or dissenters were viewed as second-class citizens in England from the seventeenth century through most of the nineteenth century. They were unable to apply for university education, they could not run for political office, and their marriages were not legally recognized. In English society throughout James’s life, nonconformists were perpetual outsiders.

John Angell James, like his father, was an ardent nonconformist. His background, church ministry, and personal conviction were decidedly of this dissenting persuasion. Clyde Benfield posited, “James was particularly influenced by the


51 Michael Haykin, Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theology Seminary, interview by author, Louisville, KY, October 2012.

52 Robert W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), 579. See appendix 2, figure A8. A copy of the original 1803 certificate of dissenting ministers was found in James’s papers after his passing.
nonconforming views of Matthias Maurice who wrote, *Social Religion Exemplified.*"\(^5^3\) James personally felt that nonconformity was a separation from the Anglican system of the “error of religious doctrine.”\(^5^4\) James held that three foundational principles should support every nonconforming church:

First, the all-sufficient and exclusive authority of the Scriptures, as a rule of faith and practice. Secondly, the consequent denial of the right of legislature and ecclesiastical conventions to impose any rites, ceremonies, observances, or interpretations of the Word of God upon our belief and practice. Thirdly, the unlimited and inalienable right of every man to expound the Word of God for himself, and to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.\(^5^5\)

John Angell James’s biographer, John Campbell, wrote that James’s nonconformity was a personal conviction:

Mr. James—his Dissent from the Established Church deserves special notice. His Nonconformity was of a thoroughly Scriptural character; it was the Nonconformity of Owen and his noble compeers—a thing not of faction or division, but of conscience, decided and inflexible, yet peaceful and loving. Mr. James greatly prized, and firmly held, his principles on this subject; and, on proper occasions, he was always prepared to state, and, if necessary, to defend them, in a manner at once chivalrous and charitable.\(^5^6\)

James’s personal convictions encourage him to preach and write on the principles of the nonconformist position. He sought to define nonconformity while inspiring his fellow nonconformist.


\(^5^5\)James, *The Life and Letters*, 171.

\(^5^6\)Campbell, *John Angel James*, 79-80.
Congregationalist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Quakers, and Independent churches were the prominent eighteenth and nineteenth-century denominations that formed nonconforming churches. These churches maintained,

Nonconformist rejection of the intervention of the state in their affairs sprang from the conviction that no secular power had the right; religious liberty must mean not only the right to worship in peace but also the right to run their own business, to marry in their own chapels and to stand for public office.\(^{57}\)

For the churches within these denominations, the right for autonomy and independence remained a primary driver throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries in England.

Ten years before his death, James connected piety numerous times as a key attribute to be commended when he wrote *The Protestant Nonconformity as a Sketch of its General History*. In this work he admonishes nonconformist to consider their rich heritage:

Nonconformists have a history rich in the records of *piety*, heroism, and martyrdom, and which is adorned with the names of men, to whom even by the admission of their opponents, England is much indebted for the most precious of her possessions—her civil and religious liberties. Dissenters have no cause to be ashamed of their pedigree, and they would be more convinced of this, if they would make themselves better acquainted with the virtues, the struggles, and the sufferings of their illustrious ancestors: men of whom they are not worthy unless they are prepared to imitate their courage and their constancy, their glorious union of exalted piety with their ardent attachment to the cause of freedom.\(^{58}\)

James and his church’s involvement in Nonconformity were harmonious—James as leader and Carrs Lane as the “cathedral of nonconformity.”\(^{59}\) James’s leadership, writing, and labors elevated the influence of Nonconformist.

\(^{57}\)Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 74.

\(^{58}\)James, *Protestant Nonconformity*, ix.

“The Christian Remembrancer,” written in 1862, placed James as a leading figure of nonconformity: “Probably, no better central figure could have been chosen than Angell James, from the long period in which he occupied a prominent place, from his influence with his party in England and America from his practical powers and also from the weight of his private character and unusually consistent career.”60 According to James’s successor, Robert Dale states that James was widely acknowledged as a leader for nonconformity during his lifetime:

We had a race of preachers in Independent pulpits—Wilkes and Hyatt, and Leifchild and Parsons, and John Angell James, and their contemporaries—who were true children of the Revival. The leaders of Nonconformity were, most of them, men of natural eloquence and fervid temperament; they knew how to excite and to impress the common heart; their faith in Christ and in the Gospel was unvexed by the speculative troubles of later years, and they preached with a vehemence, a solemnity, and a power which produced immense results.61

After James’s death others said of him,

John Angell James has been so long a name in the Nonconformist world, and as an acknowledged leader he took so conspicuous a part in the popular religious movements of a long and busy period, that we make no apology for introducing his biography to our readers.62

John Briggs said that James was the foremost leader throughout his lifetime.63

Nonconformists had tried unsuccessfully for centuries to gain access to national universities. From Oxford, since 1581, dissenters had been wholly excluded from matriculation. At Cambridge, dissenters were allowed to enter and matriculate but


63John Briggs, President of the Baptist Historical Society and a former Pro-vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham in the UK, interview by author, Birmingham, England, 17 November, 2012.
since 1616 they had been prevented from taking degrees.\textsuperscript{64} Although Nonconformists were excluded from national universities, their leaders maintained a high view of education. Timothy Whelan posited that in many ways the nonconformist educational system was stronger than state universities in many respects.\textsuperscript{65} Their high view for education can been seen throughout Nonconformists leadership:

Though excluded from the Universities, and denied access to the national fountains of literature, by a bigoted and narrow-minded policy, and thus left to provide as we can for the education of our own ministry, we have among us some, who in the departments of Biblical criticism, Greek and Hebrew literature, systematic theology, and English composition, would be referred to as splendid ornaments of the Anglican hierarchy.\textsuperscript{66}

Dissenters were not shrinking back and their growing numbers continued to place pressure on government officials and parliament.

Membership of Congregationalist and nonconforming churches grew rapidly toward the end of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. An example of the growth of nonconformity can be seen in the growth of James’s denomination: “Between 1750 and 1800 Congregationalist doubled and increased almost fourfold again by 1838.”\textsuperscript{67} With all the persecution they had endured, it is almost unfathomable to believe that by the time The National Religious Census of 1851 was conducted, the total nonconformist population was very close to that of the Church of England. The growing

\textsuperscript{64}Frederick Sanders Pulling, The Dictionary of English History (London: Cassell and Company, 1884), 81.

\textsuperscript{65}Timothy Whelan, Professor in the English Department of Georgia Southern University, interview by author, Jacksonville, FL, 9 November 2012.

\textsuperscript{66}Dale, History of English Congregationalism, 627, 628.

nonconforming population and the subsequent pressures on parliament led to a huge victory when the Act of 1871 passed. This allowed dissenters free access into all national universities.\textsuperscript{68} All churches in every city were impacted by the expansive growth of nonconformity. Carrs Lane, for example, had a membership in the late 1700s of fewer than twenty and by the mid nineteenth century their membership was close to 1,000 and its buildings had experienced multiple enlargements.

In James’s book, \textit{Protestant Nonconformity as a Sketch of its General History}, James connects nonconformity as a shaping factor for the churches in Birmingham as well as one’s personal piety. James says nonconformists have a rich history of piety and that piety was the highest form of self-governance.\textsuperscript{69} So that no one could question the purpose of James’s treatise of nonconformists’ influence on churches in Birmingham, James closes the book with these final words connecting nonconformity with personal piety:

\begin{quote}
It is to the immoderate attachment to secular interest, the love of power, and the want of reverence for truth, not to the obscurities of Revelation, we must impute the unhappy contentions among Christians; maladies, which nothing can correct, but deep and genuine piety. The true \textit{schismatic} is not so properly the person who declines a compliance with what he judges to be wrong, though he may be mistaken in that judgment, as the man who, like the author before us, sedulously employs every artifice to alienate the affections of good men from each other.\textsuperscript{70}
\end{quote}

The message of piety was a core principle of nonconformity. No matter the season of life in which he preached or the stroke of his pen, James saw nonconformist beliefs and practices as shaping factors for piety.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[69] James, \textit{Protestant Nonconformity}, 15.
\item[70] Ibid., 279.
\end{footnotes}
Nonconformity appeared to offer little future for their youth due to their persecutions. For these youth, leaving nonconformity meant a recognized legal marriage, acceptance into state universities, and no longer being treated as second-class citizens. Haykin has said that nonconformists were not only concerned for their youth leaving their faith, but also that they were concerned with them leaving nonconformity. Many nonconformists accepted the practice of addressing its youth on the first Sunday of the New Year. This was meant to be a statement, New Year, first Sunday of the year, of first importance: addressing all nonconforming youth in genuine Christian piety. James addressed and wrote often to the concern of young men and young women leaving home. In a 1850 New Year’s address called the “Chief End of Life,” James instructs the next generation of nonconformists to consider domestic happiness and pious household as a wise means to true religion. Nonconformist youth were admonished in the doctrine of personal and domestic piety through these annual addresses. Nonconformists’ parents were encouraged to seek the revival of domestic piety.

Evangelicalism

The phenomenon of this protestant movement cannot be assigned to any single Christian denomination. Evangelicalism was a growing worldwide phenomenon during

71Haykin, interview. See appendix 1, figure A6.
72Ibid.

73An example of the priority of piety can be seen in a review of five of James’s New Year’s sermons. Piety was a prominent and clear theme in each of these sermons. The word piety was used as a term fifty-six times in these messages. The sermons researched were: “The Foundation, Construction and Eternity of Character,” January 1852; “The Chief End of Life,” January 1850; “Youth Warned,” January 1824; “A New Year’s Solemn Warning, The Force and Important of Habit,” January 1856; and “Religious Education of Children,” January 1846.

74David W Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History From
James’s ministry life and its central figures included John Wesley, David Brainerd, William Carey, George Whitfield, Charles Spurgeon, William Wilberforce, David Livingstone, Charles Finney, Robert Murray M’Cheyne, Dwight L. Moody, Andrew Murray and many others. Evangelicals were shaping England, America and many parts of the world. Evangelicals shared biblical convictions and battled social injustices that united evangelical leaders and their followers from across many Christian denominations.

Nineteenth-century Oxford professor, Henry Parry Liddon, said of this movement, “The deepest and most fervid religion in England during the first three decades of the 19th century was that of the Evangelicals.”\textsuperscript{75} The National Religious Census of 1851 recorded that 54 percent of the adult population of England and Wales went to church.\textsuperscript{76} From 1805 down to his death, John Angell James was one of the most effective evangelical preachers of his day.\textsuperscript{77} Evangelicals came from varied backgrounds and different Christian denominations.

Evangelicalism could not be dismissed as anti-intellectual, illogical, or theoretical. Evangelicals had achieved intellectual respectability, without which they could hardly have exercised so much official influence and effected significant social change. Their respected influence grew beyond the four walls of the church. Evangelicals were aware of world events and engaged with perseverance to right the wrong they

\textsuperscript{75}Henry Parry Liddon, \textit{Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey} (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1893), 4: 356.


\textsuperscript{77}David Bebbington, \textit{The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody} (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 135.
encountered. One example of how evangelicals sought to shape their world can be seen in their efforts to abolish slavery. Abolishing slavery required the best of evangelical minds, logical argument and sensible persuasion. Eugene Stock stated the growing influence of evangelicalism was indisputably the strongest spiritual force in the country.\textsuperscript{78} The phenomenon of evangelical influence was supported as they gained respectability and as their numbers continued to grow.

Social movements, economics, politics, the family and societal injustices were being shaped by evangelical thought. Historian John Wolffe, author of \textit{The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney}, wrote of the expanse of evangelical influence:

\begin{quote}
During the rapid growth between the 1790s and the 1840s English-speaking evangelicals was a turbulent sea pulled by powerful tides of spiritual impulse and social change, generating many lesser currents and eddies. Evangelical conviction molded the lives of countless individuals in enormously diverse situations, from the very rich to the very poor; men, women and children; black and white, slaves and free. It had profound implications for gender roles and family life, for the fabric of society and for political endeavor.\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

Economic business practices, child labor laws, slavery, education of children, anti-poverty, women’s rights, and temperance were some of the social issues that evangelicals sought to impact from their biblically persuaded position. An example of how evangelicals maximized their influence to fight social injustices can be seen specifically in John Angell James’s efforts to cultivate strong links with American evangelicals. James and the prominent Baptist (and sometime editor of the \textit{Anti-Slavery Reporter}) John Howard Hinton (1791-1873) promoted collaboration with his American


\textsuperscript{79}John Wolffe, \textit{The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney} (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2007), 11.
Evangelicals harnessed their collective influence to effect change in the world in which they lived.

Evangelicals made the family a central ministry focus: “The education of the young in the ways of godliness was a product of this revival.”

John Angell James, Charles Spurgeon, John Wesley, and other evangelical pastors during their day began to mention domestic piety and the God-given responsibility of parents directed toward their children in their sermons and writings. James’s sermons were certainly being shaped by this evangelical phenomenon:

Parents have virtually handed over their children to ministers, and ministers, instead of concerning themselves right earnestly about the business of catechetical instruction, or other private means of gaining an influence over the minds of the young, have contented themselves with the exercises of the Sabbath and the sanctuary. Domestic religious instruction and education, and ministerial, or, rather, pastoral care of the children of church members, were scarcely ever at a lower point among all denominations of evangelical professing Christians than in the present day. The young are left to the pulpit and the presses, which, it is admitted, are powerful means of instructing and impressing; but the judicious, systematic, persevering, and affectionate labors of the parlor and the vestry are most lamentably neglected, or only perfunctorily carried forward. Parents, you are guilty; ministers, you are guilty.

Spurgeon added, “May all our friends have a like blessing; and may young people commencing life be wise enough to perceive that family piety and domestic happiness must go together: let them not expect the first without the second.”

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82 John Angell James, “New Year’s Address.” *Church Guardian and Church of England Magazine* (1847). That nonconformist James’s sermons were printed in The Church of England’s Magazine is another example demonstrating his receptivity as a respected national leader and pastor.

83 George Carter Needham and Adoniram Judson Gordon, *The Life and Labors*
shaped pastoral ministries of pastors like James with an unwavering emphasis on the family and the roles that each member in this God-given institution played in its redemptive mission.

**Industrial Revolution**

The Industrial Revolution marks a major turning point in world history. This revolution shaped every aspect of civilization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Cities grew, family dynamics were redefined, and commerce was ever expanding. Industries of textiles and iron were experiencing amazing growth as the improvements in the travel systems made the exporting of goods possible. The development of the steam engine and improvement to travel contributed greatly to this growth and they spurred the possibility of mass production. From the most far-reaching areas of the world to the center of commercialization, every culture felt the impact of the Industrial Revolution.

Families were among those institutions most affected by the Industrial Revolution. Before the Industrial Revolution, many families lived in rural areas in the country where father was mostly home and families were together. The Industrial Revolution took the father away from their families and in many instances, mothers as well. Children and youth were left with little or no adult supervision. The emergence of factories and jobs outside the home created new tensions felt by the families. In the eighteenth century and earlier, nuclear and extended families had worked together on farms and then in cottage industries centered in homes.\(^8^4\) Children were also negatively impacted as millions were employed in factories, working extensive hours in inhumane

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settings. Children as young as four years of age were working twelve-hour shifts alongside their parents to keep the demands of the Revolution. The moral fabric of societies was corroding and the priority of family and education was diminishing.

As James took his position as pastor of Carrs Lane, the effects of the Industrial Revolution were already spiritually affecting the families of Birmingham. Timothy Paul Jones and Randy Stinson point out, “The waning years of the eighteenth century, paternal involvement in children’s spiritual formation seems to have grown increasingly rare.”

James pastored during the boom of the Industrial Revolution that was beginning to redefine economies, manufacturing, agricultural enterprises, political, educational and family. The context in which James ministered was ever changing as a direct result of the Industrial Revolution.

Specifically, the residents of Birmingham were impacted as the city grew at a rate of almost four times the national average during James’s pastorate. With fathers working longer hours, attendance at church was greatly neglected, particularly by men. One examiner noted in 1793,

Families thought it ingenteel to take their domestics to church with them; the streets were far from being void of people in the time of public worship. Evenings were frequently loose and riotous, particularly owing to bands of apprentice boys. Family worship was almost disused.

The new family work paradigm challenged generational definitions of the family and practically reshaped the day-to-day routines within the home:

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As the Industrial Revolution reshaped economic structures, family members in urban areas found themselves separated from one another, with each one working at different tasks in factories or mills. The Puritan model that had prized family education and worship began to falter. In the early and mid-1700s, father-led family worship had been a daily fixture in many homes.\(^{88}\)

Pastors and churches in Birmingham, more than any other city in England, had to right the wrong of the degenerating paradigm of the family.

James’s sermons and books are a record of his concerns for those negatively impacted by the cultural advancements of his day. He admonished his church frequently to avoid the pitfalls and sins that were abundant. James himself was taken from school at age thirteen to work with his father as a draper and thereby experienced firsthand the impact of the Industrial Revolution on his family. Authors and Southern Seminary faculty Stinson and Jones posit,

Faced with increasing family fragmentation, a new social epitome began to take shape: In an ideal family, the father—once the coordinator of labor and production within the household—would become a breadwinner whose sphere of labor was outside the household while wife and children remained in the home.\(^{89}\)

And thus Henry Frederick Cope observed, “In the rise of the factory system . . . to a large extent the family lost the father.”\(^{90}\) James preached, wrote, and admonished those in his congregation to embrace what he believed was a biblical framework of the family.

**Growth of Birmingham**

The population and economic and industrial growth in Birmingham was unmatched by any other city in England. Birmingham at the time of James’s arrival in

\(^{88}\) Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family*, 162, 163.

\(^{89}\) Randy Stinson and Paul Timothy Jones, eds., *Trained in the Fear of God* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 163.

1804 had a population of approximately 80,000 residents. At the time of James’s passing in 1859, Birmingham’s population had grown to over 250,000.\textsuperscript{91} Comparatively, England’s population had only doubled during this same time period. Birmingham’s robust economy and rapid population growth earned the city the title of the first manufacturing town in the world.\textsuperscript{92} Birmingham’s railroads, canals, and roads provided accessibility for trade with the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{93}

Not everyone saw all this growth as positive. One observer noted, “Redolent of undrained refuse and excrement, to which pigs as well as human beings contributed, polluted air, water, and food made them endemic centres of disease.”\textsuperscript{94} There is a dark and shameful past that led to Birmingham’s explosive growth. One of the leading drivers of affecting the growth of Birmingham was slavery and all the businesses that surrounded this dreadful industry. Unfortunately, James’s beloved town of Birmingham was much more than an innocent bystander and much of its growth economically can be traced to its heinous role in the slave industry. Birmingham was informally known as “Brummagem” because of its manufacturing of brummagem ware.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{91}John Angell James, \textit{An Address to the Children of the Congregation and the Sunday Schools, Delivered in Carrs Lane Chapel, September 12th, 1855} (Birmingham: Richard Matthison, 1855), 17. See appendix 2, figure A9.


\textsuperscript{93}In my research, I investigated the canal system in Birmingham. During the peak of use there were 160 miles of functioning canals transporting goods. The impact of the canals were felt immediately; once they were opened the price of coal fell in half over night. These canals gave Birmingham a decided advantage in transporting goods like coal, iron, limestone, fabrics, and raw materials.

\textsuperscript{94}Arthur H. Driver, \textit{Carrs Lane 1748-1948} (Birmingham: Swan Press, 1948), 45.

\textsuperscript{95}Brummagem ware—Birmingham became the center of cheap trinkets, imitations or counterfeits. These were goods that were made for the exchange for slaves.
writes that the origin of brummagem comes from Birmingham reputation of its goods being considered inferior and brummagem is just a slipshod pronunciation of Birmingham. Brummagem was a term of reproach, as the city became known as a place to purchase cheap, counterfeit goods. Birmingham was known specifically for its ability to manufacture rapidly: chains, padlocks, muzzle, and guns. These instruments were used to regulate the slave trade. Birmingham, itself, a city at the center of the Industrial Revolution, was profiting and growing as a direct result of its involvement in slave trade worldwide. This shameful industry drove the growth of Birmingham and this all made up part of the historical context in which James ministered.

In an address to the children of the congregation and the Sunday Schools, delivered in Carrs Lane Chapel, September 12th, 1855, John Angell James stated that he had witnessed many changes during his time in Birmingham:

What changes have also taken place in our town during these fifty years! When I came there were only 80,000 inhabitants, and now there are 250,000. Nearly twenty new churches have been built, and perhaps more than thirty other places of worship. What improvement has there been in the private and public buildings! Since then, our noble Town Hall, Market Hall, King Edward’s School, the Public Office, the Corn Market, the Dispensary, and the Queen’s Hospital have all been erected, and Smithfield laid out. Our streets have been lined with stone pavements, instead of the sharp pebbles which formerly blistered our feet as we walked upon them, and our suburbs have been studded with elegant villas. When I came, we had no railways, and consumed seventeen hours in going to London by coach, instead of three or

Individuals born and raised in Birmingham are still often called “Brummies” as a slang term for Brummagem.


98See appendix 1, figure A4 for a 1789 newspaper article petitioning against the abolishment of slavery because of the beneficiary impact of slavery on Birmingham and its neighbors.
four, now, in the steam carriage. We had no gaslights, but only oil lamps in the streets, which served little else than to make darkness visible, and candles in the shops and in our places of worship. There was of course no electric telegraph, no police, no water works. And then, my children, what changes in our manufactories! How we would have stared in disbelief, if any would then have told us that before we died they would make plated goods as well as convey information by lightning, as is the case now with the electro-plating and the electric telegraph! There were then very few steam engines, and manual labor was not so much lightened by machinery as it is now!99

After fifty years of ministry in Birmingham, James was amazed by the expansion of Birmingham but more importantly the growth in godliness of his congregation:

What changes I have witnessed in the circumstances of many! Some, by the blessing of God upon their industry, sobriety, and skill, have risen from poverty to wealth; while others by their own misconduct, have sunk from wealth to poverty. And I wish you to set out in life remembering that “Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come.” True religion will be your best friend for this world, as well as your only one for that which is to come. It will keep you from bad companions, and all those vices which lead to poverty. For, as an old writer once said, it will cost more to keep one vice than two children.100

Everything that could possibly come with this type of growth came to Birmingham, the good and the bad. Regardless of what changes came, James immersed himself fully into this city.

These happenings and world events were all around James and all the while he stayed planted in the city because he felt called to reach Birmingham. James’s successor, Robert Dale, wrote of James: “The stainless reputation and incessant labors of fifty years, won for him a respect, and gave him a moral and spiritual influence in Birmingham, which the brightest genius might have coveted in vain.”101

99 John Angell James, An Address to the Children of the Congregation and the Sunday Schools (Birmingham: Richard Matthison, 1855), 18.

100 Ibid.

changes, God had given James a unique influence beyond his church in this great city. He labored both civically and socially, preached unashamedly, and served his church and Birmingham as a faithful gospel messenger. The social injustices affecting Birmingham, James, and the members of Carrs Lane were numerous. James and Carrs Lane was growing as the city of Birmingham grew.

**Abolition of the Slave Trade**

The most prominent and horrific social injustice in James’s day was slavery. As James was just beginning his ministry of Carrs Lane the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade ended the slave trade.\(^{102}\) This Act kept British citizens from buying and selling slaves; however, the ownership of slaves continued for nearly three more decades. The vast majority of citizens continued to own slaves as their slaves had children. While slavery was not immediately emancipated in Britain by the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, there was some good that came from it. In 1807, Britain shipped 2,532,300 slaves worldwide, equaling 41 percent of the world’s total transport.\(^{103}\) The Act of 1807 posed a fine on ships that carried slaves.

In the mid-1820s, the debate of slave ownership arose again and this time the push was set on complete emancipation of all slaves. On August 1, 1834 the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 outlawed slavery in Britain. That day 780,993 slaves were freed in England. This effort required the best of evangelical minds, rational argument and practical influence. James was engaged personally in the fight to emancipate slavery.

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William Wright considered James as one of the nation’s most prominent figures in the fight to abolish slavery: “John Angell James is a name that must stand third, or certainly fourth, among those whose influence destroyed slavery through England’s dominions.” He was willing to engage personally and to thrust his congregation into this battle. Before anti-slavery became vogue, James took deep interest in defeating slavery. The slave trade in England was defeated and James played a significant role in its emancipation.

James involved himself both locally and nationally in the battle being waged to abolish slavery. Locally, James was part of starting the Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society in 1826. Catherine Hall, professor of History at University College of London posits, “The Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society became a local, national and international campaign group that took an important role for 19th century slavery laws.” This society set out its own agenda for change and to stop any trafficking of human beings. It is important to recognize that pastors like John Angell James continually involved themselves in a whole spectrum of interlinked social causes like slavery. Had prominent men, like James, not given their endorsement and voice then the abolishment of slavery would not have been defeated when it was. Nationally, James’s voice against slavery

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104William Burnet Wright, “A City of Refuge,” The Atlantic Monthly 63 (1889): 806. James was resolute concerning his feeling of slavery: he wanted it abolished. Some Christian slave owners felt it enough to evangelize their slaves while others offered Sunday school classes. Others believed bringing “the coloured” to church was commendable and a “positive good.” McKivigan and Mitchell report that “in a Baptist circular letter of 1800 instructed masters as to their responsibility of ‘family religion’ of their slaves. Stated in it masters ‘personal religion’ responsibilities required them to instruct their slaves.” John R. McKivigan and Snay Mitchell, Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 51. Certainly pastors like James needed to bring clarity to the prevailing prejudices surrounding slavery.

105The Saturday Evening Post, October 8, 1859. See appendix 1, figure A2.

invigorated many churches in England. John Waddington validates James’s role in the fight against slavery: “The Rev. John Angell James rendered invaluable service; the churches throughout the country were aroused. Nothing could stand before the feelings evoked, and the slaves at length were really set free.”

James is in the infamous portrait depicting Clarkson’s opening address at the world’s first International Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840, in the National Portrait Gallery, London. During the International Anti-Slavery Convention, British Clergyman John Angell James presented the resolution “The intention and the terms of this fellowship, respectfully submit that it is their incumbent duty to separate from their communion all persons who, after they have been faithfully warned in the spirit of the Gospel, continue in the sin of enslaving their fellow creatures.” Removing members from the church over ownership of slaves was a stance that James took that left no question of his conviction personally. Locally, nationally and internationally, James was known as an ardent slave abolitionist.

Slavery was defeated when personal and institutional links between nonconformist, abolitionists, their churches, and parliament were united and persistent. In the 1820s, during the heat of the slavery debate, James offered Carrs Lane multiple times as a site for slave abolition meetings. James’s involvement in the abolition of the slave trade shows that he was willing to engage himself far beyond the four walls of his church. Welcoming colored men to his table as well as his pulpit provides one glimpse as to how

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107 Waddington, Congregational History, 309.

108 See appendix 2, figure A11. John Angell James is one of the delegates in the famous picture of the world’s first International Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840.


110 Hall, Civilizing Subjects, 310, 384.
James sought to model the Christian response to those of other races.\textsuperscript{111} Moses Roper, an escaped slave from the United States, came to Birmingham and was invited by James to speak at Carrs Lane Church. The crowd was so large that the church could not contain them.\textsuperscript{112} Beyond his personal involvement, James reminded his congregation of their platform for influence. One author noted that James often exhorted his church, “James’s work as a pastor was always more important to him than his public duties. We occupy a very public station; like an angel standing in the sun we must be seen.”\textsuperscript{113} At the end of 1830, the Birmingham Antislavery Society that James helped form was so disappointed that immediate emancipation did not happen that they placed additional pressure on parliament leader, Thomas Fowell Buxton.\textsuperscript{114} Disappointment and frustration began to accumulate in criticism of Buxton. James recognized his church’s influence and it allowed him to apply additional political pressure. In the end, pressure applied upon antislavery parliament members by evangelicals, abolitionists, pastors, societies, and churches like Carrs Lane was too much to be ignored.

