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“THE DIVINE LIFE IN THE SOUL CONSIDERED”:
THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE
WORKS OF SAMUEL DAVIES

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“THE DIVINE LIFE IN THE SOUL CONSIDERED”:
THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE
WORKS OF SAMUEL DAVIES

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For our sons.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DFW	The Directory for Family-Worship
DPW	The Directory for the Publick Worship of God
<i>Sermons</i>	<i>Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Davies, A.M. President of the College of New Jersey.</i> 3 vols. N.p.: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1854. Reprint, Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1993.
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
WLC	Westminster Larger Catechism
WSC	Westminster Shorter Catechism

PREFACE

This dissertation is the fruit of more than three years of research, but it had its genesis in an inauspicious late-morning conversation with my doctoral supervisor, Michael Haykin. An hour earlier I had told him that my planned thesis on D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' theology of marriage might make a great article, but a terrible dissertation. We discussed several potential topics, but it was Michael, sitting in a floral-print armchair, who finally said, "What about Samuel Davies?" Four significant words indeed. Over the course of many lunches, afternoon teas, and even via Skype, he has whittled away needless words, sharpened blunt transitions, and scribbled marginal notes in purple Noodler's ink on several iterations of this document. More importantly, he has modeled for me the Christian piety that I found in Davies' sermons, and for his ministry I am indeed grateful. The other members of my committee, Don Whitney and Greg Wills, have been continual teachers, encouragers, and dialog partners for several years. Both men have shown me what is possible through disciplined work, and I am thankful for their scholarship and friendship.

I am indebted to two stellar librarians in particular: Paul Roberts and Jason Fowler, whose mastery of digital repositories and reference works has proven almost as valuable as their friendship. Further, the reference librarians and associates at Princeton's Firestone Library, William and Mary's Swem Library, and the Virginia Historical Society have been most helpful in securing rare items that have made their way into numerous footnotes.

To my brothers in the doctoral program, thank you for your encouraging words and for enduring far too many conversations on Samuel Davies and eighteenth-century Evangelicalism. Thanks also to Rich McRae for lending me his copy of Davies' sermons.

My family has supported me in ways too numerous and frequent to mention. To my wife, whose patience, sacrifice, encouragement, and steadfast love have carried me far beyond my natural abilities more times than she will know, all my love, always. Finally, to our sons, whose energy and imagination are boundless, Dad is more proud of you than words can express.

Joseph Harrod

Louisville, Kentucky

April 2014

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In November, 1752, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) wrote a Scottish correspondent describing a young minister with whom he had recently spent an afternoon’s conversation: “He seems to be very solid and discreet, and of a very civil, genteel behavior, as well as fervent and zealous in religion.”¹ Nearly four years before the aforementioned meeting, Edwards had called the same young preacher “a very ingenious and pious young man.”² For all that he knew of this godly young man in 1752, Jonathan Edwards could never have known that within a decade their bodies would be buried just yards apart, about a half-mile north of the yellow clapboard house in which both men had briefly lived and died in Princeton. Samuel Davies (1723–1761), the minister whose character Edwards described, was the reluctant fourth president of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton), a champion for religious toleration and civil rights for dissenters in Virginia, and a poet whose verses constitute some of the earliest North American hymnody. Davies was a husband and father who had lost both wife and children, a pioneer missionary to African slaves, and a New Side Presbyterian revivalist whom D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has described as “the greatest preacher” America ever produced. Yet a decade into the twenty-first century, Davies remains relatively unnoticed by American Evangelicals.³

¹Jonathan Edwards, letter to William McCulloch, November 24, 1752, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 544.

²Jonathan Edwards, letter to James Robe, May 23, 1749, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. Claghorn, *Works* 16:276.

³D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times: Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions*

Moreover, for all of his remarkable public accomplishments, those who knew Davies most closely esteemed his personal holiness. Upon learning of Samuel Davies' death, his long-time friend and London correspondent Thomas Gibbons (d. 1785) remarked,

what crowned all, or advanced his distinction as a man and a scholar into the highest value and lustre, was, that his pious character appeared not at all inferior to his great intellect and acquired accomplishments . . . His pious character as much surpassed all else that was remarkable in him, as the sparkling eye in the countenance of a great genius does all the other features of the face.⁴

Samuel Finley (1715–1766), Davies' successor as President at the college, noted that “from twelve or fourteen years of age, [Davies] had continually maintained the strictest watch over his thoughts and actions, and daily lived under a deep sense of his own unworthiness,” and “of the transcendent excellency of the Christian religion.”⁵ In reading Davies' sermons, treatises, hymns, correspondence, and diary, one gains a sense of what his friends knew personally: Samuel Davies articulated a warm and Evangelical piety, deeply rooted in theological reflection upon Scripture.

1942–1977 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 263. The standard biography of Davies is that of George William Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1971). See also George William Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753–55* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967). Although Pilcher's work is the standard monograph, the best biography is that of George H. Bost, “Samuel Davies: Colonial Revivalist and Champion of Religious Toleration” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1942). Other noteworthy biographical treatments include Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750–1858* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 3–31; John B. Frantz, “Davies, Samuel,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: From the Earliest Times to the Year 2000*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, vol. 15 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 405–06; Mark A. Noll, “Davies, Samuel,” in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed. Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 181–83, and Mark A. Noll, “Davies, Samuel,” in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, vol. 6 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 159–61; and Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South, Volume One: 1607–1861* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963), 52–61.

⁴Thomas Gibbons, “A Portion of Two Discourses, Preached at Haberdashers-Hall, London, March 29, A.D. 1761, occasioned by the Decease of the Rev. Samuel Davies, A. M., Late President of the College of Nassau Hall, in New Jersey,” in *Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Davies, A.M. President of the College of New Jersey*, vol. 1 (New York: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1854; repr., Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1993), 56. This work will henceforward be cited as *Sermons*.

⁵Samuel Finley, “The Disinterested Christian: A Sermon, Preached at Nassau-Hall, Princeton, May 28, 1761. Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Samuel Davies, A. M. Late President of the College of New Jersey,” *Sermons*, 1:53.

In recent decades, several writers have drawn attention to the vital link between theology and spirituality. Edward Farley wrote that “a person’s piety is a pattern of being and doing that arises out of a specific interpretation of the gospel.”⁶ Alister McGrath has noted similarly that “properly understood, theology embraces, informs, and sustains spirituality,”⁷ and Donald Bloesch has asserted that “spirituality is inseparable from theology.”⁸ Every theology implies a corollary spirituality or spiritualities. One’s doctrinal commitments, whether articulated and refined or unexpressed and unappreciated, shape the ways in which one lives. This interrelationship between theology and spirituality informs the thesis of this dissertation.

Thesis

The purpose of this dissertation is to answer the following question: how did Samuel Davies’ theology inform his understanding of spiritual life and piety? For Davies, this question was of utmost importance. In an undated letter, Samuel Davies expressed the vital importance of theology to Christian piety:

The blessed Jesus by his mediation opened a way for the communication of Heaven. In truth sir, I cannot inculcate the religion of The holy Jesus without inculcating holiness; & therefore this has been, & I hope shall ever be, the darling subject of my Discourses, wherever I have the honour of preaching the everlasting Gospel to ye [the] sons of men. The free and rich Grace of God, the absolute necessity & complete sufficiency of ye [the] righteousness of Jesus & the importance & necessity of faith, are doctrines dear to my soul, the foundation of my Hopes, & of the utmost consequence in the Christian system.⁹

⁶Edward Farley, *Requiem for a Lost Piety: The Contemporary Search for the Christian Life* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 17.

⁷Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 27.

⁸Donald G. Bloesch, *Spirituality Old and New: Recovering Authentic Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 13.

⁹Samuel Davies, letter to unspecified recipient, Samuel Davies Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Although the manuscript is undated, Davies mentions preparations for his trip to England, placing the letter in approximately 1753. The transcription leaves Davies’ shorthand, punctuation, and spelling in place. Throughout this dissertation, all citations and quotations from primary sources retain their original spelling and punctuation.

In answering the primary research question, this dissertation also addresses the following related questions: first, what role did the Bible play in Davies' vision of Christian spirituality? Second, how is the spiritual life communicated to and sustained within individuals through Jesus Christ? Third, what is the nature and role of holiness in the spiritual life of Christians? Finally, what role do means play in the communication, maintenance, and furtherance of Christian piety? In sum, I will argue that Samuel Davies believed that spiritual life was founded on the divine revelation of Scripture, communicated by Jesus Christ to individuals through conversion and regeneration, sustained and nourished by faith in the living Christ, animated by gospel holiness, and maintained through the conscientious practice of various religious duties.

Status Quaestionis

Although Samuel Davies was a key figure in colonial Christianity, his theology and piety remain largely unexplored. Not until the twentieth century did his life and ministry attract scholarly interest, interest that has been restricted to only a few areas of Davies' legacy, namely his roles as a preacher of the great awakening and as a forerunner of religious toleration. Most recently, Thomas Kidd has described Davies' role in challenging the colonial Anglican establishment in Virginia and in bringing the awakening to the southern colonies.¹⁰ Mark Noll has contributed two substantive biographical articles on Davies and located him as a key preacher within early Evangelicalism.¹¹ In his 2008 doctoral dissertation, Charles Holloway compared Davies' homiletical theology with that of Davies' fellow Presbyterian and close friend Gilbert

¹⁰Thomas S. Kidd, *Patrick Henry: First among Patriots* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), and idem, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

¹¹Noll, "Davies, Samuel," in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, and idem, "Davies, Samuel," in *Dictionary of National Biography*. See also Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 183–85.

Tennent (1703–1764), and also with that of Jonathan Edwards.¹² Holloway suggested that while these three men differed in their homiletical methodology, their underlying theology of preaching was remarkably similar.¹³ In this work, Holloway considered Davies’ theology of Scripture as it related to the work of a preacher, but did not extend this theology to its broader influence on the Christian’s life.¹⁴ Holloway described an important aspect of Davies’ piety when he demonstrated that Davies believed the preached word was only effective when it was attended and applied by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ In his conclusion, Holloway recognized that increased personal devotion was a significant outcome of the ministries of Edwards, Tennent, and Davies, yet devoted less than one page to explaining the features of such devotion.¹⁶

In her 1996 doctoral dissertation, Carol Bodeau described eighteenth-century colonial depictions of Native Americans.¹⁷ To this end, she analyzed five of Davies’ sermons delivered during the French and Indian War, noting his rhetorical movement between Indians as potential allies and Indians as demonic savages.¹⁸ While Bodeau’s rhetorical assessment of Davies’ sermons is generally accurate, her theological analysis

¹²Charles Stewart Holloway, “The Homiletical Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Gilbert Tennent, and Samuel Davies” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008).

¹³Holloway, “Homiletical Theology,” 68.

¹⁴Holloway, “Homiletical Theology,” 77–111.

¹⁵Holloway, “Homiletical Theology,” 113–16; 120.

¹⁶Holloway, “Homiletical Theology,” 148–49.

¹⁷Carol Ann Bodeau, “Faces on the Frontier: Indian Images from Colonial Virginia” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Davis, 1996). The usefulness of Bodeau’s research is limited by her weak historiography. She includes a clear factual error on p. 13 when she indicates that Davies visited David Brainerd’s Indian mission in 1753 and was pleased with Brainerd’s success. Here she relies on Pilcher’s annotations in his republication of Davies’ diary for her chronology, yet Pilcher’s annotations are incorrect. Davies actually visited the mission of John Brainerd (d. 1781); David Brainerd had died in October 1747.

¹⁸Bodeau, “Faces on the Frontier,” 4, 12. Bodeau uses the terms “Indian” and “Native American” with specific technical meanings. When non-native writers describe images of native people, she uses the term “Indian.” When discussing the people these images represent, she uses the term “Native American.”

lacks depth and focuses only on broad categories such as “sin” and “millennium.”¹⁹ Though mentioning Davies’ ethical appeals to his hearers, Bodeau did not develop the implications of these appeals on the lived Christian experience of the congregants. Further, she omitted nine sermons Davies delivered between 1755 and 1761, in which Davies more clearly articulates his theological bases for declaring the conflict a “holy” war.²⁰ Though less critical than Bodeau, Iain Murray’s 1994 treatment of Evangelical revivals provides a thoughtful historical narrative of Davies’ life and ministry, especially his theology of revival.²¹ Davies believed the rapid spread and success of the gospel during the 1740s–1750s was due to a special effusion of the Holy Spirit upon churches.²² The key validation of genuine revival was increased Christian love.²³

During the 1960s and 1970s, G. W. Pilcher produced arguably the two most important scholarly monographs on Davies: *The Reverend Samuel Davies Abroad* (1967) and *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia* (1971). The first is an edited transcription of Davies’ diary that he maintained during a trans-Atlantic fund-raising tour on behalf of the College of New Jersey from 1753–1755 and the second is the standard biographical work on Davies, which is itself a reworking of Pilcher’s 1963 doctoral dissertation from the University of Illinois.²⁴ Pilcher’s sought to present a thorough historiography of Davies’ life and ministry, which he handily accomplished, though not

¹⁹Bodeau, “Faces on the Frontier,” 46–51.

²⁰Davies returned from a fund-raising trip to Great Britain in mid-February 1755, and by early March he began to address the war in his sermons. Thirteen sermons preached between March 5, 1755, and January 1761 address the war. Two additional sermons, published in spring 1756, also took up this subject. These sermons will be treated more fully in chap. 1 of the dissertation.

²¹Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 3–31. Nearly half of Murray’s chapter (pp. 3–18) is a biographical sketch.

²²Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 19–24.

²³Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 24–26.

²⁴George William Pilcher, “Preacher of the New Light, Samuel Davies 1724–1761” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1963). Pilcher incorrectly lists the year of Davies’ birth as 1724.

without weaknesses.²⁵ In developing his portrait of Davies, Pilcher necessarily interacted with Davies' theology as a representative of New Side Presbyterianism, as pastor, and a college president, yet because his concern was more broadly historical, he was content to leave significant aspects of Davies' theology undeveloped and his discussion on spirituality is therefore limited.

R. S. Alley's 1962 dissertation focused primarily on Davies' role in advocating religious toleration for non-Anglican congregations in Virginia.²⁶ In chapter 2 of his work, Alley engaged Davies' theology, but his major interest was in those aspects of Davies' theology that relate most directly to the relationship between the Christian and the state: providence, nature, history, and government.²⁷ Alley's analysis here is helpful to some degree in elucidating Davies' worldview. While Alley does take up doctrines of the Christian life such as repentance, conversion, faith and works, and citizenship, his analysis of each theme, save the last, is limited to one page each.²⁸

²⁵Interestingly, Pilcher's dissertation title lists the year of Davies' birth as 1724, though Davies was born on November 3, 1723, an uncontested date and one not affected by Old Style/New Style calendar changes. Pilcher cites the 1723 birth date in the text of his dissertation: Pilcher, "Preacher of the New Light," 6. A more significant error involves an annotation Pilcher made in his transcription of Davies' diary. In his entry for Monday, October 1, 1753, Davies notes that he "lodged at Mr. Brainerd's, the good Missionary among the Indians." For nearly one week, Davies was in Mr. Brainerd's company. Pilcher adds the following footnote to this entry: "At this time David Brainerd was minister to congregations of Presbyterian Indians in Crossweeksung and Cranbury, New Jersey, and engaged to Jerusha Edwards. His expulsion from Yale in 1743 had actually triggered the founding of the College of New Jersey." See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 17, n. 37. Pilcher's identification of "Mr. Brainerd" as David Brainerd is impossible as David Brainerd had died in October 1747, and was buried in Northampton, Massachusetts. Further, Jerusha Edwards died in February 1748, and as I have argued elsewhere, the story of an engagement between Brainerd and Edwards has little historical grounding: Joseph C. Harrod, "Jerusha Edwards: A Heart Uncommonly Devoted to God" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Jonathan Edwards Society, Northampton, MA, October 7, 2011), 8–11. Davies actually lodged with Presbyterian missionary John Brainerd (d. 1781), David's brother. While these errors do not overturn Pilcher's work, they do indicate the need for a critical appropriation of his research.

²⁶Robert Sutherland Alley, "The Reverend Mr. Samuel Davies: A Study in Religion and Politics, 1747–1759" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1962).

²⁷Alley, "Reverend Mr. Samuel Davies," 2, 18–61.

²⁸Alley, "Reverend Mr. Samuel Davies," 45–59. Alley develops the concept of citizenship further than other doctrines of the Christian life and his discussion is helpful for understanding Davies' ethic.

G. H. Bost's 1942 dissertation is perhaps the best researched biographical study on Davies yet produced.²⁹ Bost accurately characterized Davies' emphasis on Evangelical catholicity, the necessity of holiness, and renewed affections.³⁰ His chapter on Davies' family and pastorate provide important vistas through which to observe Davies' high views of marriage and ministry, views which shaped his spirituality.³¹ The chief limitation of Bost's valuable study is that the breadth of his research does not allow for focused development on those elements of Davies' theology which most directly affect an understanding of Christian piety. His treatment of this area of Davies' thought occupies only seven pages.

The sources cited above represent the most substantive treatments of Samuel Davies' life and theology. A few other works, though less directly relevant to this dissertation's thesis, deserve mention. Leonard Trinterud's 1949 study of colonial Puritanism includes a clear summary of New Side federal theology, which includes numerous citations from Davies' sermons.³² Wesley Gewehr's 1930 monograph on the Great Awakening in the South focused primarily on Davies as a promoter of religious toleration and includes a helpful narrative of Davies' several disputes with Anglican clergy and British officials.³³ This narrative illuminates one of Davies' chief concerns in seeking religious toleration for Presbyterians in Virginia: his concern over the laxity among many Anglican clergy in living holy lives. R. B. Davis' 1968 publication of Davies' collected poetry contains a thoughtful introductory essay on the role of poetry in

²⁹George H. Bost, "Samuel Davies: Colonial Revivalist and Champion of Religious Toleration" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1942).

³⁰Bost, "Samuel Davies," 62–69.

³¹Bost, "Samuel Davies," 86–142.

³²Leonard J. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-Examination of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949), 169–95.

³³Wesley M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740–1790* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1930), 68–105.

Davies' religious expression and contains many poems that Davies composed as means of applying his sermons to his congregants and also for shaping their piety outside of his normal preaching ministry.³⁴

Samuel Davies has attracted relatively little scholarly attention in the past two and a half centuries, especially when compared to contemporaries such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield (1714–1770). Most studies of Davies have tended to emphasize a few key aspects of his ministry, namely his role as preacher of the Great Awakening, or more commonly his work in securing religious toleration for Presbyterians in Virginia. While some studies have included discussion of Davies' theology and some aspects of Christian piety, none have attempted a systematic analysis of his theology of spiritual life and its implications for Christian piety, which is the purpose of this dissertation.

Methodology

The primary methodology for this dissertation is an inductive analysis of primary-source artifacts created by Samuel Davies. Today, Davies is cited as a powerful preacher, and that is how his contemporaries remembered him as well. During his own lifetime, at least a dozen of Davies' sermons were published in North America and in Great Britain.³⁵ Within five years of his death, colleagues, correspondents, and admirers

³⁴Richard Beale Davis, *The Collected Poems of Samuel Davies, 1723–1761* (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1968).

³⁵Samuel Davies, *The Curse of Cowardice: A Sermon Preached to the Militia of Hanover County, Virginia, at a General Muster, May 8, 1758. With a View to Raise a Company for Captain Samuel Meredith*. (London, 1758; repr., Woodbridge, NJ: James Parker, 1759); Davies, *The Duties, Difficulties and Rewards of the Faithful Minister. A Sermon Preached at the Installation of the Revd. Mr. John Todd into the Pastoral Charge of the Presbyterian Congregation, In and About the Upper Part of Hanover County in Virginia, Nov. 12, 1752. With an Appendix, Containing the Form of Installation, etc.* (Glasgow, 1754); Davies, *The Duty of Christians to Propagate Their Religion Among the Heathens, Earnestly Recommended to the Masters of Negroe Slaves in Virginia. A Sermon Preached in Hanover, January 8, 1757* (London, 1758); Davies, *The Good Soldier. Extracted From a Sermon Preached to a Company of Volunteers, Raised in Virginia, August 17, 1755* (London, 1756); Davies, *Little Children Invited to Jesus Christ. A Sermon Preached in Hanover County, Virginia; With an Account of the Late Remarkable Religious Impressions Among the Students in the College of New-Jersey* (London, 1758; repr., Boston, 1759). Davies, *Religion*

began to gather and publish collections of his sermons.³⁶ The earliest edition was begun in 1766 and completed in 1771; it contains sixty-three sermons.³⁷ Nineteen further sermons were added to the various editions by 1810. The edition used in this dissertation, unless otherwise noted, is that from 1854, recently reprinted in 1993. Two sermon manuscripts, located at the Firestone Library of Princeton University, remain unpublished.³⁸

and Patriotism, the Constituents of a Good Soldier. A Sermon Preached to Captain Overton's Independent Company of Volunteers, Raised in Hanover County, Virginia, August 17, 1755 (Philadelphia: James Chattin, 1755); Davies, *Religion and Public Spirit, A Valedictory Address to the Senior Class, Delivered in Nassau-Hall, September 21, 1760, the Sunday Before Commencement* (Philadelphia: James Parker, 1761); Davies, *A Sermon Delivered at Nassau-Hall, January 14, 1761. on the Death of His Late Majesty King George II, Published by Request, to Which is Prefixed a Brief Account of the Life, Character, and Death of the Author, By David Bostwick, A.M., Minister of the Presbyterian Congregation in New-York* (Boston, 1761); Davies, *A Sermon on Man's Primitive State; and the First Covenant. Delivered Before the Reverend Presbytery of New-Castle, April 13th 1748* (Philadelphia, 1748); Davies, *A Sermon Preached at Henrico, 29th April, 1753, and at Canonsgate, 26th May, 1753* (Edinburgh, 1754); Davies, *A Sermon Preached Before the Reverend Presbytery of New-castle, October 11, 1752, Published at the Desire of the Presbytery and Congregation* (Philadelphia, 1753); Davies, *The Vessels of Mercy, and the Vessels of Wrath, Delineated, in a New, Uncontroverted, and Practical Light, A Sermon First Preached in New-Kent, Virginia, August 22, 1756* (London: Buck, 1758); Davies, *Virginia's Danger and Remedy, Two Discourses, Occasioned by the Severe Drought in Sundry Parts of the Country; and the Defeat of General Braddock* (Glasgow, 1756; repr., Williamsburg, VA: William Hunter, 1756). See William B. Sprague, "Memoir of President Davies," *Sermons* 1:27, who lists nine of these sermons as those printed during Davies' life.

³⁶According to Sprague, Davies' British correspondent, Thomas Gibbons, selected the sermons that were included in the multi-volume editions. See Sprague, "Memoir of President Davies," *Sermons* 1:27–28. Sprague indicated that the sermons were published from Davies' preaching manuscripts and thus intended for the *ear* rather than the *eye*. Nevertheless, Gibbons edited the sermons. In his preface to the fifth edition of Davies' sermons (1792), Gibbons described this process: "A very considerable number of his Sermons has been transmitted to me, and thence I have selected what were sufficient to compose the ensuing volumes . . . it may naturally be supposed that they required patient and accurate revisal in order to their publication; and that the Editor, if he would discharge his duty as he ought, must find himself under the necessity of making some occasional alterations and amendments as to the language, and especially of adjusting the pointing. These liberties I have taken, and have endeavoured to execute my trust in the same manner which I have reason to think Mr. Davies, had he been living, would have approved and commended . . . They who knew and heard Mr. Davies will need no further proof than the perusal of the discourses themselves that they are the real productions of the author to whom they are ascribed" (ii–iii). See Samuel Davies, *Sermons on Important Subjects, By the Late Reverend and Pious Samuel Davies, A. M., Sometime President of the College of New Jersey* (New York: T. Allen, 1792), 1:ii–iii.

³⁷Pilcher noted that a three-volume 1766 edition of Davies' sermons may never have been published even though Charles Evans included it in his *American Bibliography*. See Pilcher, "Samuel Davies," 294. The Boyce Library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary lists this work among the library's Founder's Collection, yet were unable to locate a physical copy.

³⁸Samuel Davies, A sermon on Luke 14:27, and A sermon on 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20, Samuel Davies Collection, Firestone Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

Although Samuel Davies never wrote a systematic theology nor produced major treatises on theological topics, his sermons make his theology accessible. Although he would not have used the term to describe himself, Davies was an itinerant minister to Presbyterian congregations throughout Virginia and parts of North Carolina. Although some of Davies' sermons record the date of preaching and a specific audience, the majority of his sermons lack such helpful notes. While it is impossible to reconstruct in full Davies' preaching patterns, it is likely that the nature of his ministry afforded him the opportunity to preach the same sermon on multiple occasions and for different audiences. Two pieces of evidence support this claim. First, several of Davies' sermons include multiple date and location references, indicating that they were indeed preached on more than one occasion.³⁹ Second, while some of Davies' surviving sermons were preached to particular audiences and contain audience-specific applications, most of Davies' sermons are more general in nature and could easily have been delivered to nearly any congregation with minimal adaptation.⁴⁰ Davies' sermons tend to follow the Puritan "plain style" of explaining a biblical text, identifying several doctrines arising from the text, and offering improvements (applications) to his hearers.⁴¹ Davies' sermons were,

³⁹See Samuel Davies, "A Thanksgiving Sermon for National Blessing," *Sermons*, 3:355–78, preached in Hanover, Virginia, on January 11, 1759, and at Nassau Hall, Princeton, New Jersey, on August 12, 1759; Davies, "Practical Atheism, in Denying the Agency of Divine Providence, Exposed," *Sermons*, 3:379–406, preached in Hanover, Virginia, on April 4, 1756, and at Nassau Hall, Princeton, New Jersey, on November 23, 1759; Davies, "The Primitive and Present State of Man Compared," *Sermons*, 3:407–33, preached in Hanover, Virginia, on December 10, 1758, and at Nassau Hall, Princeton, New Jersey, on December 14, 1760; Davies, "Evidences of a Want of Love to God," *Sermons*, 3:457–73, preached at Hanover, Virginia, on April 14, 1756, and New Kent, Virginia, on April 17, 1757; Davies, "A Christmas-Day Sermon," *Sermons*, 3:562–86, preached in New Kent, Virginia, on December 25, 1758, and Nassau Hall, Princeton, New Jersey, on December 25, 1760.

⁴⁰Two audience-specific sermons include Samuel Davies, "On the Defeat of General Braddock, Going to Fort Duquesne," *Sermons*, 3:307–28, and his farewell sermon to his Hanover, Virginia, congregation from July 1, 1759, "The Apostolic Valediction Considered and Applied," *Sermons*, 3:637–55. Examples of more general sermons are far too numerous to reference here.

⁴¹For a discussion of this style in its Colonial Puritan context, see Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 25th anniv. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 34–35.

however, anything but “plain,” blending doctrinal precision and rhetorical eloquence intended to communicate his own experiential appropriation of the text and thus to move his hearers’ minds and hearts.⁴² Davies’ sermons are saturated with doctrine and the repetition of certain doctrines across multiple sermons enables an accurate, though surely not exhaustive, analysis of his theology.⁴³ Due to the fact that Davies articulated his theology primarily through sermons that included intentional applications of specific doctrines, contemporary readers can observe Davies’ vision for living Christianly. While these sermons form the primary source for studying and analyzing Davies’ theology and piety, they are not the only sources.

From 1753–1755, Samuel Davies maintained a diary documenting his travels throughout Great Britain to raise funds for the fledgling College of New Jersey. While the diary functions as a travelogue, it also includes more introspective entries in which Davies recorded his internal struggles with accepting the responsibility for the trip, his fears for the long voyage and for the safety of his family during his absence. This text allows the reader to view Davies’ piety in a less public setting. Similarly, Davies’ family records from his Old Testament and an annotated portion of his New Testament provide helpful insights into Davies’ life and study of Scripture.⁴⁴

⁴²In an undated letter, Davies described his experience and his aim as a preacher: “The difficulty of the ministerial work seems to grow upon my hands. Perhaps once in three or four months, I preach in some measure as I could wish; that is, I preach as in the sight of God, and as if I were to step from the pulpit to the supreme tribunal. I *feel* my subject. I melt into tears, or shudder with horror, when I denounce the terrors of the Lord. I glow, I soar in sacred ecstasies, when the love of Jesus is my theme, and, as Mr. Baxter was wont to express it, in lines more striking to me than all the fine poetry in the world, ‘I preach as if I ne’er should preach again; as a dying man to dying men,’” in Albert Barnes, “Life and Times of the Author,” *Sermons on Important Subjects by the Reverend Samuel Davies, A. M., President of the College of New Jersey*, vol. 1, 4th ed. (New York: Robert Carter, 1845), xxxvii. This introductory essay is not included in the reprinted Soli Deo Gloria edition. The reference is, of course, to Richard Baxter (1615–1691), the English Puritan pastor.

⁴³Because Davies did not date the majority of his sermons, it is nearly impossible to track his theological development chronologically.

⁴⁴Davies family Bible records, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA, and Samuel Davies, New Testament annotations, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

Samuel Davies' correspondence also provides another source for understanding his spirituality. Although his preserved letters are not nearly as voluminous as contemporaries such as Jonathan Edwards, John Newton (1725–1807) or Phillip Doddridge (1702–1751), Davies addressed theological questions in them and mentioned spiritual concerns with those to whom he wrote, making this literature a useful source for understanding his vision of spiritual piety. Among those items that have survived, a 1751 letter from Davies to Congregationalist pastor Joseph Bellamy (1719–1790) provides a unique chronicle of the revival in Virginia as well as Davies' thoughts on friendship and piety.⁴⁵ Similarly, Davies' tracts and treatises are also important sources. Shortly after arriving in Virginia in 1747, Davies became embroiled in a number of disputes with leading Anglican clergymen and other local officials over the legitimacy of his ministry.⁴⁶ His published responses provide useful insights into Davies' theology and piety.⁴⁷

Two final sources for understanding Samuel Davies' theology and piety are his hymns and poems. Davies was among the earliest hymn writers in the colonies, occasionally crafting hymns to complement his sermon topics. Now, hymnody is hardly a uniquely American phenomenon, yet it is a "crucial expression of American Evangelical religiousness."⁴⁸ Hymns "are an important means of theological pedagogy," capturing

⁴⁵Samuel Davies, *The State of Religion among the Protestant Dissenters in Virginia; In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bellamy, of Bethlehem, in New-England: from the Reverend Mr. Samuel Davies, V. D. M. in Hanover County, Virginia* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1751). Bellamy graduated from Yale (1735) and had trained for pastoral ministry under Jonathan Edwards. He pastored the Congregational church in Bethlehem, Connecticut, from 1740 until his death in 1790.

⁴⁶The best accounts are those of Bost, "Samuel Davies," 38–45, 69–85; and Gewehr, *The Great Awakening*, 68–105.

⁴⁷For example, see Samuel Davies, "Charity and Truth United or the Way of the Multitude exposed in Six Letters to the Rev; Mr. William Stith, A.M., President of William and Mary College. In Answer to Some Passages in William Stith's Sermon Entitled *The Nature & Extent of Christ's Redemption, Preached Before the General Assembly of Virginia, Nov. 11, 1753*," ed. Thomas Clinton Pears, *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 19 (1940–1941): 193–323.

⁴⁸Stephen Marini, "Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of

key teachings and presenting these doctrines in a memorable way.⁴⁹ For the historian, hymnody provides “an important record of the past spiritual experiences of the believing community.”⁵⁰ In 1860, Basil Manly, Jr. noted rightly that “from the devotional compositions of Christians in all periods a much more accurate sketch may be derived of the doctrines that really impressed on the mind and translated into the life, than from regular creeds or confessions of faith.”⁵¹ Nathan Hatch has emphasized the influence of Evangelical hymnody due to its popular appeal and wide distribution through the publication of hymn and tune books.⁵² Charles Lippy, explaining the success of hymnody in American religion during the latter half of the nineteenth century, wrote that hymns were “popular vehicles for developing not only a common vocabulary for much popular Protestant religiosity, but also powerful cohesive bonds among those for whom they captured a way of viewing reality that gave personal experience rich meaning.”⁵³ Hymns, then, are an important inroad into understanding the religion of the people who sing them. Yet hymns also help shape the theological contours of their singers.⁵⁴ Similarly, Davies used religious poetry to impress significant theological truths upon the minds of Christian readers. His poems were generally meditative and followed the patterns of Isaac Watts

American Popular Religion,” *Church History* 71 (2002): 273.

⁴⁹Richard J. Mouw, *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*, ed. Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), xiii–xiv.

⁵⁰Mouw, *Wonderful Words of Life*, xv.

⁵¹B. Manly, Jr., and A. Brooks Everett, eds., *Baptist Chorals: Tune and Hymn Book Designed to Promote General Congregational Singing; Containing One Hundred and Sixty-Four Tunes, Adapted to About Four Hundred Choice Hymns* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1860), iii.

⁵²Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 146.

⁵³Charles Lippy, *Being Religious, American Style: A History of Popular Religiosity in the United States*, Contributions to the Study of Religion, no. 37 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 110.

⁵⁴Mark A. Noll, “The Defining Role of Hymns in Early Evangelicalism,” in *Wonderful Words of Life*, 3–16.

(1674–1748) or John Milton (1608–1674).⁵⁵ Although a formal analysis of Davies’ poetry and hymns is beyond the scope of this dissertation, these artifacts will be discussed as they demonstrate ways in which Davies applied theological truth to Christian experience.

Background to the Present Study

I was first captivated by the religious landscape of the eighteenth century as a Master of Divinity student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. During my final year of study I wrote a master’s thesis examining the preaching and theology of Jonathan Edwards. The research for this thesis introduced me to the larger world of early Evangelicalism and to the riches of the spirituality of the eighteenth century. My understanding of and appreciation for the early generations of Evangelicals has grown through subsequent doctoral seminars on Puritan and Evangelical piety and early American religious history in which I examined the relationship of marriage and piety and hymnody and piety, respectively.

As my interest in eighteenth-century piety was growing so too was my curiosity regarding the move toward American independence from Great Britain and the founding of the republic during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. This interest was fueled in part by a growing sense of dissatisfaction over public discussions of religious freedom by both the political left and right and the recognition that the American form of government was truly unique. I came to appreciate with new depth the harassment and persecution faced by members of dissenting religious movements within the colonies and more aware of the diversity of philosophy and theology represented among the founding generation and their immediate predecessors. Samuel Davies thus represents a nexus of these two research interests.

⁵⁵Samuel Davies, *Collected Poems of Samuel Davies, 1723–1761*, ed. Richard Beale Davis (Gainesville, FL: Scholars’ Facsimiles and Reprints, 1968), xix.

Summary of Contents

This introductory chapter establishes the need for the dissertation, states the research question, thesis and methodology for the study, and describes the relative neglect of Davies among Evangelical scholars.

Chapter 2 places Davies within the historical context of the eighteenth century, and especially within significant movements and events that established the context for his ministry. This chapter also includes an overview of his life and ministry, especially his roles as pastor and college president.

Chapter 3 discusses the role of Scripture in Davies' theology and spirituality. For Davies, God's revelation, both written and proclaimed, was the foundation for genuine piety and this chapter demonstrates the ways in which the Bible shaped Davies' spirituality.

Chapter 4 examines Davies' theology of regeneration, which for Davies was the beginning point of true piety. Although he had a more Puritan understanding of preparationism, Davies was a consummate Evangelical preacher of the new birth. This chapter explores both the Puritan and evangelical elements of Davies' doctrine of regeneration and its implications for living the Christian life.

Chapter 5 presents Davies' doctrine of holiness, which for him was the vital animating principle of Christian spirituality. Davies believed that the link between holiness and piety was inviolable, and that the distinguishing mark of Christian piety was a holy delight in God. This chapter explores the implications of Davies' theology of holiness for Christian experience.