After slavery ended in England, James immediately turned his attention to defeating slavery in America. James wrote to Rev. Dr. Patton in New York on November 30, 1833, concerning slavery in America. He exhorts Patton to be more zealous and to consider the examples of churches in the battle against slavery. In this personal letter James exhorts,

\textsuperscript{111}James, \textit{The Life and Letters}, 512.
\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., 69.
Do, my dear brother, as you value the moral reputation of your country, as you wish to make the example of your churches effective upon Christians in other countries,—as you are anxious to rouse and sustain a more liberal and zealous spirit of moral enterprise in the Protestant nations of Europe, both for their own internal improvement and the extension of religion in the world, do call the attention of your brethren to the vast importance of a more philanthropic and Christian treatment of the slaves and free blacks. Let the ministers of the gospel of all denominations take up the subject, and employ both the pulpit and the press in demolishing those prejudices which, as long as they were suffered to exist, are at once your reproach and your weakness. Pardon these suggestions, which are thrown out in a spirit of genuine solicitude for the moral reputation of your country. With this letter I send a newspaper, in which you will see how the conduct of the Americans in reference to slavery is considered by our journalists.115

James certainly understood the power of the pulpit in the fight against slavery. On July 10, 1834, James wrote to Rev. Dr. Sprague:

Your country must be foremost of all lands in the great moral renovation of the world, but she has some sins first to put away from herself. She is purifying herself from intemperance, and her next purgation must be from oppression. You have the chain of caste on the north and east, and the fetters of slavery in the south: both must be broken before the spirit of American piety will be quite free for the great work she has to do. You can scarcely imagine what a blot these things are upon your national reputation in the estimation of the multitude in this country. If the pulpit be once engaged against slavery it will fall, and engaged the pulpit soon will be. Your effort for the Poles is worthy of you and your pen; and now let that same tongue and pen, which pleaded the cause of European exiles, plead the cause of your two millions of enslaved fellow-subjects.116

The fight against slavery was worldwide and lifelong. In a personal letter two years before his death, James wrote Patton in the U.S. encouraging him to continue his fight against slavery even though the Supreme Court’s decision filled him with astonishment,

115James, The Life and Letters, 269, 270.

116Ibid., 345. William Buell Sprague was the pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Albany, New York, for forty years. Sprague wrote numerous books, including Lives of Rev. Edward Dorr Griffin, D. D. (1838), Timothy Dwight (1845), and Rev. Jedidiah Morse (1874), his greatest contribution to literature being his Annals of the American Pulpit. Sprague was vocal concerning the abolishment of slavery in the United States.
horror, and indignation.\textsuperscript{117} James understood the power of The Press and his letters were well received and effective in the American fight to abolish slavery:

Again, the cause of American emancipation might be greatly promoted by communications from distinguished persons in Great Britain, prepared expressly for publication under their own signatures, in our most influential moral and religious periodicals. The letters of the Rev. John Angell James, of Birmingham, addressed to the editor of the New York Observer, were extensively read, and produced a most salutary impression. These letters were kind and courteous, yet firm and faithful in their rebuke of American slavery and prejudice, and coming as they did from one extensively known and respected amongst us, they were most welcome auxiliaries.\textsuperscript{118}

James was acknowledged as an instrumental voice against the dreadful inhumanity of slavery. His esteemed position provided a worldwide and lifelong platform that he and his church engaged in to abolish slavery.

**Sunday School Movement**

Sunday school work began in England as an indignous movement to help educate the poor uneducated children that were working long hours before child labor laws were passed through parliament. Sunday schools existed in various locations throughout England as early as 1750 and 1760.\textsuperscript{119} Robert Raikes was not the originator and founder of the Sunday school. One of the first known Sunday schools was held at St. Mary’s Church in Nottingham in 1751.\textsuperscript{120} In 1780, Sunday schools became known

\textsuperscript{117}James, \emph{The Life and Letters of John Angell James}, 562.


\textsuperscript{119}William Henry Watson, \emph{The First Fifty Years of the Sunday School} (London: Sunday School Union, 1873), 1-17, 80.

\textsuperscript{120}John Gorton, \emph{A Topographical Dictionary of Great Britain and Ireland} (London: Chapman and Hall, 1833), 1: 240. For a listing of Sunday Schools established before Robert Raikes, one can review Robert Aspland ed., \emph{The Christian Reformer; or, Unitarian Magazine and Review} 9 (January-December 1842): 10; \emph{The Christian Life
throughout England by the promotions and systematic approach of Robert Raikes of Gloucester. Children working long hours in the factories forced them out of school. Raikes had observed efforts at educating poor children on Sundays and to these ideas he added his own ideas.

Through Raikes’s background in publishing he was able to spread the news of Sunday school and the movement spread rather quickly. By 1831, over 250,000 children were involved weekly in Sunday school in Britain alone. Although Sunday school work preceded Raikes, James believed that Raikes played a significant role in its establishment. James traced the river of this ministry back to Raikes as the father and founder of the Sunday school movement.121 It is important to note that social and economic conditions ripened by the Industrial Revolution led to the timely movement called Sunday school. Raikes’s motives were driven more by social reform, as he was concerned with the impoverished condition and children’s basic educational needs. Raikes, the founder of the Sunday school movement, is a more accurate statement concerning his enormous contribution.

Sunday school, Sabbath school, and First Day school were all names most commonly associated for this movement. What was the primary objective of these schools? Where were they located? Who oversaw them? These questions were still being determined well into the nineteenth century. There was a debate whether the schools should focus exclusively on reading, or on reading and writing, and even the addition of arithmetic. There were also debates of whether the city officials, societies, or the church

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should direct and manage the Sunday schools. In addition, there was confusion as to whether churches should embrace the new idea of Sunday school. In some churches in Northern United Kingdom, several pastors were not permitted to attend the Sunday school teacher meetings. In other churches, deacons and members did not send their children to the schools in fear of their children being corrupted by “improper associations” with the street children. For many years, the work of the Sunday school existed outside the four walls of the church. The merger of Sunday school work into the church was not without incident.

While it appeared that the Sunday school movement was wildly embraced, the rhetoric was not entirely positive. One of the primary concerns during the early years was that Sunday schools weakened parents’ home-based religious training.122 This argument has continued for centuries. Others demonized Raikes’s Sunday school as wicked.123 By 1818, opposition to Raikes and his method of children’s ministry was being challenged biblically. Preston Randolf (an early leader of Seventh-Day Baptist) wrote an article called “Moses on Training Children” in a well-read publication called the Sabbath Recorder:

Now if you ask for the ‘Best Mode of Instructing our Youth’, your essayist can do nothing better than to cite Moses’ method, and secure a thorough study of it. Else why so many godless children, old and young? Why so much Sabbath-breaking? So many who show by their daily life, by obscenity, by profanity, by idle, wasteful, wicked habits, that they do not know God’s law, nor his dealings with the children of men? There certainly is a failure somewhere. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” It is more reasonable to suppose that the failure is in our understanding or earning out Moses’ plan, than to


conclude that the Bible instructions are wrong. If we search the Scriptures, we shall find that they insist again and again upon parents teaching the Word of the Lord to their children, thy sons and thy sons’ sons. Moses in his second great speech repeats in nearly the same words what he had just said (and if they are repeated here, do not grow impatient, but begin at least to count), “Lay up these words in your heart and in your soul, and ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” This certainly means parental instruction in God’s Word, and it does not delegate anything to other teachers. Notice here the parent’s preparation, “Lay up these words in your heart.” Have the mind so stored with God’s Word, the thoughts and affections so upon it, that at every opportunity, in the freshest morning hours, in the day’s moments of leisure, and in the evening’s repose, it will be the constant theme of pleasant conversation.124

This article contends, “Faithful parents do not need a Robert Raikes.”125 Others (like James) felt Sunday schools were necessary because “though the Bible exhorts parents to teach their children, the poor are unable to give them instruction and it is feared some of them have no heart for it.”126 James sought to find the middle ground by exhorting parents with their clear God-given roles and the role of discipleship given scripturally to the church.

Birmingham was one of the first cities to follow Raikes in establishing Sunday schools.127 The first Sunday school known in Birmingham began after a July 5, 1784 article ran in the Birmingham Gazette from a noble soul whom signed himself as “A Well Wisher.”128 This newspaper article called for a meeting of local inhabitants to consider


125Ibid., 617.


127Wright, “A City of Refuge,” 806.

128S. M. Coombs, History of Carrs Lane, A Retrospect: 1898 (Birmingham: Press of Hudson & Son, 1898), 42.
the utility of establishing Sunday school in the town of Birmingham. It is important to note that this proposal called for the work to be in a town institution, unconnected with any place of worship.129 Three years after the town schools were formed in Birmingham, Carrs Lane began its own Sabbath school under the leadership of Pastor John Punfield.130 In 1793 and 1796 Carrs Lane found itself buying cottages and building additional schoolrooms for their growing Sabbath school ministry.

Carrs Lane Church was an early adaptor and embraced the concept of Sunday school helping educate poor children. Unfortunately by James’s arrival at Carrs Lane, there was only one Sabbath school class remaining that the church sponsored and it was not located on the church’s premise.131 After James arrived, Carrs Lane renewed its interest in its Sabbath schools and even established an elaborate set of objectives and framework of what Sabbath schools could look like sponsored by a local church.132 Carrs Lane’s Sabbath school flourished and by 1812 Carrs Lane once again needed additional children’s space. Also in 1812 James helped define an expressed gospel objective established for the teachers at Carrs Lane.133

129Ibid., emphasis added.

130Ibid., 43.

131The fact that only one Sabbath School remained upon James’s arrival was not a reflection on the churches desire or conviction of helping children. The church was left in a weakened state due to the previous pastor, Jehoida Brewer, who was discharged for an improper relationship with a woman in his congregation. The church was further affected by Brewer’s decision to take a majority of the congregation with him when he left to begin a new church called Livery Street.

132Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 143

133See appendix 3, figure A37 for the Church Book of Minutes which included a well thought out treatise which helps substantiate John Angel James as a preeminent figure that casts vision and gave pragmatic direction on how Sunday school should be the work of the church. To hold this two hundred year old historical document was exceptional and an incredible find. This book brings much credibility to the Sunday
James, through his 1816 writings of *The Sunday School Teacher’s Guide*, gave clear gospel priorities to Sunday school’s original intent that was more educationally directed. This book helped redirect the purpose of this movement and offered churches a practical how-to manual covering topics such as modest clothing, keeping control of children, punctuality, visiting parents of pupils, rewards and punishments, and prayer. More importantly in this work, James began to define for churches the primary gospel purpose of the Sunday school. James writes, Sunday school is the eternal work of evangelism and not merely academics.\(^{134}\) James’s writings declared an eternal redemptive purpose for the Sunday school movement:

> The ultimate object of a Sunday School teacher should be in humble dependence upon divine grace, to impart that religious knowledge; to produce those religious impressions; and to form those religious habits, in the minds of the children, which shall be crowned with the salvation of their immortal souls. Or, in other words, to be instrumental in producing that conviction of sin; that repentance towards God; that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; that habitual subjection in heart and life to the authority of the scriptures, which constitute at once the form and power of genuine godliness.\(^{135}\)

James’s book helped reshape and redirect the initial perception of Sunday school being primarily for the education of poor illiterate children.

James, through his Sunday school ministry at Carrs Lane and his writing of

School work at Carrs Lane Church under James’s leadership. In it one finds Carrs Lane’s resolution on their Sabbath Day schools, the schools official name, statement as to the institution, it’s objective, government, property, funds, role of treasurer, role of general committee, role of the committee of ladies, role of teachers, admission of children, dismissal of children, mode of instruction, books and cards to be used, catechisms, examinations, church attendance, rewards and punishments, use of library, attendance at prayer meetings, number of children, divisions, business of the school, order of instruction for boys, instruction of girls, superintendents, monitors, rewards and forfeits, quarterly, and annual examinations and writing.


\(^{135}\)Ibid., 48.
The Sunday School Teacher’s Guide, provided a gospel objective and a sensible framework for churches. James and Carrs Lane were not the first pastor and church to embrace the work of Sunday school, but it was here that a biblical model was demonstrated for the church. The Sunday School Teacher’s Guide was being heralded before it was released and it received extraordinary reviews after it was published in nationally circulated magazines like the Evangelical Magazine. His book was also being promoted and quoted in American books. The Sabbath School Index, written by R. G. Pardee, and The Sunday School World, written by Edwin Rice are examples of two books that quoted James in their works on Sunday school. An 1827 article by The American Sunday School Magazine reported six thousand children gathering for the twelfth anniversary of the Birmingham Sunday School Union assembled at Carrs Lane, Livery Street, and Cannon Street churches. This magazine article demonstrated how churches around the world were looking to Carrs Lane and James’s writings for a model to follow and practical instruction.

Denominations outside of James’s own Congregational denomination printed James’s messages concerning the Sunday school. An American Biblical Repository article shows to what extent James was impacting leaders in America with his work referencing Sunday school:

The Rev. John Angell James of Birmingham has been too long before the American public as the author of The Sunday School Teacher’s Guide. The lively interest, which he has ever manifested in the advancement of religion in the United States, has taught us to regard him as one of ourselves. While he is admired as a pious, judicious and instructive writer, he is also hailed as a brother, throughout our churches, and each new production from his pen is received by many with the confidence and ardor of a confirmed and intense Christian affection. 


137 Bela Bates Edwards, et al., The American Biblical Repository (New York:
Asa Bullard served the American Sunday School Society from 1834 to 1888, for forty years as the secretary and as the honorary secretary for fourteen years. In 1876 he wrote *Fifty Years with The Sabbath Schools* in hopes of providing brief sketches of the early schools. Here again James’s *Sunday School Teacher’s Guide* was being commended with the early establishment of the American Sunday school:

The first mention of Sabbath schools in this country, in the “Boston Recorder,” so far as we can find, was in vol. xi., for 1817, in an article by Thomas Vose, Secretary of the Boston Society for the Moral and Religious Instruction of the Poor. It spoke of the interest that had been excited by the establishment of Sabbath schools in towns among the poor; and mentioned that “the anniversary of the society would be held on Wednesday, in the afternoon, at the Old South Church, where the children of their Sabbath school would be present, and a sermon, composed for the occasion, would be preached by the Rev. Mr. Huntington, and a contribution would be taken to aid in defraying the expenses incidental to this important object. In the same volume of the “Recorder,” there is published a brief account of the origin, progress, and improvement of the Sabbath school system of education, taken from the “Sunday School Guide,” by J. A. James, published in England, and republished in New York.  

When the President of the Baptist Historical Society and a former Pro-vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, Professor and Birmingham resident, John Briggs, was asked, “Was James’s book, *The Sunday School Teacher’s Guide*, the first book that defined the work of Sunday School for the local church?” Briggs said,

His book was certainly the first that I personally know of specifically addressing the local church. Competitors would be Raikes’ *The Sunday School Companion*, [1794] and Hanway’s *A Comprehensive View of Sunday Schools* [1786]. I think you make a fair point in indicating that whilst books on Sunday School management addressed to a general audience predate James’ work, his was the first to address local church leaders.  


138 Asa Bullard, *Fifty Years with the Sabbath Schools* (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks and Company, 1876), 46.

139 Briggs, interview. Briggs explained further that “many churches by this time were having Sunday schools for children or beginning to offer it, but often they were
Raikes and Hanway’s books on Sunday school do predate James’s book but their books were not written for the local church. Briggs robustly states, “In James and Carrs Lane we find the first prominent model and framework for the work of Sunday school in the local church.”\(^{140}\) John Angell James’s book and Carrs Lane’s extraordinarily successful ministry provided the confluence whereby the Sunday school movement and the church became synonymous. It was James’s, *The Sunday School Teacher’s Guide*, that gave the church its first seminal blueprint for the work of the Sunday school.

During the nineteenth century, other resources began to support the vision of Sunday schools reaching and educating children. Historian Charles Cashdollar posits,

> Books and periodicals brought the middle-class home into collaboration with the Sunday School’s agenda from Monday through Saturday. Parents answered and encouraged their younger’s memory assignments and, in general, played an important, cooperative role in promoting the value system that both home and (Sunday) school shared. The two were partners, playing complementary roles in the nurture of the congregation’s children.\(^{141}\)

James’s contemporary, Charles Spurgeon, shared James’s position that connected home-religion and Sabbath schools: “So soon as they become of years capable of understanding the things of God, we endeavor to bring them to Christ by *teaching them the truth*. Hence our Sabbath-schools, hence the use of the Bible, and family prayer, and catechizing at home.”\(^{142}\) Throughout the nineteenth century educational leaders maintained a clear

struggling and small. What was happening at Carr’s Lane was noteworthy: buildings exclusively for children’s Sunday school, a documented standard for workers, a fully supportive pastor, children attending in the thousands and a published book being sold in England and the United States.”

\(^{140}\)Ibid.


emphasis on the home. Educators like Cora Stockham maintained this position: “The home affords the greatest number of opportunities; next to the home, the day school.”

James undoubtedly felt that the church and the family had mutual roles to play in reaching children and youth.

James desired to see his children, those in Carrs Lane, and others, grow up as evangelists, missionaries, and transmitters of true religion. James shared his desire for the children of Carrs Lane:

But whatever are the causes, the fact to me is indubitable, that multitudes of the young men of the present day are exceedingly corrupt and profane. Such a state of things rouses and interests all my feelings as a father, a minister, and a citizen—I am anxious for my own children, as well as for the youth of my flock, my town, and my country. You are to be the fathers, young men, of the next generation; and most solicitous do I feel that you should transmit true religion—and not vice, to posterity. Listen then with seriousness to what I shall this evening advance, from motives of pure and faithful affection.

The evidences that the church also had an important role to play in reaching children and youth can be seen in the practice of James’s ministry. James was an ardent supporter of his church’s volunteer investment. James said, “Hireling teachers can scarcely be expected to possess either the zeal or ability of those who now engage in the work from motives of pure benevolence.” James did not like the idea of the children in his community merely being instructed by teachers who were not primarily called to reaching and caring for the children.


144John Angell James, Youth Warned: a Sermon Preached in Carr’s Lane Meeting House, on Sunday Evening, January 4th, 1824, and Addressed Particularly to Young Men (Birmingham, UK: B. Hudson, 1825).

James’s second book directed to the work of Sunday school was a small book called *Elizabeth Bales: A Pattern for Sunday School Teachers and Tract Distributers*. In this book he commends Elizabeth Bales’s piety and elevates the role of the Sunday school teachers by sharing her example as a volunteer. Through resources like this one, James not only esteemed lay ministry; but also, the ministry of women. Through the writings and exhortations of James, one can clearly see that he sought to engage many adults in the church’s ministry to reach children for the sake of the gospel. Spurgeon also sought to raise the position of the Sunday school teacher.

No scholarly, historical study that seeks to research the Sunday school movement adoption by the church is complete without a thorough investigation of John Angell James and the ministry of Carrs Lane. During James’ first year as pastor with Carrs Lane, the church only had one Sunday school class. In just a few short years Carrs Lane engaged nearly 2,000 children weekly with over 150 teachers. Pastors like James and Spurgeon elevated the role of lay teachers: “I would rather have a title of S.S.T. [Sunday school teacher] than M.A. or B.A. or any other given by men.” Carrs Lane’s own Sunday school was recognized nationally as having one of the most efficient of its kind in the nation of England. One example of Carrs Lane’s national influence is seen in the spread of its Sunday Vestry School classes:

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The example of Carrs Lane was soon followed throughout the country, the attention of the Churches having been aroused to the importance of adult classes by letters in *The Christian Witness*, and *The Sunday School Union Magazine*—the outcome of “Carrs Lane Vestry Class.”

James pastored Carrs Lane during an age when the Sunday school movement was experiencing explosive growth. It is interesting to note that the Sunday school movement fit James’s philosophy of helping the church reach children and that he embraced this method wholeheartedly within the ministry strategy of Carrs Lane.

**Conclusion**

Nonconformity, evangelicalism, Industrial Revolution, growth of Birmingham, the abolition of the slave trade, and the Sunday school movement are six primary social movements that help define part of James’s historical context. A clear understanding of these movements, how they affected James and how he was involved in each, provides a more precise understanding of James and his ministry context. Volumes of books have been written on each of these movements and thus this survey sought to show an unquestionable tie between James’s life and ministry with each of the six movements. This chapter has provided a historical context allowing ensuing chapters to examine James’s writings, sermons, and ministry in order to argue this dissertation’s overarching thesis of examining the centrality of domestic piety to the ministry of John Angell James.

A synthesis of the aforementioned survey of James’s childhood, college years, and his ministry calling, along with a review of six social movements of his day provide a clearer understanding of him as a pastor, author, and international leader. James was a man from humble beginnings that was greatly impacted by his mother’s domestic piety.

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150“Number Ten” (May 1892), 14, http://books.google.com/books?pg=PP48&dq=Carrs+Lane+working+with+other+churches&ei=fO24ULnONZTo8QTS_IHAAg&id=Ah8FAAAQAAJ (accessed December 1, 2012).
In school, James was more of a fighter than a student, but during his college years he was influenced by the piety of John Poole. During James’s life, he was the leading figure of the nonconformist. He was ardent in his conviction and felt that nonconformists held a rich history in piety. As one who was shaped and helped collaborate evangelical efforts, James understood the importance of harnessing the collective influence of other leaders. As the Industrial Revolution tore at the moral fabric of families, James refocused his efforts to equip and encourage families both through his sermons and writings.

While James loved Birmingham, he sought to impact it with the gospel and he was faithful to this task for fifty-four years as the pastor of Carrs Lane. The most atrocious injustice of James’s lifetime was slavery and James fought persistently; locally, nationally and internationally to abolish it. James saw the incredible possibilities of the Sunday school and he helped redefine this movement with a clear gospel objective and he helped the church see how this ministry should belong to the church. While the movements mentioned throughout this chapter shaped James, he also became a catalyst for change as he sought to impact immortal souls worldwide.
CHAPTER 3
JAMES’S MINISTRY AT CARRS LANE

This chapter will examine James’s ministry at Carrs Lane, his personal suffering, his passion for writing and work at shaping congregationalism. James was not only being challenged and shaped by external world events, but every day he was influenced by his church ministry and his times of great suffering. It was not long before his passion for domestic piety and its immortal purpose would become the focal point of many of his writings. As a nonconformist, James played a pivotal role in uniting the independent churches into the Congregational Union of England and Wales. One of James’s leading characteristics of activism pressed him to take an active role throughout his lifetime. Through great suffering James kept his role as a pastor. For decades, he took up his pen time and time again and worked to unite the most independent of all churches: the self-governing congregational churches. Understanding the background in which James formulated his conviction toward domestic piety is essential in forming a comprehensive understanding of his integration.

James Begins His Pastorate

Carrs Lane was a church fighting for its survival when James arrived in 1805. Carrs Lane Chapel was founded in 1747 when some members left the Old Meeting Church feeling that it was drifting into Unitarianism.¹ James was the sixth pastor of Carrs Lane.

Lane following: Gervase Wilde 1748-1766, John Punfield 1767-1791, Edward Williams 1791-1795, Jehiadah Brewer 1795-1803, and Joseph Berry 1803-1803 (interim). Before James’s arrival, Pastor Brewer was removed from the church as pastor for “indecent liberties with a female.” Brewer was unwilling to resign peacefully so he left with a majority of the members. He started another church called Livery Street with a large portion of Carrs Lane’s congregation. This church split left Carrs Lane very weak for years to come. From 1803 to 1805 Carrs Lane was without pastoral leadership. This destabilized condition led the struggling church to offer an invitation to a young inexperienced pastor.

Even though James was young and lacked experience, he hoped to lead Carrs Lane to better days despite the church’s current condition. James, only nineteen years of age, entered Birmingham to preach as a fill-in preacher for a struggling church. After the

2 John Angell James, Protestant Nonconformity (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1849), 133.

3 Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1991), 132. See appendix 2, figure A12 for a picture of a plaque inside Carrs Lane showing early pastors and the years they served.

4 John Sibree and Moses Caston, Independency in Warwickshire (London: Ward and Company, 1855), 178. In 1814, James, Brewer, and some influential members from each church met to end the dispute between their two churches. The chasm then ended as these two churches were reconciled. John Angell James, The Life and Letters of John Angell James (London: J. Nisbet, 1861), 129. When the Sunday School Union was formed in Birmingham, the first meeting was held at Livery Street; John Angell James was asked to address the children and teachers. This sermon was later printed and then James decided to expand it. This sermon and small volume later became The Sunday School Teachers Guide. John Angell James, The Sunday School Teachers Guide (Birmingham: Thomas Knott, 1817).

church heard James preach, they invited young James to become their pastor. James accepted their offer contingent that he could finish his last year at the Gosport Academy. He arrived in Birmingham the following September of 1805 to become the pastor of Carrs Lane. James later commented concerning his first Sunday as pastor: “At that time Carrs Lane congregation was far from being the numerous, wealthy, and influential body.” His new church appeared quite elderly as he surveyed the congregation. James recalled, “It looked like an assembly of the ancients.” James was paid 120 pounds annually as Carrs Lane’s pastor. The following spring, on May 8, 1806, he was ordained in a five-hour long ordination service. Carrs Lane had been fraught with division, discouragement, and multiple setbacks. James must have realized this when he wrote in his first pastoral letter: “Suffer me now to rejoice with you in the prospect of a speedy close to your trials and distresses. The storm has spent its force and I trust will be succeeded by lasting calm. With the strongest faith let us believe that these things will ultimately prove for the furtherance of the gospel.”

6See appendix 3, figure A21 and A22 for the Carrs Lane Church Minute Book of 1783-1810. The September 16, 1804 minutes record James’s preaching at Carrs Lane. On September 23, 1804 Carrs Lane’s invitation to James to become their pastor is recorded.


9James, The Life and Letters, 68.

10Timothy Larsen and Mark A. Noll, Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicalism (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 329.

11E. L. Stow, “Famous Preachers of Birmingham, Angell James, He Brought Calm and Success to Carrs Lane,” Birmingham Weekly Post, November 5, 1848, n.p.; See appendix 1, figure A2.
pastor of Carrs Lane, James’s own words reveal that he knew of the difficult condition into which he was walking.

**Carrs Lane**

The locality of the Carrs Lane Chapel was as unfavorable as the reputation of the congregation. No impressive buildings in the prime location of town awaited this young pastor when he began his ministry in Birmingham. James was discouraged by the location and the condition of his church: “I at last became exceedingly disheartened by the state of the congregation. Our place of worship was uncomfortable; the street in which it stood was narrow and shabby.” Carrs Lane Chapel was difficult to find and locate among the shadowy places in Birmingham. His church did not grow because it was located in the ideal area; the opposite was actually true. Carrs Lane was regarded as “a mean chapel situated on a dirty street surrounded by noise, smoke and dispute.”

Davidoff and Hall make mention of Carrs Lane’s membership: “Carrs Lane was not a particularly wealthy church and the preponderance of its membership came from the lower end of the middling ranks.” Often as many as forty families of paupers lived on the doorsteps. An American visiting Carrs Lane wrote of Birmingham, “It is emphatically, a dingy, dusty city, full of business and filth with few attractive streets, it has little or no architectural beauty.” It would not be too much to say that Carrs Lane was weak and

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12 James, *The Life and Letters*, 94-95.


14 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 127.


had an inauspicious standing, located on an equally unfavorable street.

The early ministry years at Carrs Lane were difficult for James. Campbell described these years:

For the first seven years of his course he ploughed on a rock, like too many other faithful men at the present time. In his case, as in that of others, piety, talent, zeal, eloquence, work—hard, zealous, and prayerful—seemed to go for nothing, or very little. Plough on a rock.  

James’s congregation, which numbered only sixty-two members at the commencement of his ministry in 1805, continued to be very small until 1812. After James’s first year, the membership had only grown to 69 in 1806, in 1807 there were 77 members. In the next couple of years membership grew to 100 only to decline again the following year. The growth of Carrs Lane from a small, struggling, and primarily elderly membership to a weekly attendance of over 2,000 in less than fourteen years was a remarkable achievement. James began with great hope, youthful zeal, and a willingness to work hard. During James’s early years he began to target children through Sabbath School and through parents with exhortations regarding domestic piety. Despite all his effort, the early years were not easy both personally and within his ministry with little fruit for his labor; and James took his failure personally.