Chapter 6 explores the range of religious duties that Davies practiced himself and which he encouraged other Christians to perform to maintain a vital experience of communion with God. Davies believed that means such as meditation, prayer, family worship, and the sacraments were essential practices for maintaining genuine Christian piety.

Chapter 7, the conclusion, summarizes answers given to the research question and related questions. It contains a critical appraisal of Davies' theology of spiritual life as well as suggestions for how modern Evangelicals might appropriate Davies' legacy.

CHAPTER 2

THE LIFE AND WORLD OF SAMUEL DAVIES

The standard biography of Samuel Davies (1723–1761) is more than forty years old and a full accounting of Davies’ story is beyond the scope of this dissertation.¹ Yet to understand Davies’ theology and spirituality, one must know something of the contours of his life and the world in which he ministered. This chapter overviews Davies’ life and ministry in the context of eighteenth-century colonial America.

A Summary of Samuel Davies’ Life and Ministry

Like the mother of his biblical namesake, Samuel Davies’ mother, Martha, had prayed for a son, a prayer which she saw answered on November 3, 1723.² Davies was raised an only child, born in New Castle County, Delaware (then part of Pennsylvania).³ Both his mother, Martha née Thomas, and father, David (1680–1759), were of Welsh descent. Davies’ paternal grandfather, Morgan David (1622–1694), a Baptist by conviction, left Lantwidvoryde, Glamorganshire, Wales, in 1684 and settled a one hundred-acre tract in Merion, Pennsylvania.⁴ Morgan David’s two sons, Shionn (or John,

¹The standard account is that of George William Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1971).

²Pilcher, *Apostle of Dissent*, 4. Pilcher follows Davies’ own reckoning of his date of birth, which Davies inscribed in his personal copy of the Old Testament. Davies here recorded his birthday as November 3, 1723, yet the inscription on Davies’ tombstone at Princeton Cemetery lists the year of Davies’ birth as 1724. Albert Barnes reproduced this transcription in his introductory essay in *Sermons on Important Subjects by the Reverend Samuel Davies, A.M., President of the College of New Jersey*, 4th ed. (New York: Robert Carter, 1845), 1:xxxv.

³Samuel Davies’ mother gave birth to an unnamed daughter who was perhaps stillborn or who died in infancy in 1718. See William Heth Whitsitt, *Genealogy of Jefferson Davis and of Samuel Davies* (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1910), 67.

⁴Pilcher, *Apostle of Dissent*, 3. Regarding Davies’ genealogy, see Harry Alexander Davies, *The*

ca. 1670–1753) and David farmed the family’s tract until 1716 before selling their interests and moving to New Castle County where they bought 400 acres in the Pencader Hundred, which they owned jointly until 1743.⁵ Now, Welsh settlers had founded a Baptist meeting at Iron Hill in the Hundred in 1703 and Davies’ parents were members of this congregation.⁶ Samuel Davies’ mother, Martha, joined the church by baptism in 1711.⁷ In February 1716, David “Davis” and Martha “Dafis” signed the church’s new confession of faith.⁸ This confession was a Welsh translation of Benjamin (1640–1704) and Elias (1665/66–1699) Keach’s confession, first published in London in 1697 and later adopted by the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1742.⁹ Welsh Baptist minister Abel Morgan Sr. (1673–1722) translated the confession from English into Welsh and the church appended articles on hymn singing and the imposition of hands to the document. No further history regarding the family’s religious situation survives from 1716 until 1732, when the Welsh Baptist meeting expelled Martha Davies from membership.

The account of Martha Davies’ dismissal is decidedly one-sided. The only extant record comes from the congregation’s meeting minutes, which describe her

Davis Family in Wales and America (Davies and David), Genealogy of Morgan David of Pennsylvania (Washington, DC: n.p., 1921).

⁵*Pencader* is a Welsh term for “highest seat,” and likely described Iron Hill, a place where many Welsh settlers established their homes. See J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Delaware, 1609–1888* (Philadelphia, PA: Richards and Company, 1888), 2:984.

⁶For a concise history of the early Welsh Baptists in New England and the Middle Colonies, see Gerald L. Priest, “Abel Morgans’s Contribution to Baptist Ecclesiology in Colonial America,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 8 (Fall 2003): 49–68.

⁷Henry C. Conrad, ed., *Records of the Welsh Tract Baptist Meeting, Pencader Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, 1701 to 1828*, Papers of the Historical Society of Delaware, 42 (Wilmington, DE: The Historical Society of Delaware, 1904), 7–13 and 15–16.

⁸Conrad, *Records*, 19–21.

⁹William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 239–40, and 348–49. Elias Keach founded the Pennepek (or Pennepack or Lower Dublin) Baptist Church in 1688. In 1709, Welsh Baptist Abel Morgan, Sr., became pastor of the congregation. The confession was an amended version of the Second London Confession of 1677. See James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 115–16.

“rebellion . . . against the church.”¹⁰ This rebellion consisted in Martha’s “opposing the truth which she once professed to the church,” in “refusing instruction, and despising advice,” in “breaking covenant with the church,” and in “being so false and unfaithful . . . that she has curtailed the truth.”¹¹ The last two charges specify that Martha’s covenant breaking involved taking church matters to the Presbyterians. Were these matters doctrinal or personal? Had she grown dissatisfied with the theology which she had earlier professed, or perhaps with the answers, or lack thereof, to questions she was raising? Martha Davies was not the first member the church had expelled, but she appears to have been the only one removed for dealings with local Presbyterians and the last person removed for more than a generation.¹² Regrettably, Martha Davies’ version of the incident is lost to history, and one might expect her version to contain a different perspective than the official account. Bost’s suggestion that the incident reveals Martha’s “spirit of inquiry . . . and persistence” seems appropriate: rather than amend her views, she joined a neighboring Presbyterian congregation, a move that proved consequential to her son’s life.¹³

Education and Conversion

While Samuel Davies’ tutelage began under the Baptist Abel Morgan, it was

¹⁰Conrad, *Records*, 26. The minutes record her name as “Martha David,” but a later editor added a *nota bene* that “she was President Davis’s mother.”

¹¹Conrad, *Records*, 26.

¹²No fewer than thirteen members were put out of the church between 1714 and 1724 for various reasons such as “unseemingly dress”, protracted absences, questionable company keeping, defying church instruction, and similar matters. The book records no further dismissals after Martha Davies’ removal. Interestingly, the book’s detailed records of new members, signatories to the confession of faith, letters of departure granted, excommunications, and deaths within the congregation stop in 1732 and do not resume until 1770. An annotation indicates that pp. 12–51 of the original book are present but blank. Abel Morgan’s brother, Enoch Morgan (1676–1740), was the third pastor of the church and would have presided over Martha’s dismissal. See Conrad, *Records*, 18–33.

¹³George H. Bost, “Samuel Davies: Colonial Revivalist and Champion of Religious Toleration” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1942), 7–8.

within the Presbyterian Church that he experienced conversion and prepared for ministry. Two men assumed responsibility for Davies' spiritual well being and education. William Robinson (d.1746) ministered at St. George's Presbyterian Church in Delaware and it was this congregation which Martha Davies joined in 1732.¹⁴ Robinson led a small classical school which Davies' attended until the age of fifteen. Davies was awakened spiritually during his fifteenth year and became a member of the St. George's Presbyterian Church. Robinson would later become an itinerant preacher in Hanover, Virginia, the same town in which Davies was to spend a decade in ministry. While little information exists about Davies' education under Robinson, another young Presbyterian minister shaped Davies more profoundly.

Irish by birth, Samuel Blair (1712–1751) immigrated to Pennsylvania, where he studied under William Tennent (1673–1746) at the Log College. The New Castle Presbytery licensed Blair to preach, and he ministered in New Jersey from 1734 until 1739, when he accepted a call to minister in New Londonderry, Pennsylvania. Blair established a classical school in New Londonderry, Fagg's Manor, and preached to the town's Irish immigrants.¹⁵ The congregation experienced a season of revival not long after Blair's arrival, which the pastor documented for Boston pastor and publisher

¹⁴Little is known about Robinson's life and ministry apart from the information that Samuel Davies provided Joseph Bellamy in a 1751 letter. For a brief biographical sketch, see Archibald Alexander, *The Log College: Biographical Sketches of William Tennent and his Students, together with an Account of the Revivals under their Ministries* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 193–209.

¹⁵One of Samuel Blair's fellow ministers, Samuel Finley (1715–1766), provided a detailed reflection on Blair's life and ministry. Finley served as the fifth president of the College of New Jersey, succeeding Samuel Davies in that position in 1761. Finley's eulogy for Blair recalls the deceased's early piety, his proficiency with biblical languages, mathematics, and philosophy, and his consistent service in church parliaments. See Samuel Finley, *Faithful ministers the fathers of the church. A sermon preached at Fogs-Mannor. On occasion of the death of the Reverend Mr Samuel Blair, who departed this life July 5. 1752 [sic]* (Philadelphia: Bradford, 1752), 13–18. Samuel Davies eulogized his former tutor in verse, composing a poem recounting Blair's life and ministry. This poem is appended to Finley, *Faithful Ministers*, 25–32. Archibald Alexander used these sources when writing his own memoir of Blair in his *Log College*, 147–77. A collection of Blair's sermons and treatises appeared posthumously: Samuel Blair, *The Works of the Reverend Mr. Samuel Blair* (Philadelphia, PA: Bradford, 1754).

Thomas Prince's (1687–1758) *The Christian History* in 1744.¹⁶

Blair saw this local revival as part of a larger trans-Atlantic work of God.¹⁷ Unlike Jonathan Edwards' *Faithful Narrative*, which contained several case-studies of specific revival experiences of members of Edwards' congregation, Blair lamented his negligence in recording specifics as they occurred.¹⁸ Those under his charge had been religiously observant when the young pastor arrived in 1739, but in his assessment they lacked heart-religion. This situation changed dramatically during the spring of 1740. Within the early months of his pastorate, Blair determined to direct his preaching toward the unregenerate within his congregation, that through his preaching they might experience "conviction and conversion," yet in a scene that would become familiar in the early 1740s, it was during Blair's absence from the pulpit that the stir of revival began.¹⁹

A rider met Blair as he returned from several weeks' travel to tell him of a remarkable stirring in New Londonderry. Blair's first sermon upon his homecoming was from Matthew 6 and he urged his hearers to pursue God's kingdom with haste. While Blair prized moderation of religious expression, several in his congregation "burst out in the most bitter mourning." Thus began a season of deep repentance and increased interest in vital religion among the Presbyterians in New Londonderry.²⁰ Samuel Blair's ministry ended with his untimely death in 1751.

Davies matriculated at Fagg's Manor shortly after Blair established the school and heard Blair's preaching and observed its affects upon the congregation. He also noted

¹⁶Thomas Prince Sr. pastored Boston's Old South Church and in 1743 created *The Christian History*, a magazine that ran from 1743–1745. Blair's account was also published independently: See Samuel Blair, *A Short and Faithful Narrative of the Late Remarkable [sic] Revival of Religion in the congregation of New-Londonderry, and other parts of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, PA: Bradford, 1744).

¹⁷Blair, *A Short and Faithful Narrative*, 6–7.

¹⁸Blair, *A Short and Faithful Narrative*, 7.

¹⁹Blair, *A Short and Faithful Narrative*, 8–13.

²⁰Blair, *A Short and Faithful Narrative*, 13–28.

his teacher's desire to downplay the more "enthusiastic" manifestations of spiritual concern among the congregation. Davies' specific curriculum at Fagg's Manor has been lost, but in a 1748 response to critics in Virginia, Davies defended the private preparation and public examination of ministerial candidates by the New Castle Presbytery:

[Candidates] have acquir'd the Latin and Greek languages; studied Philosophy, particularly, Logic, Ontology, Pneumatology; and read sundry approv'd Systems of Theology, besides various Writings on particular important subjects; as, on Natural and Revealed Religion in Opposition to Atheism, Deism, &c. Most of them have learn'd Hebrew, and some of them read Physics and Ethics, or Natural and Moral Philosophy; besides what progress they made in sundry branches of Mathematics.²¹

In other writings, Davies' quotes freely from classical and contemporaneous authors such as Virgil, Horace, Grotius, Locke, Böhme, and Doddridge.²² His surviving sermon manuscripts and interlinear notes show facility with Greek. William Foote noted the rigor of Blair's curriculum with regard to the classics, sciences, and theology.²³

While it seems likely that Davies was aware of, if not present at, public meetings hosted at the Manor by the Anglican evangelist George Whitefield (1714–1770) in 1739 and 1740, Davies first mentioned meeting Whitefield and hearing him preach in early 1754.²⁴ Davies was beginning his ministerial training at a crucial period in the

²¹Samuel Davies, *The Impartial Trial, Impartially Tried, and Convicted of Partiality: in Remarks on Mr. Caldwell's, alias Thornton's Sermon Intituled, An Impartial Trial of the Spirit, &c. and the Preface of the Publisher in Virginia* (Williamsburg, VA: W. Parks, 1748), 17.

²²Samuel Davies, *Charity and Truth United or The Way of the Multitude Exposed in Six Letters to the Rev. M r. William Stith, A. M., President of William and Mary College*, ed. Thomas Clinton Pears, Jr., in *Journal of the Department of History (The Presbyterian Historical Society)* 19 (1941) : 198–99.

²³William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1850), 159.

²⁴Davies left no written testimony of this event, yet he would have been a student at the time of Whitefield's visit. See Charles Hartshorn Maxson, *The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1920), 60. Pilcher's suggestion that the Davies was present at the 1739–1740 meetings seems plausible; however Davies journal entry for January 1, 1754 may indicate that he had not heard Whitefield preach before: "Went in the Evening to hear Mr. Whitefield in the Tabernacle . . . he preached on the Parable of the barren Fig Tree, and tho' the Discourse was incoherent, yet it seemed to me better calculated to do good to Mankind than all the accurate, languid Discourses I have heard. After sermon enjoyed his pleasing Conversation at his House." George William Pilcher, ed., *The Reverend Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753–55* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 46–47.

social and religious history of the American colonies. Beginning in the mid 1730s and peaking in the early 1740s, the colonies and other parts of the realm experienced an unprecedented spiritual upheaval most commonly known as the Great Awakening.

Davies' Context: The Great Awakening

Some colonists, especially those in New England, had known revivals of religion prior to the early 1740s, but these events were often quite localized and attracted little publicity.²⁵ Such revivals were sporadic, of relatively brief duration, and often connected with specific pastoral initiatives such as covenant renewal ceremonies.²⁶ Those affected were frequently young adults, who suddenly felt great concern for their souls, experienced conversion, and transitioned into full church membership.²⁷ Yet in the mid-1730s, different manifestations of heightened religious concern began to emerge on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁸

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) had observed multiple revivals during his youth. Edwards noted a series of five revivals overseen by his grandfather, the powerful Solomon Stoddard (1643–1729), during his near sixty-year pastorate (1669–1729) in Northampton, Massachusetts.²⁹ Edwards had also seen revival accompany his father Timothy's (1669–1758) ministry in East Windsor, Connecticut.³⁰ But after the young

²⁵Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 1–12.

²⁶Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 3–5.

²⁷Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 6–12. See also H. S. Stout, "Great Awakening," in *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 494–96.

²⁸For an overview of the revival's trans-Atlantic context, see Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys, A History of Evangelicalism*, Vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), especially 100–54.

²⁹Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 4, *The Great Awakening*, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 145–46.

³⁰Jonathan Edwards, Letter to Mary Edwards, May 10, 1716, in *Letters and Personal Writings*,

Edwards had taken up his grandfather's mantle in Northampton in 1729, he characterized the revival stirrings that began several years later as "surprising."

In the winter of 1733–1734, revival came to Northampton's youth following the death of one of their own. Soon a great concern for spiritual matters gripped the larger community, a concern which transformed Northampton well into 1735.³¹ What surprised Edwards was that the revival had occurred in a town on the very edge of the British Empire. Edwards was also amazed that the revival's affects were not limited to young adults, but also involved young and old alike. Neither were the revivals affects limited to one social class. Edwards was also struck by the speed with which the awakening spread, its deep emotional impact, and its wide geographic disbursement.³² On this last point, Edwards knew that other pastors and congregations in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Jersey were reporting extraordinary experiences, but he did not yet know that similar happenings were afoot in villages and towns in Wales and Cornwall.³³

Daniel Rowland (1711/13–1790) was already an Anglican curate in Llangeitho and Nantewinlle, notorious for his "levity and worldliness," when he was converted through the gospel-saturated preaching of Griffith Jones (1683/84–1761) during the winter of 1734–1735.³⁴ By the time he was ordained as a priest in August 1735,

vol. 16 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. George S. Claghorn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 29–30. See also George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 25–28.

³¹Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:148ff.

³²Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:158ff. For a helpful analysis of Edwards' pneumatology and a summary of his *Faithful Narrative*, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *Jonathan Edwards: The Holy Spirit in Revival* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2005), 53.

³³Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4: 153–56. Among the reports of revival Edwards mentioned was that of the Dutch pastor Theodore Jacob Frelinghuysen (1691–1747), who ministered in the Raritan Valley of New Jersey, indicating that the revival was not limited to English speaking congregations.

³⁴For a helpful and accessible treatment of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism in general and Daniel Rowland in particular, see Eifion Evans, *Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1985). See also Derec Llwyd Morgan, *The Great Awakening in Wales*, trans. Dyfnallt Morgan (London: Epworth Press, 1988). Two tombstones are associated with Rowland, listing

Rowland's "life and preaching were . . . radically transformed."³⁵ Rowland's sense of spiritual urgency for his countrymen prompted him to adopt the relatively novel practice of itinerant preaching, which drew large crowds that quickly outgrew church buildings and yielded numerous conversions.³⁶ Another young Welshman was also struggling with God in this year of grace, 1735. Howell Harris (1714–1773) of Trefeca was a school teacher growing increasingly concerned with spiritual matters. After a period of intense spiritual reflection following Easter, Harris was converted on Pentecost Sunday, May 25, 1735.³⁷ Rowland and Harris met later that year. In the years that followed, Harris and Rowland, guided by Griffith Jones, established religious societies for hundreds of new converts.³⁸

As the isolated villages of Wales experienced spiritual awakening, so did towns along the rugged shores of Cornwall. In 1733/34 George Thomson (1698–1782), rector of St. Genny's, was converted through a recurring nightmare and the comfort he received from reading Romans 3.³⁹ This spiritual change dramatically affected his ministry although he remained relatively isolated both spiritually and geographically.⁴⁰ Thomson proved to be a key connection for later itinerant ministers in Cornwall.⁴¹

differing birthdates. Rowland received Anglican ordination as a deacon on March 10, 1734. See Evans, *Daniel Rowland*, 29–30.