After seven years of difficult ministry, Carrs Lane began to experience extraordinary growth. In 1812, Carrs Lane began to grow and the seating capacity of the

See appendix 1, figure A5.

17 Campbell, John Angell James, 85.

18 Cameron, The Family Treasury, 73.

19 Stow, “Famous Preachers of Birmingham.”

church was enlarged from 480 to 800. The 1813 Church Minutes began to record more evidences of growth as it was reported that they were running out of communion cups to serve their growing congregation effectively.\(^\text{21}\) In 1820, a third chapel was completed with a seating capacity of 1,800 people. Arthur Porritt, author of “Leading Churches and Preachers,” commented on James’s new church:

> It is one of the easiest possible buildings in which to speak, so perfect are its acoustic properties. John Angell James used to pace its pulpit and say, “This is the best building in the world to preach in.” It is possible that Mr. James’s pride in his building was quite justifiable.\(^\text{22}\)

While he loved his building, he loved his congregation more: “James once told his son that his only anxiety about death was for his church and his daughter that had been an invalid since birth.”\(^\text{23}\) James likened his church as his family and this love for his congregation was compelling as Carrs Lane continued to grow.\(^\text{24}\) For several years his success as a pastor was comparatively small, but he became suddenly popular in about 1814, and began to attract large crowds.\(^\text{25}\) From James’s own account, he was little known beyond his own neighborhood until 1814.\(^\text{26}\) James was careful to remind his congregation that the church is the Lord’s:

\(^{21}\) Growth at Carrs Lane, under James’s ministry, can be seen in the need for new buildings and smaller issues like the need for more communion cups. See appendix 3, figure A26.

\(^{22}\) Arthur Porritt, “Leading Churches and Preachers,” *The Puritan: An Illustrated Magazine for Free Churchmen* 1 and 2 (1899): 381; See appendix 2, figure A20 for a pencil sketch of Carrs Lane in 1821.

\(^{23}\) James, *The Life and Letters*, 601.

\(^{24}\) Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 128.


A great deal is said about “our church” and “rules that we have established in our church,” but he countered, “Our church? When did it become ours? The church is Christ’s! The church is a kingdom, of which Christ is sole monarch, and all the power we have, is to execute the laws which he has already established.”

Carrs Lane was experiencing remarkable growth and the name of John Angell James was beginning to be known beyond the four walls of his church. The growth of Carrs Lane provided James with greater opportunity in regard to training parents through domestic piety.

The successes that James was experiencing brought opportunities that challenged his love for Carrs Lane. In 1815, at the age of thirty, James received a very tempting offer that almost moved him from Birmingham. Businessman Thomas Wilson had funded the building of Paddington Chapel in London and he wanted James to become the first pastor and offered him a hefty raise of 1,000 pounds annually. The move could have made sense because of James’s close relationship with the London Missionary Society. Being in London would have given James a closer proximity with this mission society. While Carrs Lane was certainly growing, the appeal to be in London and in this new chapel had to be alluring to young James. Of this offer made to James, Robert Dale writes, “London has always had strong attractions to a young and effective preacher. By what considerations he was induced to remain in Birmingham, does not appear.” Robert Dale recorded that James declining this offer did not appear a wise decision: “However wise his choice may have been, I am inclined to think it was the heart rather than the judgment which determined it, for in 1815 he could hardly have foreseen the great and


29 James, *The Life and Letters*, 130.
prolonged success which lay before him at Carrs Lane.”

I believe that had any offer of another situation been made at that time, I should have been strongly tempted to accept it. Against this, however, my wife, who knew the bias of my mind, firmly set herself, and used to say to me, “Never leave Birmingham till you see your way out of it as clearly as you did into it.”

His wife’s advice was sound and good, and fortunately for Carrs Lane, James listened to the godly advice of his wife. James later wrote in regard to a woman’s domestic mission: “And it is clear to me, that woman’s is [women have] a domestic mission, which is to affect society through the medium of family influence.”

To James, women had been given a domestic influence that extended to her family and all of society.

As a foregoing narrative of his life, James set forth an apology for preaching the gospel that he felt was lacking in his day. He decided early on that his messages would center upon the good news. Like unmovable bookends of his life and ministry, the gospel remained a constant thread from the beginning through the end of his ministry. In a personal letter written to the Reverend Patton, James said of himself, “I am merely a preacher of the gospel, not a scholar, not a philosopher, not a profound theologian.”

James’s ministry spanned a half a century and burrowed deep into the rich treasures of the gospel. James modeled the power of the gospel as a local church pastor. He never moved past the gospel to greater truths or a deeper message. The more he preached the

30 Ibid.
31 James, The Works of John Angell James, 17: 300.
32 Ibid., 92.
33 Campbell, John Angell James, 29.
34 James, The Life and Letters, 259.
gospel, the more he saw its life-changing power transform the lives of those in his
church. The minor heresies of his day did not distract him from his gospel focus and he
rarely addressed them:

So little importance did he attach to the minor heresies of his day that he rarely
thought it worthwhile to address by tongue or pen feeling they would die of
themselves while the gospel of good tidings and great joy would remain on his lips.
In all his preaching every utterance was marked by a thoroughly Scriptural purity.

James did connect his gospel message to domestic piety as will be studied thoroughly in
chapter five. James’s connection of the gospel to domestic piety is seen in his book, The
Christian Father’s Present to His Children:

Consider therefore, the situation of those young persons, whose parents, careless of
their own souls, take no pains for the salvation of their children. In what a hapless
situation are such young people placed! They are taught perhaps everything but
religion. They are instructed in all the elegant accomplishments of fashionable life;
but how to serve God and obtain eternal salvation, is no part of their education. In
their abode, wisdom, in the form of parental piety, is never heard saying, “Hearken
ye children, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” They see cards and other
amusements often introduced to the domestic circle, but no Bible: they hear singing,
but it is not the songs of Zion, there is feasting and conviviality, but no devotion:
there is no domestic altar, no family prayer. The Sabbath is marked with the same
levity as other days. They go to church perhaps, but hear anything rather than the
pure gospel of Christ.

This gospel foundation would be the underpinning that James built his ministry upon at
Carrs Lane.

James’s ministry at Carrs Lane was a model of faithfulness, longevity, and
perseverance. For fifty-four years James lived in one city as a missionary who never left
his post. He faithfully cared for the families that made up his church. His humble

35 John Angell James and John Overton Choules, The Church Member’s Guide
(Boston: Gould, Kendall & Lincoln, 1838), 58, 59.

36 Campbell, John Angell James, 48.

37 James, The Christian Father’s Present, 2.
perseverance spanned five decades and manifested itself in his love for his church. No greater compliment could be paid to a pastor:

If he had ever been dazzled by his popularity as a preacher, he was now weighed down by the tremendous responsibilities of the ministerial office. Anticipating his own appearance before the judgment-seat of Christ, and “knowing the terror of the Lord,” he persuaded men. He watched for souls as one who would have to give an account.  

James’s ministry began in modest obscurity and after years of loyal ministry his congregation was blessed through the charitable expression of his pastoral gifts. James’s love for Carrs Lane continued into his closing days. He desired that his church transitioned well upon his passing, so he encouraged the church to consider Robert Dale as co-pastor of Carrs Lane in 1853. Being so convinced that Dale was the right man for the job, James paid half of Dale’s salary each year (see appendix 3, figure A30). James’s love for Carrs Lane can be seen in the eloquent words preserved in the 1857 Church Minutes Book:

“Mr. Dale, Take care of this church, it is one of the legacies I shall leave. I have loved it, I have lived for it and I shall soon die for it. I cannot live many more years” (see appendix 3, figure A39). His forward thinking secured Dale’s pastoral leadership for Carrs Lane until 1895. James’s and Dale’s ministry spanned ninety years at Carrs Lane (1805-1895).

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38 James, The Life and Letters, 517.

39 Warren Wiersbe, 50 People Every Christian Should Know (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 119. See appendix 3, figure A27 for an entry in the 1849-1856 Church Minute Book which states that Dale had been nominated to co-pastor. James began casting vision for a co-pastor for Carrs Lane six years before it actually came to fruition. An entry on December 31, 1847 records James’s statement: “As soon as I can find a suitable man to take the ministerial and pastoral duties, I will engage him. I will engage him but you must appoint him to me my co-pastor.” The Carrs Lane Church Minute Books of 1838-1848 record the church calling Robert William Dale as co-pastor. Of the 297 male members, 222 were present to vote and sign the document. Women were still not allowed to vote at this time. See appendix 3, figures A28 and A29.
Pain and Suffering

While James was personally shaped by all the external social movements of his day, it was perhaps his personal sufferings that impacted his life and ministry most. There is no doubt that James’s life and ministry were shaped to some degree by the social movements in which he lived. Shortly into James’s ministry he began to feel the excruciating agonies associated with personal hardships, pain, and suffering. While James’s public ministry was beginning to be marked with great success and notoriety, his personal life was marked with extended suffering.

As a young pastor, James was greatly discouraged. James began writing despondent letters to friends seeking some type of encouragement for his dwindling congregation: “We rejoice that, although we can look around us and see vacant pews, which but lately were occupied with valuable and active members, although Providence is removing some, the hand of death arresting others, and disease and suffering.”

Between 1806 and 1807, Bogue wrote James multiple letters seeking to express his regret for his continued illness with hopes of encouraging this inexperienced pastor. James and his first wife lost a child due to a miscarriage in 1807. Thomas, their son, was born healthy in 1809 and was soon baptized. Three years later they lost a daughter six weeks after her birth and in 1814 their daughter, Sarah Anne, was born deaf and a lifelong invalid. When James’s health was declining he wrote of his lifelong struggles with his daughter: “Searching the heart with candles, makes strange and humbling disclosures. I thought I knew myself, but I find now that, at the age of seventy, I have had much to

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41 Ibid., 97.

42 Ibid., 9, 11.
learn. My dear daughter continues a great invalid. This has doubled the affliction."43

James was so discouraged by the first seven years of ministry that he gave “serious
consideration of moving to another sphere.”44 With the stresses of a growing
congregation, his poor health, and his daughter’s disabilities, James was learning a
greater dependency on Christ that sustained him throughout his ministry:

I must remain at home God’s suffering one. Perhaps the dear brethren will think of
me as they approach the Throne of Grace; and that it may not be forgotten, I will
enclose in this letter a written supplication to that effect, which you will be kind
enough to present at one of your devotional meetings. Such a prayer from such an
assembly will perhaps have power with God to prevail. Mr. James sends his paternal
love to the brethren that he may be favored with bright manifestations of the presence
and power of Christ, and be enabled to bear present and future affliction with all
long-suffering and joyfulness, and be thus assisted to glorify God in the fires.45

In James’s autobiography he wrote, “In 1817 it pleased the Lord to visit me with the most
alarming bodily illness, in the form of a low fever, which deprived me of the use of my
limbs for a considerable time, and left me so enfeebled that I was nine months out of my
pulpit.”46 James experienced many trials, and physical and mental suffering, but through
it he sought to glorify God in the fires that each time of suffering brought.

After James began to experience ministry success and worldwide acclaim, his
personal struggles continued to affect him. In 1817 at the age of thirty-three, the ministry
demands were growing too great. James suffered a nervous breakdown due to exhaustion
that left him unable to preach for nine months; shortly after he recovered, his wife, Fanny
died on January 27, 1819 after nursing him back to health.47

43Ibid., 557.

44James, The Works of John Angell James, 17: 42.

45Campbell, John Angell James, 16.

46James, The Life and Letters, 132.

47John Angell James, “John Angell James Biography,” www.gracegems.org/
earnest piety, exemplary prudence, meekness, and gentleness.\textsuperscript{48} James attributed his wife’s domestic piety as a great measure of the formation and success in his career:

Such was the blessed woman the Lord gave me, and of whom I feel that I was utterly unworthy; and to whom, under God, to her gentleness and prudence, to her meekness and good sense, to her sobriety of judgment and instinctive propriety, I owe in great measure the formation of my own character and my fair and good start in my ministerial career. And now, at the distance of fifty years from the date of my union with her, and of nearly forty from her death, I record my gratitude to God for this inestimable gift.\textsuperscript{49}

Although many viewed him as strong and confident, for many years he barely slept the night before he was to preach.\textsuperscript{50} The pain that James experienced continued as later in life his second wife, whom brought great cheer to him, died before their twentieth anniversary.\textsuperscript{51} From beginning to end, James’s life was checkered with various struggles, trials, and stress.

James’s health issues were numerous and lifelong. On March 13, 1840, James shared in a letter to his friend, Reverend Dr. Fletcher, of his own continued health issues as “bordering on insanity if not over the border.”\textsuperscript{52} James explains his mania with the following words:

I find it difficult to explain the idiosyncrasy under which I labor. It is something like this: I make a promise to preach; after awhile I am somewhat poorly; I wake up in the night—the promise comes up like a specter before me; it is a trifling concern—no matter, it is a concern, it is a future. I cannot sleep; I rise uncomfortable, and continue so through the day. I go to bed dreading I shall not sleep; the prediction

\textsuperscript{22}James\_biography.htm (accessed January, 31, 2010).

\textsuperscript{48}James, \textit{The Life and Letters}, 136.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., 92.

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., 281.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., 282.
verifies itself. Then I calculate there are so many weeks to intervene, and that I shall not sleep comfortably till it is over; and how can I endure broken rest so long? By this time the matter has got hold of me, and neither reason nor religion can throw it off; and where others would find that which they would never think about for a moment till the time comes, I find that which darkens every moment till it is past. It is not, observe, a dread of the service itself, but a dread that I shall not sleep till it is over.53

Those that witnessed James preaching said that they never knew he had any disorder concerning his speaking. It appeared to most that once he stepped before his congregation his fears transformed into a pleasant and warm spirit.

James did not allow his bad health or inability to travel prevent him from being useful at home. During the height of his illness James wrote the following ways to stay useful in his immediate sphere of labor:

*My own congregation.*—In preaching, endeavor to be more evangelical, more of unction combined with my present practical style; more of Romaine combined with Baxter. Be shorter. Three quarters of an hour or fifty minutes.

*In the neighboring congregations.*—To preach every fortnight at one or other of the following places: Walsall, Bilston, Wolverhampton, Stafford, Broomsgrove, Stourbridge, Tipton, Brierly Hill, Dudley, Solihull, Gornall. To preach at weekday lecture at the Lozell’s Chapel. Once a month at Garrison Lane. Once in two months at Smethwick.

*Pastoral Duties.*—Visit every member at his own house, except servants, during the present year. Meet a class of female servants, and distribute a tract to each. Duties of servants. Visit every one of the districts and invigorate them. Visit a family every Monday.

*Catechizing the children in some way or other.*—To labour much to promote the spiritual welfare of the Church. Always write a New Year’s Address, at least begin.

*For the Students.*—To lay myself out much for their spiritual welfare; to consider myself solemnly bound to do this. Never a week without one or more at my house. To labour for their good.

53Eliakim Littell and Robert S. Littell, “The Life of John Angell James,” *The Living Age* 71 (1861), 135. In his autobiography, James wrote a chapter about his nervous depression. In the chapter there are multiple letters written to individuals where James sought to cancel different speaking engagements. These letters range in dates from 1830 to 1845. I read other letters in the Birmingham Library that also document this nervous disorder.
Public.—To write, if possible, six essays on subjects connected with professors and young ministers, in Evangelical Congregational magazines; to have a class of Scripture readers.

As to my own Personal Habits.—Learn to think of death not only with composure, but even with something of desire; overcome dread of death and love of life.

Subdue besetting sins, and become indifferent to the objects of them. Rise earlier, more meditation, prayer, devotional reading. In family prayer more devout.⁵⁴

James preached a sermon called “Sanctified Affliction” and in it he admonishes his hearers: “We are brought to adopt the language of the apostle, ‘I have all things, and abound. All things are mine; for I am Christ’s!’ In this case, also, the affliction has answered its end. No trial can be in vain which has revealed to us the glory of the Savior.”⁵⁵ This clear view of God’s glory and James’s resolve in the sovereignty of God provided some hope to him during this intense storm. The above-mentioned desires written and preached by James were not from a man who had forsaken his desire to be useful for the sake of Christ despite his personal trials.

He was so affected by his nervous disorder that he refused almost all speaking engagements the last two decades of his ministry. He was so consumed by his anxiousness and fears of public speaking engagements, “After a time, he became so prostrate, that any special public engagement haunted and terrified him till it was over. Twice or thrice his dread became so excessive that he was compelled to leave important services at the last moment in the hands of his brethren.”⁵⁶ An example of James declining speaking offers is seen in his correspondence with Charles Spurgeon:


⁵⁶James, *The Life and Letters*, 275, 276.
I want just to mention that I had a sweet letter from that eminent servant of God, John Angell James, of Birmingham, in reply to one I had written asking him to come to this meeting. He said, “I would have done so if I had been well enough, but I am unable to travel. My work is almost done. What a mercy,” he adds, “to have been permitted to serve my Master so long!”

The severity of this frightful disorder meant that in the later years of his ministry he could not accept outside speaking engagements.

Of his infirmities, James felt they were meant as the chief part of his usefulness. When describing his infirmaries James wrote,

I have a thousand times feared lest I should not honor God as I ought in affliction. I am greatly affected by pain, a poor, timid, cowardly creature. I can never cease to wonder at God’s infinite forbearance towards me. I believe my life was spared in answer to prayer. The earnestness of the people in supplication was remarkable. The chief part of my usefulness, both as a preacher and an author, has been since that illness.

James’s life and ministry successes were, from James’s perspective, a result from his trials and illnesses. Affliction as seen by James can bring great benefit to a believer:

Increasing deadness to the world, and growing spirituality of mind, are sure results of sanctified affliction. The love of the world is the great snare of the church in every age of time, but especially in the present unmolested circumstances of the Christian profession. Worldly-mindedness is now the prevailing sin of Christians! We see them on all hands too eager to make themselves happy on earth, and seeking their enjoyments, if not in the sinful amusements of the world, yet in its innocent and home-bred comforts. They look not at unseen and eternal things, but at seen and temporal things.

This is the language of sanctified affliction. Then when the Christian is seen giving himself afresh to the service of God, in a more devoted attendance upon all the means of grace, private, domestic, and public; when his liberality is more diffusive, and his zeal more ardent; when he seems concerned, inventive, and laborious to show his gratitude and love by new acts of devotedness, and former measures of service will not content him—it is a convincing evidence that he has derived benefit from tribulation.

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58 James, *The Life and Letters*, 33.

59 James, “Evidences and Results of Sanctified Affliction.”
James, having been afflicted throughout his life, certainly could preach this message to encourage and instruct his beloved congregation at Carrs Lane.

**John Angell James as an Author**

Pastor John Angell James was a prolific writer and his works received worldwide acceptance. Interestingly, until his last years he wrote standing.  

Biographer John Campbell said of him, “Few men, perhaps, ever paid more attention to the searching out of ‘acceptable words’ than Mr. James, who was a thorough master of the English tongue; yet in no man was there less of the appearance of display. In him art successfully concealed itself. He combined in a degree equaled by none of his contemporaries.”  

As an author of at least twenty-two published books, James’s diligent work allowed him to gain worldwide recognition and influence.  

Of James’s twenty-two books, six of them were directed to instruction regarding domestic piety. His sermons, tracts, and books had a circulation of 2,930,950 by 1860.  

His book, The Anxious Inquirer sold 456,421 copies in the first eighteen months of publication. This book was said to be the most popular book in England after The Pilgrim’s Progress.  

The Religious Tract Society translated

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60 James, The Life and Letters, 578.

61 Campbell, John Angell James, 44.


64 Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes. 130.
Anxious Inquirer into Gaelic, Welsh, German, French, Swedish and Malagasy. Dent said of James’s writings,

It is doubtful if Baxter or even Bunyan has been so widely read. Mr. James gave to the world, as the best legacy of his life, seventeen volumes, some of which have had a vast circulation. His ‘Anxious Inquirer after Salvation Directed and Encouraged’ must rank only second to Bunyan’s ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ in number of copies printed and circulated in different languages and countries.

James was an effective and practical writer. He was known as a writer that wrote and preached with great conviction.

James, Baxter, and Spurgeon were all pastors that were gifted both as remarkable preachers and extraordinary writers. Campbell commented on this likeness of James and Richard Baxter:

In the case of James, as in that of Baxter and a few others, there was a union of great writing with great speaking power. But this is rare. The divine wisdom is never prodigal of the highest gifts, and generally deems one of these sufficient. It deserves remark that this holds alike in the Church and in the world. First-class writers and first-class speakers, as a rule, have always formed two distinct bodies.

Many of the books James authored were first preached to his congregation whereby representing the general character of his preaching. James’s books were first written as sermons to the congregation assembled at Carrs Lane:

Some of the most useful of Mr. James’s volumes are entitled “Pastoral Addresses,” which were written chiefly for his own people; but their fame became such that they were soon circulated far beyond the bounds of his own congregation, for at the close of the year 1850, 1,049,319 copies of these pastorals had been sold.

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65 James, The Life and Letters, 308.
67 Campbell, John Angell James, 135.
Robert Dale, successor at Carrs Lane, wrote concerning how James’s messages were strengthened by his writings:

It will be sufficient if I say that I believe his preaching was strengthened and elevated by the careful preparation required for printing; that had he written less, instead of being more efficient in the pulpit, his power there would probably have been greatly diminished.  

Over the course of James’s life he illustrated in an effective way the power of the pulpit and the pen.

The Impact of the Anxious Inquirer

An example of the usefulness of James’s writings can be seen through his book, *The Anxious Inquirer*. In 2009, Warren Wiersbe wrote a book called *50 People Every Christian Should Know*. Wiersbe noted that *The Anxious Inquirer* greatly impacted two of the fifty Spiritual Giants of the Faith (as Wiersbe calls them). Charles Spurgeon and Robert Dale both came to Christ after reading *The Anxious Inquirer*. A newspaper article in the 1848 *Birmingham Weekly Post* reported that the *The Anxious Inquirer* had helped multitudes into an experience of personal religion including Robert Dale and Charles Spurgeon. Stated emphatically by Spurgeon himself in his autobiography, he wrote how James’s books influenced his life:

Years afterwards, on being in Mr. James’s company, I told him that I went all the way from Cambridge to Birmingham to hear him preach. I was glad also to have the opportunity of thanking him for that precious book of his, *The Anxious Inquirer*,

70James, *The Life and Letters*, 515.


72Stow, “Famous Preachers of Birmingham.” See appendix 1, figure 1A
which has been the means of bringing so many sinners to the Saviour, and which I had found exceedingly helpful when I was seeking the Lord.\textsuperscript{73}

Reports began making their way back to James of \textit{The Anxious Inquirer}'s impact in the settlements of America:

In one of the back settlements of America, where a stated ministry had not yet been fixed, a single copy of ‘The Anxious Inquirer’ had found its way. It was lent from one person to another, and seven-and-twenty persons were thus hopefully converted to God by the perusal of the solitary copy found among them. Not a few of those who are now in the Christian ministry in various branches of the Church have confessed that their first serious impressions arose from the perusal of this work.\textsuperscript{74}

Coombs wrote in the \textit{History of Carrs Lane},

\begin{quote}
No man in writing a book could be more deeply impressed with the conviction that he was moved by the Spirit of God than was the author of this remarkable book. He charges its readers to “take it up with something of the awe that warns you how you touch a holy thing.”\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

In \textit{The Anxious Inquirer} James mentions the influence of domestic piety, reminding parents of the influence given within the domestic circle:

\begin{quote}
She was the only child of a fond and affectionate parent. He dreaded the loss of that sprightliness and vivacity which constituted the life of his domestic circle. O how little may a parent know the far reaching of the deed, when he snatches the word of life from the hand of a child.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

\textit{The Anxious Inquirer} provided one example of the usefulness, the immense readership, and the influence that James was receiving as a writer.


\textsuperscript{74}Steel, \textit{Burning and Shining Lights}, 307.

\textsuperscript{75}S. M. Coombs, \textit{History of Carrs Lane, A Retrospect: 1898} (Birmingham, UK: Press of Hudson & Son, 1898), 34.

\textsuperscript{76}James, \textit{The Anxious Inquirer}, 103.
Domestic Piety in the Writings of John Angell James

James sought to encourage parents concerning their role regarding domestic piety. Thomas, James’s son, was born in 1809. Shortly after his birth, James printed his first resource, a sermon, for those in his church called “Parental Desire, Duty and Encouragement.” This resource was well received by Carrs Lane and it launched James’s career as an author. This work served as a type of foreshadowing for his lifelong sermons and books directed toward family. He reminded parents in this booklet that “they are bound by the sacred authority of God’s Word, to instruct their children in the knowledge of the divine.” He also reminded parents of the chief importance of the immortal souls of their children and that salvation should be the first wish of every parent. Throughout James’s ministry he felt compelled to exhort parents concerning their eternal responsibility through resources like this one.

Of James’s published books, several were directed to admonish families: The Christian Father’s Present to His Children, The Young Man from Home, The Marriage Ring, The Young Woman’s Guide through Life and Immortality, The Young Man’s Guide through Life and Immortality, and The Family Monitor: A Help to Domestic Happiness. Throughout each of these books he continuously championed the blessing and responsibility that has been given to parents. He reminded parents that their children possess immortal souls and that their domestic piety and example were the means in which God often used to draw children unto himself. In his book The Young Woman’s

77 James, The Life and Letters, 93. See appendix 2, figure A13 for a picture that shows the 1810 publication of this message.

78 James, The Works of John Angell James, 17: 154.

Friend and Guide Through Life to Immortality, James spoke of the immortal nature of children: “All should realize the sublime idea that their houses are the schools for eternity, their children the scholars; themselves the teachers; and evangelical religion the lesson.”

John Angell James’s heart for the family is abundantly clear. He preached, wrote, and pastored as one who sought to encourage parents in their God-given role to point their children to Christ so that they may place their full affections on Jesus.

James’s Perception of the Power of the Written Word

James understood the power of the written word and this passion consumed him until his last days. Nearing the end of James’s life he continued to take up his pen:

I think it probable that with these few notes I shall lay down my pen, which has written much; would God that it had written better! But while I say this I am not without hope. In some humble degree I have aimed at usefulness both in my preaching and writing.

Dent said that James wrote as one who realized the amazing influence of the written word: “He must put his thoughts to press in order to reach and move the million.” James understood the enduring message of a book: “Little good for a season, but the book alone is enduring.” James illustrated this conviction practically through George Whitefield’s life:

The labors of the preacher are confined to his lifetime. The tongue of Whitefield was for a period the horn of his power; with that he moved the nations; through that, “by the good hand of his God upon him,” he wrought wonders in both hemispheres; but on September 30th, 1770, that tongue ceased to articulate, and his noble career

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81 James, The Works of John Angell James, 17: 305.

82 Dent, Old and New Birmingham, 582.

83 Campbell, John Angell James, 130.
came to an immediate end! He sought neither usefulness nor fame by means of the press; he perfectly understood his own glorious mission.\textsuperscript{84}

James considered the pen as part of his mission. Although James had been feeble, he preached the Sunday before his death with his typical conviction and passion. Although his body was growing weak, his mental power remained strong and he wrote up to the hour of his last seizure.\textsuperscript{85} James felt that the man who wrote one useful, popular book or tract had done a work worth living for. During his last years he wrote Spurgeon: “I cannot serve my Master much longer; but I can still do a little for Him. I preach perhaps once on the Sabbath, and I still continue to do what I can with my pen.”\textsuperscript{86} Even at death’s door and in poor health James continued to write as a means to impacting ministry leaders like Charles Spurgeon and others.

James’s favor as a writer was not built upon his academic aptitude. James’s popularity was remarkable when considering his academic limitations: “Here was a man, with so little academic training, that it might even be true to say he had none.”\textsuperscript{87} James testified of his own academic deficiencies: “My mind has had but little proper culture, so that I am a wonder to myself when I consider what God has done by me.”\textsuperscript{88} James’s writings were not of a scholarly fashion but rather written as a practitioner that knew firsthand the needs of those he shepherded:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., 131.
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\textsuperscript{85}Ibid., 17.
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\textsuperscript{86}Spurgeon, Spurgeon, and Harrald, \textit{Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon}, 1: 208-09.
\end{flushright}

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\textsuperscript{87}William Hendry Stowell, \textit{The Eclectic Review} (London: Judd and Glass 1860), 3: 2.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., 4.
\end{flushright}
I have been an author as well as a pastor and preacher, and have met with more acceptance in my works than I had any reason to expect, and in one instance have been granted a degree of success, I mean in reference to the “Anxious Enquirer,” which is as marvelous as it was unlooked for, a more extended notice of which may be expected further on, when I come to speak of my books. Still these works are all practical, and contain no profound theology—nothing to give me a high place among divines, commentators, or critics.\(^8\)

Adding to James’s success as a writer was the fact that the ordinary man could read his books with relative ease.

In time, over seventy editions of James’s titles were published in the United States before the Civil War, primarily in New York and Boston but also in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Concord, New Hampshire, Northampton, Massachusetts and Charleston.\(^9\)

Chiefly the people of England knew the names of Baxter and Doddridge, but the name John Angell James was a household name throughout the world.\(^1\) The popularity of James’s written word found its way to the four corners of the world into the hands of individuals like Edgar Allan Poe, who never traveled to Birmingham to hear James preach.\(^2\) British historian, John Tosh posits that John Angell James was one of the most influential didactic writers of the early Victorian era.\(^3\) It is difficult to come close to estimate the combined circulation of James’s writings to date.

Early in James’s writing career he was publically accused of plagiarism. In

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\(^8\)James, *The Life and Letters*, 6.


\(^1\)Campbell, *John Angell James*, 246, 247.


1824, James preached a sermon called “Youth Warned.” In it he attacked the theater and said it shared in the destruction of young men. James took a strong stance against the theater in this sermon:

Multitudes of once comparatively innocent and happy youths have to date their ruin for both worlds, from the hour when their feet first trod within the polluted precincts of a theater. Until then they were ignorant of many of the ways of vice. That fatal night was the dreadful season of their initiation into the ‘mysteries of iniquity!’ Afterwards they fell from morality and respectability, and continued falling deeper and deeper in vice, until earth, tired of the sickening load of their corruption, heaved them from her lap—and hell, from beneath, moved to gather them at their coming! When, therefore, a young man acquires and gratifies a taste for theatrical representations, I consider his moral character in imminent peril.94

Joseph Parkes, the manager of Theatre Royal responded with a vicious, public attack on James’s character by accusing him of plagiarism. Parkes, a Utilitarian lawyer wrote The Plagiary Warned, referring to James, and had it printed for mass distribution. In this book Parkes calls James a bigot, unsophisticatedly ignorant, a thief by plagiarism and a fraud and shows writings of James side by side of those he accuses James of stealing from. At the end of the 113-page book he closes with a harsh quote by Bramston: “Do not steal word for word or thought for thought, for you will be teased to death if you are caught.”95

A second pamphlet was published that was written by Alfred Bunn, which further attacked James for plagiarism and his position against the theater (see appendix 2, figure A14). On July 18 and August 1 of 1824, James preached two sermons called “The Sin of Scoffing Religion Exposed.” In these sermons he states,

In one of the pamphlets published in defense of the drama against the remarks contained in the preceding sermon, the following discourse was very offensively


attacked as a plagiarism from the sermon of Archbishop Tillotson on the same text. But a comparison of the two will show that the one is not founded on the other, and the passages really borrowed were marked as far as practicable as quotations. One would have thought the reference to the Archbishop’s sermon might have been sufficient to prevent the imputation.  

It was James’s opinion that he had documented his sources well enough, but Parkes in particular did show that James took liberties well beyond accepted practices. James felt keenly the criticism he received from the writing of Parkes’s and Bunn’s books. He later shared with his son Thomas, that he determined to be better and learn from this criticism.  

Thomas wrote,

He felt very keenly the criticisms which his first publications underwent, but he determined to be the better for them, and labored to remove the faults which were pointed out. And he did not shrink from telling me as much, while I was yet a boy, in order to encourage me, by his own example, to derive profit and instruction from any censure passed upon me. His prefaces, almost to the last, showed his sensitiveness to remark.  

James’s reputation as a writer did not appear to suffer greatly from these attacks. What he did learn seemed to have sharpened his writings after 1824.

**Congregationalism**

Two primary concerns for Congregational churches are the church’s autonomy and the church’s polity. Carrs Lane was a Congregationalist church that prided itself with independence and autonomy. Like congregational churches today and other nonconforming churches of its day, Carrs Lane was not subject to any authority or rule beyond that which it provided for itself. The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* defines congregationalism as “that form of Church polity which rests on the independence and

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97James, *The Life and Letters*, 592.

98Ibid.
autonomy of each local church." According to Paige Patterson, “The principles of democracy in church government rest on the belief that Christ is the sole head of his church, the members are all priests unto God, and these units are regarded each as an outcrop and representative of the church universal.” While this is typical of congregational churches, James regarded himself as the leader of his flock and adopted a strong admonitory tone in church meetings. For James the ultimate authority of the church was Scripture and Christ as the head.

While Carrs Lane was thoroughly independent, James led his church to cooperate often with the churches of Birmingham for gospel causes. Anti-slavery, missions, Sunday School work, temperance and other supportive works allowed James and Carrs Lane to work with churches of many Christian denominations. Upon James’s arrival as a new pastor, Canon Street Baptist Church was also meeting at Carrs Lane as they rebuilt their church. In 1812, the favor was returned as Rev. Robert Kell offered to allow Carrs Lane to meet in his church while they enlarged their meeting space.

Importantly, James was respected for his personal piety that provided conviction for his life and ministry: “It embraced his whole being, and gave him his character.” Carrs Lane, led by James, was a cooperating, hospitable and caring congregation. A marble monument hangs at Carrs Lane Chapel to this day in honor of James. These words are


100Steven B. Cowan, Who Runs the Church? 4 Views on Church Government (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 135.

101Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 128.

102Steel, Burning and Shining Lights, 320.
inscribed as a tribute to his congregational leadership: “The harmony between him and his flock was never troubled during his long tenure and their love and veneration, no words can express” (see appendix 2, figure A15).

**James’s View Regarding Infant Baptism and Domestic Piety**

A distinction to note for Congregational churches is the baptism of children. James baptized his infant son in 1809 as part of the church’s practice of tradition. James and Carrs Lane did not believe that infant baptism resulted in the child’s regeneration. In regard to the Catholic practice and belief that baptism contributes to a child’s salvation, James wrote,

The Church of Rome guarantees the safety of her children. And are there not multitudes in other churches, besides that of Rome, who are indulging in the same fatal delusion? They have been made Christians, they suppose, by baptismal regeneration—have been acknowledged such by confirmation—have been sealed by the Sacrament, and are thus brought within the bonds of the covenant. And how many, in voluntary unestablished churches, are relying upon their public profession and union with the church. Alas, alas! In how many cases is a hollow and inconsistent profession the sole ground of dependence for eternity!103

James further explained his position in his book *History of Protestant Nonconformity*. He wrote,

It has been said that religious controversy becomes virulent in the inverse ratio of the importance of the subject, and that polemics become fierce in proportion as they approach nearer to each other on more momentous points. This applies with some truth to the baptismal controversy. Not that I mean to say little importance attaches to this topic of theology; especially when baptism is represented to be regeneration. The dogma of baptismal regeneration, as understood by Papists and Puseyites, is one of the most destructive errors of the day. We are told the guilt of original sin is taken away by the sacramental grace conferred with the baptismal fluid. The New Testament conveys no such notion as this.104

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104James, *Protestant Nonconformity*, 51.
James referred to children as little heathens, sinners that needed repentance and salvation through the gospel. He encouraged parents in their primary role concerning the care of their children’s immortal souls: “So far as the children are individually concerned, I again remind you (parents), your last and highest end is the salvation of the immortal soul. This is your aim, to be instrumental in converting the souls of the children.” While James and Carrs Lane practiced infant baptism, it was merely in hopes of a future day of salvation for the child.

Congregational churches like Carrs Lane practiced infant baptism as a dedication of parents regarding the faithful practice of domestic piety. An example of this position is seen in James’s exhortation to parents:

Instruction is a momentous part of the duty of every pious parent. He is not only to be the priest, but also the prophet of his family. The obligations of infant baptism, though primarily and immediately referring to the children, lie also upon the parent’s conscience, and are to be discharged by him, in the way of doing all that means can accomplish, in bringing up his family for God. As soon as reason dawns, and invites instruction, parents are to begin the work of endeavoring to form the religious character of their offspring. By catechetical instruction, by familiar explanations of the word of God.

James clearly articulates that pious parents have a greater influence upon their children through the practices of domestic piety rather than the destructive theological position regarding infant baptism. James did not disregard the important practice of parents having their children baptized. James felt that the obligation of bringing children up for God belonged to parents.

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105 Campbell, John Angell James, 172.
106 James, The Works of John Angell James, 17: 33.
James felt that the collective influence of his congregation could accomplish more for the kingdom in an established intentional effort. Until 1831, Congregational-Independent churches had no established unifying organization. James aided in the organization of the Congregational Union of England and Wales that united congregational and independent churches. In 1831, during a meeting of delegate pastors it was John Angell James that proposed the following motion:

That it is highly desirable and important to establish a Union of Congregational churches throughout England and Wales, founded on the broadest recognition of their own distinctive, principles, namely, the scriptural right of every separate church to maintain perfect independence in the government and administration of its own particular affairs.

In May 1832, upwards of eighty ministers and twenty-five lay delegates met in the same place to consider the letters which had been received in reply to their communications, and it appeared that out of thirty-four English county associations twenty-six were most fervently disposed to the Union, “four declined for the present,” from the remaining four no answer had been received. Mr James moved the adoption of the report of the provisional committee, and its adoption was immediately followed by a resolution declaring that a “General Union of Congregational churches and ministers throughout England and Wales ‘BE NOW FORMED.’” Later in the morning he introduced a paper containing a declaration of the Principles of Faith and Order of the Congregational body, “drawn up by an individual at the request of several brethren in town and country.”

At their adjourning meeting, this motion with additions was passed and the Congregational denomination was formed. The founding documents that James instrumentally constructed can be read in his autobiography *The Life and Letters of John Angell James.* Generally, these founding documents gave an opening declaration, preliminary notes, principles of


109 Ibid., 203-08.
religion and church order, and discipline. James chaired this Union from its establishment in 1831 until 1838; and he was a regular attendee of its annual meetings until his passing.

**Spring Hill College and the Cultivation of Piety**

Another way that James and Carrs Lane made an impact on the city of Birmingham was through the establishment of Spring Hill College. Considering James’s educational background, it is remarkable that he prioritized education as a means of influencing Birmingham:

John, when a lad, fell into bad habits, and so was sent away from home when only eight years old, to a boarding-school, whose preceptor had qualifications that “extended literally no further than to teach writing and common arithmetic.” Swearing was only an ordinary wickedness at the school, and John never had there a religious thought or feeling. Here he learned a little Latin and had some general instruction. “My whole boyhood and school days,” he remarks with painful emotion, “passed by without any decided religious thought or feeling.”

Neither James’s childhood nor his own college years served as precursors of what became a passion throughout his life and ministry. James’s educational void seemingly served as a catalyst that drove his lifelong passion to educate children as well as young men and women.

Two residents of Birmingham, Mrs. Sarah Glover and Miss Elizabeth Mansfield, were instrumental in the formation of Spring Hill College. They provided the needed funds and offered their homes for classroom space, and in 1838 Spring Hill College was open for admission:

Thirteen young men commenced their studies under the tuition of Mr. Watts, Professor of Theology and Ecclesiastical History, and Mr. Barker, Professor of Languages; to whom was shortly afterwards added Mr. Rogers, Professor of Mathematics, Philosophy, and the Belles Lettres.\textsuperscript{111}


\textsuperscript{111}James, *Protestant Nonconformity*, 137.
James became Chairman of the Board of Education of Spring Hill College, the Birmingham ministerial training college, from its foundation until his death.\textsuperscript{112} Spring Hill College was a priority for James throughout his life. James certainly could have made himself the central theme of his fortieth-year celebration at Carrs Lane, but he turned the attention to the need of educating the young by raising 1,000 pounds to establish a scholarship for young preachers attending the college.\textsuperscript{113} James raised funds and provided guidance by being an unfailing attendant of the General Committee, he examined and admitted candidates, and he also involved himself in discipline issues that arose.

James worked hard to ensure that education at Spring Hill College was in the service to piety.\textsuperscript{114} James desired to see true piety exhibited in the lives of the graduating pastors. This ardent piety, he felt, could culminate in many being called to the mission fields for the sake of the gospel. At his fortieth-year of ministry James made the following statement to the students of Spring Hill College:

\begin{quote}
Are there not to be found in our colleges, or in our ministry, some servants of Christ possessed of sufficient property who could support themselves, and who, self-moved with intense desire, will go to China perhaps unconnected with any society, for the love they bear to Jesus and to souls?\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

James felt the young preachers attending Spring Hill College should exercise their piety

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{113}Arthur H. Driver, \textit{Carrs Lane 1748-1948} (North Hampton, UK: Swan, 1948), 48. James wanted to raise 500 pounds at his anniversary: the church doubled that goal.
\item \textsuperscript{114}Dale A. Johnson, \textit{The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity, 1825-1925} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 82.
\item \textsuperscript{115}John Angell James, \textit{God’s Voice from China to the British Churches, Both Established and Unestablished} (London: Hamilton, Adams and Company, 1858), 28.
\end{itemize}
in practical service to the church their first two years of college. In their last two years these young preachers should be learning to preach. In James’s twenty-one years of service to Spring Hill, fifty-four students graduated.\textsuperscript{116} Thirty-three of these graduates had entered the ministry in Congregational churches. Illustrating James’s concern for piety among the graduates of Spring Hill College he addressed those who had finished their course work:

> If your piety has suffered in its vigor and vitality by study; if the Bible has been neglected for the class book; and prayer has degenerated into a form by the influence of lessons; if you feel that you are going forth from college less of a Christian than you entered it, you should sorrowfully confess it to God. I wish each of you to be a vessel meet for the Master’s use; which you cannot be in a low state of experimental religion.\textsuperscript{117}

For James, the service of Spring Hill College was to allow these students to understand, pursue, and guard true piety.

Unlike James’s college experience, the students of Spring Hill College were inspired by the experience and education they had received. One former student, D. G. Watt said of James and Spring Hill College’s influence,

> The advancement of the piety of the church, the most faithful, stimulating, and soul-moving, I ever expect to listen to. I am only one out of very many ministers who have gone forth from the college; I know that he loved other most excellent brethren quite as much, and, no doubt, he followed therein with practical expressions of an interest and regard which went beyond those I have enumerated.\textsuperscript{118}

Individual lives like Watts and many others in Birmingham were impacted by the establishment of Spring Hill College. This further illustrates the influence of James and Carrs Lane upon Birmingham. James wrote in a letter that piety of the young preachers

\textsuperscript{116}James, \textit{The Life and Letters}, 371.

\textsuperscript{117}Campbell, \textit{John Angell James}, 29, 30

\textsuperscript{118}James, \textit{The Life and Letters}, 387, 388.
attending his college should foster and prepare them as preachers of the gospel. Piety to James was essential in the home and in the pulpit.

**Developing and Maintaining Piety in Young Pastors**

Beyond the aforementioned efforts at Spring Hill College, James sought to encourage young pastors by dedicated personal time, and through his sermons and writing. Using these three resources James often impressed upon the young men the importance of piety as a means of evangelistic and missional effectiveness. Without personal piety,

> The Christian profession is sinking in its personal piety; the line of separation between the church and the world becomes less and less perceptible. How is this to be remedied, and by what means is the spirit of piety to be revived? May we not ask a previous question—How came this spirit of slumber over the church? Was it not from the pulpit? And if a revival is to take place in the former, must it not begin in the latter? Is the ministry of the present day in that state of earnest piety which is likely to originate and sustain an earnest style of preaching, and to revive the lukewarmness of our flocks?\(^{119}\)

James gave his personal time, preached sermons, and wrote in efforts of exhorting young pastors to earnestly pursue and guard piety. James exhorted these young pastors in hopes that they, like Wesley and Whitfield, might rouse the slumbering piety of a nation. This type of ardent piety engages evangelical efforts and calls forth missionary enterprises that work upon the world’s conversion.\(^{120}\) James’s emphasis and exhortations shaped the passion for domestic piety in the next generation of young pastors. James demonstrated through his sermons and writings to young pastors that true piety was connected to evangelism and missional piety.


\(^{120}\)Ibid., 73.
Dedicated Personal Time

James had a great passion and platform to encourage young pastors. On Saturday afternoons he regularly invited two or three of the students to have lunch with him and then spend the afternoon talking with them about the work of the ministry: “For many a man, those Saturday afternoons left an impression never to be forgotten. He would urge upon them the priority of effective evangelism and the necessity of personal piety.”121 William Guest wrote of learning at James’s table:

> During the six years of my life as a student, I have listened to addresses from him to the unconverted, which for heart searching description, solemn remonstrance, and tender persuasion, are beyond my power of language to depict. I hold it to be a tribute due to his memory, and which I state with deep thankfulness to God, that whatever usefulness may have attended the ministry of those of us, who were the first students at the College, we owe very much to the affectionate entreaties we heard at his table to hold fast to the saving doctrines of the Gospel.122

Pastors like Guest learned from time with James the evangelical power on the gospel to the unconverted.

Nineteenth-century pastor and author William Meynell Whittemore was a student at Spring Hill that spent time with James. In Whittemore’s book, The Teachers’ Treasury and Storehouse of Material for Working Sunday-School Teachers, he admonishes his readers to follow James’s example:

> Mr. James was accustomed to invite two or three of the students at a time to visit him and spend the day with him. He treated us with loving hospitality, and after dinner we went up into his little study, which seemed quite a sacred place; there we had a long and pleasant chat; kindly sympathy readily opened our hearts, and it was easy to tell of difficulties that troubled and thoughts that burned. We never came from those little visits without a holier sense of our responsibility before God; a new joy that even we were counted faithful, and put into the ministry, and a more earnest resolve to redeem the study-time given us for preparation.

> Surely we could be like Mr. James was to the students—a land of bishop to our

121Campbell, John Angell James, 78.

Pastors like Guest and Whittemore serve as two examples of James’s impact on young pastors. These men in turn impacted many through their works. Guest, like his mentor, sought to impact young men through the writing of his book *The Young Man Setting Out in Life* (1867), *A Young Man’s Safeguards Through the Perils of the Age* (1878), and others. Piety was a theme throughout many of Whittemore’s writings: *Pressing Onward* (1875), *Golden Hours* (1864), and the abovementioned *The Teachers’ Treasury and Storehouse of Material for Working Sunday-School Teachers*. James dedicated personal time to encourage and instruct young pastors.

**Development of Domestic Piety in Young Pastors**

Samuel Clarkston of Salford was also impacted by the personal time that James dedicated to young pastors:

“The measure of the benefit of the intercourse on these Saturday afternoons depended upon us. No doubt is there, moreover, that the exciting, sanctifying, and manifold advantages of these memorable hours contributed very largely to prepare some for occupying so worthily the honoured positions they now fill. It will be seen that the main benefit of these Saturday afternoons was their quickening influence on our moral and spiritual life. The very thing this that we needed. There are few of us, it may be, who can recall the information he communicated. Nor do we care to do it. We all know this, that he had the art of making us happy and active, by touching the springs of the best part of our nature; that he helped us to know ourselves; that he aided us to form or strengthen our holiest purposes; that he led us to feel more deeply, avail ourselves of collegiate advantages more industriously, watch against our peculiar perils more vigilantly, and implore the grace of the Divine Spirit, to prepare us for our responsible work, more fervently and importunately.”

What did this young pastor Clarkston leave with from his time around James’s table? Not

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124 James, *The Life and Letters*, 382, 383
surprisingly, Clarkston, besides being a faithful pastor, also became an author, which included the book *The Church at Home; or, A Pastor’s Plea for Family Religion* (1860). Clarkston’s earnest prayer was that this little volume might prompt and aid heads of families to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Like his mentor, Clarkston believed domestic piety to be directly connected to the evangelistic and missional fervor:

> The interest and progress of the cause of God are connected with the maintenance and growth of domestic piety. It has been said with truth, “that Christianity has subsisted in a family when excluded from the sanctuary, but never could subsist in the sanctuary when excluded from the family.”

> There is a close analogy between a church and a family—a church! Does it not suggest the ideas of teaching, worship, intercourse, discipline? Have not these a place in every well-ordered household where true religion dwells? The family sphere at all events affords motives, reasons, and scope for each of them, and thrice-happy is that abode where these four things are maintained and practiced. It is our object now to explain and illustrate these essential features of “a church in a house.”

James was intentional with young pastors and his influence was unrecognizably stamped upon their lives. Pastors like Clarkston, mentored by James, became men of influence in their own right. They embraced many of the same passions as James as they preached and wrote on the subject of domestic piety. Clarkston wrote concerning the disciplines of domestic piety: “Family devotion chastens, purifies and enlarges the joy of prosperity. It refines every gratification. It consecrates every engagement. There due gratitude and praise rise daily to the Giver of all good for His distinguished and undeserved favors.”

Clarkston, like James, sought to encourage parents, but especially fathers as “heads of

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126 Ibid., 4.

127 Ibid., 41.
families” with their God given role and eternal responsibility.

James believed that piety was a principle set forth in the New Testament, and while there is room for differing views on multiple subjects, that the fundamentals of piety were absolute and unalterable. James also felt that piety should be a driving principle for young pastors. This principle was supported by Scripture and should be embraced by pastors:

The Divine Book further shows that personal piety, true and deep, is an essential qualification; without this no man is fitted to publish the Gospel of reconciliation. This piety, moreover, must be not simply credible, as a thing of profession, but fully developed in the character of the parties, and palpable to all the world. While these principles are held sacred, language, science, philosophy, literature, all knowledge and all culture, may be added in the largest possible measure. But all these things united, cannot compensate for the want of piety, the want of Gospel, or the want of teaching ability.  

James spent significant time and energy exhorting, encouraging and training young pastors. Of all the advice he had to give them, piety remained a central theme throughout all his years of exhortations.

James’s sermons to young pastors have been compiled in his book called Earnest Ministry. In this work, James states that much of what pastors expect from their sermons is counteracted by the neglect of domestic instruction. James wrote that the church is chiefly built up from families:

There is a great mistake on this subject, into which both parents and ministers have fallen; and that is, that the conversion of the children of the professor is to be looked for more from the sermons of the latter, than from the instructions of the former; whereas the contrary is the true order of things; and were domestic piety and teaching what they ought to be, this is the order which would be found to exist. Were all religious professors, who are parents, real and eminent Christians; were they, from the time they became parents, to set their hearts upon being the instruments of their children’s conversion; were they to do all that prayer, instruction, discipline, and example could do, for the formation of the religious character of their offspring; and were they carefully to abstain from everything

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which would obstruct these ends, it might be confidently expected that it would be within the hallowed precincts of such homes, and not in the sanctuary, that the children of the godly would usually become godly themselves.  

James exhorted young pastors to focus much of their attention on parents and see this as a great assignment as a pastor. James instructed young pastors to remember that the conversion of children should happen more from the conversation of parents rather than sermons of a pastor. On the night of James’s passing it was young pastors that were on his mind as he wrote for the last time: “To my younger brethren I say, you are engaged in the greatest work in the universe for in preaching for the salvation of souls you are brought into fellowship with God in his eternal purpose of mercy.”  

James’s last words were to young pastors reminding them of the eternal nature of their great work. His Saturday afternoon meetings, sermons, and books impacted pastors worldwide by admonishing them to pursue piety as a means to evangelistic and missional usefulness.

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129 James, *Earnest Ministry*, 175.

130 Campbell, *John Angell James*, 249.
CHAPTER 4

JAMES’S MINISTRY OF DOMESTIC PIETY: AN EXAMINATION OF WRITINGS AND SERMONS

The family in the nineteenth century was seen as the central institution within all of society. In *Civilising Subjects*, authors Davidoff and Hall wrote of the nineteenth-century family: “The family was a bulwark, a defense against the immorality of the world, a haven in which Christian morality was practiced.”¹ During this time, male leadership was expected with women playing a more supportive role. The family constituted the nucleus for most economic activities. In evangelicals and nonconformist marriages, men assumed economic and legal responsibilities while their wives were expected to brood children.² During the nineteenth century the family was seen in its simplest terms, “As a little world.”³ James shared a common nonconformist tenant that laid a great emphasis on family worship and spiritual formation.⁴ Every family, James instructed, has a “sacred character” intended to prepare the next generation for eternal purposes.⁵ It was these eternal purposes that James preached and wrote, exhorting each

¹Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 94.
³Ibid., 356.
⁴Ibid., 86.
member of the family to play their God-given role. This chapter examines the writings and sermons of John Angell James directed toward domestic piety. Special attention will be given to his instructions to parents, fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters.

Family to James was much more than a survival mechanism, a means for earthly relationships, or even a means to intimacy and childrearing. He did not view the family as man’s invention or merely a secular institution for perfunctory ends. Family engaged in the mission of God whereby eternity weighed in the balance. The underlining motive for James was the immortal soul and he believed that the family was primary in its spiritual influence: “The children of the godly should be converted at home by family instruction. This is what we want, that we may have more family religion—that piety that illuminates the domestic dwelling.”

Much of his preaching, writing, and ministry was aimed at directing parents to an eternal mission and responsibility that they had been given as shepherds of immortal souls.

James seldom lost sight of the battle that rages over the souls of men and that family should have a vested interest as the institution that is most powerful of all. This high view of family fastened James’s life, ministry, writings, and sermons to a biblical mission. James added, “Domestic happiness, in many respects, resembles the manna which was granted to the Israelites in the wilderness; like that precious food. Family is a gift of God from heaven that could not be purchased with money, only God bestows it, as

which the duties of husbands and wives are forcibly set-forth. I know I am totally unable to perform my part—for I fear I shall fail in the first requisite. I hope and pray though that my marriage will be prove a happier one now that I have a picture for myself. I will strive to do my duty at any rate.” Lucy Gilmer Breckinridge, *Lucy Breckinridge of Grove Hill: The Journal of a Virginia Girl, 1862-1864* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 218.

See appendix 3, figure A38 for the 1849-1856 Church Minutes where James again lays out his vision for the family in this church business meeting.
it grants refreshment through this pilgrimage.”  

His messages regularly proclaimed the hope that is given in the gospel.

To James, the institution of family was given as a great gift from God as a means used to point immortal souls to Christ. In 1828, James compiled the book, *Family Monitor or A Help to Domestic Happiness*, from a sermon series that he had preached to his flock:

A FAMILY! How delightful the associations we form with such a word! How pleasing the images with which it crowds the mind, and how tender the emotions it awakens in the heart! “Who can wonder that domestic happiness should be a theme dear to poetry, and that it should have called forth some of the sweetest strains of fancy and of feeling? Or who can be surprised, that of all the sweets which present themselves in the vista of futurity, to the eye of those who are setting out on the journey of life, this should excite the most ardent desires, and engage the most active pursuits? The family is constituted, and ought, therefore, to be conducted with the prospect of the rising generation following that which precedes it, not only to the grave, but to eternity.” Every member of every household is an immortal creature. Now since all the institutes of God look to another world as their chief and ultimate reference, surely, surely, that institute which is the most powerful of all, must be considered as set up with a special intention to prepare the subjects of it for “glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life.”

With this eternal understanding of family, James instructed fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters of Carrs Lane. Examining James’s rhetoric concerning domestic piety merits careful consideration of his instructions to parents collectively, fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters. The thesis of this chapter examines domestic piety as a central means of gospel proclamation and Christian formation in the life and ministry of John Angell James. This chapter will further illustrate a foundational narrative of the immortal soul that connects his exhortations to parents, fathers, mothers, son, and daughters.