³⁵Evans, *Daniel Rowland*, 38. See also Morgan, *The Great Awakening in Wales*, 66–68.

³⁶Evans, *Daniel Rowland*, 41–45. See also Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 80. While Rowland's spiritual mentor, Griffith Jones, was known for his itinerant ministry, the practice was not yet widespread.

³⁷Harris recounted his spiritual awakening and conversion in *A Brief Account of the Life of Howell Harries, Esq.* (Trevecka: n.p., 1791), 9–15. See also Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 79 and Evans, *Daniel Rowland*, 53. I am indebted to Eifion Evans for providing helpful background context to understand Harris' conversion in light of several key devotional books.

³⁸Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 88.

³⁹G. C. B. Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals, 1735–60: A Study of Walker of Truro and Others* (London: S.P.C.K., 1951), 31. See also Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 75, and D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 30.

⁴⁰Davies, *Cornish Evangelicals*, 31.

⁴¹Though Thomson was a committed Calvinist and supporter of George Whitefield, he

Rowland and Harris formed the nucleus of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism and Thomson was likewise committed to Calvinistic teachings. These men witnessed an even greater revival in their respective localities during the early 1740s through the ministry of George Whitefield, who was at this time a young Christian under the spiritual direction of two brothers, John (1703–1791) and Charles (1707–1788) Wesley.

Born into a high Anglican family, John and Charles Wesley earned degrees at Christ Church, Oxford, where they formed a society of serious-minded young men who pursued holiness and charitable works.⁴² Following their father's death in 1735, the Wesley brothers undertook a mission to the new colony of Georgia. The brothers had both received ordination as Anglican priests. Their mission was short lived. Mentored by German Moravians, the Wesleys experienced conversion in May of 1738 and one year later began preaching in the open air and for the next five decades transformed the religious landscape of Britain through hundreds of small religious societies, remarkable hymnody, and a consistent message of salvation *sola fide*.

Whitefield was born to a Gloucester family of low means in 1714.⁴³ In keeping with his low social status, he attended Oxford as a servitor in the 1730s and joined the Wesleys' society. Whitefield dated his conversion to Pentecost Sunday, 1735.⁴⁴ He was ordained a deacon the following year and as a priest in 1739 and began preaching in the

maintained a cordial and regular correspondence with the Wesleys, hosting them during their ministry in Cornwall. See Davies, *Cornish Evangelicals*, 32–33.

⁴²For an excellent biographical treatment of the Wesleys and early Methodism, see Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995).

⁴³Several excellent recent biographies of Whitefield include Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival*, 2 vols. (London: Banner of Truth, 1970–80); Frank Lambert, *“Pedlar in Divinity”*: *George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737–1770* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991).

⁴⁴George Whitefield, “A Short Account of God's Dealings with George Whitefield from his Infancy to his Ordination, 1714–1736” in *George Whitefield's Journals* (London: Banner of Truth, 1960), 62. This day is the same as the conversion of Howell Harris. See Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 78–79.

open air soon thereafter.⁴⁵ Whitefield was a polarizing figure. Historian Thomas Kidd has described him aptly as a “controversial sensation.”⁴⁶ His open-air preaching drew thousands of listeners. His eloquent sermons, dramatic presence, and emotional pleadings left audiences stunned. He appeared tireless, preaching multiple sermons daily and maintaining a vigorous itinerary. In 1738 Whitefield visited Georgia, establishing an orphanage before returning to England three months later. In 1739 Whitefield returned to America and set the Middle and New England colonies ablaze with a burning message of the new birth and fiery words of criticism for established clergy. Though Whitefield alienated many ministers, he established enduring friendships with many others. Among his closest colonial supporters were the Tennents.

William Tennent Sr. (1673–1746) and his sons Gilbert (1703–1764) and William Jr. (1705–1777) were Irish immigrants to Pennsylvania, arriving in 1718.⁴⁷ William Sr. had been ordained in the Church of Ireland, but declared his Presbyterian sympathies upon his arrival in Pennsylvania. He championed rigorous local theological education and founded a ministerial training school, the Log College, in Neshaminy, Pennsylvania, in 1735. Gilbert prepared for ministry at Yale, earning an MA in 1735. He pastored briefly in Delaware, and settled in New Brunswick, New Jersey, the following year.⁴⁸ William Jr., remembered for a remarkable mystical experience, ministered in

⁴⁵The bishop of Gloucester ordained Whitefield at age 21, nearly two years younger than his normal policy for men seeking holy orders. See Whitefield, “A Short Account,” 65–71. Whitefield was ordained a priest at Oxford on January 14, 1739, and preached to the miners of Kingswood, Bristol on February 25, 1739. See George Whitefield, “A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal from his Arrival at London to his Departure from Thence on his way to Georgia,” in *George Whitefield’s Journals* (London: Banner of Truth, 1960), 199 and 223. See also Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 44–45.

⁴⁶Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 45.

⁴⁷S. T. Logan, “Tennent, William Sr. (1673–1746),” in *Dictionary of the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition in America*, ed. D. G. Hart (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 2005), 258–59. See also Alexander, *Log College*, 14–22. Another of William Sr.’s sons, John Tennent (d. 1732), ministered in New Jersey. Following John’s death, William Jr. assumed leadership over John’s congregation.

⁴⁸S. T. Logan, “Tennent, Gilbert (1703–1764),” in *Dictionary of the Presbyterian and*

Freehold, New Jersey, from 1733–1777.⁴⁹ Whitefield met the Tennents in 1739 and praised the elder William’s educational efforts.⁵⁰ After meeting Whitefield in New Brunswick, Gilbert Tennent traveled with the young evangelist throughout the middle states and became an ardent promoter of Whitefield’s message.⁵¹ Their admiration was mutual.⁵² Through this affinity with the Tennents, Whitefield came to visit Samuel Blair’s school at Fagg’s Manor, Pennsylvania, where he found an audience acquainted with and eager for his message of salvation by faith and the necessity of the new birth. Some colonialists, however, viewed Whitefield and the growing revivals more cautiously. Others rejected the revivals outright as dangerous enthusiasm.

The common designations of “Old Lights” and “New Lights” describing those who opposed and those who favored the revival, respectively, fail to capture the range of opinions regarding the Great Awakening. Thomas Kidd proposes a helpful threefold classification of anti-revivalists, moderate Evangelicals, and radical Evangelicals.⁵³ The effects of revival were varied, ranging from heightened religious sensitivity to wild ecstatic exhibitions. The awakening was socially destabilizing, upsetting long-held

Reformed Tradition in America, ed. D. G. Hart (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 2005), 257–58. See also Alexander, *Log College*, 23–67. For an expanded treatment of Gilbert Tennent’s life and influence, see Milton J. Coalter, Jr., *Gilbert Tennent, Son of Thunder: A Case Study of Continental Pietism’s Impact on the First Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986).

⁴⁹M. J. Coalter, Jr., “Tennent, William, Jr. (1705–1777),” in *Dictionary of the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition in America*, ed. D. G. Hart (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 2005), 258. See also Alexander, *Log College*, 96–131. While preparing for ministerial examination, William Jr. fainted and to all observers save one appeared dead. After three days, he awoke moments before his funeral was to begin and convalesced for upwards of one year. He later reported that he had seen a vision of heaven and been told by a heavenly being that he must return to earth. See Alexander, *Log College*, 99–102 and 132–34.

⁵⁰Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 47.

⁵¹Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 47ff.

⁵²George Whitefield, “A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal from his Embarking after the Embargo to his arrival at Savannah in Georgia,” *George Whitefield’s Journals* (London: Banner of Truth, 1960), 347.

⁵³Kidd, *Great Awakening*, xiv.

norms.⁵⁴ Fissures emerged among nearly all denominations, including Dutch Reformed churches, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians.

Samuel Davies thus prepared for ministry during one of the most consequential periods of colonial religious history. His teachers were sympathetic to Whitefield's Evangelical emphases, but they had arrived at their theological convictions of the necessity of regeneration and faith prior to the evangelist's arrival. They were also aware of the divisive nature of the revival and imparted to Davies sensitivity to its excesses. When Davies entered public ministry, he was well prepared in learning and temperament for the opposition he faced.

Ordination and Marriage

Samuel Davies completed his studies at Fagg's Manor in 1746 and the revival-friendly New Castle Presbytery licensed Samuel Davies to preach on July 30th that year.⁵⁵ Thereafter, Davies preached in several vacant pulpits in Pennsylvania and Delaware.⁵⁶ The presbytery ordained Davies on February 19, 1747.⁵⁷ As Davies had no congregation, he was ordained as an evangelist to the leaderless congregations of Virginia.⁵⁸

On October 23, 1746, Davies married Sarah Kirkpatrick. The young evangelist left only one brief note in his family Bible regarding his wife, which records the shocking brevity of their marriage: "Separated from [Sarah] by Death and bereaved of an abortive

⁵⁴On the point of the Great Awakening as a socially destabilizing event, see Kidd, *Great Awakening*, xv, for a very helpful analysis.

⁵⁵Davies family Bible records, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA. Samuel Blair was instrumental in forming a new presbytery in New Castle, Delaware, in 1741 following a separation from the anti-revivalist existing presbytery. See James Laird Vallandigham and Samuel A. Gayley, *History of the Presbytery of New Castle from its Organization: March 13, 1717 to 1888* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Publishing Company, 1889).

⁵⁶Pilcher, *Apostle*, 13.

⁵⁷Davies family Bible records.

⁵⁸Pilcher, *Apostle*, 13.

Son Sep. 15, 1747.”⁵⁹ Just over one year after losing his wife and son, Davies married Jane Holt of Williamsburg. Her brother John (1721–1784) was a publisher who developed a deep friendship with his brother-in-law Samuel.⁶⁰ Davies’ writings reveal his profound love for Jane, whom he called his *χαρα*:

Connubial Love! thrice happy was the hour
I fell a willing captive to thy Pow’r.
Opprest I panted underneath my load,
While I a single individual stood:
But, *Chara*, since with thee I coalesc’d,
And join’d thee to my maim’d imperfect breast,
I grew into a finish’d man, compleat,
And hardly feel the huge unwieldy weight.⁶¹

In another poem, written during a two-year sojourn to England, Davies mused,

The Tho’ts of Friends, the Tho’ts of Home
Engross my Heart and still find Room.
Chara with what strange, magic Art,
Dost thou, so distant, charm my Heart?

Not seas can quench, nor Distance cool
The flame of Love that fires my Soul.
Not works of Nature or of Art
Can raze thine Image from my Heart.⁶²

Davies also recorded his tender affections for Jane in his journal: “My dear *Chara* has often recurred to my tho’ts, and frequently I imagine myself talking with her. It is a mercy that God has made any of my fellow creatures of importance to my happiness, but my absence from them affords me additional uneasiness. Thus the sweets of life have

⁵⁹Davies family Bible records.

⁶⁰See Pilcher, *Apostle of Dissent*, 37. See also Bost, “Samuel Davies,” 87, 90–97.

⁶¹Samuel Davies, “Conjugal Love and Happiness,” in *Collected Poems of Samuel Davies 1723–1761*, ed. Richard Beale Davis (Gainesville, FL: Scholars’ Facsimiles and Reprints, 1968), 58. Craig Gilborn described this poem as Davies’ most personal poem and noted Davies’ indecision on whether it ought to be published. See Craig Gilborn, “The Literary Work of the Reverend Samuel Davies,” (master’s thesis, University of Delaware, 1961), 66.

⁶²Samuel Davies, “[To *Chara*],” *Collected Poems*, ed. Davis, 160.

their stings.”⁶³

The couple had six children: William (1749), Samuel (1750), John Rodgers (1752), Martha (1755), and Margaret (1757). One daughter died during birth (1758).⁶⁴ At his son John Rodgers’ birth, Davies put his thoughts into verse:

Thou little wond’rous miniature of man,
Form’d by unerring Wisdom’s perfect plan;
Thou little stranger, from eternal night
Emerging into life’s immortal light;
Thou heir of worlds unknown, thou candidate
For an important everlasting state,
Where this your embryo shall its pow’rs expand,
Enlarging, rip’ning still, and never stand.⁶⁵

Davies’ theology shaped his paternal affections, as is clear in the remaining stanzas:

Another birth awaits thee, when the hour
Arrives that lands thee on th’ eternal shore;
(And O! ‘tis near, with winged haste ‘twill come,
Thy cradle rocks toward the neighb’ring tomb;)⁶⁶

In this second stanza, Davies used the occasion of natural birth to picture the spiritual birth which was a prominent feature of his sermons; a regeneration necessitated by humanity’s primordial fall into sin and its sentence of death (cf. Genesis 1:17). The opening lines of stanza 3 reiterate Davies’ anthropology:

Thou embryo-angel, or thou infant fiend,
A being now begun, but ne’er to end,
What boding fears a Father’s heart torment,
Trembling and anxious for the grand event,
Lest thy young soul so late by Heav’n bestow’d,
Forget her Father, and forget her God!⁶⁷

⁶³Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 34–35. See also Bost, “Samuel Davies,” 98, for a small sampling of other journal entries mentioning Jane. Samuel missed his wife greatly during his stay in England and recorded dozens of thoughts and prayers for his wife and sons during this time.

⁶⁴Davies family Bible records.

⁶⁵Samuel Davies, “On the Birth of John Rogers Davies,” in *Collected Poems*, ed. Davis, 199–200.

⁶⁶Davies, “On the Birth of John Rogers Davies,” 199.

⁶⁷Davies, “On the Birth of John Rogers Davies,” 199.

Bost found Davies' verse too sermonizing, marked by "gloomy forebodings" and "horrible" sentiments, and reckoned that such sentiments could not have characterized Davies' normal home life or regular "trend of thought in the presence of his beloved family."⁶⁸ Contrary to Bost's analysis, these lines reveal Davies' biblical worldview which had been shaped by experience. The father's "boding fears" and "trembling and anxious" countenance seem appropriate when one recalls that it was a mere six years earlier that Davies' first wife and son had died in childbirth. These lines also express a sentiment shared by Davies' contemporaries regarding the ever-tenuous balance of an immortal soul's earthly mortality.⁶⁹ The poem ends with a prayer:

Maker of souls! avert so dire a doom,
Or snatch her back to native nothing's gloom!⁷⁰

Davies' concern for his children extended to their education and piety. He tutored his children, "unwilling to trust them to a stranger."⁷¹ Davies lamented the difficulty of tutoring three sons and two daughters: "I find the business of education much more difficult than I expected—My dear little creatures sob and drop a tear now and then under my instruction."⁷² Davies' concern for his children's education was inexorably linked with their piety: "There is nothing that can wound a parent's heart so deep, as the thought

⁶⁸Bost, "Samuel Davies," 99–100.

⁶⁹Davies was not alone in his concern over the brevity of his children's life and his concern for their souls. Jonathan Edwards wrote letters to his children indicating his concern for their souls in light of the brevity of life. See Joseph C. Harrod, "A Heart Uncommonly Devoted to God': Jonathan Edwards' Funeral Sermon for his Daughter Jerusha" (master's thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 75–76. See Edwards' letters to his daughter Mary and son Timothy: Jonathan Edwards, Letter to Mary Edwards, 26 July 1749, ed. Claghorn, *Works* 16:288–29 and Jonathan Edwards, Letter to Timothy Edwards, 17 July 1753, ed. Claghorn, *Works* 16:598–99. Edwards had written to Timothy earlier in the year and encouraged him to heed God's call for salvation in the midst of Timothy's ill health. See Jonathan Edwards, Letter to Timothy Edwards, 1 April 1753, ed. Claghorn, *Works* 16:578–80.

⁷⁰Davies, "On the Birth of John Rogers Davies," 200.

⁷¹Samuel Davies, Letter to Thomas Gibbons, *Sermons* 1:59.

⁷²Samuel Davies, Letter to Thomas Gibbons, *Sermons* 1:59.

that he should bring up children to dishonour his God here and be miserable hereafter.”⁷³ Davies’ sentiments in this letter are consistent with his preaching on the topic of family religion, in which he used 1 Timothy 5:8 to argue that the father who neglected regular occasions of family worship was akin to an infidel.⁷⁴ If the recollections of nineteenth-century reporters are reliable, it seems Davies’ prayer for young John went unanswered, as his son appears to have strayed far from his father’s doctrine, and the other children, save one daughter, seem to have had little interest in either Presbyterianism or Christianity.⁷⁵

Presbyterianism in Virginia

In Virginia, the Anglican Church viewed religious dissenters as a threat to the social order.⁷⁶ George Whitefield had preached at the colonial capital in Williamsburg in December 1739 and was generally well-received by the Anglican establishment.⁷⁷ Before

⁷³Samuel Davies, Letter to Thomas Gibbons, *Sermons* 1:59.

⁷⁴Samuel Davies, “The Necessity and Excellence of Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:74–98.

⁷⁵In an undated letter, Davies informed Thomas Gibbons in London that “I am not so happy as to see [my children] under deep and lasting impressions of religion; and this is the greatest grief they afford me . . . I earnestly beg your prayers for them.” Davies, Letter to Thomas Gibbons, *Sermons* 1:59. Although the letter was undated, Davies mentions five children: three boys and two girls, indicating that the letter must have been sent after 1757, when his daughter Margaret was born. If Margaret is included among those whom Davies was instructing, she must have been two, perhaps three years of age. Davies died in February, 1761, prior to Margaret’s fourth birthday. In 1837, the *Princeton Review* republished a hitherto unknown letter of Davies and appended to this letter reports on Davies’ ministerial labors and family members. See “A Recovered Tract of President Davies; now First Published,” *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 9 (1837): 349–64. The unnamed author of the article cites both named and anonymous sources who claimed that William Davies became enamored with Catholicism and that John spurned Christianity altogether. The author claims that Davies’ daughter was the only professing Christian, yet the author knew of only one daughter of Davies, not two; thus this source’s reliability must be viewed with caution.