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7James, *The Family Monitor*, 18.

8Ibid., 1, 5.
Exhortations to Parents

While James began a specific exhortation of domestic piety, other evangelicals in the nineteenth century began to encourage and equip parents. The increasing number of resources and sermons on the topic indicate an added emphasis on domestic piety throughout the century. The books of Jesse Hobson’s, *Domestic Piety*, James Hamilton’s, *Church in the House*, Charles Bridges’s, *Essay on Family Prayer*, John Abbott’s *Mother at Home*, and Jacob Abbott’s *Fire-side Piety* are just a few examples of other authors writing on the topic of domestic piety. Not all evangelicals used the term domestic piety as their precise phraseology but their priority remained steadfast as they gave an abundant and clear emphasis on the eternal mission of the home. Evangelicals defined domestic piety as the way in which an individual lived out their faith in the context of their family often focused on moral living. The object of domestic piety, for James, was squarely focused on eternity and the immortality of the soul.

James’s writings sought to remind and exhort parents that the salvation of their children should be their primary concern. He kept this priority ever before parents: “Then by God’s grace, ‘this one thing I will do,’ I will make their salvation, above all things besides, the object of my desire, of my pursuit, and of my prayer. How tremendous is the responsibility of a parent! The immortal destiny of your children should be your one great, commanding, controlling, absorbing object!” An examination of James’s lifelong rhetoric of domestic piety directed toward parents involved three distinct

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admonishments: the parental role is God-given, the parental role is primary, and the parental influence is enforced by example. For James, domestic piety provided the most effective means for parents to proclaim the gospel and provided Christian formation for their children.

**Parental Role is God-Given**

The first evidences seen of James’s emphasis regarding parents needs to proclaim the gospel at home is seen early in his ministry. On April 28, 1810, a young twenty-four-year-old James stood before his congregation and preached a message that foreshadowed his great passion for the institution of the family that guided his preaching, ministry, and writings for the next five decades. The title of James’s sermon in 1810 was “Parental Desire, Duty and Encouragement.” This parental fervor for James later became summed up in two words: domestic piety. To James, domestic piety should be guarded as “the salvation of the soul being thus pointed out as the object which should constitute the first wish of every parent’s heart on behalf of his child.” The salvation of souls should encourage parents in their primary responsibility.

What could an inexperienced twenty-four-year-old pastor possibly offer in the way of exhortation to parents with his lack of personal parenting experience? Thomas, James’s son was born in November of 1809. This meant that at the time of James’s April message to parents that he had a grand total of six months of personal parenting experience.

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experience. James’s 1810 message is clear: parents should not neglect their God-given role concerning the immortal souls of children.\textsuperscript{14} James’s encouragement in this sermon, “Parental Desire, Duty and Encouragement”, did not revolve around practical parenting tips, behavior modification, or even disciplining strategies.

James encouraged those he shepherded in this message to see their role as God-given: to see their children as a blessing from the Lord and see their eternal responsibility.\textsuperscript{15} As a young pastor James lacked personal experience as a parent. The death of his two children and Scripture gave him great conviction as he exhorted parents as seen in his oldest remaining sermon. Only five known sermons remain from his first fifteen years of ministry, and “Parental Desire, Duty and Encouragement”\textsuperscript{16} is the first of those remaining five. It will be noted that James commenced his authorship with reinforcing one of those relative duties which formed so great of an extent the subjects of his sermons.\textsuperscript{17} This sermon and James’s first published work served as an early indicator of his passion to instruct parents regarding their role in domestic piety.

Forty years into James’s ministry, in 1846, James preached a New Year’s address on the “Religious Education of Children.” While some may not consider James’s sermon the typical way to kick off a new year, James’s passion for the families in Carrs Lane to practice domestic piety drove him to keep this discipline before his congregation.

\textsuperscript{14}James, “Parental Desire, Duty and Encouragement.”

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16}“Parental Desire, Duty and Encouragement” was preached on the occasion of his son’s birthday, April 28, 1810. This sermon was later published by James and began his career as an author.

Throughout James’s ministry, he always preached the first Sunday of the year to children, youth, or parents.\(^{18}\) Forty years into his faithful ministry, as he wrote and taught of the God-given roles of parents to train their children, he still felt he could do more in his remaining years of ministry. After all he had said through word or pen, James revealed in this 1846 sermon a certain shame and guilt that he had not done enough to encourage domestic piety, as he had desired. He made it known in this sermon that during his remaining years of pastoring that he placed a greater priority on the religious training of children and youth:

There is no part of my own pastoral history on which, in the forty-first year of my ministry, I look back with more shame, regret, and penitence, than I do on my neglect of the catechetical instruction of the young. It is true I have had to occupy and fill a large sphere of duty, and have been engrossed by most multifaceted occupations, both at home and abroad; but it now seems to me that this forms no excuse, and nothing can form an excuse, for the neglect of a devoted attention to the young. How can we wonder that they go off to the world if they are not from childhood trained both by their parents and ministers? God help me that through the few remaining years of my ministry on earth. I do say, before God and his churches, that Christian parents and pastors are most censurably lacking in their duties to the youth that Providence has placed under their care. I know what a bustling age it is, both in the church and in the world, how much the time of both Christians and their pastors is demanded for the various institutions of the day; but no missionary operations, whether home or foreign, no public spirit, no religious benevolence, ought to be allowed to interfere with the right religious training of our children and youth.\(^{19}\)

As the closing of his earthly ministry was approaching, James felt that Christian parents and pastors were “censurably lacking” in their God-given responsibility to children and youth. Thirty years after James 1809 sermon, James again in this sermon lays out the foundation for domestic piety: “Recollect what a solemn thing it is to be a parent, and


what a weighty responsibility attaches to those who have the immortal souls of their children committed to their care!“20 James’s 1846 sermon illustrates clearly that after all the books James had written and the sermons that he preached to exhort parents, that more efforts could be made by parents and the church to proclaim the gospel at home.

The two aforementioned sermons, “Parental Desire, Duty and Encouragement” and “Religious Education of Children,” were preached nearly forty years apart. James’s passion for domestic piety is seen as he continued to believe in parents’ God-given role. Throughout James’s life he maintained this conviction concerning the parental role. Parents, James argued, were given the position of prophets and priests of their household by instructing their families and leading them in worship.21 Others, like Richard Baxter, shared James’s high view of the parental role: “If family religion were kept up and conducted as it should be, the public preaching of the Gospel would cease to be the means of conversion to the members of such households; among them it would be effected by domestic instruction.”22 In 1837, James wrote a pastoral letter to the churches in the Worcestershire Association. In this letter he sought to encourage pastors to consider the means of grace that parents have been given and their ability to fan the flame of devotion in their souls.23 James sought to encourage other pastors to encourage parents in their congregations as well.

Lastly, James’s exhortation to parents centered on personal responsibility that

20Ibid.

21Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, 109.


he felt was God-given and scripturally-mandated. His message communicated clearly that it is parents that are ultimately responsible before God:

You may engage a master or masters, as numerous as you please, to instruct your children in many things, useful and praiseworthy in their own place, but you must by the order of nature, educate them yourselves. You not only ought to do it, but you will perceive, if I am correct in what I have stated, and may still advance, you must do it, whether you intend it or not.24

Throughout James’s ministry career he stressed, he reminded, and he called upon parents to never abdicate their responsibility:

Here fix your center; here direct your aim; here concentrate your efforts, your energies, and your prayers. Remember, their religious education is your business. Whatever aids you call in from ministers or teachers, you never must, you never can, you never should, delegate this work. God will hold you responsible for the religion of your children.25

James’s instruction of parental responsibility was clear and continuous: “How tremendous is the responsibility of a parent! The immortal destiny of your children should be your one great, commanding, controlling, absorbing object!”26 The rhetoric throughout the span of James’s life and ministry admonished parents with the primacy of their God-given responsibility to proclaim the gospel to their children.

**Parental Role is Primary**

James held the position that parents have a powerful God-given influence that is fueled by personal devotion and grace: “Parents will have little ability, and less inclination, to inculcate piety upon his children, who has none himself.”27 James believed


25John Angell James, “A New Year’s Address to Parents and Ministers, on the Religious Education of Their Children,” *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 24 (1846): 12.

26James, *The Church in Earnest*, 117.

parents held the primary role of reaching and shaping their children’s Christian
formation. James often made his convictions known on this topic:

Parents, I now turn to you. How can we expect to see the ardor of missionary zeal in
your children, unless proper means are employed by you to kindle and support it? If
your sons and your daughters grow up without the fear of God, if they become
mirthful and worldly, if they acquire a taste for the amusements of the world, if they
become the companions of fools, we can neither expect nor wish them to be the
agents of such a cause as this.28

James reminded parents that their children possess eternal souls and that their personal
devotion and example were the means in which God uses to draw children to repentance.
James’s message of parents’ primary responsibility helped parents see their homes as a
mission field. This family mission field needed parents intentionally proclaiming the
gospel. James reminded parents, “All should realize the sublime idea that their houses are
the schools for eternity, their children the scholars; themselves the teachers; and
evangelical religion the lesson.”29 If children and youth were themselves to be reached
then parents served as the teachers in the schools for eternity.

James exhorted parents as to their primary role of proclaiming the gospel and
shaping their children’s spiritual formation throughout his ministry. From the beginning
of his ministry he reminded parents of their primary responsibility: “They are bound by
the sacred authority of God’s Word, to instruct their children in the knowledge of the
divine.”30 He exhorted parents of the chief importance of the eternal souls of their

28 John Angell James, “The Advantages and Obligations of Youth in Reference
to the Cause of Christian Missions Stated and Enforced,” May 12, 1828,

29 John Angell James, The Young Woman’s Friend and Guide through Life to

30 James, “Parental Desire, Duty and Encouragement.”
children, and that salvation should be the first wish of every parent. James believed parents held the primary role of reaching and teaching children and youth.

If the world were to be reached for Christ then parents served as a primary means to foster this zeal in their children. In James’s book *A Help in Domestic Happiness* written in 1828, he makes this point clear:

> Parents, you are invested by God himself with an almost absolute authority; you are constituted by him the supreme magistrate of your household, and cannot have a right idea of your situation, without considering yourself as appointed to rule. You must be the sovereign of the house, allowing no interference from without, no resistance from within. You have no option in the matter, and are not permitted to abdicate the throne, or to cast away your scepter.

The fortieth year celebration of James’s ministry at Carrs Lane was a momentous occasion with much fanfare. James had much to say to his congregation as one might imagine. To what topic of primary importance did James preach to his congregation of this day of celebration? Even on this day James was so moved with the conviction of the primary role that parents played in domestic piety that he provided clear instruction to parents concerning their responsibility:

> HEADS OF FAMILIES, I entreat you, determine to set yourselves afresh to the work of family religion, and the godly education of your children. I know that it is in part my business to look after your children’s souls, as well as yours; and I sorrowfully lament that I have not paid more attention to catechetical instruction of the young of my flock: but still, the religious education of your children is more your business than mine. I may be your helper, but I must not be your substitute. The pastor ought not to attempt, or to be allowed, to supersede the parent. Let your households be the seminaries of the church, and endeavor, by God’s grace, to train up a generation to whom we shall hand over with confidence the interests of Zion, when they shall pass from our hands.

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31 Ibid.

32 James, *The Family Monitor*, 137.

33 John Angell James, *Grateful Recollections: An Address to the Church Assembling in Carr’s Lane, Birmingham, on Completing the Fortieth Year of His Pastorate* (Birmingham: B. Hudson, 1845), 48.
Parents have been given a primary role that has been given by God himself. A careful examination of the lifelong exhortations directed to parents reveal that James held that parents possessed a responsibility that was assigned by God himself.

James felt so strongly about parents attending to their spiritual roles that in the area of family worship he offered, “If you feel it to be an insurmountable difficulty to commence the service (family worship) yourself, your minister and pastor will gladly preside at the performance of the first act, and address your household on the subject.”34 In an 1822 sermon called “Christian Fellowship” he admonished parents once more with their exceedingly important responsibility:

The station occupied by Christian parents, is exceedingly important, and therefore very responsible. We naturally look to the families of professing Christians for the materials with which the “spiritual house” is to be repaired amid the spoliations of sin and death. A large proportion of our members are the children of the godly, and our churches would be still more enriched with the fruits of domestic piety, if that piety itself were more ardent and more exemplary. It is impossible to urge in terms too strong, the sacred duties of Christian parents. Their influence on the prosperity of the church is greater than is generally conceived, or can be fully stated.35

He encouraged parents to see themselves as pastors of their households, watching out for the souls of their children.36 Nearing the end of his ministry years, he warned parents in a New Year’s Eve sermon not to hand their job over to ministers.37 In the sermon he restated his commitment with God’s help over the remaining days of his ministry to always remind parents that “[y]our children’s religious education is your business.

34James, “Family Prayer.”


36Ibid.

37James, “Religious Education of Children.”
Whatever aids you call in from ministers, or teachers, you never must, you never can, you never should, delegate this work. God will hold you responsible for the religion of your children.”

James’s preaching and writings concerning his conviction of parents primary role was strengthened by the value he placed on immortal souls.

**Domestic Piety Enforced by Example**

The pious example provided within the domestic circle was the most powerful influence of all, according to James. The best shaper of a child’s spiritual formation for James was the pious example of a parent. A thorough examination of James’s sermons and writings points inarguably to the example that parents possess in the context of domestic piety. James held that the importance of domestic piety had direct influence on the church’s ability to be earnest in its work:

Now the church cannot be in earnest if its families are not. An awakening attention to the claims of religion must begin in the domestic circle. Ministers may be in earnest for the salvation of the young, schoolmasters and mistresses may be in earnest for their salvation, but if parents also are not, all the efforts and influence both of the pulpit and the school united will be in vain. Home is usually the mould of character; and the parent is the help or hindrance of the minister of religion.

James believed that parents transferred their faith to their children largely by means of example in the context of domestic piety. James instructed parents to consider the enormous impact of their personal example:

When your children come home, you put a book of your own selection into their hands, or even many such books, and they read them with pleasure and personal advantage. Still, after all this, never for one day forget, that the first book they read, nay, that which they continue to read, and by far the most influential, is that of their parents’ example and daily deportment.

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38Ibid.

39James, *The Church in Earnest*, 113, 114.

James’s exhortations to parents often reminded them of their powerful example, their children have immortal souls, and that parents are to be the first to fan the flame for evangelical and missionary zeal.

James reminded parents that their children possess eternal souls and that their personal devotion and example were the means in which God uses to draw children unto himself. James calls a parent’s example the greatest educator of all:

What will educate these children? And now I answer, “Your example will educate them—your conversation with your friends—the business they see you transact—the likings and disliking you express—these will educate them; your domestics will educate them: and whatever be your rank or situation in life, your house, your table, and your daily behavior, these, these will educate them. Some parents talk of beginning the education of their children; the moment they were capable of forming an idea, their education was already begun—the education of circumstances—insensible education. This education goes on at every instant of time; it goes on like time—you can neither stop it nor turn its course.”

In 1824, James wrote his first book to parents called The Christian Father’s Present to His Children. In it he reminded parents of their important example: “Parents, as you

41Ibid., 127, 128.

would wish your instructions and admonitions to your family to be successful, enforce them by your example.”43 Throughout James’s ministry he reminded parents of the incredible influence of their example in shaping their children’s spiritual formation:

When your children come home, you put a book of your own selection into their hands, or even many such books, and they read them with pleasure and personal advantage. Still, after all this, never for one day forget, that the first book they read, nay, that which they continue to read, and by far the most influential, is that of their parents’ example and daily deportment.44

A parent’s example of piety and true religion, James felt, was more important than any lesson a parent might teach. On September 29, 1826, James and eight deacons sent a letter to the Tahitian Islands, in it he admonished the inhabitants of that island to remember to

be very attentive to the education of your children. Example is more powerful than precept. It is vain to teach them religion by your words—unless you show it to them by your actions. Teach them to obey you. Be firm, but mild. Govern them in love. Subdue them by kindness.45

From the beginning of James’s ministry to his dying day, at home or internationally, he encouraged parents to consider the power of their daily habits and actions.

**Exhortations to Fathers**

James believed that fathers were the key role in domestic piety and in 1824 he wrote *The Christian Father’s Present to His Children*. Through this book, James hoped to share from his personal experiences, and those things that have been beneficial in his efforts of domestic piety.46 This book was met with great acceptance and ran through

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43 James, *The Christian Father’s Present*, 27.

44 Ibid., 137.

45 James, *The Life and Letters*, 239.

nineteen editions by 1857. The public reception to this young pastor’s writings struck a nerve and received wide circulation. In this work, James encourages fathers to consider their personal and domestic piety throughout this book nearly two hundred times. In James’s *Christian Father’s Present to His Children*, he encouraged fathers to make the Bible central to the domestic circle, not cards or other amusements. James encourages men to be industrious but not to allow temporal things to engross the mind. He reminds men that their main business on earth is to obtain the salvation of their children’s immortal souls. Fathers are reminded in this work that, since the fall, men are destitute. Fathers, he exhorted, “True piety is the only reformer of mankind.” James taught that a father’s piety was the best means to shape a child’s spiritual formation. At the end of 1846 James preached a sermon called “Self Examination.” In this sermon James asks straightforwardly, “Fathers, have you kept up family religion with punctuality, seriousness, and affection, being careful of the spiritual welfare of your children?” James’s lifelong instructions to fathers zeroed in to three primary considerations: Children’s souls are eternal, fathers should be careful to instruct and train their children, and fathers must lead in their role towards domestic piety.

**Children’s Souls are Immortal**

James’s words stood as a clarion call to fathers to prioritize their children’s eternal souls. In *The Christian Father’s Present to His Children*, he stresses a foundational theme that ran throughout his ministry:

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47Ibid., 363.

48Ibid., 8.

Fathers! Your children are immortal beings! The stamp of eternity is upon them! Everlasting ages are before them! They are like the rest of the human race—depraved, guilty, and condemned creatures; and consequently in danger of eternal misery! Yet they are, through the mercy of God, creatures capable of attaining to glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life. Looking upon them in this light, what should be your chief concern for them.\(^5\)

James’s message throughout his entire ministry was unambiguous: “Fathers! Your children are hastening to either eternal happiness—or eternal torment!”\(^6\) His appeal to fathers pointed to a future home and beyond the temporal, fleeting and fading allurements of this world. In 1828, James wrote *Help to Domestic Happiness*, which directed fathers, “His eye, his heart, and his hope [fixed] on the same objects for them, as they are for himself and that is, upon eternal life.”\(^7\) In his book *The Church in Earnest*, he stresses his expectations for Carrs Lane’s membership using sharp words:

> I am not only the father of his existence, but in some measure of his destiny. I shall be the means, perhaps, of raising him to heaven, or sinking him to perdition. I am educating him to be an associate with the devil and his angels in everlasting fire, or a companion with the innumerable company of angels in glory everlasting. O God, help me! For who is sufficient for these things?\(^8\)

The eternal souls of his children should be the Christian father’s principle object. Even a deist considers the eternal welfare of his children and it is only an avowed atheist that can fix his aim lower than the possession of happy immortality.\(^9\) Beyond the short-lived training of children for this world, James reminded fathers to prepare their children for eternity.

\(^{50}\)James, *The Christian Father’s Present*, 15-16.

\(^{51}\)Ibid., 6.

\(^{52}\)James, *The Family Monitor*, 115.

\(^{53}\)James, *The Church in Earnest*, 117.

\(^{54}\)James, *The Christian Father’s Present*, 6,7.
Fathers Should Train and Instruct

This idea of Christian fathers instructing their sons was stressed repeatedly throughout James’s ministry. His recognition of the role of training that fathers possessed encouraged James to write and preach in order to encourage them. He instructed fathers, “I say to you also, look well to your sons; be doubly solicitous, and doubly laborious, and doubly prayerful, in reference to them. Be the friend, the companion, the counselor of your sons, as well as their father.”55 A father’s influence on the family, marriage, and their children’s spiritual formation was ever before James. He argued that Christianity had elevated the status of woman, but man was the main subject of the Bible that certainly extended to the role of fathers. James’s son, Thomas, said of his father, “He lived in habitual communion with God. For my own part, on recalling all I knew of him, I find no act of his unworthy or inconsistent.”56 James instructs fathers to be careful in their training and instruction and to not be too harsh as to discourage your children or provoke them to anger.

James realized that a very trying time for young men was when they were leaving home and entering adulthood. He had seen the consistent struggle that young men faced and that many struggled with sin and their faith. He encouraged fathers to support their sons in this way as they were leaving home: “My son, I can watch over you no longer. May the God whose providence removes you from your father’s house, be your protector, and preserve you from the evils of this sinful world. Remember that though my eye cannot see you, his can, and ever does. Fear him.”57 James saw many of the youth

55James, “Religious Education of Children.”

56James, The Life and Letters, 572.

from his own church struggle and fall. He became so burdened by this that in 1838 he wrote a book called, *The Young Man from Home*. In it he commended young men to seek their fathers’ words of instruction: “Wise is the young man, though he has left his father’s house, feels it a privilege to look upon his parents as his counselors.”  

A message throughout his life directed fathers to consider their domestic influence especially on their children. In *The Christian Father’s Present to His Children* he asks fathers to consider the following pursuits as the chief end of life: riches, pleasure, amusement, fame, or knowledge. James states that the chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, and with that he adds that parents should seek that same salvation for those under their care.

**Fathers’ Roles in Domestic Piety**

James wrote and preached that fathers have been given the head role within the institution of the family. To James, every family is a community or government and in it God has invested fathers sovereign authority as a good king but not a tyrant or an oppressor. James was burdened by the inconsistency of domestic piety and its scarce semblance. Of this concern James wrote,

> There is so much worldly mindedness, so much conformity to fashionable follies, so much irregularity of domestic piety. It is not enough for you to be pious on the whole, but you should be wholly pious; not only to be real disciples, but eminent ones; not only sincere Christians, but consistent ones. Your standard of religion should be very high.

To the contrary, a father executing his role can bless his children for both worlds.

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58 Ibid., 23.


60 Ibid., 16.
Domestic piety for James included instruction, family prayer, disciplining, a pious example, warning, and diligent inspection. While both parents were included with carrying out these functions of domestic piety it was the responsibility of the father to institute them and maintain their priority. For James, domestic piety was built upon this bedrock motive:

What is the chief object of your parents. . . . You must have said at once “For my being truly pious?” Yes, my children, this is most strictly true. At home, abroad, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity, this is the ruling solicitude of our bosoms.61

Fathers have a key role regarding domestic piety as it pertains to their children’s souls:

“It is a solemn expression, ‘I am a parent,’ for what is it but saying, I have immortal souls entrusted to my care, whose destiny for eternity will be affected by my conduct?”62

Therefore, a pious child that truly loved the Lord with all his heart was the product of gospel impact resulting from domestic piety led by the head of the household.

**Exhortations to Mothers**

Not only did James offer great words of encouragement to fathers, but he also sought to honor women by esteeming their roles as wives and mothers. As with fathers, James admonished mothers to consider the immortal souls of their children a primary objective of their life. Pragmatically, because of the time that mothers have with their children, James shared, “A mother should never forget that those little engaging creatures which play about the room so gaily and so innocently, with all the unconsciousness of childhood, are young immortals—beings destined to eternity.”63 James, throughout his

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61Ibid., 24.


63Ibid., 381.
life, never forgot the influence of his mother and he often sought to elevate the role of mothers:

Ah, what? Deep thoughtfulness certainly on the momentous nature of your charge. It is an awesome responsibility to be a parent, especially a mother. A distinguished philosopher has said that, “all the world is but the pupil and disciple of female influence!”

He also sought to admonish mothers in their important role towards domestic piety. James exhorted mothers by encouraging them to consider their influence, elevating their roles, and helping define their role regarding domestic piety.

**James’s Mother’s Influence**

James’s mother was a woman of prayer, and her devotion to Christ and biblical instruction were a major shaping force in the salvation and spiritual formation of her son. His mother’s influence followed him into his adult ministry years. His mother often reminded her son when success and popularity began coming his way, “Remember, my son, there is nothing so beautiful as an humble Christian.” Perhaps because young James’s spiritual formation was so influenced by his mother’s faith he later wrote, “The greatest power in the moral world is that which a mother exercises over her young children. This decisive moment sets the dominant direction which determines the course of life.” As a writer he captured the emotion of a mother preparing her son to leave home as well as reveal the true essence of a mother’s influence:

They fall upon their knees, and by united prayer commending you to Him who has in ten thousand instances been the guide and protector of youth. While our mother

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64Ibid.

65Ibid., 93.

66Ibid., 68.
packed your trunk, dropped her fast flowing tears upon your clothes and sighed her petition, “Oh son, my son! Great God, preserve him from all evil.”

James was able to connect as a writer as one who felt the heartache of such experiences.

**Elevating the Role of Mothers**

With this same heartbeat Pastor James urged mothers, “Oh, dedicate that boy to God, with all the fullness of a mother’s love, both for him and for his Lord, and pour over him all the influences of a mother’s judicious care and culture.” James’s teachings to women were of particular note because culture was wrestling with allowing women to vote at church, with slavery and a God honoring position of a godly wife and mother. That he wrote and spoke to women directly was of great encouragement to women. In some churches of this era women were not allowed to gather separately without men’s presence and leadership. Imagine how encouraged mothers were when James exalted and honored their God-given role: “Millions have blessed God on earth, and will prolong the praise in heaven and through eternity, for a godly mother. Mothers, next to ministers, have been the chief instruments of God, in building up the church!” His training of mothers caused them to look beyond even the good of morality to an even loftier view and purpose.

His uplifting words allowed mothers to see themselves as partners with God for the purpose of building God’s kingdom. There is no doubt that mothers have been given a special place of influence, as they are often primary nurturers of young children:

> Mothers, I would affectionately admonish you. The godly character of your children depends, perhaps, under God, more upon you, than upon your husbands, for these

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67 James, *The Young Man from Home*, 12.

68 James, *The Church in Earnest*, 145.

69 Ibid.
obvious reasons; as a general principle it is true, that children are more tenderly attached to the mother than to the father.  

In his book *Female Piety*, James writes a careful chapter to young mothers: mothers are the first educators, God has ordained the influence of mothers, mothers not only educate but shape character, children are immortal beings, mothers should understand their mission, mothers should begin early, and mothers should discipline. No nobler position is given than the one given to mothers to influence piety in their young children:

Mothers, can you conceive of a higher, nobler elevation to which in your maternal relation you can rise, than when, to the opening mind of your wondering child, you give the first idea of God? Or when you direct him to that Divine babe who was born at Bethlehem, was subject to his parents, grew into that Savior who said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me,” and took them in his arms, and blessed them, and then died for their salvation upon the cross. Or, than when you talk to them of heaven, the dwelling place of God and of his angels. Oh, to see the first look of holy inquisitiveness, and the first tear of infant piety.

After all this, James instructs that mothers are not alone in this work. Fathers should engage and exercise their God-given authority as well.

**Mothers’ Roles in Domestic Piety**

James believed that the greatest power in the mortal world was that of a mother’s influence of her child. Mothers care for more than the body of the child by cultivating their character and their souls. Her domestic piety duty was both sweet and sacred and was considered by James as hallowed, lovely, and one of the most beautiful sights in the world. James wrote that it is the Bible that has given a mother her throne as queen of the domestic circle. Her role is most important because substitutes can be

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70 James, “Family Prayer.”

71 John Angell James, *Female Piety: or, The Young Woman’s Friend and Guide through Life to Immortality* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), 383.

72 Ibid., 86, 87.

73 Ibid., 90.
found for her in the scene of business, but not the home. A mother should not underestimate her role or be foolish concerning its domestic influence. James lamented the pitiable sight of some poor children who have the misfortune of being in the hands of weak, foolish, and incompetent mothers. Regarding domestic piety, James emphatically states that it is the home to be the sphere of a woman’s mission and her first and chief place of duty. James admonished women to consider Solomon’s writings:

Still a woman may look well to the ways of her household, and yet have time to devote to the cause of religion and humanity; and some do so, who by method, diligence, and dispatch, set their house in order. The description of the virtuous woman comprehends both these: “She looketh well to the ways of her household. The heart of her husband doth safely trust her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. Her children rise up and call her blessed. She giveth meat to her household, and her portion to her maidens. She eateth not the bread of idleness.” Here is domestic order, management, economy, in perfection. Yet with all this is associated, “She stretcheth out her hands to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” There the good housewife is supposed to find time for works of mercy abroad as well as of industry at home. When the comfort of a husband is never neglected, and he has no reason to complain, and does not complain, of the want of his wife’s society; and the supervision of the children, as to their general well-being, and their education and home-training are properly attended to; and the whole course of domestic order is maintained with regularity and precision; it is to a Christian woman’s honour that her method of dispatch and order in the regulation of her household affairs is such as to leave her ample time for usefulness, without infringing on her duties as a wife, a mother, or a mistress.

James felt women had been given a special grace and position by providence and he sought to elevate women’s roles and encourage them regarding their influence towards domestic piety.

A mother must realize that her faithfulness within the domestic circle had

74 Ibid., 391, 392.
75 Ibid., 189.
76 Ibid., 190-91.
eternal influence. James did not mince words as he sought to exhort mothers concerning the immortality of their children’s souls:

Fond mother, look at that babe hanging on thy breast, and those other children sporting around your knee; and thou, the father of the group, watching with a parent’s and a husband’s swelling heart, thy wife and the mother of thy children, and indulging only in joyous emotions, and sportive expressions, pause, ponder, reflect! Millions of ages from that moment of domestic ecstasy, every one of those little happy creatures will be either in heaven, or in hell—will be a seraph or a fiend—will be enduring inconceivable torment, or enjoying ineffable felicity; and much, as to which it shall be, will depend upon you.77

James’s rhetoric regarding domestic piety sought to encourage mothers to consider their eternal influence, elevating theirs and helping define their role regarding domestic piety:

True piety, instead of setting aside a single female excellence, clothes them all with a Divine sanction, harmonizes the demands of God with the claims of man, converts the ordinary duties of domestic life into a means of preparation for that glorious world where the social ties no longer exist, and softens the cares, anxieties and sorrows, with which woman’s lot in this world is but too often sadly oppressed.78

James felt that where children’s immortal souls will spend eternity was partly determined by a mother’s impact.

**Exhortations to Sons**

James certainly loved the young people, both sons and daughters, in his congregation. There was simply no more visible example of this than on August 28, 1817. James was in a state of great debility from a nervous fever that had left him incapacitated for several months. Despite James’s poor health, he sought to encourage the young people in his congregation:

Although it has been five months since I’ve officiated with you. . . . I felt irresistibly impelled to write you. Are you living habitually under the fear of the Lord? . . . Examine your heart and listen to your pastor who has lately had opportunity of

77 James, *The Church in Earnest*, 117.

78 James, *Female Piety*, 417.
putting this matter to test by being on the border of eternity. You have had the
inestimable advantage of pious parents and a religious education. Fear the Lord.
Happy I shall be to resume my labors among you whenever it shall please God to
restore my strength. . . . Your pastor has been brought back from the gates of death.
(see appendix 2, figure A16)

James, from his deathbed, was burdened for the sons and daughters of his congregation.

In this letter, his admonishment is that they fear God. In a sermon preached at the thirty-
fifth anniversary of the Youth Missionary Society, May 12, 1828, James preaches to the
missional aim of sons and daughters:

PARENTS, I now turn to you. How can we expect to see the ardor of missionary
zeal in your children, unless proper means are employed by you to kindle and
support it? If your sons and your daughters grow up without the fear of God, if they
become mirthful and worldly, if they acquire a taste for the amusements of the
world, if they become the companions of fools, we can neither expect nor wish them
to be the agents of such a cause as this. It is only as they remember their Creator,
live under the influence of decided piety, and cherish a deep concern about the
salvation of their own souls, that anything can be looked for from them, in
connection with the schemes of Christian benevolence. Let me, then, become the
advocate of your children’s souls, of your own comfort, of the permanence of our
churches, and of the cause of missions, by entreat you to pay more attention to
the religious education of your families. On this basis, in a considerable measure,
rests our cause.79

In this same sermon he entreats parents for the sake of missions to pay more attention to
the religious education of children. James’s writings to sons are typically directed to
young men leaving home and about to embark upon adulthood.

Consider One’s Parents

James wrote two books to young men. The first was The Young Man from
Home written in 1838, and The Young Man’s Guide to Life and Immortality written in
1851. In these writings, sons are encouraged to consider the sovereign provision God has
given in pious parents. While it is ordained that sons should leave, they should remember
the continued influence of his father: “The God whose providence removes you from

79James, “The Advantages and Obligations of Youth.”
your father’s house, be your protector, and preserve you from the evils of this sinful world. Remember that though my eye cannot see you, his can, and ever does. Fear him.”80 It should be considered a great privilege as a young man to have parents that remain as counselors into adulthood. James exhorts sons leaving home to cherish, then, young man—cherish a fond affection for your parents’ house; it may be humble—but it is home to you. You may be rising higher and higher at every step above the lowly spot on which your cradle was rocked, and may be outstripping in prosperity those with whom you inhabited it—but still let it ever be sacred to you.81

In James’s writing he attempts to give sons a small taste as to the anxieties that is common among parents:

None but a parent’s heart can know the anguish of parting with a sweet babe. But there is an agony deeper and more inconsolable than that. It is occasioned by a wicked son. I have seen one mother pour forth, from a heart which no consolations could reach, tears of bitterness over a perverse and wicked son, and have heard her say, “Would that my son had died in his infancy!”82

James believes that sons should reflect on the immeasurable value of their home, their family, and the domestic piety afforded through their parents. A son should feel the pangs of departure when considering the tears of a mother and the heavy heart of a father.

**James’s Warnings to Young Men**

Sons grow up, become young men, and as it is appointed that they leave home. James being concerned about sons of his church growing up, leaving home, and facing the evils present in the world wrote *The Young Man from Home*. In this work James

80 James, *The Young Man from Home*, 20.


82 James, *The Young Man from Home*, 189.
reminds sons of the blessing of home, gives a stern warning of dangers to come, and encourages these young men to consider the benefits and hope that only piety offers. A script of what nineteenth-century pastors were facing was seen in James’s own words:

Young men face dangers: Ministers have seen the dangers of youths leaving home. Pastors notice infrequent church attendance, and then receive a letter from parents, “pastor please make an effort to snatch my son from his evil companions and profligate courses.”83

James pointedly cautioned men throughout his ministry while realizing that they must leave home: “You (young men) cannot always remain at home, to be nursed in the lap of domestic enjoyment. You have a great part to play in the great drama of life and must leave home to prepare to act it well. It is the appointment of God that man should not live in idleness.”84 The theater, bad companions, vicious women, drinking parties, indolence, and dandyism are a number of the most prevalent sins that James warns his young readers to avoid.

James had for many decades warned youth concerning the danger of the theater. In Young Man from Home, James was so convinced of its danger that it is the first of his warnings. Of bad companions he cautions, “Bad companions are a source of danger. Perhaps more young men are ruined by this, than by any other means. James warns young men to set a strict guard knowing this snare is spread at your feet.”85 James concludes by warning young men to avoid strong drink, indolence, and dandyism. James tells his readers that “even while the pleasures of sin last, they are sadly mixed with the warnings, perturbations and reproaches of consciences. Sin is a hard master, and Satan’s

83Ibid., 12, 13.
84Ibid., 7.
85Ibid., 36.
service is a galling yoke.”86 He encourages young men to look ahead and consider that
one day they will lead a family and eternity is before them:

This present world is not our HOME—and unhappy is the man who makes it such. Heaven is the home of immortal man. During the whole time we are upon earth, we are away from home; and away from it, that we may prepare, like a child at school, or a youth in his apprenticeship—to go at length finally and fully to possess and enjoy it . . . the overturn of a boat or a carriage. Place your finger on your pulse and say “If this stop—and any second it may stop—I am instantly in heaven or hell!”87

James’s writings were direct, pointed, and his message was clear. He spoke in a way that his readers understood and were compelled by his instruction.

James wanted his young readers to know that sin was not a trifle matter. The sins of youth were to be exposed and considered for what they really are:

Sin is that bitter thing which the soul of a true Christian hates; it is the object of his antipathy, and therefore of his dread. He turns from it with aversion and loathing, as that which is offensive and disgusting. It is not merely that he is commanded by authority to abstain from sin—but he is led away from it by the expulsive power of a new attraction.88

James felt that sin could lead young men to an incorrigible condition if they continued in the way of sin. As a way of encouraging these young men, James admonished them to “think on eternity. Place your finger on your pulse and say, ‘If this stop but a second, and at any second it may stop, I am instantly in heaven or hell.’ God has provided some better things for us, heaven, I repeat, is the home of immortal man.”89 Throughout the decades, James preached to youth to fear the Lord as Solomon said. This is how men depart from evil.

86Ibid., 169.

87Ibid., 154.

88James, “The Young Man Leaving Home,” 137.

89James, The Young Man from Home, 191.
Commendation of Piety

James did not feel that genius, wealth, noble deeds, ambition, or a commanding influence saved a young man from the error of his way or saved the soul from death. James wrote that it was “real piety, even of piety in youth, and of piety in humble life. The honour of being useful, the glory of being instrumental in saving souls, is placed within the reach of the youngest, poorest, and most illiterate aspirant after the mighty and truly sublime achievement.”90 James did not define piety as a result of godly living, but rather it is foundational or the parent of all virtues and Christian usefulness. James asserted his position: “Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is.” True piety is the parent of every virtue which is either useful to man or pleasing to God; and when confirmed and illustrated by a faithful life, is the best recommendation a youth can offer to one whose confidence he wishes to secure.”91 James’s position on piety was eloquently and definitively stated throughout his sermons and writings to young men.

Exactly what did James preach that protected young men from sins’ destruction? James’s rhetoric of piety was clear and consistent throughout his life and ministry. He illustrates piety’s power to preserve from the power of temptations’ snare using Joseph as an illustration. The piety that was the preservative against sin and sustained him to his last day was a filial piety that was first developed in his father’s tent. James illustrated the benefit of piety for Joseph:

But Providence is ever watchful over the reputation and interests of pious men. But for Potiphar’s wife, what was the means of Joseph’s preservation from the snare? “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Here was the shield that covered his heart. He was faithful, just, generous, noble; but there needed to be

90Ibid., 153.
91Ibid., 140.
something else, something still stronger, to resist such a temptation: morality alone would not have done it, and he called in the aid of his piety. Let every young man mark this, and see the power, the excellence, and benefit of piety, as a preservative against sin.\textsuperscript{92}

For Joseph, piety not only helped in this one battle of temptation. James felt piety offered young men protection throughout their entire lives: “So Joseph found it. The piety which had been the guide of his youth, the guard of his middle life, and the prop of his old age, sustained him to the last, and he died with firm faith in the promise of God.” So where did Joseph find this protective, sustaining piety? James posits that this earnest piety is developed early in a young man’s life through his family:

Let us look at Joseph in that situation where the seed of all his future excellences began to develop—his father’s tent. There, were laid, in his filial piety and his true religion, the foundations of that noble and lofty character which all nations and ages have delighted to contemplate. It is unquestionably true, and should ever be borne in mind by parents and children, that the rudiments of character are formed in early life, and at home, and then and there those seeds of good or evil are sown which bear in future years their appropriate fruits.\textsuperscript{93}

For James, Joseph’s life illustrated the blessings of piety and its origination. James held that piety served as a preservative of sin, a sustainer of faith throughout life, and this true piety is birthed from the family circle through domestic piety.

Young men admonished young men to pursue piety as a means of strength, wisdom, and peace. James wished to impress upon young men that their piety should be scriptural and evangelical. James was earnest to train young men in his church and elsewhere to be the future pillars of the church. He felt pastors and church leaders should be especially attentive to young men and seek to train them so that they would be ready to lead the church. In 1849, James gave a monthly address called “Sunday Evening

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\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 115.

\textsuperscript{93} John Angell James, \textit{The Young Man’s Guide through Life and Immortality} (London: Hamilton, Sons and Company, 1863), 138.
Lectures to Young Men.”94 These lectures later became his writing, The Young Man’s Guide Through Life and Immortality. In these sermons and this book, James wrote that “piety and sound morality are a nation’s strength—more than its armies and its navies. Piety and sound morality are its wealth—more than its commerce. Piety and sound morality are its glory—more than its literature, science, and victories.”95 This rhetoric of James further illustrates his elevated position on piety. To James, piety became the chief purpose of God’s creation:

He who has true piety, however young he may die, has effectually accomplished the chief purpose of his creation. While he who neglects true religion, whatever of rank, wealth, honor, or even earthly usefulness, he may have acquired, and however long he may live to enjoy them—has missed the chief end of his being; and will very soon look on his life as a lost adventure.96

The parent of virtue, as James referred to piety, also served as “the protector of health, the nurse of economy, the patron of industry, the guardian of integrity, the prompter of knowledge, and thus the guide to success and the helper of prosperity.” Piety for James was the basis of everything else, of all talents and virtues. The development, encouragement, and training of young men were ever before James. He sought through his writings and sermons to exhort young men to consider their parents. He warned them and throughout his life he commended true piety as their highest aim.

94 See appendix 2, figure A17 for a pamphlet with the schedule of James’s monthly lectures in 1849. The lectures were later published in James’s book The Young Man’s Friend and Guide Through Life to Immortality.

95 Ibid., 20.

96 James, The Young Man’s Guide through Life, 45.

Exhortations to Daughters

James proclaimed that women are the finishing grace of all of creation. When the Bible is taught women are elevated. Daughters grow up to become young women and James sought to encourage these women. For James, childhood and youth were temporary and not the ultimate condition of human existence, because each leads and points to manhood or womanhood. These daughters should look to one source for final authority concerning their roles, purpose, and mission: “Go to the right source. Do not be satisfied with merely consulting men’s works but consult God’s Word. I remind young women to search Scriptures themselves by whose authority all ministers and books are to be tried.” Scripture, unlike culture in James’s day, pointed to a noble, excellent position of honor for women. James’s writings and sermons encouraged women in their God-given positions: While culture regards women as inferior, Christianity elevates the condition of women by its genius. Specifically, James desired that young women understand the blessing of family, understand their mission, and that they cultivate piety.

Blessing of Family

Young women do have a great role to play in the God-given institution of family. James encouraged these women by educating them as to their specific roles. Within the role of marriage, James wanted these young wives to know their first calling was to God:

It is not merely what you have been as a woman in society, or as a wife, a mother, or a mistress in the family, but what you have been toward God, that will decide your

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97 James, Female Piety, 7.

98 James, A Young Woman’s Friend, 96, 97.

99 Ibid., 15.
lot in the day of judgment. You may have been the most exalted, and noble, and learned of women, the most faithful of wives.\textsuperscript{100}

Within marriage, James posited that these young women should look to Eve as God’s design: “Here then is the design of God in creating woman, to be a suitable helpmate to man. Man needed a companion and God gave him woman. If then a woman’s mission in paradise was to be man’s companion and joy, such must be the case still.”\textsuperscript{101} In regards to submission, James taught,

\begin{quote}
Man was made to show the glory of God by being in subordination to him. Woman was created to be in addition to this, the glory of man by being in subordination to him and only to him; while woman was created to be, in addition to this, the glory of man, by being in subordination to him, as his help, his ornament, and his glory.\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

James held that the family was chief among all that God has given to mankind and within family God has given women a great place of honor and a great mission.

**Woman’s Mission**

In 1852, James provided a syllabus called “A Course of Sermons to Young Women” (see appendix 2, figure A18). The importance of these lectures were seen in James’s offering them on Sunday mornings so that everyone was taught with these young women. These sermons later became James’s book *Female Piety: or, The Young Woman’s Friend and Guide Through Life to Immortality*. Here James taught young women to find mentors that know the destiny and mission to be man’s helpmate. James stated that man is not safe or profitable to others when he is dissociated from the influence of a woman. Besides helping her husband, young women needed to understand

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{100}James, *Female Piety*, 448.
\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., 79.
\end{flushright}
her influence upon the next generation. James taught young women concerning their influence: “The greatest power in the moral world is that which a mother exercises over her young children. This decisive moment sets the dominant direction which determines the course of life lies concealed in the first years of infancy; and these belong to the mother.”103 James encouraged young wives that they should never feel degraded by such a submission. James did not teach that wives should be slaves to their husbands, their children, nor their homes. Their mission was eternal in nature and women should give their all to this passion of being useful for souls.

**Female Piety**

In 1842 James wrote *A Memoir to Elizabeth Bales*. Elizabeth was an example of the type of piety that James was instructing the young women at Carrs Lane to cultivate. Elizabeth’s piety was humble, evangelical, consistent, and eminent. In his book, *Female Piety*, James wrote that piety possessed an earnestness, filial, genuine, and practicality that should be developed early in life. To young women he posited,

Female piety is the best and only sincere expression of gratitude toward God. She that loves not Christ, whomesoever else she may love, and however chaste and pure that love may be, is living immeasurably below her obligations, and has a stain of guilt upon her heart and her conscience which no other virtue can efface or conceal.104

James pointed young women to Scripture and reminds them to study God’s Word as a means of further cultivating piety. He admonished these women to seek piety early in their lives, to withdraw from vanity and to give the first parts of their day consecrating their heart to piety. The benefits of piety he instructs: protects from sin, prepares for

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103Ibid., 87.

104Ibid., 36.
usefulness, provides consolation amid sorrows, and provides beauty for the soul. Piety shaped foundationally by the gospel impacted all of life for James.

Young women that are married have a piety that is directed domestically, James exhorted. Young wives should look to their homes as a great mission:

Female zeal in religious matters must ever be carried forward with *due regard to the duties of home*. If, as I have stated, home be the sphere of woman’s mission, and the first and chief place of her duty, no public objects of any kind must be allowed to interfere with these. It will never do to serve the Lord with time taken from domestic order, comfort, and family duty.\(^{105}\)

James cautioned that many families suffered from filial piety where the domestic hearth had been broken. The welfare of young people was ever before James. Even in practical matters he connected his advice back to domestic piety,

Young Christians should be very careful not to form *matrimonial connexions*, in opposition to the apostolic injunction, “not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” Both reason and revelation unite their testimony against the practice of Christians marrying *irreligious* persons. What an interruption to conjugal comfort, what an obstacle to domestic piety, what an injury to the cause of religion, does such a practice bring with it.\(^{106}\)

James elevates what Scripture advances: the role of husbands, the roles of women, and the importance of domestic piety as a means to reaching immortal souls. In James’s sermons and writings he sought to elevate the role of young women, educate them concerning God’s intent for family, and help women discover their mission which all is built on his position on piety.

**Conclusion**

James taught on the subject of domestic piety throughout his ministry that

\(^{105}\)Ibid., 189.

\(^{106}\)John Angell James, *Christian Fellowship, or, the Church Member’s Guide* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1829), 137.
spanned more than five decades. For James, it was the immortality of the soul that led him to a strong conviction for domestic piety. James held that the families were to join in God’s prime mission of proclaiming the gospel to immortal souls:

The soul, the soul! What a word is that! The salvation of immortal souls is the chief object of the infinite benevolence of God, the centre of his schemes, and the consummation of his works; it is that for which the Son of God became incarnate and died upon the cross; for which the Holy Spirit is poured out from on high; for which the Bible was penned by inspiration; and the whole apparatus of religious ordinances was constructed.  

James felt the immortality of the soul to mankind’s chief end and mission. Parents have souls entrusted to their care and they should not neglect the pursuit of introducing their children to salvation through the proclamation of the gospel. James exhorted parents to have this eternal perspective toward their children:

My children are immortal creatures; their souls are entrusted to my care, and will be required at my hands, and their salvation depends much upon me. Then, by God’s grace, ‘this one thing I do,’ I will make their salvation, above all things besides, the object of my desire, of my pursuit, and of my prayer. I will neglect nothing that can conduce to their respectability, comfort, and usefulness in this world; but above, and beyond this, I will chiefly desire and do whatever can conduce to the salvation of their souls.

This chapter was written to examine James’s emphasis regarding domestic piety as a central means of gospel proclamation and Christian formation. Specific sources are sited to demonstrate James’s intentional instruction to every member of the family regarding domestic piety. The gospel alone provides salvation for man’s soul and allows one to live a pious life here on earth. This extensive examination reveals that his lifelong emphasis


108 James, The Church in Earnest, 117.
on the immortal soul was a tread woven throughout his teachings to parents, fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters.
CHAPTER 5
AN EVALUATION OF JAMES’S INTEGRATION OF
DOMESTIC PIETY ON EVANGELISTIC AND
MISSIONAL EFFORTS

Introduction

Domestic piety, especially for seventeenth nonconformists, was not just an additional spiritual discipline to be considered. It was through the practice of domestic piety that dissenting nonconformists passed their conviction and faith practice from one generation to the next. John Angell James’s integration of domestic piety was one of his primary emphasis during his lifetime, and his priority of this spiritual discipline warrants serious consideration. Did James’s integration of domestic piety impact the members of Carrs Lane, the city in which he lived, and his church’s missional efforts? James was impacted by domestic piety throughout his life. This influence is first seen in his mother’s pious impact, through the humble influence of the shoemaker John Pooles and the domestic impact of evangelicals and nonconformists of his day. This chapter evaluates the impact of James’s rhetoric by providing an evaluation of his integration of domestic piety upon Carrs Lane’s evangelistic and missional efforts.

Domestic Piety Taught to Members of Carrs Lane

James’s Integration

An interest in the religious education of the young was apparent from James’s earliest days as pastor of Carrs Lane. Two years before his passing, on April 2, 1857, James wrote,
Even before I became a member of Carrs Lane Church I felt a strong desire to promote the religious interest of young people and through subsequent years the desires have maintained its power over my mind. The circumstances of my life, the opinions of others, the bent of any thought, perhaps of my talents have all combined to point out this line of service as the “one thing” I ought to do. (see appendix 3, figure A36)

For James, if the next generation and the world were to be reached for Christ, then parents needed to be trained and exhorted to execute their God-given assignment of gospel proclamation. James’s priority and what he felt was the global reach of family religion is recorded on January 3, 1851, in the Church Minutes books:

There must be more family religion. I begin to think that we are all wrong talking so much about the pulpit we forget about the family. I will use a strong expression but I will do it advisably. The children of the godly should be converted at home by family instruction. Family religion—that piety that illuminates the domestic dwelling. This is the “work of the church,” “the light of the world.” (see appendix 3, figure A38)

James developed the skillful integration of domestic piety in his ministry over his fifty-four years of ministry at Carrs Lane. James’s integration of domestic piety was central to his ministry throughout his ministry because of the connection he made from family religion to effective evangelism and world missions.

In 1846, James preached a New Year’s sermon called “The Religious Education of Children” that further illustrates his efforts of integrating domestic piety. James shares his one regret after four decades of ministry at Carrs Lane:

There is no part of my own pastoral history on which, in the forty-first year of my ministry, I look back with more shame, regret, and penitence, than I do on my neglect for the catechetical instruction of the young. It is true I have had to occupy and fill a large sphere of duty, and have been engrossed by most multifaceted occupations, both at home and abroad; but it now seems to me that this forms no excuse, and nothing can form an excuse, for the neglect of a devoted attention to the young. As a parent and a pastor, I now see defects I would give anything to supply, and which, God helping me, I meant to supply through the few remaining years of my ministry on earth. I cast no reflection upon others which I do not take to myself, but I do say, before God and his churches, that Christian parents and pastors are most censurably lacking in their duties to the youth which Providence has placed under their care, I know what a bustling age it is, both in the church and in the world, how much the time of both Christians and their pastors is demanded for the various institutions of the day; but no missionary operations, whether home or foreign, no public spirit, no
religious benevolence, ought to be allowed to interfere with the right religious training of our children and youth.\(^1\)

This sermon was printed in the 1846 *Evangelical Magazine* that held a wide circulation among most Protestant denominations of that day. James’s burden for the family and his intent for the future of his ministry at Carrs Lane is made publically clear through this sermon that was printed as an article. In the sermon James makes what must have been a controversial statement as he claims that the religious training of children and youth should precede that of foreign and home missions and religious benevolence of the church. In this message James specifically exhorts parents in regards of domestic piety:

> Cultivate, I repeat, your own personal religion to a higher degree of eminent and consistent piety. Without this you will have neither the disposition nor the power to do much in forming the pious character of your children. Many of you must be sensible that you are in too lukewarm a state, and too inconsistent as professors of godliness, even to make the attempt to bring your children under the influence of true religion, much less to expect success.\(^2\)

This message by James, above all other sermons, shows his intent in integrating domestic piety as the pastor of Carrs Lane. Even further than intent, this message shows exactly where James places domestic piety among all the other ministry priorities of the church that demanded his attention. For James, domestic piety was worthy of cultivation and a chief ministry priority.

Often James used the phrase family religion and domestic piety interchangeably. In his sermons and books, James used the phrase “family religion” many times. In his book *The Church in Earnest*, James committed an entire chapter to the subject of family religion. In this book James exhorts parents, “It is not whether you are


\(^2\)Ibid.
paying some attention to the salvation of your children, but whether you are paying such
attention as this great subject requires.”3 James lamented often that the responsibilities of
family religion and domestic piety were being neglected and poorly maintained.4

Regarding family religion, James asked pointed questions: “Fathers, have you kept up
family religion with punctuality, seriousness, and affection, being careful of the spiritual
welfare of your children?”5 James was driven with a deep conviction regarding family
religion and the domestic circle:

Fully believing that “family religion” is the one thing needful amongst us and that if
the duties and precepts, so beautifully enforced and illustrated by the writer, claimed
more of our attention as individuals, we should see more parents bringing up their
children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, more children knowing the
apostolic precept, “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing
unto the Lord.” In short, by fulfilling our home duties, the domestic circle would
more abundantly exhibit the fruits of godliness, and our shattered Society be built up
of living stones, a temple sacred to the Lord of Hosts.6

Family religion and domestic piety were often mentioned in James sermons and books as
a central means of gospel proclamation and Christian formation.

**Families of Carrs Lane’s Practice of Domestic Piety**

To what degree were the families of Carrs Lane personally impacted by
James’s integration of domestic piety? On January of 1834, Carrs Lane received a letter

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3John Angell James, *The Church in Earnest* (London: Hamilton, Adams and
Company, 1848), 125.


5John Angell James, *Pastoral Addresses* (New York: D. Appleton and

Adam Waldie, 1831), 4: 387.
from a young man named Benjamin Dobson. Dobson, a young man raised at Carrs Lane and a recent convert writes,

To the Church of Christ at Carrs Lane,

From childhood I have been blessed with a religious education, trained up with anxious solitude in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. My dear parents communicated to me every religious principle and employed every measure using prayer, conversation and writing to imprint my youthful mind. (see appendix 2, figures A20 and A21)

Throughout his letter, Dobson indicates regret that he had turned to sin as a young man and that his rebellion was in spite of the incredible spiritual upbringing that he had as a young child. This letter indicates that Dobson’s parents, trained under James’s ministry, were seeking to intentionally impact their child’s spiritual formation. Dobson’s parents lived out the instructions of domestic piety in their home and their influence made a lasting impact even upon their prodigal son.

James’s congregation clearly took his exhortations seriously. Family prayers in the household of the Phipson’s, for example, a modest metal manufacturing family who were enthusiastic members of James’s congregation, were seen as crowning the domestic arrangement of their household and serving as an expression of all that was most delightful in family life.7 It was Phipson, ever faithful, that made the proposal that Carrs Lane hire Robert Dale as James’s Co-pastor on July 10, 1854 (see appendix 3, figure A27). Phipson served as a deacon at Carrs Lane for fifty-nine years.8 James’s rhetoric continued throughout his ministry as seen in the church minutes recorded on January 4, 1856. James encourages his families:


Is family religion too much neglected by the pressures of business and it some measure sunk to a mere form? If family piety is low the piety of the church will be low. Do your children see you as the bright example, which gives power and influence to prayer? (see appendix 3, figure A40)

The Phipson and Dobson families are two families that demonstrate James’s integration of domestic piety with church members of Carrs Lane.