⁷⁶The best treatments of the Evangelical awakening in Virginia are those of Gewehr and, more recently, Kidd. See Wesley M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740–1790* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1930); and Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 234. See also Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982) for a fabulous treatment of the political and social context of Davies’ ministry.

⁷⁷George Whitefield, *George Whitefield’s Journals* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 371–73.

leaving town, Whitefield left copies of his *Sermons* and *Journals* for printing, hoping that God might “be pleased to bless them to the conviction and edification” of the residents.⁷⁸ Soon Whitefield’s printed sermons made a significant impact upon the people of Hanover. Between 1740 and 1743, Samuel Morris, a brick layer by trade, procured a copy of Whitefield’s published sermons from a visiting Scottish minister and read these sermons with some neighbors. Many of these hearers were greatly affected by the sermons and continued assembling during the week as well as on the Sabbath. Anglican authorities noted the residents’ absence from regular church services. The gathering soon grew large enough to necessitate a dedicated meeting house.⁷⁹ The small congregation recognized their need for a minister and in 1743, William Robinson, the man under whose preaching Samuel Davies had been awakened, became the first in a series of visiting Presbyterian preachers to meet this need.⁸⁰

William Robinson’s preaching generated controversy for the enthusiasm it sparked among his hearers. Robinson preached at the “reading house” for four days and offered the people instruction in more orderly worship.⁸¹ Then John Blair (d. 1771), stirred up “frenzy” with his preaching.⁸² In 1744 the New Castle Presbytery sent John Roan, another of Tennent’s graduates, who expanded the impact the revivals and who began denouncing the established clergy.⁸³ The ministries of these three men would make

⁷⁸Whitefield, *Journals*, 372.

⁷⁹Davies, *The State of Religion among the Protestant Dissenters in Virginia; In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bellamy, or Bethlehem, in New-England: From the Reverend Mr. Samuel Davies, V. D. M. in Hanover County, Virginia* (Boston, MA: S. Kneeland, 1751), 10–11.

⁸⁰Davies *State of Religion*, 11.

⁸¹Davies, *State of Religion*, 13.

⁸²Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 235. John Blair was the brother of Samuel Blair, Davies’ tutor at Fagg’s Manor. In 1757 he assumed leadership of the school for nine years before being elected as professor of theology at the College of New Jersey, a post which he held until John Witherspoon’s presidency. See Alexander, *Log College*, 178–79.

⁸³Kidd, *Great Awakening*, 235.

Davies' work all the more difficult, kindling the opposition of the leading Anglican clergy and secular magistrates in Hanover and Williamsburg.⁸⁴ In May 1745, Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Finley visited the congregation and represented their interests before Governor William Gooch (1681–1751).⁸⁵ Though the men stayed for only one week, Morris reported that “the people of God were refreshed, and sundry careless sinners were awakened” by Tennent and Finley’s ministry.⁸⁶ Then, William Tennent and Samuel Blair travelled to Hanover, and after securing license to preach, they ministered “about a fortnight” there, serving the Lord’s Supper to the young congregation.⁸⁷ Thus the fledgling group of dissenters in Virginia had endured several years of government and religious hostility to their budding Evangelical notions. Neophytes in doctrine and church order, the Hanover congregation remained leaderless. This situation would change, albeit briefly, in 1747.

Davies’ First Virginia Mission: 1747

The New Castle Presbytery had ordained Davies in February and he wasted little time fulfilling his call. On April 21, 1747, Davies wrote the Reverend Patrick Henry (d.1777), Rector of St. Paul’s Parrish in Hanover, indicating his reserved assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.⁸⁸ One week before sending this letter to

⁸⁴Davies, *State of Religion*, 15-16.

⁸⁵Davies, *State of Religion*, 16.

⁸⁶Davies, *State of Religion*, 16.

⁸⁷Davies, *State of Religion*, 17.

⁸⁸Samuel Davies to Patrick Henry, April 21, 1747, Dawson Papers, Earl E. Swem Library, William and Mary College, Williamsburg, VA. Davies objected to Articles 3, 6, 20, 21, and 37. In Article 3, Davies clarified that he believed the phrase “[Christ] went down into Hell” did not mean “Christ’s burial Descent into the place properly called Hell where the Damned are but either his being in the state of the Dead; or his enduring extreme Misery & great Distress; or his lying in the Grave.” Davies accepted the biblical canon as laid out in Article 6 with the caveat that he would not read the Apocryphal books in public worship. With regard to Article 20, Davies rejected its claim that the Anglican Church had the “power to decree Rites or Ceremonies.” He clarified that Article 21 could not prohibit ecclesiastical councils from meeting apart from a magistrate’s call and that Article 37 could not guarantee civil magistrates right over ecclesiastical affairs. He noted that Articles 34–36 had been negated by Parliament. Henry was Rector of

Henry, Davies had appeared before Governor William Gooch (1681–1751) at Williamsburg where he sought and secured a license to preach at four meeting houses.⁸⁹ By Davies’ own admission, his initial visit was exploratory, “to officiate for some time, and to see if any way should be cleared to settle there.”⁹⁰ Hanover County had long been settled by the time Davies arrived. Richard Davis described the town as “a generally normal rural population of English descent.”⁹¹ Davies “preach’d frequently in Hanover and some of the adjacent counties at this time,” but his mission lasted less than two months and in his own estimation saw less fruit than previous Presbyterian itinerants.⁹² The young evangelist returned home, but his short venture left a lasting impression upon the Evangelical-minded congregants, who urged Davies to remain among them and immediately wrote the presbytery requesting that Davies become their permanent minister.

Davies was convinced that Hanover stood in greater need of a settled minister than other congregations in which he had itinerated in the middle colonies, yet his health faltered following his return from Virginia: “I spent a year under melancholy and consumptive languishments, which I certainly expected would have conveyed me into the eternal world.”⁹³ Though the deaths of his wife and son in September 1747 certainly exacerbated his melancholy, Davies survived this dark season. And when a messenger from the Hanover congregation arrived in 1748 bringing word of their decision to call

St. Paul’s from 1737–1777. Notice of Henry’s death appeared in the *Virginia Gazette*, April 11, 1777.

⁸⁹The best narrative of Davies’ interactions with the Virginia Anglicans and officials is that of Gewehr, *Great Awakening in Virginia*, 68-105. The account that follows is based largely on his chronology. William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia Historical and Biographical*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: William S. Martien, 1850), 160, reproduced the text of the license.

⁹⁰Davies, *State of Religion*, 19.

⁹¹Richard Beale Davis, *Intellectual Life in the Colonial South, 1585–1763*, vol. 2 (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), 691.

⁹²Davies, *State of Religion*, 20.

⁹³Davies, *State of Religion*, 20.

him as minister, Davies resigned himself to God's care and providence.

Davies' Settled Virginia Ministry: 1748–1759

Samuel Davies settled in Hanover, Virginia, in May of 1748 and remained there until 1759.⁹⁴ When Davies returned to Virginia, he found tensions between Dissenters and Anglican clergy and government authorities remained high. The case of Davies' friend and fellow minister John Rodgers illustrates the parties' disagreements.

Rodgers and Davies had been students at Fagg's Manor. Davies recognized the need for settled ministers in Virginia was larger than he could meet, so he brought Rodgers to extend their usefulness. The team arrived in Hanover, preached on a Sunday, then travelled to Williamsburg to secure a license for Rodgers. The governing council rejected Rodgers' application and refused him licensure despite Governor Gooch's favorable inclinations.⁹⁵ The council refused to reconsider its judgment and thus Rodgers was forced to leave the colony while Davies continued alone. During this same session, dissenting citizens, including Samuel Morris, were fined for having invited John Roan to preach unlicensed several years earlier.⁹⁶ Yet Davies preached throughout that summer without incident. In October 1748 he married Jane Holt.

On November 1, 1748, Davies secured licenses to preach at three additional houses, bringing the total of licensed locations to seven.⁹⁷ Three of the houses were in Hanover County and the remaining houses were in Henrico, Goochland, Louisa, and

⁹⁴Davies family Bible records. While this period represents the largest part of Davies' ministry, the narrative that follows is necessarily selective. For fuller treatments, see the surveys of Gewehr, *Great Awakening in Virginia*, 68–105; Bost, "Samuel Davies," 86–103; Pilcher, *Apostle of Dissent*, 86–134.

⁹⁵Foote, *Sketches*, 165.

⁹⁶Foote, *Sketches*, 168.

⁹⁷Foote, *Sketches*, 168–69, reproduces the license.

Caroline counties. Davies' territory was large and overland travel significantly difficult.⁹⁸ In 1750 the New Kent County court licensed Davies to preach in St. Peter's parish, but the general court in Williamsburg revoked this license.⁹⁹ Davies argued for the right to maintain licensure for preaching in multiple locations. The many families under his spiritual care were too widely dispersed to attend one central location without having to travel upward of forty miles. Davies believed that the governing council was violating the intention of the 1689 Act of Toleration. This act permitted dissenting Protestants the right to assemble for worship in licensed meeting locations conducted by licensed ministers who had taken particular oaths of allegiance. Davies, like others before him, had appealed to the Act as grounds for his licensing and believed that attempts by the Williamsburg council to use the Act to regulate the number and influence of dissenting ministers were a violation of protected rights.¹⁰⁰ Opposition to Dissenters came on differing fronts.

As early as 1747, Patrick Henry of Hanover had attempted to discredit revival-minded ministers by republishing a sermon originally preached in Boston by one John Caldwell. The sermon, *An Impartial Trial of the Spirit*, argued that revivalist preachers placed too much emphasis on the emotional reactions of their hearers as evidence of genuine faith to the exclusion of rationality.¹⁰¹ The sermon's conclusion well summarized its author's intent: "Found not your Evidences of Conversion upon sudden Starts and Warmths in Devotion; much less upon spiritual Pride and Uncharitableness; nor fancy

⁹⁸See Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1996), 52, for a description of the terrible state of roads and travel in Virginia during the eighteenth century.

⁹⁹Foote, *Sketches*, 169–70.

¹⁰⁰Gewehr, *Great Awakening in Virginia*, 70.

¹⁰¹John Caldwell, *An Impartial Trial of the Spirit operating in this Part of the World; by comparing the Nature, Effects, and Evidences of the present Supposed Conversion, with the Word of God. A Sermon preached at New London-Derry, October 14th, 1741* (Boston ed., repr. Williamsburg, VA: William Parks, 1747), 14–15, 26–27. Samuel Davies exposed the sermon's author as an Irish criminal ministering under an assumed name. See Gewehr, *Great Awakening in Virginia*, 81–84, for a summary of Davies' arguments.

that God will regard you, let your Warmth of Zeal ever be so great, if you are Workers of Iniquity.”¹⁰² Patrick Henry appended a preface to this sermon to “open the eyes of some deluded people among us, who are imposed upon by the itinerants.”¹⁰³

Henry’s chief complaint was that such preachers were “schismaticks” who had split from the orderly Presbyterian Church established decades earlier in the Middle Colonies. Following the lead of Gilbert Tennent, who was closely allied with George Whitefield, these preachers formed a new synod in New York and began sending missionaries “into all neighbouring Governments.”¹⁰⁴ Henry chastised these visiting preachers for promising their followers in Virginia that they would soon send a minister who would “qualify himself according to the Law, and become a fixed Pastor among them.”¹⁰⁵ Henry hoped that those who read the sermons would be convinced of the reasonableness of Anglicanism, that it did not “consist in uncommon Fervours of Imagination, extraordinary Raptures and Extasies: And that it is altogether irreligious to judge and condemn those as Enemies to Christ, who cannot approve of these Flights, as Signs of Gospel Conversion, and Marks of a true Christian.”¹⁰⁶

Now, while Henry’s assessment of the itinerants’ loyalties and motivations was rather uncharitable, his facts regarding the recent history of his ecclesiastical antagonists were correct. Samuel Davies and the Presbyterian preachers who had preceded him in Virginia were indeed part of a breakaway synod established only a few years earlier that pitted the pietistic New Side Presbyterians against the more precisionist Old Side Presbyterians.

¹⁰²Caldwell, *An Impartial Trial of the Spirit*, 28.

¹⁰³Caldwell, *An Impartial Trial of the Spirit*, xiii.

¹⁰⁴Caldwell, *An impartial Trial of the Spirit*, xiv.

¹⁰⁵Caldwell, *An impartial Trial of the Spirit*, xv.

¹⁰⁶Caldwell, *An impartial Trial of the Spirit*, xv.

The Old Side and New Side Division

Presbyterianism began in the American colonies in 1706 with the first meeting of the Philadelphia presbytery.¹⁰⁷ Its American beginnings were modest given its Old World strengths. From its founding the presbytery in Philadelphia was the nexus of colonial Presbyterian life until 1717 when the church founded additional presbyteries in Long Island, New York and New Castle, Delaware and established the Synod of Philadelphia.¹⁰⁸

During the 1720s, some Presbyterian ministers questioned the synod's increasing control over congregations. These questions came to a head in 1729 when the Synod of Philadelphia required subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as the doctrinal statement of colonial Presbyterianism. This decision, remembered as the Adopting Act, proved divisive.¹⁰⁹ Cultural differences fueled part of the division as Scots-Irish immigrants like John Thomson (1690–1753) favored subscription, which was a long-established tradition in the Old World, whereas Colonial-born ministers such as Jonathan Dickinson (1688–1747) of New England rejected the standards as human impositions.¹¹⁰

In the mid-1730s, the Adopting Act's critics renewed their objections over the case of Samuel Hemphill, an Irish immigrant who had subscribed to the Westminster Standards both in Ireland and in Philadelphia but who later denied many supernatural

¹⁰⁷For a recent survey of early American Presbyterianism, see D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, *Seeking a Better Country: 300 Years of American Presbyterianism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2007), 13–32. Three major Presbyterian traditions founded denominations in the American Colonies.

¹⁰⁸Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, 36.

¹⁰⁹A. H. Freundt, "Adopting Act (1729)," in *Dictionary of the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition in America*, ed. D. G. Hart (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 2005), 13–14.

¹¹⁰Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, 36–37. See also Freundt, "Adopting Act (1729)," 13.

doctrines of Christianity under in favor of a more rational faith.¹¹¹ Dickinson and other critics argued that Hemphill's case exposed the limitations of creedal subscription. While division over creedal subscription was one force pulling at Presbyterian unity during the mid-1730s, concerns of the personal piety of ministers was another, and this concern centered on Gilbert Tennent.

Tennent was concerned that the Synod placed too little emphasis on heart religion and personal holiness among clergy, the kind of piety that his father's Log College fostered among ministerial candidates. Other Presbyterians were suspicious of Tennent's seminary because it could not provide the depth of well-rounded education as could Scottish Universities or colonial colleges and because Tennent promoted itinerant ministry that ignored established presbytery lines.¹¹² In 1739 the Synod of Philadelphia took steps to limit the Log College's influence, which exacerbated tensions between the Tennents and their New Brunswick Presbytery and the Synod of Philadelphia. The Tennents' support for George Whitefield during his 1739–1741 preaching tour put an even greater strain on intra-presbytery relationships, which were at their peak when in Nottingham, Pennsylvania on March 8, 1740, Gilbert Tennent preached a sermon which he later regretted, "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry."¹¹³ This sermon, drawn from Mark 6:34, used Jesus' lament over leaderless Israel to warn against contemporary "Pharisee-Teachers" who had "learned to prate a little more orthodoxly about the New Birth, than their predecessor Nicodemus, who are, in the mean Time, as great Strangers to the feeling Experience of it, as he."¹¹⁴ The sermon proved divisive.

¹¹¹Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, 53–54.

¹¹²Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, 56–57.

¹¹³Hart and Muether, *Seeking a Better Country*, 59–60.

¹¹⁴Gilbert Tennent, *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry, Consider'd in a Sermon on Mark VI.34, Preached at Nottingham, in Pennsylvania, March 8. Anno 1739, 40* (Philadelphia, PA: Benjamin Franklin, 1740), 17.

At the May 1740 meeting of the Philadelphia Synod, Tennent argued that local presbyteries ought to examine and ordain prospective ministers and refused to work with many of his critics. In 1741 the New York delegation refused to attend the synod's meeting in Philadelphia and were thus censured and ejected from the synod.¹¹⁵ In 1745 the presbyteries of New York and New Brunswick united to form the Synod of New York. This synod, led by Jonathan Dickinson and the Tennents, was decidedly pro-revival and pietistic, but Dickinson favored a moderating approach to many of the revival's more enthusiastic elements and thus tempered the Tennents' harsh denunciations of which Gilbert would repent in 1749.¹¹⁶ The New York Synod's emphasis on the vital experience of Christian piety shaped ministers like Samuel Blair, Samuel Finley, and Samuel Davies, as well as David Brainerd (1718–1747), missionary to the Indians in New Jersey.

Although the division between the Old Side synod of Philadelphia and the New Side synod of New York persisted, both sides desired restored fellowship, which would eventually come in 1758. Yet at the time of Samuel Davies' Virginia mission in 1747, the wounds from the separation were still fresh and to outside observers such as Patrick Henry appeared irreconcilable. Henry failed to recognize the nuanced perspectives on revival that marked the New Side synod and undoubtedly colored his judgment of Samuel Davies, whose approach to Christian piety was far closer to that of Dickinson and Blair than that of Tennent.¹¹⁷

Patrick Henry insisted that no New Side Presbyterian minister would be able to

¹¹⁵See A. C. Guelzo, "New Side Presbyterians," in *Dictionary of the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition in America*, ed. D. G. Hart (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 2005), 175–76.

¹¹⁶Guelzo, "New Side Presbyterians," 176.

¹¹⁷To be fair, Tennent later regretted his acrid tone during these debates and assumed a more conciliatory manner. Davies admired Gilbert Tennent's "pious Simplicity" and considered him a "spiritual Father." See Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 13.

settle permanently among the people of Virginia because such a minister would have to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church, which he was convinced the itinerants could not do.¹¹⁸ Perhaps Henry's published doubts best explain Davies' letter of April 1747 assenting to the Articles and indicating the young minister's irenicism. Henry's challenge did not go uncontested.

In 1748 Samuel Davies answered Caldwell and Henry's charges in one of his few published pamphlets, *The Impartial Trial, impartially Tried, and Convicted of Partiality*.¹¹⁹ Davies' answer was thorough and unrelenting. His phrase-by-phrase rebuttal of Henry consists of 32 pages while his response to Caldwell, whom he exposed as an Irish immigrant named Thornton who had fled to New England to avoid prosecution, was 26 pages. The substance of Davies' response to Henry highlights the significance of his theology and piety. Davies contended that the doctrines which he and the visiting itinerants who had preceded him preached were none other than the substance of the Anglican Church's Thirty-Nine Articles.¹²⁰ Further, Davies insisted that "vital religion is a sensible thing" in which one awakened may have assurance of living in a saving relationship with God, admitting that this assurance varies in "degree and duration," but is empowered by the Holy Spirit, who imparts to Christians "some degree of rational persuasion, that they are children of God thro' Faith in Christ Jesus."¹²¹ Though Davies disagreed with Henry, his correspondence was deferential to the elder

¹¹⁸Caldwell, *An impartial Trial of the Spirit*, xv.

¹¹⁹Samuel Davies, *The Impartial Trial, impartially Tried, and convicted of Partiality: in Remarks on Mr. Caldwell's, alias Thornton's Sermon, intituled [sic] An Impartial Trial of the Spirit, &c. and the Preface of the Publisher in Virginia* (Williamsburg, VA: W. Parks, 1748).

¹²⁰Davies, *Impartial Trial, impartially Tried*, 5–6. Davies was quick to note that he and the other Presbyterians had preached much more than was contained in the Articles, but nothing they had preached was contrary to their expression of essential Christian doctrine. Davies here emphasized Articles 9–13.

¹²¹Davies, *Impartial Trial, impartially Tried*, 13.

churchman's authority.¹²²

Samuel Davies' debates with Patrick Henry were but one aspect of his ministry in Virginia. As Gewehr has noted, much of the opposition came in spite of Davies' consistent deference and respect for those in positions of authority.¹²³ He argued successfully against attorney general Peyton Randolph (1721–1775) that the Act of Toleration applied in Virginia as a colony of Britain.¹²⁴ In a tract that remained unpublished until 1941, Davies offered a carefully argued and theologically rich rebuttal to the Arminianism of William Stith (1707–1755), president of William and Mary College from 1752–1755.¹²⁵ Davies spent the first several years of his ministry in Virginia alone, though he tried (unsuccessfully) to convince Jonathan Edwards to join him in his work.¹²⁶ But relief did come.

In 1752 the Virginia authorities licensed a young minister, John Todd, to assist Davies. In the years that followed, the New York Synod supplied more than a half-dozen other ministers to Virginia, such that in December 1755, the ministers established a Presbytery in Hanover.¹²⁷ Davies and his fellow ministers saw revivals of religion in 1755 and 1756 and undertook missionary travels through northern Virginia in 1757, extending their congregations therein.¹²⁸

¹²²In one oft-repeated irony of history, Patrick Henry's nephew, also Patrick Henry (1736–1799), recalled Davies and his preaching fondly. Pastor Patrick Henry's sister-in-law Sarah took the then twelve-year-old future statesman with her to hear Davies preach. See Thomas S. Kidd, *Patrick Henry: First Among Patriots* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 30.

¹²³Gewehr, *Great Awakening in Virginia*, 88.

¹²⁴See Davis, *Intellectual Life*, vol. 2, 692–93.

¹²⁵Davies, *Charity and Truth United*. See Davis, *Intellectual Life*, vol.2, 792 for a summary of the tract's provenance and publishing.

¹²⁶William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical*, 2nd series (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1856), 41–43. Davies wrote Joseph Bellamy and asked him to appeal to Edwards in person.

¹²⁷Gewehr, *Great Awakening in Virginia*, 89–90.

¹²⁸Gewehr, *Great Awakening in Virginia*, 92–93.

During his Virginia ministry, Davies also wrote poetry for both private and corporate use.

Samuel Davies published a collection of fifty *Miscellaneous Poems* in Virginia in early 1752. In their analyses of these poems, both Davis and Gilborn note Samuel Davies' self-professed dependence on eighteenth-century British poets Isaac Watts (1674–1748) and Elizabeth Rowe (1674–1737) as well as the sixteenth and seventeenth-century wordsmiths George Herbert (1593–1633) and John Milton (1608–1674).¹²⁹ Davies' reliance on these older poetic masters invited critique. An Anglican cleric, writing pseudonymously, ridiculed Davies' poetry in an ongoing series of *Virginia Gazette* editorials.¹³⁰ Given his tenuous relationship with local Anglicans clergy, however, one wonders if the outmoded lines were only a pretext for debate. Some of Davies' poems were private reflections, recorded in his journal during his trip to Great Britain. These poems are significant in that they seem to flow quite naturally, or in Davies' own words "spontaneously," providing another expression of his rhetorical abilities.¹³¹ Still other poems were intended for broader congregational use as hymns.

Samuel Davies was the earliest colonial hymn-writer.¹³² While public worship in the colonies had made extensive use of metrical Psalters for more than a century, original compositions that moved beyond paraphrases of biblical texts were relatively

¹²⁹See Davis, ed., *Collected Poems of Samuel Davies*, xix–xxi; and Gilborn, "Literary Work," 61.

¹³⁰Davis lists the issues and dates of the *Gazette* in which Anglican clergyman John Robertson, writing under the pen-name Walter Dymocke, criticized Davies' poetry. He also records Davies' published responses. "Dymocke" wrote eight lengthy articles critiquing the poems, published in the *Virginia Gazette* between March 20 and June 12, 1752. Davies replied on July 3 and 10. In his replies, Davies admitted that some of the criticisms were warranted, but defended his work nevertheless. See Davis, ed., *Collected Poems of Samuel Davies*, xi.

¹³¹Davies noted on December 7, 1753, that his "Heart spontaneously dictated" a fourteen-line poem to his wife, Jane. See Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 40.

¹³²Note the masterful, though dated, study by Louis F. Benson, "President Davies as A Hymn Writer," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 2, no. 6 (September 1904): 277–86.

new in the mid-eighteenth century.¹³³ Davis composed sixteen original hymns and reworked the words to two other hymns.¹³⁴ He wrote most of his hymns to accompany sermons, often reinforcing or elucidating the text or doctrine upon which he had preached. For example, Davies' hymn "The Blessing of Hope in Death" accompanied a sermon on Proverbs 14:32: "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in death" (AV).¹³⁵ In answering the question of how the righteous have hope, Davies wrote in stanza 3,

Yet, SAVIOUR, thine Almighty Pow'r
Ev'n then can sure Support afford,
Ev'n then that Hope shall smile secure,
That's now supported by thy Word.¹³⁶

Still other hymns have no direct connection with any texts in Davies' collected sermons. One example is Davies' "The Glories of GOD in pardoning Sinners," more commonly known by its first line, "Great God of Wonders!"¹³⁷ While only some of the hymns can be dated, those that are calendared fall between July 1755 and January 1758, indicating

¹³³The earliest colonial Psalter, the *Bay Psalm Book*, had been printed at Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1640 and Cotton Mather released his collection, *Psalterium Americanum*, in 1718. Benjamin Keach (1640–1704) had introduced hymn singing among the Baptists of London in the early 1670s, to no small controversy. See J. Barry Vaughn, "Benjamin Keach," in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1990), 53–56. Isaac Watts popularized the use of hymns in public worship among Congregationalists following the 1707 publication of his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* in London. Philip Doddridge (1702–1751) was another Congregationalist hymn-writer and contemporary of Davies. Davies re-wrote several of Doddridge's hymns. Both Davies and Doddridge were following Watts' lead.

¹³⁴Samuel Davies, "The Hymns of President Davies," ed. Louis F. Benson, *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, 2, no. 7 (December 1904): 343–73. The [hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org) database attributes twenty hymn texts to Davies, yet this count includes slight variations on the same hymns, making Benson's count more accurate. See "Samuel Davies," accessed August 20, 2014, http://www.hymnary.org/person/Davies_S.

¹³⁵Samuel Davies, "The Blessing of Hope in Death; or Comfort in a dying Hour earnestly implored," ed. Benson, *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, 7:344.

¹³⁶Davies, "The Blessing of Hope in Death," ed. Benson, *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, 7:344.

¹³⁷Davies, "The Glories of God in pardoning Sinners," ed. Benson, *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, 7:353–55. This hymn, with three variations, has appeared in at least 81 hymnals. See "Great God of Wonders! All thy ways," accessed August 20, 2014, http://www.hymnary.org/text/great_god_of_wonders_all_thy_ways.

that Davies' became better acquainted with the practice of hymn singing during his 1753–1755 trip to Great Britain.¹³⁸ While Davies' poetry shows his comfort among the highly literate members of society, he was also adept at ministering to those of more humble status. Davies gave considerable attention to the spiritual well-being of African slaves.

Davies estimated that he regularly preached to three hundred African slaves in Virginia and about one hundred had been baptized having a “deep sense” of key doctrines “upon their spirits,” and lives marked by “the strictest Morality and Piety.”¹³⁹ An African slave was “formed for immortality” and thus “a being of vast importance.”¹⁴⁰ Many slaves, Davies noted, were “eagerly desirous to be instructed [in Christian doctrine], and to embrace every opportunity for that end.”¹⁴¹ Davies supplied the slaves with Bibles and other Christian literature and found the recipients thoroughly grateful. He sought song books because, “The Negroes above all of the human species that ever I knew, have an ear for music, and a kind of extatic delight in Psalmody.”¹⁴² Yet Davies was a product of

¹³⁸See Benson, “Hymns of President Davies,” 7:343. Davies was already familiar with the use of Psalmody as evidenced by his journal entry for September 24, 1753, when he attended a Psalm-singing service in New York City before sailing for Great Britain. Of this service, Davies recalled that he “was much charmed with the Power of Harmony.” See Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 16. On December 2, 1753, Davies led his shipmates in the singing of a Psalm during public worship. See Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 31. Although Philip Doddridge had died before Davies' trip to England, he records meetings with other hymn writers such as the Independent preacher Samuel Chandler and Presbyterian preacher and hymn writer Thomas Scott (1707–1775). See Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 45 and 122. Davies also joined in a meeting for hymn singing during the summer of 1754. See Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 98.

¹³⁹Samuel Davies, *Letters from the Rev. Samuel Davies shewing the state of religion in Virginia, particularly among the Negroes. Likewise an extract of a letter from a gentlemen in London to his friend in the country, containing some observations on the same* (London: R. Pardon, 1757), 10.

¹⁴⁰Samuel Davies, *The Duty of Masters to their Servants: in a Sermon by the Late Reverend, Pious, and Learned, Samuel Davies, of Hanover County, Virginia* (Lynchburg, William W. Gray, 1809), 5. This sermon does not appear in Davies' collected sermons.

¹⁴¹Davies, *Letters*, 11.

¹⁴²Davies, *Letters*, 12.

his times and owned and sold African slaves as well.¹⁴³ Davies' pastoral ministry in Virginia was interrupted for two years in the early 1750s when he joined Gilbert Tennent in a trans-Atlantic fundraising tour throughout Great Britain.

Davies' Journey to Great Britain: 1753–1755

Colonial Presbyterians had long recognized the need for robust, regional theological education. America had only three colleges: Harvard, Yale, and William and Mary. Private pastoral schools such as William Tennent's Log College and its various offshoots were another option, but neither solution was ideal. Harvard was drifting from its Calvinistic moorings and was cool to the awakening.¹⁴⁴ Yale's administration and students were at odds over the awakening, as evidenced by the expulsion of David Brainerd for his support of the revival. Though this antagonism would change in the following decade, in 1746 it appeared firmly ensconced.¹⁴⁵ The Anglican establishment of William and Mary and its great distance from the region of the Middle Colonies limited its potential for the Presbyterians. Now, the private schools were theologically sound, at least as far as New Side Presbyterians were concerned, but functioned more as apprenticeship programs and lacked extensive support structures like libraries and faculty to accommodate the growing needs of a learned ministry. These hardships led Presbyterians to establish a new work in the latter 1740s.

In 1746, several members of the New York Presbytery secured a charter for a college in New Jersey. The trustees were New Side men, but in 1748 a new charter

¹⁴³See Davies' correspondence with his brother-in-law, John Holt, reprinted in Robert Sutherland Alley, "The Revered Mr. Samuel Davies: A Study in Religion and Politics, 1747–1759" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1962), 52.

¹⁴⁴Samuel Eliot Morrison, *Three Centuries of Harvard: 1636–1936* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 84–88. See also Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 25th anniv. ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 227.

¹⁴⁵See Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 7 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 42–44.

included members of the Synod of Philadelphia.¹⁴⁶ In April 1747, the trustees elected Jonathan Dickinson as the school's first president. The school met in Dickinson's home in Elizabeth, New Jersey until Dickinson died unexpectedly in October 1747. Aaron Burr Sr. (1716–1757) assumed leadership that fall and formally in 1748, relocating the college to his parsonage in Newark, New Jersey.¹⁴⁷ The school's financial needs exceeded its income. Burr received no salary for his first three years as president.

By 1753 the college trustees recognized the need for steady funds if the school were to continue. They first asked Ebenezer Pemberton (1704–1777) of New York to undertake a fund raising journey to Great Britain, but Pemberton declined. The trustees then sought Samuel Davies for the mission. Davies was reluctant to leave his work in Virginia, but responded affirmatively to the trustees' call. The trustees also sought and secured Gilbert Tennent's assistance in the journey. Davies began a diary in July 1753 and maintained it until his return in February 1755. The trustees could hardly have picked a more difficult time for the men to undertake their journey.

English Presbyterianism had declined and fractured during the early eighteenth century. On the one hand, many who retained the name of "Presbyterian" had adopted Unitarian doctrine. On the other, many who retained the Calvinistic soteriology of Presbyterianism had rejected its ecclesiology and moved among dissenting groups such as the Congregationalists and the Baptists.¹⁴⁸ Further, the colonial division between Old and New Side factions affected the emissaries' reception: Old Side representatives were already in England seeking funding for educational endeavors. Still, the trip was successful: Davies and Tennent raised in excess of £3,000, funds which the trustees used

¹⁴⁶S. D. Alexander, *The Presbytery of New York, 1738 to 1888* (New York, NY: Anson D. F. Randolph and Company, 1887), 14–15.

¹⁴⁷For a helpful survey of Princeton's founding, see Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Princeton: 1746–1896* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1946).

¹⁴⁸Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, xi.

to help build Nassau Hall. Davies also made numerous personal connections with various correspondents who offered him advice on how to navigate the political and religious situation of Virginia. He preached frequently throughout England and Scotland and his impressive delivery left a lasting impression as the demand for printed copies of his sermons surged. When Davies returned to the colony during the waning weeks of winter in 1755, he found his reputation significantly enhanced.¹⁴⁹ Yet Davies' return coincided with one of the most tumultuous periods in colonial history, the Seven Years' War.

“Religion and Patriotism”: Samuel Davies and the Seven Years' War, 1755–1761

By the middle of the eighteenth century, England and France had been at war almost continuously since the 1690s.¹⁵⁰ Though America had seen its share of skirmishes, war was normally something far-off, yet by the latter 1740s, the Spanish, French, and English colonial interests, not to mention long-standing feuds between the Native American tribes, would collide with unprecedented force in what was to become the first truly global war. The British colonies, hemmed in between the Atlantic Ocean on the east and French and Spanish territories to the north, the west, and the south, perceived an existential threat to their land, their liberties, and their very lives. Within this backdrop, one skirmish proved a match to tinder.

On the rain-soaked morning of, May 28, 1754, a tall twenty-two year old George Washington (1732–1799) led the roughly forty troops under his command through the forests of the Ohio Country, west of the Alleghenies, in modern day Pennsylvania. The Lieutenant Colonel was joined by a dozen and one Indian warriors. Having spotted a French encampment in a rocky, wooded glen, and seeing few options,

¹⁴⁹Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, xii.

¹⁵⁰Walter R. Borneman, *The French and Indian War: Deciding the Fate of North America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), xxi.

the Virginian ordered his men to arms. Whether it was the French or British who fired first is lost to history, and each side defended their own innocence, but within a quarter of an hour the French had suffered heavy casualties and laid down their arms. During a poorly handled interrogation, the wounded French commander, Ensign Joseph Coulon de Viliers de Jumonville, had the misfortune of lying too near the spot where the Indian leader Tanaghrisson, known to the British as “Half King,” stood. As the tall Virginian turned to consult a translator, Half King looked at the wounded Frenchmen and said, “Thou art not yet dead, my father,” and repeatedly sunk his hatchet deep into the ensign’s skull until it split. He then washed his hands with the dead Frenchman’s brains before his warriors butchered the wounded French. Lieutenant Colonel Washington watched the scene in horror. He and his men had just started a war that would grow to a truly global scale.¹⁵¹

By June word had reached the French of the slaughter at Jumonville’s Glen, as the spot would come to be called, and they sought revenge. They extracted this revenge on Washington and his troops at the hastily built and practically indefensible Fort Necessity, south of the Forks of the Ohio. On July 4, 1754, Washington surrendered and was allowed to return to Virginia. Though war would not be formally declared for two more years, the British responded to their losses in the Ohio Country with massive force. In the spring of 1755, General Edward Braddock (1695–1755) and his regiments arrived in Virginia and mobilized a war effort unparalleled in the colonies.¹⁵² His spectacular march on the French stronghold at Fort Duquesne, modern-day Pittsburgh, conducted according to the European strategies of war, was overshadowed by his more spectacular

¹⁵¹The story is best told by Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2000), 5–7. See also Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2010), 42–45, and Joseph J. Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 12–16.