Together the families and members of his congregation at Carrs Lane were shaped by the integration of domestic piety as expressed in their new building. Carrs Lane was one of the first churches to build dedicated space for reaching children with the gospel (see appendix 2, figure A37). James, on his fiftieth year Jubilee Celebration, declared that he had preached over 10,000 sermons and spent 2,600 Sabbaths as Carrs Lane’s pastor, reaching nearly 20,000 children. He stated in his Jubilee sermon that when he commenced his service as pastor that children were completely overlooked, but now he gives them this instruction: “Piety is the only preparation for heaven” (see appendix 2, figure A10). An evaluation of James’s integration of domestic piety shows that tens of thousands of families in Birmingham, members of Carrs Lane for over fifty-four years of James’s ministry, and Carrs Lane’s ministry focus for many decades demonstrated extraordinary influence.

**Carrs Lane’s Impact on Birmingham**

Birmingham was the city to which James felt called, and no hardship or enticement to another place of service ever lured him away. Visitors to the town frequently mentioned its unappealing and monotonous appearance, but James loved the city in which he lived. Historian Johann Georg Kohl’s felt, “Birmingham might be a cultural desert but it was a paradise for the useful arts of human intellect and hard work.” The hard working

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9 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 36

city of Birmingham was expanding, but not all growth brought the changes that improved the moral fiber of the town. James was burdened for the uneducated and poor children, the slave trade associated with Birmingham, the awful neglect of domestic piety within families and the lostness of his city. In order to win the lost and fight the moral decay of his city, James began town missions, started outreach Sunday schools, and planted churches.

An example of Carrs Lane’s influence is seen in the life of a Birmingham resident named Henry Wright. In 1850, Wright had joined the church at Carr’s Lane. He soon displayed a life that showed he was truly pious and was elected as a deacon in 1852. He became a close friend of James and during James’s last years he was like a son.11 James and Carrs Lane were certainly reaching men like Wright and others in Birmingham. Spurgeon would say of James’s impact on Birmingham,

I do not think Mr. John Angell James, of Birmingham, saw much fruit to his ministry for many years. As far as I remember, Carr’s Lane Chapel was not the place of any great notoriety before he preached there; but he kept on steadily preaching the gospel, and at last he drew around him a company of godly people who helped to make him the greatest power for good that Birmingham had at that time.12

Individuals like Wright made up a collective mass of thousands that Carrs Lane was impacting through their town missions, efforts through outreach Sunday schools, and church plants.

**Domestic Piety: A Town Mission to Reach Families**

According to The Town Mission in Connection with the Church Assembling at Carrs Lane 1837-1839 Minute Book, James and Carrs Lane had divided Birmingham into


thirteen distinct districts.\textsuperscript{13} Paid town missionaries supported the work in each district. These missionaries were responsible to read the Scripture in the houses of the poor, bring people under the means of grace, distribute tracks, hold prayer meetings, stir up people to attend public worship, and admonish parents to send their children to Sunday school. Town missionaries had other duties including preaching twice on the Sabbath and during the summer months they preached every day in the courts that offered a good place.\textsuperscript{14} These missionaries reported monthly to the Town Missionary Superintendent who recorded the numbers in the Church Minute books for a report to the church (see appendix 3, figure A35). The numerous reports in the Church Minute books indicate the church’s intentional plan to impact their beloved city.

The expressed objective of the Town Missionary was to spread the knowledge and influence of evangelical religion in the dark and destitute towns and neighborhoods by visiting house to house. This was done in pursuance of the authority conferred upon them by the church. This practice was approved and began in 1837. The first missionaries were Edwin Derrington, who was assigned the streets around Garrison Lane Chapel; Peter Sibree, who was given Legge Street; and Mr. Clay, who was assigned Livery Street. One missionary, Henry Coleman served as a Carrs Lane Town Missionary for twenty-two years.\textsuperscript{15} James had seen this district model work well as he had divided the city into

\textsuperscript{13}See appendix 3, figures A33 and A34 for the Carrs Lane Town Mission Books of 1837-1839. The seventeen books entail an elaborate, detailed strategic plan by Carrs Lane.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid. These Town Mission Books record town missionary job descriptions and the pay structure for each position.

\textsuperscript{15}“Number Ten” (May 1892), 12, http://books.google.com/books?pg=PP48&dq=Carrs+Lane+working+with+other+churches&ei=fO24ULnONZTo8QTS_IHAAg&id=Ah8FAAAAQAAJ (accessed December 1, 2012).
six districts already and assigned two deacons to care for the needs of his growing congregation.

**Domestic Piety: A Mission to Reach Children through Sunday School**

An additional way that Carrs Lane impacted the city of Birmingham was through its Sunday school outreach ministry. James’s decentralized ministry approach allowed him to think well beyond the four walls of his church to the city that he loved. The Carrs Lane Sabbath School minutes show an intentional effort to impact the city’s children. The 1834 record shows Sunday schools in six areas of town: Smithwick, Garrison Lane, Yardley, Harborne, Great Barn, and Carrs Lane (see appendix 3, figure A41). The Sunday schools meeting in those areas offered everything that the schools at Carrs Lane had to offer. The scholars were well-trained and the records indicate the same level of accountability for these schools as the one that met at Carrs Lane. As Carrs Lane reached out to children and the fame of James spread far and wide, the response in attendance and membership was rewarded with growth.

John Angell James’s concern for domestic piety did not preclude age-organized gatherings such as Sunday school. An example of how Carrs Lane used its Sunday school ministry as an intentional long-lasting ministry outreach is seen in its earliest efforts. In 1810, a room was leased for the work of Sunday school in Smethwick and by 1823 a small chapel was built.16 In 1837, Smethwick Congregationalist church was formed and they hired their first pastor. It was twenty-seven years of labor before this church was birthed. In 1821, two members went to Great Barr Street hoping to

16S. M. Coombs, *History Of Carrs Lane Church, A Retrospect: 1898* (Birmingham: Hudson and Son, 1898), 46, 47. The information in the text was supported by Coombs’s work.
recruit a handful of boys for Sunday school for instruction. They hired a room and on
their opening day in 1822, eighty names were enrolled. By 1829, Palmer Street Chapel
was built and in 1837 a missionary was employed for the work. By 1843, a larger chapel
was needed and the older chapel was converted to Sunday school space. In 1860, the
church was formed and a pastor hired. Acock’s Green Congregational Church also began
as a small Sunday school near Yardley’s Parrish in 1820. Needing a larger space by 1827,
a small chapel was built as members of Carrs Lane supported the work of the gospel in
that district. Acock’s Green Church planted other churches in Olton, Yardley Causeway,
and missions in two other villages.

**Domestic Piety and Church Planting**

James’s focus on domestic piety did not prevent him from having other clear
lifelong passions. The last sermon that James preached was on the Sunday before he
passed away. He preached at a Carrs Lane’s daughter church in Edgbaston. His last
sermon was called “How Shall We Neglect so Great a Salvation?” At the close of his
message he stated, “If he knew this was his last discourse he should preach, he would
choose these words as his dying theme.”17 To his last days James placed a high priority
on the church plants of Carrs Lane. To impact the growing population of Birmingham,
James embraced a strategy of planting churches throughout the city and its suburbs.
James’s passion for reaching the lost allowed him to embrace mutually compatible
priorities: domestic piety and church planting.

James’s emphasis on piety in the home did not stand in the way of evangelism
and church planting. Under James’s leadership, Carrs Lane built seven chapels, set up

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four independent churches, and took up collections to build two more chapels. In 1901 the *British Monthly Magazine* reported, “Most of the newer Congregational Churches in the suburbs are offshoots of Carrs Lane. Yet the church has never been weakened by its decentralizing policy.” An article in the 1867 *Christian Witness and Congregational Magazine*’s portrayed Carrs Lane’s church planting efforts:

> The earliest evangelistic efforts of the Church were directed to the neighboring villages, rather than the town, though the latter soon obtained attention. Chapels were, from time to time, built or provided at Smethwick, Yardley, Minworth, and Great Barr, and suburban and town extensions planted at Lozells, Garrison Lane, Palmer Street, and Bordesley Street. Provision was also made for boatmen, in a small Chapel near the canal.

Historians Timothy Larsen, David Bebbington, and Mark Noll confirmed in their work *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicalism*, that James raised 23,000 pounds for Carrs Lane’s church planting efforts. Carrs Lane sought to impact Birmingham by reaching the lost, helping the poor, and educating children through Sunday school, and they viewed church planting as the primary means of advancing this purpose.

To get a sense of the size of some of these congregations, one would need to view the picture of the 1,200 seat Lozells Chapel (see appendix 2, figure A19). Lozells Chapel began when twenty-nine members of Carrs Lane started a Sunday school class in a barn at the house of Benjamin Millichamp in 1833. Shortly afterwards, a preaching

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station was established and supplied by lay pastors for nearly a decade. In 1839, a small chapel was built as the church needed to support its growing congregation. Carrs Lane was generous to support its daughter church by contributing 300 pounds of the 500 needed for this small chapel. Carrs Lane’s strategy of planting churches was rather simple: Carrs Lane hired a large room, gathered a large number through the Sunday school, and then they began preaching stations in efforts to begin a church. The aforementioned Lozells Chapel is an example of James and Carrs Lane’s strategy of church planting.

In 1837, Smethwick Church was formed. This church began twenty-seven years earlier in 1810 as a Sunday school ministry. In 1860, a church was founded through this work in Bordesley Street. This initial work began in 1827 as a town mission. In 1820, a Sunday school and preaching station in the village of Yardley was built, and in 1827 the small Acock’s Green Chapel was built. Two members of Carrs Lane sought to gather children for Sunday school and in 1829 Garrison Lane Chapel was built. Later this chapel was sold as it became too small and the church became St. Andrews Road. In 1837, a mission was commenced in a hired room in Allison Street. In 1898, Carrs Lane celebrated their 150th year anniversary. As part of their sesquicentennial celebration, Carrs Lane rejoiced to have seen the birth of 13 churches, 3,663 church members, 562

\[\text{22} \text{Coombs, } \text{History Of Carrs Lane Church, 47.}\]
\[\text{23} \text{Ibid., 46-48.}\]
\[\text{24} \text{Driver, } \text{Carrs Lane 1748-1948, 47.}\]
\[\text{25} \text{Coombs, } \text{History Of Carrs Lane Church, 46, 47.}\]
\[\text{26} \text{Ibid., 46.}\]
\[\text{27} \text{Ibid., 49.}\]
Sunday school teachers, 7,714 Sunday school scholars and 58 lay preachers. Under James’s leadership, Carr’s Lane continued to plant churches throughout the nineteenth century as a means of impacting Birmingham. The review of the aforementioned churches clearly supports the number of individuals being reached and the numerous missional endeavors that these churches were engaged. James’s effectiveness with church planting demonstrates that he adequately embraced equally well-suited ministry priorities, including domestic piety and church planting.

**Domestic Piety and Missional Zeal**

**Carrs Lane’s Missional Efforts upon James’s Arrival**

When James became the pastor of Carrs Lane, the only missional outreach was through the one Sunday school class, which did not meet at the church. James said, “There was nothing else, literally, nothing we set our hands to.” Shortly after James became pastor, Carrs Lane’s missional efforts extended far beyond the four walls of the church. Following James’s lead, this once struggling church had a gospel impact to the far reaches of the world. James spoke often of taking the hope of the gospel to the heathen in the villages. Thomas, James’s son, was able to see his dad’s commitment to the gospel by witnessing him give all of the royalties from the success of *Anxious Inquirer* to foreign missions. Upon James’s passing William Guest wrote, “I know not whether in the other hemisphere there will not be even a deeper sensation than in this;

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throughout the vast extent of the United States the name of the Pastor of Carrs Lane has
been as familiar as a household word."\textsuperscript{31} Locally in Birmingham, John Angell James was
considered a stalwart supporter and friend to missionary work, thus upon his death it
meant that another higher-ranking figure in Birmingham associated with the cause had
gone.\textsuperscript{32} James, the pastor of Carrs Lane was known worldwide and the impact of this
church’s ministry was eternal. James had a stated missional focus on China and his
exhortations connected domestic piety with missional zeal.

Missions were connected to the domestic circle for James. James desired to
extend Carrs Lane’s missional efforts. For this to become a reality, the families of his
church needed to be intentional with their domestic responsibilities. James held that
families provided the greatest starting place for missionary zeal. While James desired to
reach the unconverted worldwide, he realized the important role that families in his church
played. Specifically, James called on parents to encourage their children concerning the
work of missions. On May 12, 1828, James preached at the thirty-fifth anniversary of the
Youth Missionary Society and posited, “Domestic piety is the source of missionary zeal.
And should God call you to make the honorable sacrifice of giving a son or a daughter to
the cause of missions, withhold not, grudge not, the costly offering.”\textsuperscript{33} James exhorted
his parents that their greatest spiritual sacrifice was offering their sons and daughters to
the work of missions. Parents at Carrs Lane heard often James’s appeal to them:

\textsuperscript{31}William Guest, \textit{A Tribute of Grateful Love to the Memory of John Angell

\textsuperscript{32}Catherine Hall, \textit{Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English

\textsuperscript{33}John Angell James, “The Advantages and Obligations of Youth, in Reference
to the Cause of Christian Missions Stated and Enforced,” May 12, 1828,
PARENTS, I now turn to you. How can we expect to see the ardor of missionary zeal in your children, unless proper means are employed by you to kindle and support it? If your sons and your daughters grow up without the fear of God, if they become mirthful and worldly, if they acquire a taste for the amusements of the world, if they become the companions of fools, we can neither expect nor wish them to be the agents of such a cause as this. It is only as they remember their Creator, live under the influence of decided piety, and cherish a deep concern about the salvation of their own souls, that anything can be looked for from them, in connection with the schemes of Christian benevolence. Let me, then, become the advocate of your children’s souls, of your own comfort, of the permanence of our churches, and of the cause of missions, by entreating you to pay more attention to the religious education of your families. On this basis, in a considerable measure, rests our cause.34

James went to considerable lengths to depict vividly the grand expectations of parents in regard to their domestic influence. Parents at Carrs Lane were not idle bystanders in the work of missions. Even if they themselves were not called to go overseas then they were to instruct their children with the possible calling. James specifically exhorted parents with their role regarding the work of missions.

While James was zealous in seeing young men and women offer themselves for the work of missions, he also desired to see their preparedness. In 1816, the London Missionary Society approved a young man named John Smith to mission work in Demerara and that he should go at once. James vehemently opposed this appointment:

James accused the directors of looking upon the missionaries and missionary students as “menial servants whom they are to govern at their sovereign pleasure . . . they were sending out men to the heathen that who although truly pious, had not even such a knowledge of the Gospel of Christ as to be able to teach it with propriety.”35

James knew that those who were sent were indeed engaged in eternal gospel ministry and that their understanding and ability to communicate the gospel was essential to their effectiveness as a missionary.

34Ibid.

Missionaries Needed: A Domestic Call to Children, Parents, and Families

James’s missional endeavors, writings, and Carrs Lane’s growing reputation were a result of his integration of domestic piety upon his church’s evangelistic and missional effectiveness. American authors and editors of the Littell’s Living Age, Eliakim and Robert S. Littell, said of James worldwide reputation, “A good many of our readers possibly know very little of Angell James. Nevertheless, his name is a household word.”36 James was clearly esteemed by many ministry leaders as one making significant worldwide gospel impact. A thorough examination of the aforementioned ministry areas confirms that James’s integration and exhortation regarding domestic piety greatly broadened his ministry impact. James’s integration of domestic piety impacted the members of Carrs Lane, Birmingham, Carrs Lane’s church plants, young pastors that he mentored, and his church’s missional efforts.

Carrs Lane was no longer an isolated struggling congregation under James’s leadership: “Few churches in the world are better known than the Carr’s Lane Congregational Church in Birmingham, England. There are few churches that have a worldwide reputation, Carr’s Lane Chapel is one of them.”37 Due to James’s exhortations his congregation was becoming wide reaching in its efforts to proclaim the gospel globally. To be faithful in following the great commission, James kept the need of missions before his congregation through his exhortations and sending Carrs Lane members to areas of the greatest needs.

James often exhorted the members of Carrs Lane regarding their responsibility


for world missions. James desired to see the children from his congregation be on
mission when they entered adulthood. He wanted to see the children of Carrs Lane and
others, grow up as evangelists, missionaries, and transmitters of true religion: “I am
anxious for my own children, as well as for the youth of my flock, my town, and my
country. You are to be the fathers, young men, of the next generation; and most solicitous
do I feel that you should transmit true religion—and not vice, to posterity.”

James exhorted parents regarding the parenting of their daughters: “Raising daughters. Look
higher than to get them married, even well married. Take into account their being well
qualified for their mission. Set them before you as the future heads of a domestic
establishment, and prepare them to preside over it with dignity and efficiency.”

When exhorting young mothers, James provided the following example to encourage them in
their role of training their children for missions:

Mrs. Owing said she dedicated her five sons to God as ministers and missionaries of
Jesus Christ, and said that her greatest desire was that her children might be trained
up for God. She spoke with joy of the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and of
the glorious day now ushering in. She attempted to speak to her children, but was so
exhausted, and their cries and sobs were such, that she could say but little. Her
husband then made a prayer, in which he gave her back to God, and dedicated all
they held in common, to him. She then fell into a sweet sleep, from which she
awoke in heaven. The prayers of this mother have been answered. All her eight
children have been ‘trained up for God.’ Her five sons are all ministers and
missionaries.

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38 John Angell James, *Youth Warned: A Sermon Preached in Carr’s Lane Meeting House, on Sunday Evening, January 4th, 1824, and Addressed Particularly to Young Men* (Birmingham: B. Hudson, 1825), 7.

39 John Angell James, *Female Piety or The Young Woman’s Friend to Guide Through Life and Immortality* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), 106.

James’s exhortations to parents regarding their training and raising missionaries were making an obvious impact upon his congregation.

On September 8, 1833, James received a letter from a young man in his congregation. In this letter W. F. Tarlton offers himself as a candidate for the holy office of missions, to preach Christ crucified to the lost heathen (see appendix 2, figure A23). Tarlton and many other members of Carrs Lane were responding to the missional exhortations of their pastor. Several missionaries were sent from Carrs Lane to various regions of the world. Henry Nott returned to Carrs Lane in 1838 and brought home the fruit of twenty-two years of ministry; the complete rendering of the Bible in Tahitian. He supervised its printing and returned with copies in 1840. On the centennial of Nott’s death, the island organized a Pilgrimage of Homage; a celebration of his ministry. This Bible is still the standard used in Tahiti.41 George Pritchard, a member of Carrs Lane Church, went to Tahiti in 1824 and in 1837 he became British consul at Tahiti. In 1845, he was appointed consul at Samoa.42 Other members of Carrs Lane were also sent to various mission fields: Michael Hill, North India, 1821-1849; J. B. Warden, North India, 1821-1846; George Pritchard, South Seas, 1824-1837; B. Hobson, China, 1839-1859; J. B. Coles, South India, 1843-1891; Mrs. Coles, South India, 1843-1850.43 Hobson not only opened hospitals in Hong Kong and Canton, but also became the Father of Western Medical Literature.44 James’s teaching and exhortations concerning the missions was more than mere rhetoric.

41Driver, *Carrs Lane 1748-1948*, 94.


44Ibid., 95.
His encouragement resulted in several members of his church going to many nations that needed a gospel witness.

**James’s Exhortation Leads to Worldwide Impact**

James’s heart for the lost was worldwide, but he agonized greatly for the Empire of China. What motive and understanding drove James’s passion for China?

James wrote of the vastness of the population of China and the number of souls there that were not Christian:

A third of the inhabitants of our globe are there—350,000,000 of immortal souls, for whom Christ died, and all hastening to heaven or hell at the rate of 15,000,000 annually! I do not underrate or undervalue our missions to Africa and Polynesia—I would not abandon one of them, but if I could, would strengthen them all—yet some single cities of China contain more souls than all the islands of the Pacific, or all the tribes of Africa which are yet within our reach.45

Perhaps one of James’s greatest missional convictions was that the Chinese people needed the Holy Scripture in their own language. In one of his sermons in connection with the London Missionary Society Anniversary, he said,

If, one hundred years hence, Christianity shall have found a lodgment in the city of Canton, we shall have reaped an immense prize for the conflicts of a century. Scarcely the third of a century had rolled away before the whole of China was accessible to the heralds of salvation. None were more alive to the importance of the situation than was Mr. James. He was full of holy enthusiasm about the matter, and at length he got up a scheme for printing a million copies of the New Testament in the strange language of the people of that vast empire, which for ages had been shut out from the rest of mankind. To accomplish this noble work he traveled thousands of miles, and wrote hundreds of letters.46

James became a key voice in helping the British Banner raise support in hopes of translating and sending one million Chinese New Testaments to the Empire to be

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circulated during the Tai-ping rebellion.\textsuperscript{47} In the end, over two and a quarter million copies of the Chinese New Testament were sent.\textsuperscript{48} James became the première speaker for mission endeavors. James was able to raise considerable amounts of money throughout his lifetime that contributed greatly to the work of missions in China. His passion on the topic of missions attracted thousands and provided great conviction for personal sacrifice for the cause of missions.

Beyond his speaking efforts, James also wrote on the need of greater emphasis of missions in China. In 1858, James’s book \textit{God’s Voice From China to the British Churches} was published. He began the book with the statement, “China is open!!” and his hopes were that he could be used through this work to raise up one hundred more missionaries.\textsuperscript{49} Missionary David Brainerd said of James’s impact on China, “‘Lying on this side of eternity,’ did not more vehemently yearn for the salvation of the heathen at large than did Mr. James for the Chinese.”\textsuperscript{50} In 1858, James made an appeal for a hundred missionaries to go China. The writing of this book took place years before James’s death when he was in his poorest health.

\textbf{Conclusion}

James’s integration and lifelong emphasis on domestic piety did not negatively impact Carrs Lane’s evangelistic and missional effectiveness. James ingratiated himself


\textsuperscript{48}Campbell, \textit{John Angell James}, 68; See also appendix 1, figure A2.

\textsuperscript{49}John Angell James, \textit{God’s Voice from China to the British Churches, Both Established and Unestablished} (London: Hamilton and Adams, 1858), 3.

\textsuperscript{50}Campbell, \textit{John Angell James}, 69.
into the graces of Carrs Lane through faithful lifelong ministry. James’s abiding love for his congregation and his care for them made for great receptivity for his message regarding domestic piety. Carrs Lane loved their pastor and his instruction to them was highly regarded because they came from a pastor that they esteemed, trusted, and loved. The relationship between James, as pastor, and Carrs Lane was forged through years of teaching, experiences, and faithful shepherding. James had a clear evangelistic passion to reach Birmingham and the world. He sent missionaries to his city and he called upon parents, youth, and children at Carrs Lane to consider the gospel call to go. James further exhorted the fathers and mothers in his congregation to consider their children’s qualifications for missions.

The families of Carrs Lane, the city of Birmingham, and many nations were impacted by James’s integration of domestic piety. Domestic piety functioned as a central means to gospel proclamation and spiritual formation in James’s ministry. His integration of domestic piety was from his first days until his last. James preached and wrote tracks and books to exhort parents regarding their responsibilities regarding domestic piety. This view of domestic piety was anchored in James’s conviction regarding the immortality of the human soul. James believed that souls were destined for eternity and that parents especially should be attentive to this important task. Victorian piety which stressed outward morals was popular in James’s day. James’s piety was eternal in nature and held that everlasting bliss or torment awaited the soul upon death. The immortal soul was the central focus of James’s ministry for over five decades of his ministry at Carrs Lane. The proclamation of the gospel through domestic piety was central in James’s ministry. James’s proclamation of the gospel was a driver that allowed him to impact the members of Carrs Lane, the city of Birmingham, and nations around the world.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

John Angell James remains a largely unknown figure in American evangelical circles at the start of the twenty-first century. While his writings and many of his sermons still exist, his pastoral example, evangelical influence, and social impact remain relatively unknown. James, once a worldwide household name, simply is not considered as an example for many twenty-first century churches or their pastors. J. C. Miller, the rector of St Martin, in a sermon one week after James’s death, characterized him as a “beautiful specimen of sanctified humanity, such as is seldom seen in this fallen world.”¹ The thesis of this dissertation argued that domestic piety functioned as a central means of gospel proclamation and spiritual formation in the life and ministry of John Angell James. This argument was supported by exploring James’s early life, his ministry at Carrs Lane, an examination of his writings and his integration of domestic piety. A careful examination of James’s life and ministry should exhort pastors and churches today and provide a healthy model worth propagating especially in the area family discipleship.

Practical Implications

There are several observations on a variety of subjects, issues, theological perspectives, and philosophical practices that could be mentioned after a thorough review of James’s life. This dissertation limits astute observations to the centrality of domestic

piety in James’s rhetoric and integration as means of gospel proclamation and spiritual formation. When examining the practices of James’s ministry, there are five noteworthy conclusions. These conclusions help further support the thesis of this dissertation regarding the centrality of domestic piety to the ministry of John Angell James.

First, James’s integration of domestic piety did not distract from his church’s evangelistic or missional priorities. The opposite might actually be argued; that James’s lifelong focus on domestic piety actually enhanced his church’s local and international mission. James’s magnus opus, *The Anxious Inquirer*, was written in reference to his chief concern of converting immortal souls in Birmingham, England, and the world to the gospel. While James carried a great burden for the world, he maintained a steadfast resolve that children in any country should first be converted at home by family instruction. James and Carrs Lane’s evangelistic impact was literally worldwide. For over five decades they maintained a clear and intentional focus on domestic piety. Far from a distraction, James’s integration of domestic piety as a means of gospel proclamation and spiritual formation was foundational to the missional and evangelistic effectiveness of James and Carrs Lane. This was demonstrated through James’s impact on the members of his church, the city of Birmingham, and the church’s missionary efforts.

Secondly, James embraced an apologetic of domestic piety that became a descriptor of his lifelong ministry integration. James did not feel that domestic piety was merely a suggestion for Christian parents. James urged, pleaded, and instructed his congregation often with a well-articulated apologetic for domestic piety. Over the five decades of James’s preaching and writing, his conviction, articulation, and theological argument grew stronger. His passion for domestic piety did not wane over the years, he became more convinced of its necessity and power. In James’s early ministry years he spoke in broader terms of family, parents, and children. Toward the end of his ministry he preached and wrote specific instruction to fathers, mothers, daughters, and sons. An
example of James’s teaching becoming more specific can be seen in his 1843 writing of *The Marriage Ring:*

This mutual help should extend to the maintenance of all the habits of domestic order, discipline, and piety. The husband is to be the prophet, priest, and king of the family, to instruct their minds, to lead their devotions, and to govern their tempers; but in all that relates to these important objects, the wife is to be of one mind with him. They are, in these matters, to be workers together, neither of them leaving the other to labor alone, much less opposing or thwarting what is done. When the sun shines, the moon disappears; when he sets, she appears and shines; so when the husband is at home, he leads domestic worship, when he is absent, the wife must ever take his place.  


So convinced of the importance of speaking specifically to youth, he preached year-long Sunday night lectures exclusively to young men and women. At the end of James’s life he said his greatest regret was that he had not addressed the youth of his church more often than he had. From his first printed sermon on parenting in 1809, to the many sermons, books and church minutes shortly before his death, one sees an enduring emphasis and passion for the subject of domestic piety in James’s life and ministry. Domestic piety was a lifelong descriptor of his life. This was demonstrated by providing scholarly research that is representative of James’s ministry years including personal letters, church minutes, newspaper and journal articles, James’s writings and sermons, and historical research relating to James’s integration of domestic piety.