¹⁵²Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 87.

defeat at the hands of the French and their Canadian and Indian allies along the banks of the Monongahela River.¹⁵³ Braddock's defeat sent an ominous terror throughout the colonies.¹⁵⁴ Thus for five long years the battles raged across the continent, each side realizing gains and losses. A major tide turned in 1758 when the British regained control of the forks of the Ohio and one year later, the French surrender Quebec after the pitched battle on the Plains of Abraham. When the British captured Montreal in 1760, the conflict was effectively over in North America although the war would not formally end until February 10, 1763, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris.

Samuel Davies returned from Great Britain in mid-February, 1755 to the snowy shores of North Carolina. By early March he began to take up the conflict with France in his sermons. Thirteen of his published sermons preached between March 5, 1755 and January, 1761, addressed the war. Eleven of the thirteen were drawn from Old Testament texts, nearly always the Prophets.¹⁵⁵ Three of the sermons were delivered on fast-days, two eulogized fallen leaders, and two were addressed directly to soldiers in local Virginia militias. Each sermon bears Davies' distinctive rhetoric and Evangelical theology, yet considered as a whole, these sermons also show the larger framework through which Davies understood the conflict at hand.

Less than a month after returning from Europe, Samuel Davies preached a fast-day sermon from Daniel 4:25, a text which declares God's unilateral authority over all human kingdoms. "A powerful and perfidious enemy is making inroads upon our territories," Davies told his hearers, and the King of England had dispatched reinforcements to fight on their behalf. Yet "unless the success of the expedition depend

¹⁵³See Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 94–107, for a detailed account of the battle.

¹⁵⁴See Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 414–19.

¹⁵⁵From the Prophets, Davies preached three sermons from Isaiah, two from Jeremiah, and one each from Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah, and Zephaniah. Davies also preached two sermons from 2 Samuel, one from Romans, and one from James.

[sic] on the providence of God, to what end do we humble ourselves before him, and implore his help?"¹⁵⁶ God is perfect in wisdom, justice, goodness, mercy, and patience and is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. Quite contrary to the god of the Deists, the God of Scripture's character requires his control over his creation.¹⁵⁷ God's active rule is demonstrated especially in times of war and repeatedly throughout Scripture, especially in the Psalms.¹⁵⁸ Davies also believed it was common sense that a nation should not go to war without recognizing God's controlling hand. Neither the Jews of the Old Testament nor the pagans of old dared fight apart from seeking the favor of deity.¹⁵⁹ While Davies did not interpret every event as an immediate act of providence, he believed that the conjunction of multiple signs could be attributed only to God's favor.¹⁶⁰ Davies recounted a series of British victories stretching from the Spanish invasion of 1588 through the Battle of Prestonpans in 1745, to show that God "appeared the guardian of that favorite island, Great Britain."¹⁶¹ Yet God's past protection was no present guarantee of success, or even survival, when the people of a nation fall into sin.

"If God be turned against a nation . . . how helpless is their condition!"¹⁶²

With these words, Samuel Davies speculated that God's long favor with the colonies might have been removed. But why? "Torrents of vice," "ignorance of divine things," "a neglect of Christ and his precious Gospel," daring immorality, a dependence on "luxury and extravagance," and other such sins had come to characterize the land, and the present

¹⁵⁶Davies, "God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms," in *Sermons*, 3:330.

¹⁵⁷Davies, "God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms," in *Sermons*, 3:332–36.

¹⁵⁸Davies, "God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms," in *Sermons*, 3:335–36.

¹⁵⁹Davies, "God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms," in *Sermons*, 3:338–39.

¹⁶⁰Davies, "God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms," in *Sermons*, 3:339–40.

¹⁶¹Davies, "God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms," in *Sermons*, 3:341–46.

¹⁶²Davies, "God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms," in *Sermons*, 3:349.

state of war was most certainly God’s judging hand at work in their midst.¹⁶³ Like a father, God was chastening his wayward children to bring about a change of heart.¹⁶⁴ France was that scourging rod.¹⁶⁵ Yet just like the Babylonians who occupied the same position, God would also break the rod once its usefulness was finished.¹⁶⁶

In his sermon on Isaiah 22:12–14, delivered eleven days after General Edward Braddock’s defeat at Fort Duquesne in July, 1755, Davies took up a prophetic lament against his people, likening them to the mourning Israelites of the text. Though the Virginians had been “favored with the light of revelation from heaven, and the gospel of Jesus,” and had enjoyed long seasons of peace and liberty, yet now they could only expect war because of their prevailing vices and general disregard for God.¹⁶⁷

The root of this disregard, and the root of wars in general, according to Davies’ reading of James 4:1, was unrestrained passions.¹⁶⁸ In a New Year’s Day sermon delivered in 1757, Davies offered a theological interpretation for the British losses during the previous two years: “How peaceably did we live, till France began to fancy that she needed more plantations—that she needed a tobacco colony—that she needed the whole fur trade, and so forth?”¹⁶⁹ The present circumstances displayed the greater theological truth: “Cannons and trumpets, and all the horrid noise of war, proclaim aloud this melancholy truth, that we are a race of apostate creatures, that have fallen from our

¹⁶³Davies, “God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms,” in *Sermons*, 3:349.

¹⁶⁴Davies, “Practical Atheism, in Denying the Agency of Divine Providence, Exposed,” in *Sermons*, 3:379–80.

¹⁶⁵Davies, “The Crisis: Or the Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:130.

¹⁶⁶Davies, “The Happy Effects of the Pouring out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:226.

¹⁶⁷Davies, “On the Defeat of General Braddock, Going to Fort-Du-Quesne,” in *Sermons*, 3:308.

¹⁶⁸Davies, “Serious Reflections on War,” in *Sermons*, 3:288–90.

¹⁶⁹Davies, “Serious Reflections on War,” in *Sermons*, 3:289.

original rectitude, and become the slaves of imperious and savage passions.”¹⁷⁰

The citizens’ only hope was to “Repent! Oh! My countrymen, Repent! Sin is the cause of our danger; sin is the bane of our land: and this cause cannot be removed but by repentance.”¹⁷¹ Davies urged his hearers to join fasting to their repentance as “the proper expression of it,” and to join prayer to both exercises.¹⁷² For Davies, repentance was intended to restore fellowship with God broken by sin and such fellowship was vitally necessary: “If God dispose the victory as he pleases, then it is most fit, and absolutely necessary, that we should seek to secure his friendship.”¹⁷³ While it is clear that Davies called the citizens of Virginia to repent, it is also clear that he located the war’s primary cause in the wickedness of Britain’s enemies.

Samuel Davies appears to have had nothing but contempt for France. Davies’ disdain for the French stemmed from a variety of reasons, but the strongest reason seems to be the strong ties between France and Roman Catholicism. The French were terrorizing Virginians with “popish torture.”¹⁷⁴ Davies believed that he and his hearers might be witnessing the promised final battle between the Lamb and the beast (cf. Revelation 19:11ff).¹⁷⁵ The beast, of course, was the pope and his powers. Davies commonly spoke of France’s civil and religious tyranny and predicted great danger for the cause of Protestantism should France prevail.¹⁷⁶ While France’s alliance with Rome

¹⁷⁰Davies, “Serious Reflections on War,” in *Sermons*, 3:290.

¹⁷¹Davies, “On the Defeat of General Braddock, Going to Fort-Du-Quesne,” in *Sermons*, 3:319.

¹⁷²Davies, “On the Defeat of General Braddock, Going to Fort-Du-Quesne,” in *Sermons*, 3:319.

¹⁷³Davies, “God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms,” in *Sermons*, 3:350–51.

¹⁷⁴Davies, “Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of Good Soldiers,” in *Sermons*, 3:94.

¹⁷⁵Davies, “The Crisis: Or the Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:137–38.

¹⁷⁶Davies, “The Happy Effects of the Pouring out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:203.

troubled Davies, the native Indians, France's allies, also provoked great fear because of their paganism.

Samuel Davies offered a horrifying and dehumanizing depiction of the Indians:

The bloody barbarians have exercised on some of them the most unnatural and leisurely tortures; and other they have butchered in their beds, or in some unguarded hour. Can human nature bear the horror of the sight? See yonder! The hairy scalps clotted with gore! The mangled limbs! Women ripped up! The heart and bowels still palpitating with life, and smoking on the ground! See the savages swilling their blood, and imbibing a more outrageous fury with the inhuman draught! Sure these are not men: they are not beasts of prey; they are something worse; they must be infernal furies in human shape.¹⁷⁷

Davies clearly sought to evangelize the Indians, and saw the British failure to spread the gospel among them more properly as one of the causes for the war,¹⁷⁸ yet the majority of his descriptions obscure any concern for their physical or spiritual welfare. He feared an increasing alliance with France among other Indian nations.¹⁷⁹ Although he commonly pictured them as butchers, rapists, and murderers,¹⁸⁰ and a “cruel, barbarous people,”¹⁸¹ Davies seemed willing to accept Indian assistance from the Catawbas and Cherokees in prosecuting the war,¹⁸² but in a telling statement, Davies asserted that even the Indian allies of the British would “probably break off their alliance with [us] and join the victorious party.”¹⁸³ Because of France's papal-driven ambitions and the Indian

¹⁷⁷Davies, “Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of Good Soldiers,” in *Sermons*, 3:95–96.

¹⁷⁸Davies, “On the Defeat of General Braddock, Going to Fort-Du-Quesne,” in *Sermons*, 3:319. Davies and his fellow New Side Presbyterians supported the work of the Scottish Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge among the American Indians. In 1758, Davies also led the Hanover Synod to appoint William Richardson as a missionary to the Indians of Virginia and North Carolina. See Pilcher, *Apostle of Dissent*, 116–18.

¹⁷⁹Davies, “The Crisis: Or the Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:131–32.

¹⁸⁰Davies, “The Curse of Cowardice,” in *Sermons*, 3:148.

¹⁸¹Davies, “On the Defeat of General Braddock, Going to Fort-Du-Quesne,” in *Sermons*, 3:323.

¹⁸²Davies, “Serious Reflections on War,” in *Sermons*, 3:283–84.

¹⁸³Davies, “On the Defeat of General Braddock, Going to Fort-Du-Quesne,” in *Sermons*, 3:311.

bloodlust, Davies was confident that the battle in which the British were engaged was right.

In a modern setting the phrase “holy war” carries a variety of connotations, yet this phrase aptly describes Davies’ understanding of the conflict. In March, 1755, Davies declared that it was not only lawful, but part of the Virginians’ “Christian duty” to take up arms to defend their country.¹⁸⁴ Later that August, a month after General Braddock’s defeat, Davies told a company of volunteers that the cause in which they were engaged was noble and exhorted them to pursue the virtue of courage in battle, as was becoming for Christian men.¹⁸⁵ In an address to militiamen three years later, Davies could pronounce a beatitude on the soldiers: “Blessed is the brave soldier: blessed is the defender of his country, and the destroyer of his enemies. Blessed are they who offer themselves willingly in this service, and who faithfully discharge it.”¹⁸⁶ These defenders of their country did not merely prepare defenses at home and wait for the enemy; rather, they took the offensive and sought the enemy on his own ground.¹⁸⁷

War was not the normal pattern of Christians, nor was it to be sought. Davies began one sermon, addressed to soldiers, by declaring God’s desire to see “universal harmony and benevolence prevail among his creatures,” a desire consistent with God’s character as revealed in Scripture. Yet “when . . . the lusts of men are perpetually embroiling the world with wars,” when “ambition and avarice would rob us of our property, for which we have toiled, and on which we subsist,” when free men face enslavement, when one’s religion is threatened, when one’s fellow citizens are butchered or confined “in a barbarous captivity in the dens of savages,” and when all appears to be

¹⁸⁴Davies, “God the Sovereign of all Kingdoms,” in *Sermons*, 3:354.

¹⁸⁵Davies, “Religion and Patriotism the Constituents of Good Soldiers,” in *Sermons*, 3:98, 102.

¹⁸⁶Davies, “The Curse of Cowardice,” in *Sermons*, 3:148.

¹⁸⁷Davies, “The Curse of Cowardice,” in *Sermons*, 3:152.

lost, “when this is the case, what is then the will of God?”¹⁸⁸ Davies’ concludes forcefully that “in such a time, even the God of Peace proclaims by his Providence, ‘To arms!’”¹⁸⁹ Davies described these soldiers as “an army of saints,”¹⁹⁰ yet realized that the life of a soldier was ripe for sin and was quick to note that one’s military achievements offered no eternal salvation.¹⁹¹ Yet even those unable to go a fight could contribute through means such as taxes or through spiritual warfare.¹⁹²

At the risk of criticizing Davies from a safe distance, it seems clear that his rhetoric toward the French was often overheated and that his ethic toward the native Indians was surely inconsistent with the gospel ministry in which he was engaged. Davies was willing to impute the worst motives to his enemies, namely greed and tyranny, while seeming to pass over the British greed and tyranny in the form of slavery that would nearly destroy his beloved Virginia within a hundred years. Davies’ assertion that the militiamen who defended Virginia were blessed by God is impossible to verify, but seems to go too far. Yet Davies interpretation is theologically consistent.

First, Davies remained true to his theological moorings of God’s sovereign reign in history. Even in desperate and wicked times, God was in control, and at times used other sinful people to discipline the church. What is less clear, however, is exactly how coextensive the British nation and the church were for Davies. Second, Davies’ assessment of the spiritual condition of Virginians is prescient and consistent with similar evaluations made by the Baptists and Methodists, and within one generation following his death, many people in Virginia were skeptical of the most basic claims of Davies’

¹⁸⁸Davies, “The Curse of Cowardice,” in *Sermons*, 3:148.

¹⁸⁹Davies, “The Curse of Cowardice,” in *Sermons* 3:149.

¹⁹⁰Davies, “The Curse of Cowardice,” in *Sermons*, 3:164.

¹⁹¹Davies, “The Curse of Cowardice,” in *Sermons*, 3:162–63.

¹⁹²Davies, “The Curse of Cowardice,” in *Sermons*, 3:354.

Christianity.¹⁹³ Deism and skepticism became fashionable in Virginia, especially following the disestablishment of the Anglican Church.

Perhaps Davies' most significant interpretation of the French and Indian war is to be found in his own conclusion to a sermon delivered in 1758: "I could venture the reputation of my judgment and veracity, that it will never be well with our country till there be more of the fear and love of God in it, and till the name of Jesus be of more importance among us."¹⁹⁴ Theology and piety met, even during war. If the war represented a significant upheaval for colonists on the western frontier, this period also brought a major change to the Davies family when Samuel was nominated (twice) as president of the College of New Jersey.

President Davies and the College of New Jersey: 1759–1761

Aaron Burr Sr. had served as the College of New Jersey's president since 1747 (elected formally in 1748), but his presidency ended with his death in 1757. The college's trustees prevailed upon Burr's father-in-law, Jonathan Edwards, to fill the vacancy, a call to which the gifted theologian consented, albeit reluctantly. Edwards died on March 22, 1758 following complications from a smallpox inoculation. He had served as president only two months.¹⁹⁵ The college's trustees met in April and elected James Lockwood of Connecticut president, but Lockwood refused, and the trustees convened yet again in August 1758 to choose a leader. They elected Samuel Davies.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³See Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). See also Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1976), 137–43.

¹⁹⁴Davies, "The Curse of Cowardice," in *Sermons*, 3:99.

¹⁹⁵See Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 493–94.

¹⁹⁶John Maclean, *History of the College of New Jersey, from its origins in 1746 to the Commencement of 1854*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1877), 193–94. Maclean reproduced the minutes of the trustee meetings.

Davies took the matter to his presbytery, which advised him to remain in Virginia, and thus Davies declined the college's call. Between August 1758 and the summer of 1759, Davies and the trustees exchanged a series of letters. Davies would not resign his pastoral charge without the consent of the New York Synod. Davies also believed that he was an inferior candidate when compared to Samuel Finley. Davies yielded and became the college's fourth president. He left his congregation on May 17 and took office on July 26, 1759.¹⁹⁷ Davies presided over the college's commencement in September 1759. Davies was now an administrator.

Among the first tasks the trustees required of Davies was that he "take a Methodical Catalogue of the Books in the College Library."¹⁹⁸ Davies was himself an inveterate reader: his personal library may have contained over 500 volumes and his two-year journal of his trip to Great Britain records his wide-ranging reading interests.¹⁹⁹ Davies completed the catalog in 1760, and his prefatory remarks indicate the value which he placed on reading: "A large and well-sorted Collection of Books on the various Branches of Literature, is the most ornamental and useful Furniture of a College, and the most proper and valuable Fund with which it can be endowed."²⁰⁰ A well-stocked library allowed students to move beyond the boundaries of assigned texts, or merely those books required for recitation, enabling them to become conversant in multiple opinions, to

¹⁹⁷Maclean, *History of the College of New Jersey*, 194–202, provides excerpts and summaries of the correspondence between Davies and the various trustees.

¹⁹⁸Maclean, *History of the College of New Jersey*, 206.

¹⁹⁹Richard Beale Davis noted Davies' library in his introduction to Davies' collected poems. See Davis, ed., *Miscellaneous Poems*, xi. Davis appears to have speculated at the number of volumes in Davies' personal library as he offers no annotation to support this count. On Davies' reading during his fund raising trip to Great Britain, see Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 31, 32, 38, and 39 among numerous other references.