Thirdly, the immortality of souls was foundational and paramount to James’s integration for domestic piety. James did not preach and write on domestic piety because he thought it was a great way to teach moral lessons or develop character in children. James’s apologetic viewed domestic piety as a central means of gospel proclamation and spiritual formation. He did not integrate domestic piety into the lives of his congregation because he felt it was the best of many parenting options. The immortality of the soul was James’s primary motive, and this is seen from his first message until his last. Often
James’s preaching and teaching on this topic was extremely pointed and his articulation was stronger than many church attendees today have heard from any preacher. The immortality of the soul was an extremely weighty subject to James and he used any means necessary to help parents understand their responsibility of helping their children avoid eternal torment and destruction. For James, domestic piety was a tool or a means, not the end goal or objective. Rescuing immortal souls committed to parental care was James’s chief objective and motive:

So far as the children are individually concerned, I again remind you that their temporal interests are the lowest object of your pursuit. Your last and highest end is the salvation of the immortal soul. This is your aim, to be instrumental in converting the souls of the children from the error of their ways, and training them up in the fear of God, for glory everlasting. What an object! The immortal soul! The salvation of the human spirit!

For James, the object, highest aim, and greatest concern should be the immortal soul. James’s conviction for immortal souls as an underpinning of domestic piety was demonstrated through careful analysis and reflection of the accumulation of research required for this dissertation.

Forthly, the effectiveness of James’s exhortations regarding domestic piety was strengthened by his lifelong integration that was steadfast, frequent, and persistent. The effectiveness of James’s means of domestic piety was strengthened by his lifelong commitment to this practice. Carrs Lane, Birmingham, England, and the world were impacted by James’s exhortations regarding domestic piety. His books and tracks were sold worldwide as a testament to his receptivity and influence. The results and impact of his ministry, while prolific, was due more from persistent faithfulness. James himself did not feel that his ministry influence was due to his genius or eloquence. His success came from a mere plodding with a kind of dogged perseverance. James was a faithful pastor

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that remained steadfast and determined for more than five decades. His message to parents were constant and clear:

That Christian who would carry on a system of religious education with success, should enforce it with all the commanding influence of a **holy example**. Let your children see all the “beauties of holiness,” reflected from your character, and the grand outline of Christian morality filled up with all the delicate touches and varied coloring of the Christian **temper**. The heathens had their little shrines of their gods, which they kept in their own habitation, to remind them of the objects of their religious veneration and trust. Instead of these household gods, you are to be to your families—lovely images of the great Jehovah! Let your children have this conviction in their hearts, “If there be but two real Christians in the world, my father is one, and my mother is the other.” It is dreadful—but not uncommon for children to employ themselves in contrasting the appearance which their parents make at the Lord’s table and at their own; in the house of God, and at home.5

James did not feel that his ministry successes were due to any particular special giftedness that he possessed. The success of James’s approach was demonstrated through careful scholarly research of how his ministry impact was felt locally, nationally, and worldwide.

Fifthly, James held that a Christian parent’s role regarding domestic piety is primary and the promotion of this role was central to his ministry. James’s personal conviction on this topic was rather straightforward: “Parents God will hold you responsible.” To parents, James stated emphatically,

You are responsible to the Church of God: for family education is, or ought to be, in the families of the godly, the chief means of conversion. It is a fatal error for Christian parents to look to the ministers of religion for the conversion of their children. And, alas! It is the error of the day. The pulpit is looked to for those benefits that should flow from the parents’ chair.6

James did not waste words or remain vague regarding the responsibility that is entrusted to fathers and mothers. This conviction remained constant throughout his ministry in his


writing and sermons. Further support of James exhorting parents in this regard of their responsibility are seen throughout his writings, sermons and in various Carrs Lane Church Minute books:

The DUTIES of Christian parents primarily relate to their children. It is the command of God to train them up in the fear, and nurture, and admonition of the Lord. Let your first, and deepest, and most lasting solicitude be for the formation of their religious character, and the salvation of their souls. Let this regulate all your conduct towards them. Let it impel you to adopt a system of instruction and discipline, which shall have a close and constant bearing on their moral and religious habits. Let it guide you in the choice of schools where they are to be educated, the families into which they are to be apprenticed. Act so, as that they may clearly discern, that your most ardent prayer, your most anxious concern, is, that they may be truly godly. They should see this interwoven with all your conduct towards them; and behold a uniform, consistent, constant effort to accomplish this object. Let them hear it expressed in your advice and prayers, and see it manifested in all your arrangements.\(^7\)

James’s view of the primary role of parents is seen through his exhortations in his tracts, sermons, church minutes books, and through his writings.

**Final Reflections**

With all that has been written in this dissertation concerning John Angell James it may be best to allow him to speak for himself regarding his life and ministry. James took a rather refreshing humble perspective regarding the successes of his life and ministry:

I cannot add to the stock of sacred literature, or enlarge the stores of any who are well read in divinity, and, in default of fact and incident, supply suggestive thoughts and impulsive reflection. I feel as if I could start no mind upon a new track of investigation or career of discovery. No glimpses of previously undiscovered truth have visited my mind. I lack the powers of invention, and have no originality. What have I therefore to record which would interest other minds in reading?\(^8\)

James’s consuming lifelong passion was the conversion on immortal souls. He sought every mean in order to reach those in Birmingham, England, and the entire world. God used this humble man to impact an entire world through his sermons and writings.

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\(^7\)James, “Christian Fellowship.”

\(^8\)James, *The Life and Letters*, 7.
While James sought to impact the world, he had no greater joy than reaching the children and youth of Carrs Lane. James saw the children and youth of Birmingham and Carrs Lane as an incredible mission field. One former youth that became a poet in Birmingham wrote of his admiration for the pastor he listened to as a child:

Twas from his lips I first was taught to know, That life was vanity, the world a show: That there’s a brighter region in the skies, To which he trained my youthful hopes to rise: And when by trouble and misfortune pressed, I’ve proved him true to what he has professed, What though he only knows one narrow way, And his poor flock may go astray: Still let us venerate the earnest man, Who ends his honored life as he began.9

James, from the beginning till the end of his ministry, prioritized his church’s ministry to children and youth. The impact of Carrs Lane and the churches that Carrs Lane started prospered and enlarged using his ministry strategy. This strategy and intentional ministry to children was a lifelong central focus.

It was through domestic piety that James felt children and youth were best converted through gospel proclamation and their spiritual formation shaped. It was through the means of domestic piety that James felt parents were uniquely gifted and employed into the service of converting immortal souls. James's emphasis on domestic piety continued to build upon a Puritan belief concerning how families ultimately strengthen the church.10 The means of domestic piety provided James and the parents of Carrs Lane the best approach of proclaiming the gospel to children. Because children possess immortal souls, James instructed parents throughout his life with the effective disciplines of domestic piety. From the first of James’s ministry until the last, domestic piety remained central in the life and ministry of John Angell James as the most effective means of proclaiming the gospel.

9Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 127.

APPENDIX 1
NEWSPAPER ARTICLES PERTAINING TO JOHN ANGELL JAMES

Figure A1. James “brought calm and success to Carrs Lane”:
*Birmingham Weekly Post*, November 5, 1948

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1All photographs in Appendix 1 through 3 were taken November 15-16, 2012, in the Archives at Birmingham Central Library or Carrs Lane Church, Birmingham, UK.
Figure A2. James’s deep interest in missions and the abolition of slavery: *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 8, 1859
Figure A3. Stores closed and thousands filled the streets in silence for James’s funeral: *Saturday Evening Post, October 8, 1859*
Birmingham, May 13, 1789.

We are desired by several Gentlemen to request the Attendance of the Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham, at the Public Office, in Dale End, To-morrow, the 19th instant, at Eleven o’Clock in the Forenoon, to take into Consideration a Petition to Parliament, that the African Slave Trade (which is greatly and extensively Beneficial to this Town and Neighbourhood) may not be abolished, but undergo such Regulations only as are conducive to Humanity.

JAMES PICKARD, {Constables.

THOMAS GREEN.
Figure A5. An American visits Birmingham and notes that it is a “dingy, dusty city.”

*The Christian Cabinet*, October 5, 1859
Figure A6. James addressed the young, “Wishing them to become dissenters.”
Printed by the Propriety of Thomas Vale James, July 30, 1819
APPENDIX 2

PICTURES RELATED TO JOHN ANGELL JAMES

Figure A7. Diary entry which notes when James preached his first sermon at Carrs Lane
NOTE A

Form of a Preacher’s Licence

The following is a copy of a “licence” found among the papers of the late John Angell James:—

CERTIFICATE FOR DISSenting MINISTERS

Southampton, I do hereby certify, that at the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace of our Sovereign Lord the King, holden by adjournment at the Castle of Winchester, in and for the said county, on Monday the eighteenth day of July, in the forty-third year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Third and in the year of our Lord 1803,

JOHN JAMES

a Dissenting Teacher, did in open Court, between the Hours of Nine and Twelve of the Clock in the Forenoon, take and subscribe the Oaths of Allegiance, Supremacy, and Abjuration, and did also make and subscribe the Declaration against Transubstantiation, and against the Invocation and Adoration of the Virgin Mary, and the Sacrament of the Mass and all other Idolatry, and also did subscribe the Declaration mentioned in the Act passed in the nineteenth year of his present Majesty, George III.

Witness my hand this Eighteenth Day of July 1803.

PETER KERBY,
Clerk of the Peace.

Figure A8. Copy of James’s Certificate for Dissenting Ministers
Figure A9. James notes changes and growth of Birmingham:
Jubilee Memorial booklet, pages 16-17, September 12, 1855

Figure A10. James posits that piety is the only preparation for heaven.
Jubilee Memorial booklet, pages 24-25, September 12, 1855
Figure A11. Painting of The Anti-Slavery Society Convention, 1840, by Benjamin Robert Haydon

Figure A12. Tribute by Carrs Lane Church to early pastors
Figure A13. James’s first sermons were printed in book format for local readership.
Figure A14. Bunn’s letter accusing James of plagiarism, 1824
Figure A15. Marble monument in memory of John Angell James
The following Letter is printed at the earnest request of those to whom it was addressed. As it was written when the Author was in a state of great debility, and prohibited from applying his mind very closely to any subject, he cannot persuade himself that it contains much that is worthy of appearing in the present form; still, however, as it is offered only to those who solicited it, no apology is due, whatever defects it may be charged with, for thus sending it from the press.

Teignmouth, September 21, 1817.

TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Belonging to the Congregation assembling in Carr’s Lane Meeting,

BIRMINGHAM.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

ALTHOUGH it is now five months since I was laid by from all official intercourse with you, and am now nearly two hundred miles distant from you, I wish to convince you that no lapse of time, no intervening space, can produce any forgetfulness of the relationship in which I stand to you, or any abatement of that tender concern which I have ever felt for the welfare of your best interests. Having been informed of the second incurable which death has made since my illness upon your number, by the unexpected and sudden removal of Miss Chalmers, and not being on the spot to make that improvement in the case which it so fully demanded, I felt irresistibly impelled to address you by letter, and to urge upon you the necessity of adopting as your own, the Psalmist’s prayer, and earnestly saying, ‘teach us to number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom.’

You cannot, my dear young friends, be ignorant what is the nature of that wisdom to which the desire of the sacred psalmist was so strongly excited. You know what authority it is affirmed that the ‘fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that a good understanding have all they that keep his commandments.’ The fear of God, if you possess it, will lead you to reverence his authority, as expressed in his holy word, to desire above all things his favour, to dread more than any thing else his displeasure; and connexions of having sinned against his law, and of being still liable through the depravity of your nature to offend against his commands, you will most eagerly and most thankfully avail yourselves of the offer of pardon, through the blood of his son, and sanctification through the influence of his spirit. Under a dispensation of mercy, such as that in the gospel, the only unequivocal and decided expression of the fear of God, is a life of faith in Jesus Christ, and of prayer for the grace of the Holy Ghost. You may attend upon all the public and even upon the private services of religion; you may be amiable and respectable in the eyes of the world, without having the fear of God before your eyes; you may hurl that the generality of mankind require and respect; you may rise to life with esteem, pass through it in prosperity, and count it requited; and yet, if you have not faith in the Lord Jesus, and repentance toward God, may rise no higher in the estimation of God and of angels, than the character of fools. Here then is the point for you to resolve—‘Till I possess the fear of God, I am in the eyes of omniscient wisdom a compound of most daring rebellion and abject folly. I have till then never taken one step in the career of wisdom. I have been groping on, darkly and blindly, through the path of the ungodly and the sinner.’

Now, my dear young friends, is it not worth while to examine what you know of the fear of God? Do you really possess it? Are you living habitually under its influence? Is it seen in the holiness of your lives; and felt in the spirituality of your minds? Has it detached your affections...
SUNDAY EVENING LECTURES
TO
YOUNG MEN.

THE REV. J. A. JAMES

Intends to deliver a COURSE of
PRACTICAL RELIGIOUS LECTURES
TO YOUNG MEN,
IN CARR'S LANE CHAPEL,
On the following Subjects, and on the SUNDAY EVENINGS
named —

FEBRUARY 4th, 1849.
The CLAIMS upon YOUNG MEN, of GOD, their COUNTRY, and
the ASPECT of the TIMES.
FEBRUARY 25th.
The MORAL DANGERS of YOUNG MEN.
MARCH 25th.
The CAUSES of the NEGLECT of RELIGION by YOUNG MEN.
APRIL 29th.
THE FIRST WRONG STEP.
MAY 27th.
INSTABILITY of CHARACTER.
JUNE 24th.
THE PRODIGAL SON.
JULY 29th.
The HOPE of AMENDMENT ENCOURAGED in the WORST
of CASES.
AUGUST 26th.
The GOOD TRADESMAN, and the INFLUENCE of RELIGION
in MAKING HIM.
SEPTEMBER 30th.
RELIGION and SCIENCE.
OCTOBER 23rd.
COMPARISON of TALENTS and VIRTUES.
NOVEMBER 26th.
INFIDELITY—Its INFLUENCE on MORALS and HAPPINESS.
DECEMBER 19th.
The VALUE of TIME.

It will be perceived that these Lectures, with the exception of the first, are all
to be delivered on the last Sunday Evening of each month.

THE SERVICE COMMENCES AT HALF-PAST SIX O'CLOCK.
E. Matthiessen, Printer, Eastcheap Street.

Figure A17. Monthly schedule of lectures for young men
SYLLABUS
OF A COURSE OF
Sermons to Young Women,
TO BE DELIVERED IN
CARR’S LANE CHAPEL, BIRMINGHAM,
ON THE
Last Sabbath Morning of each Month in 1852,
BY THE
REV. J. A. JAMES.

I.—The Influence of Christianity on the Condition of Woman.
II.—The Conspicuous Place which Woman sustains in Scripture.
III.—Woman’s Mission.
IV.—Early Female Piety.
V.—Female Religious Zeal.
VI.—The Young Woman at Home.
VII.—The Young Woman from Home.
VIII.—The Character of Rebekah.
IX.—The Ornaments of Female Profession of Religion.
X.—The Character of Martha and Mary.
XI.—To Young Mothers.
XII.—Solomon’s Description of a Virtuous Woman.

Each Sermon will be Published, Price Threepence, as soon as possible after its delivery.

Figure A18. Outline of monthly sermons for young women
Figure A19. Inside of Lozells Chapel, a church plant of Carrs Lane

Figure A20. Pencil sketch of Carrs Lane Church in 1821
Figure A21. Letter from Benjamin Dobson to Carrs Lane sharing the impact of his parents’ spiritual upbringing while being trained under James’s ministry

Figure A22. Letter from Benjamin Dobson to Carrs Lane, signature and date (January 1834)
Figure A23. Letter to Reverend John Angell James from W. F. Tarlton, September 8, 1833, who offers himself as a candidate to preach
APPENDIX 3

CARRS LANE CHURCH BOOKS OF MINUTES

Figure A24. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1783-1810: Records young James preaching at Carrs Lane on September 16, 1804
Figure A25. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1783-1810: Records the letter of Carrs Lane offering James the pastorate on September 23, 1804
Figure A26. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1810-1814: The church needed more cups for communion because of growth
July 10th, 1854.

Special Church Meeting held in the Chapel this night. 

Upon having heard and solemn prayer, 

offered by Mr. James, he briefly addressed the Members and 

was seated the males on the right and the females on the 

left hand of the Chair. The following resolutions were 

unanimously passed:

1st Resolution moved by Mr. Phipson. 

Seconded by Samuel Cooks.

This Church having heard Mr. Dale's public service for 

the year for which he was invited as assistant, 

according to the resolutions formed at the Church meeting 

held July 15, 1853, and having had opportunity through 

this period to observe his deportment and attention 

to the various duties connected with the ministry, 

as well as from his written and oral reports 

to the following, do hereby recommend this Church, 

and at the recommendation and with 

the consent and approbation of our Pastor, do hereby invite 

to the following legal form to officially invite him to resume 

this office.

Figure A27. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1849-1856: Deacon Phipson nominates Robert W. Dale as co-pastor with James
Figure A28. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1849-1856: Record of the church calling Robert William Dale as their co-pastor on July 10, 1854

Figure A29. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1849-1856: 222 men of the 297 male members were present to vote and sign this document
Figure A30. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1849-1856: James personally pays half of Robert Dale’s salary.
Figure A31. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1856-1860:
James continued to focus on family piety
VIII. At the Monthly Meetings the Journals of the Town Missionaries shall be read, and they shall be in attendance, to be called in, if needful, to answer any inquiries, and to give information.

TOWN MISSIONARIES.

IX. Their salaries shall be fixed by the General Committee; they shall in no case be less than forty, nor more than eighty pounds per annum, where they give their whole time to the work. Their duties shall be to visit the houses of the poor, for the purpose of reading the Scriptures, and explaining them; distributing religious tracts, and enforcing the subjects of them; holding prayer meetings in such houses as can be obtained for that purpose; stirring up the people to attend public worship; admonishing them to send their children to Sunday schools; and persuading them to possess and read the Holy Scriptures; and indeed doing every thing that a judgment well directed, and a heart chiefly anxious for the salvation of souls can dictate for their spiritual good. It is expected that the Agents will never spend less than five or six hours a day in this manner, including the evening services. There should be not less than three services in the week, not exceeding one hour’s length, at some house in the district, for the purpose of reading the Scriptures, and explaining them to such persons as can be induced to attend. Besides these, the Missionaries are expected to preach, at least, twice on the Sabbath, and during the summer, as often as may be, in the courts which offer a good place for such services.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS.

X. One of the Visitors of each District shall be the Superintendent of the Collectors in his District. He shall keep a book containing all the Collectors’ names, and open an account with each; shall receive their collections at the Monthly District Meeting, and pay the cash monthly to the Treasurer.
Figure A33. Carrs Lane Church Town Mission Book, 1837-1838: Record of the thirteen districts, the missionaries in each district, and their pay structure.

Figure A34. Town Mission Books full with details of Carrs Lane’s church plants.
Figure A35. Carrs Lane Church Town Mission Book, 1837-1838: Records of the duties, accountability, and reporting practices of the Town Missions.
Figure A36. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1856-1860: James had a heart for the young even before he became the pastor of Carrs Lane.
Figure A37. Carrs Lane Church Special Building Committee Book, 1818-1822: Records space for 300 children at Sunday School
Figure A38. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1849-1856: James taught that children should be converted at home by family instruction

Figure A39. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1856-1869: James’s letter to Robert Dale encouraging him to take care of the church that he loved
Figure A40. Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1849-1856: James at the end of his ministry encourages families to continue practicing family piety
Figure A41. Minutes of Carrs Lane Sabbath Schools, July 1812-March 1845: Gives a detail listing of SS locations
APPENDIX 4

CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF JAMES’S WORKS

Writings

1810: Parental Desire, Duty, and Encouragement (First Printed Sermon never published)
1816: Sunday School Teachers Guide
1822: Christian Fellowship, or the Church Member’s Guide
1824: The Christian Father’s Present to His Children Sermon Series
1828: Christian Charity Explained or Christian Love (Sermon Series)
1828: The Family Monitor, or a Help to Domestic Happiness.
1830: Dissent and the Church of England
1834: The Anxious Enquirer after Salvation Directed and Encouraged.
1837: The Christian Professor
1838: The Young Man from Home
1841: Pastoral Address (Published Sermon Series – 213 pp.)
1841: The Widow Directed to the Widow’s God
1847: An Earnest Ministry
1848: The Church in Earnest
1849: The History of Protestant Nonconformity in Birmingham
1851: The Young Man’s Friend and Guide through Life to Immortality
1852: Female Piety; or the Young Woman’s Guide through Life to Immortality
1852: The Course of Faith of The Practical Believer Delineated or The Course of Faith (412 pp.)
1853: Christian Progress
1858: Christian Hope
1859: God’s Voice from China to the British and Irish Churches, both Established and Unestablished

1859: Revival of Religion

1861: Life and Letters of John Angell James (Autobiography Finished by Robert Dale and Thomas James (son))

**Published Tracts**

1819: Religious Liberty not Infringed
1820: Attraction of the Cross (48 pp.)
1832: The Importance of doing Good
1835: The Flower Faded (192 pp.)
1842: The Path to the Bush
1842: Happiness, Its Nature and Source
1842: Believe and be Saved
1842: Elizabeth Bales – A Pattern for Sunday School Teachers
1842: Memoir of the Author’s Second Wife
1845: Grateful Recollections (70 pp.)
1848: The Sabbath
1848: Reflections on the Story of Simeon Green
1849: The Pious Collier
1849: The Olive Branch and the Cross (108 pp.)
1850: The Chief End of Life
1850: Sketch of the Character of William Bielby
1853: The Oar and the Rope
1859: Three in Heaven

**Sermons**

1810: Parental Desire, Duty, and Encouragement
1812: Speech at the Anniversary of the Birmingham Auxiliary Bible Society
1814: Christian Activity
1815: Address at the formation of the Sunday School Teachers’ Union in Birmingham
1816: A Pastoral Charge (Given to Thomas James at his ordination)
1819: The Attraction of the Cross
1819: The Crisis
1820: Small Beginnings Not to be Despised
1820: Christian Mercy Explained and Enforced
1821: The Character and Reward of the Faithful Minister. Death of the Rev. John Berry
1824: Youth Warned - A Sermon Addressed to Young Men
1824: The Sin of Scoffing at Religion Exposed (Part 1)
1824: The Sin of Scoffing at Religion Exposed (Part 2)
1825: The Death of Eminent Ministers a Public Loss. Rev. David Bogue
1826: Missionary Prospects
1826: Funeral for Dr Bogue
1827: Pastoral Claims Stated, part 1
1827: Pastoral Claims Stated, part 2
1828: The Advantages and Obligations of Youth for the Cause of Missions
1828: Christian Charity Explained, or the Influence of Religion on Temper
1831: Dislike to Ministerial Fidelity Stated and Explained
1834: Pastor’s Address to his People on the Principles of Dissent, Duties of Dissenters
1835: Oratorios
1838: Address at the Funeral of the Rev. Dr M’All
1841: Faith triumphant: preached on occasion of the death of Mrs. James
1842: Happiness—its Nature and Sources Described, and Mistakes Concerning it Corrected
1845: Grateful Recollections; The Fortieth Year of the Author’s Pastorate
1846: New Year’s Address to Parents and Ministers, Religious Education of Children
1847: Pastoral Enquiries on the Beginning of the Year
1847: The Rectitude and Fidelity of the Divine Administration, Death of Mrs. TS James
1848: Sermon on occasion of the Death of Mrs. Sherman
1848: Recollections of the Rev. Richard Adams
1848: The Possession of Spiritual Religion the Surest Preservative from the Snares of Infidelity and the Seductions of False Philosophy. Delivered to the London Young Men’s Christian Association
1849: The Aspect, the Demands, and the Dangers of the Times
1849: A Tribute of Affectionate Respect to the Memory of the Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society
1849: The Olive Branch and the Cross or Quarrels Settled and Trespasses Forgiven according to the Law of Christ. A Word of Affectionate Advice to Professing Christians
1850: On Occasion of the Pope reorganizing the Papal Church in England
1850: The Chief End of Life
1851: The Papal Aggression Contemplated Religiously
1851: The Aged Minister of Christ Contemplated. Preached at the Celebration of the Jubilee of the Rev. James Gawthorn’s Pastorate
1852: The Foundation, Construction and Eternity of Character
1852: The Character and Translation of Enoch. Preached on occasion of the Sudden Death of the Rev. Thomas Weaver
1852: The Christian Citizen. Preached on occasion of the Death of James James
1852: Address at the Funeral of the Rev. John Jerrard
1853: On the Duty of Supporting the Religious institutions - Carr’s Lane Chapel
1853: The Conversion of Souls the Great End of the Christian Ministry
1853: Sermon preached on occasion of the Centenary of Tabernacle at Bristol
1853: The Dying Minister’s Reflections and Contemplations. Preached on occasion of the Death of the Rev. Richard Keynes
1853: One Thing I Do
1854: Pastoral Address: On Revival of Religion in the Church
1854: Observations on Mr Jay as a Preacher
1854: Charge to the Rev. RW Dale, MA, on his Ordination
1855: Introduction to a Selection from the Rev. Dr Spencer’s Pastoral Sketches
1855: Sermon preached at the Celebration of the Jubilee of the Author’s Pastorate
1855: The Children of Carr’s Lane Congregation on Jubilee Memorial
1855: The Antidote of Death. Preached on occasion of the Death of Mrs. Redford
1856: The Force and Importance of Habit
1857: Ministerial Fidelity Applauded - The Death of the Rev. Thomas Swan
1859: A New Year’s Solemn Warning
1859: Christian Philanthropy. Preached on occasion of the Death of Joseph Sturge

**Sermons (No Date)**

Self-Renunciation

Evidences and Results of Sanctified Affliction

Spiritual Idolatry

Faith triumphant funeral sermon, preached on occasion of the death of Mrs. James (1st wife)

Reading the Scriptures

Growth in Grace

The Duty of Mediation

Prayer and Practice

Necessity of Progress

Sin Remembered

Different Degrees of Glory

The Lord’s Supper

The Mind of Christ

Attendance on Weekday Services

Satanic Temptations

Family Prayer

Declension in Religion

The Aged Minister of Christ Contemplated
Reflections on the Story of Simeon Green—the Man Who Killed His Bad Neighbors by Kindness

The Work of the Spirit

The Benediction

Preface to Cooper's Treatise on "Heart Discipline"

Directions for Profitability Hearing the Word of God

Duties of Church Members

Queries for Self Examination

The Pious Collier; or, the History of Joseph Round
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**Sermons**


ABSTRACT

DOMESTIC PIETY IN THE MINISTRY OF
JOHN ANGELL JAMES

Jeffery Steven Wright, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013
Chair: Dr. Timothy Paul Jones

Chapter 1 introduces John Angell James as a person worthy of recognition and research. James’s godly character, pastoral leadership and worldwide influence, unheard of to most except the astute historian, presents the foundation for the significance of the study. Additionally, a definition of terms is given in order to help the reader contextualize James’s rhetoric.

Chapter 2 gives an introduction into the childhood and ministry call of John Angell James. Understanding the historical background in which James formulated his conviction toward domestic piety is paramount. Thorough consideration is given in this chapter to major societal movements and historical issues that made the world in which James lived.

Chapter 3 examines James’s ministry at Carrs Lane, his personal suffering, his passion for writing and work at shaping congregationalism. James was not only being challenged and shaped by external world events, but every day he was influenced by his church ministry and his times of great suffering. It was not long before his passion for the family and its immortal purpose would become the focal point of many of his writings.

Chapter 4 examines James’s exhortations regarding domestic piety through his writings and sermons. James had much to say throughout his life directed to fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters. This chapter also demonstrates through James’s preaching
and writings how his familial focus developed a thorough understanding and ministry practice for parents.

Chapter 5 carefully analyzes James’s integration of domestic piety and evangelism. James unapologetically admonished domestic piety and his ministry bore the fruit of this emphasis.

Chapter 6 offers practical implications that will aid pastors and church leaders in their local church ministries. James’s life and ministry in many ways serves as an exemplary model for pastors to follow. There are principles that James embraced that are transferrable to today’s pastors who find themselves in similar situations.
VITA

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  Student Pastor, North Lake Baptist Church, Gainesville, Georgia, 1988-1993
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