²⁰⁰Samuel Davies, *A Catalogue of Books in the Library of the College of New Jersey, January 29, 1760* (Woodbridge, NJ: James Parker, 1760), iii. Julian Boyd, Princeton librarian at the time of the catalog's republication, indicated that Davies' catalog was only the third produced in the colonies, behind Harvard (1723) and Yale (1743). The catalog indicates the library's holdings were 1,281 volumes.

become aware of various errors, and to prepare for a life of both private and public learning.²⁰¹ Davies believed that the catalog would show students (current and prospective) that the college's library was well-furnished, but far from complete, and that it might help direct donations of those inclined to support the school.²⁰² Davies undertook other administrative matters during 1759-1760: purchasing additional land for the school, developing new admissions criteria and degree qualifications, and introducing psalmody to evening worship.²⁰³ Another noteworthy aspect of Davies' presidency was the care given to the study of Scripture: "The President and Tutors were authorized to appoint any of the students to read a portion of the sacred Scriptures out of the original language at morning prayers."²⁰⁴ Davies, the gifted speaker, sought to cultivate public speaking among the student body by instituting monthly orations for the college's senior class.²⁰⁵ Davies presided over three commencements from 1758-1760, conferring upon students the Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees.²⁰⁶

On January 14, 1761, Davies delivered a eulogy for King George II at Nassau Hall.²⁰⁷ The young president took ill several days later and a doctor bled him. Davies preached twice the following day. His fever worsened. The next morning, during breakfast, violent chills assaulted Davies' body. For ten days he lay delirious until succumbing to his fever on February 4, 1761, nine months short of his thirty-eighth

²⁰¹Davies, *Catalogue*, iii.

²⁰²Davies, *Catalogue*, iv.

²⁰³Maclean, *History of the College of New Jersey*, 209-13.

²⁰⁴Maclean, *History of the College of New Jersey*, 213.

²⁰⁵Maclean, *History of the College of New Jersey*, 213.

²⁰⁶Although Davies had completed his studies at Fagg's Manor, a private school, Davies earned the Master of Arts degree on Wednesday, September 26, 1753. He delivered and defended his thesis, *Personales Distinctiones in Trinitate sunt aeternae*, presumably at a commencement ceremony as the governor of New Jersey and college trustees were present. See Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 16.

²⁰⁷Samuel Davies, "On the Death of His Late Majesty, King George II," in *Sermons*, 3:73-93.

birthday.²⁰⁸

News of Davies' death spread throughout the Middle Colonies and abroad and memorials were several in number and charitable in tone. The earliest eulogy appears to have been that of Presbyterian minister David Bostwick of New York, which was penned on February 13, 1761 and appended to Davies' own sermon on King George's death.²⁰⁹ Davies' London correspondent, Thomas Gibbons (d. 1785), recalled his friend's "pious character" and "great intellect."²¹⁰ Samuel Finley, the man whom Davies had thought the better candidate for president of the college and also the man who would become Davies' successor, praised Davies' personal discipline and humility.²¹¹ One of the most interesting reminiscences came from physician and patriot Benjamin Rush (1746–1813), then a fifteen-year-old recent alumnus of the school. Writing to classmate Enoch Green (1735–1776), Rush lamented: "Oh, my friend, you and I have lost a father, a friend. He was the bright source of advice and consolation, the focus of every earthly virtue, and alas he bore too much of the Divine Image—he had too much of the spirit of the inhabitants of Heaven to be a long sojourner here on Earth."²¹²

²⁰⁸Maclean, *History of the College of New Jersey*, 243.

²⁰⁹Samuel Davies, *A Sermon Delivered at Nassau-Hall, January 14, 1761, On the Death of His Late Majesty King George II*, by Samuel Davies, A. M., Late President of the College of New Jersey, to which is prefixed a brief Account of the Life, Character, and Death of the Author, by David Bostwick, A. M., Minister of the Presbyterian Congregation in New-York (Williamsburg, VA: William Hunter, 1761).

²¹⁰Thomas Gibbons, "A Portion of Two Discourses, Preached at Haberdashers-Hall, London, March 29, A.D. 1761, occasioned by the Decease of the Rev. Samuel Davies, A. M., Late President of the College of Nassau Hall, in New Jersey," in *Sermons*, 1:56.

²¹¹Samuel Finley, "The Disinterested Christian: A Sermon, Preached at Nassau-Hall, Princeton, May 28, 1761. Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Samuel Davies, A. M. Late President of the College of New Jersey," in *Sermons*, 1:53.

²¹²Benjamin Rush, *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, Volume I: 1761–1792, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 4.

CHAPTER 3

SCRIPTURE: THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Our Petitions can extend far; our tho'ts farther—But above—abundantly above—exceeding [abun]dantly above what we ask or think—exceeding [abun]dantly above all that we ask of think, —w^t a [. . .]gious extent is this! And yet, thus far does [. . .] & Grace of God extend to supply our Wants & to [nou]rish us wth his Blessings. Amazing Tho't! & how [. . .] exprest! Plain as Language can be; & yet as h[igh] as Tho't can rise. The Repetition of y^c Particle [. . .] in y^c original renders it still more emphatical. [. . .] ναμένω ὑπὲρ πάντα ποιῆσαι ὑπὲρ ἐκ περι[ρισ]σοῦ ὧν αἰτούμεθα ἢ νοῦμεν—which may perhaps [. . .] thus translated, ‘Who is able to do above,—exceed[. . .] abundantly above all that we ask or think. [*sic*]¹

Samuel Davies recorded these observations on Ephesians 3:20 in his New Testament on a blank page opposite the printed text. His style was meditative, focusing on key words in the verse, which he wanted to recall later for personal reflection or sermon preparation. This annotation is one of several that have survived and indicates that their author gave meticulous attention to the Bible as he analyzed syntactical constructions in the Greek. The importance of Scripture extended even to the particle. The mention of the biblical text being “Plain” recalls the Reformation emphasis on the perspicuity of Scripture. In fine, Davies’ notes link the significance of the biblical text to the life of its readers: the reader learns that God graciously sustains believers by his word. Samuel Davies believed that the Bible was the foundation for genuine Christian piety and this chapter explores the contours of his reflections on the nature and place of Scripture in the Christian life.

Scripture in Confession

When the New Castle Presbytery ordained Samuel Davies in February 1747,

¹Samuel Davies, New Testament annotations, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA. This copy of Davies’ New Testament was donated to the Virginia Historical Society in 1963 and contains a portion of Galatians through 2 Timothy and bears Davies’ annotations. This manuscript seems not to have been known to George William Pilcher and earlier biographers.

the young evangelist subscribed to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Longer and Shorter Catechisms, and the directories for public and family worship. The presbytery followed the pattern adopted by the Philadelphia Synod in 1729 of requiring subscription to these standards as a condition for ordination. Although some within the synod debated the necessity of subscription, none questioned the standards' statements on Scripture. These standards provide a helpful framework for evaluating Davies' own remarks regarding the Bible.

The Westminster Confession of Faith

The Westminster Confession of Faith was a common confession that united English, Irish, and Scottish Presbyterians. An assembly of divines in London drafted and edited the confession from 1643–1648. The colonial synods of Philadelphia and New York adopted the Confession in the eighteenth century and it continued to influence colonial Presbyterianism through the American Revolution and into the nineteenth century.² Rather than beginning with ontology and the doctrine of God, the Confession first addressed epistemology by beginning with Scripture.

According to the Confession, nature provides a genuine knowledge of its creator, but this natural knowledge is insufficient for salvation. Instead, God committed his diverse self-revelations into writing “to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world.”³ The “sure establishment” of Scripture is the church's

²For a brief overview of the Confession's history and influence on American Presbyterianism, see J. H. Hall, “Westminster Confession of Faith,” in *Dictionary of the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition in America*, ed. D. G. Hart (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 2005), 276. For a more recent and thorough treatment of the Confession's development, see Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009).

³Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) 1:1.

foundation. While the canon of Scripture was still a matter of debate among Continental Protestants in the mid-seventeenth century, the Confession recognized 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament writings as canonical books and differentiated these writings from the Apocrypha.⁴ Because Scripture is the “Word of God,” its authority invites faith and obedience and transcends human and ecclesial testimony.⁵ While Scripture presents a consistent message, majestic style, and “many other incomparable excellencies,” one’s final assurance of its “infallible truth and divine authority” rests not in these evidences, but rather in the internal witness of Word and Spirit.⁶

The Westminster theologians agreed that Scripture was a sufficient testimony of “[God’s] own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life,” and that no new revelation of the Spirit or human tradition could be added to it. While anyone could comprehend Scripture’s teachings, the confession’s authors acknowledged “the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word.”⁷ Although some parts of Scripture may be more difficult to understand than others, the essential message of salvation is clear.⁸ As to Scripture’s origin, the original Hebrew and Greek words of Scripture were immediately inspired by God, but people may translate the Bible into various languages that “the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.”⁹ Scripture is its own best interpreter and difficult passages must be interpreted by placing them alongside clearer

⁴WCF 1:2–3. On the issue of canonical debates during the Reformation and into the seventeenth century, see Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 128–30.

⁵WCF 1:4.

⁶WCF 1:5.

⁷WCF 1:6.

⁸WCF 1:7.

⁹WCF 1:8.

passages.¹⁰ Finally, Scripture is the “supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.”¹¹

B. B. Warfield considered this section of the Confession to be singular among ecclesiastical creeds: “There is certainly in the whole mass of confessional literature no more nobly conceived or ably wrought-out statement of doctrine than the chapter ‘Of the Holy Scripture.’”¹² Samuel Davies would likely have agreed. Davies subscribed to the Confession in 1747 and in 1758 he was requiring men ordained by the Hanover Presbytery in Virginia to do likewise. An ordination sermon that Davies preached for Henry Patillo and William Richardson in July of 1758 contains the following oath:

Do you receive the Westminster Confession of Faith, as the confession of *your faith*: that is, do you believe it contains an excellent summary of the pure doctrines of Christianity as taught in the Scriptures, and as purged from the corruptions of popery, and other errors that have crept in to the church? And do you purpose to explain the Scriptures agreeably to the *substance* of it?¹³

The fact that Davies and the presbytery which he established required ministerial candidates to adopt the Westminster Confession indicates that they viewed the document as relevant; that they required candidates to affirm it as an “excellent summary” and required them to explicate Scripture consistent with its substance shows that they valued it.

¹⁰WCF 1.9.

¹¹WCF 1.10.

¹²Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and its Work*, vol. 6 of *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1932), 155.

¹³Samuel Davies, “The Love of Souls, a Necessary Qualification for the Ministerial Office,” in *Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Davies, A.M. President of the College of New Jersey*, vol. 3 (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1854, repr. 1993), 525. Emphasis in original. Hereafter cited as *Sermons*.

The Westminster Catechisms

Questions 3–6 and 154–160 of the Larger Catechism and questions 2–3 of the Shorter Catechism address Scripture.¹⁴ The Larger Catechism identifies the “holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament” as the “word of God,” and this word is “the only rule of faith and obedience.”¹⁵ To answer the question of how the Old and New Testaments claim divine authority, the catechism states,

The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God, by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation: but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God.¹⁶

As to Scripture’s general content, the catechism is brief: “The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.”¹⁷

More particularly, the Scriptures “make known what God is, the persons in the Godhead, his decrees, and the execution of his decrees.”¹⁸ The Shorter Catechism adapted questions 3 and 5 of the Larger Catechism. Notably, the Shorter Catechism links Scripture with humanity’s ultimate purpose of worshipping and enjoying God:

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Q. 2. What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A. The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.¹⁹

The Larger Catechism includes several questions especially relevant for a piety grounded

¹⁴Questions 158–160 of the Larger Catechism address Scripture as it is to be handled by those preaching the Bible and those who hear it preached. Questions 3–6 and 154–157 are directed to all Christians.

¹⁵Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC) 3.

¹⁶WLC 4.

¹⁷WLC 5.

¹⁸WLC 6.

¹⁹Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC) 1–2. Question 2 of the WSC is adapted from Question 3 of the WLC and Question 3 of the WSC is identical to Question 5 of the WLC.

in Scripture. First, Scripture is one of the “outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation.”²⁰ The Holy Spirit then uses the Word to effect salvation:

The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.²¹

Individuals and families are to read the Bible in understandable translations with particular attention to devotion:

The holy Scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem of them; with a firm persuasion that they are the very Word of God, and that he only can enable us to understand them; with desire to know, believe, and obey the will of God revealed in them; with diligence, and attention to the matter and scope of them; with meditation, application, self-denial, and prayer.²²

Samuel Davies urged his hearers to consider the Shorter Catechism’s statement on God’s providence, indicating that he found the catechism to be a useful summary of doctrine for the laity.²³

The Westminster Directories

In addition to its confession and catechisms, the Westminster Assembly also produced directories for public and family worship. The Directory for the Publick Worship of God provided a framework for pastors “to conduct worship services within the regulative principle of Scripture.”²⁴ It provided a variety of instructions regarding the public reading of Scripture, public prayers interspersed through the service, preaching,

²⁰WLC 154.

²¹WLC 155.

²²WLC 156–157.

²³Samuel Davies, “The Divine Government the Joy of our World,” in *Sermons*, 1:430.

²⁴Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 304.

the sacraments, the Lord's Day, psalmody, and a variety of pastoral duties such as marriage ceremonies, visiting the sick, and burying the dead.

With regard to Scripture, the Westminster theologians recognized that the public reading of Scripture was essential for congregational edification.²⁵ This responsibility was reserved for the clergy and those preparing for ministry. Scripture was to be read serially, normally in chapter-length sections from both Testaments, yet the minister had discretion and the assembly's blessing to read more.²⁶ Literate members of the congregation were to be encouraged to read Scripture privately; illiterate congregants were to be encouraged to learn to read, that they might be pursue private devotions.²⁷

The theologians assembled in London also gave the church a Directory for Family-Worship. Though public worship was a great blessing, the divines believed that "it is expedient and necessary that secret worship of each person alone, and private worship of families, be pressed and set up; that, with national reformation, the profession and power of godliness, both personal and domestick, be advanced."²⁸

The directory advised the use of prayer and meditation in "secret" or private worship as "the unspeakable benefit whereof is best known to them who are most exercised therein; this being the mean whereby, in a special way, communion with God is entertained, and right preparation for all other duties obtained."²⁹ Such worship was not for clergy only, but for "persons of all sorts," both morning and evening. Paraphrasing Acts 20:28, heads of households were instructed to take careful watch over themselves

²⁵The Directory for the Publick Worship of God (DPW), "Of Publick Reading of the Holy Scriptures."

²⁶DPW, "Of Publick Reading of the Holy Scriptures."

²⁷DPW, "Of Publick Reading of the Holy Scriptures."

²⁸The Directory for Family-Worship (DFW), "Preface."

²⁹DFW, 1.

and their families, that they observe this worship.³⁰ The Directory also outlined family worship, which included prayer, praises, and reading Scripture, and also the use of the Lord's Day for spiritual growth.³¹ Samuel Davies' vision of a word-based devotion was certainly consistent with these guidebooks.

The Thirty-Nine Articles

The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were not Davies' native creed, but he adopted them in 1747, with some reservations, in order to secure a license to preach in Virginia.³² Articles 6 and 7 of the statement address Scripture. Article 6 describes the nature and purpose of Scripture:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church . . . And the other Books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine . . . [and] All the Books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive, and account them Canonical.³³

Both the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Thirty-Nine Articles agree that Scripture contains all that is necessary for saving faith. The Thirty-Nine Articles enumerate the apocryphal books of the Old Testament, which the Westminster Confession omits. This listing prompted Samuel Davies to add the following caveat to his assent to the Articles:

6th Art: with this explication, that by the phrase "And the other Books (as Hierome saith) the church doth read for example of life & instruction of manner", be not intended to enjoin as a duty the reading of the Apocryphal Books in Publick

³⁰DFW, 1.

³¹DFW, 2 and 8.

³²Davies' reservations are described in chap. 2 of this dissertation.

³³The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, 6.

Religious Assemblies.³⁴

Davies' rejoinder indicates his scrupulous caution with regard to Scripture's canon and the spiritual welfare of his congregations. To Article 7, which describes the continuity between the Old and New Testaments, Davies readily assented, taking no exception. Although Davies made specific references the Westminster Confession and Catechisms relatively sparingly, a survey of his body of sermons shows that these standards formed the basis for his views on the nature and place of Scripture in the Christian life.

A Theological Analysis of Samuel Davies' View of Scripture

A close reading of Samuel Davies' various writings provides an accessible view of his theology of Scripture. The following analysis utilizes Davies' own theological terminology, which often followed the Westminster Confession.

Inspiration, Authority, and Infallibility

Samuel Davies was certain that the words of Scripture, though penned by human authors, were given directly from God. In a sermon on Luke 16:27–31, Davies argued for divine inspiration of Scripture by virtue of its sublime content when contrasted with its humble origins. How else could a “company of ignorant mechanics” living in the backwater of Judea compose such a “vast treasure of knowledge” or “a system of religion and morality so much more plain, so much more perfect, than all the famous sages of antiquity could frame?”³⁵ Such were Jesus' disciples, and these disciples claimed to speak on behalf of God. This sermon provides the clearest sustained statement of Davies' theology of the Bible's inspiration and authority.

Davies' stated goal for the sermons was to teach believers “the grounds of the

³⁴Samuel Davies to Patrick Henry, April 21, 1747, Dawson Papers, Earl E. Swem Library, William and Mary College, Williamsburg, VA.

³⁵Samuel Davies, “The Divine Authority and Sufficiency of the Christian Religion,” in *Sermons*, 1:81.

Christian religion, both to prevent their seduction [by false doctrine], and to give them a rational and well-grounded faith.”³⁶ To accomplish this goal, Davies took a twofold approach, arguing first for Scripture’s sufficiency and then against contemporary objections to the Bible. Scripture provided sufficient grounds for faith and ethics and was self-attesting as to its divine origin.³⁷ Unlike Islam, which spread by force, Christianity grew peacefully, with believers enduring opposition from all people rather than causing it.³⁸ In this particular sermon, Davies emphasized Scripture’s divine origin, reliability, and clarity. More often, however, Davies asserted or simply assumed Scripture’s inspiration.

During an ordination sermon, Davies asserted that the custom of the imposition of hands was a biblical ceremony linked with the “authoritative benedictions of the inspired patriarchs and prophets.”³⁹ He stated his position even more clearly in a similar sermon in which he declared that the patriarchs and prophets instituted this practice “under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁰ Solomon was “the wisest of men, inspired from heaven.”⁴¹ Isaiah’s prophetic utterance came from the “omniscient Spirit, who inspired his lips” and Jeremiah’s plea “turn thou me, and I shall be turned” (Jeremiah 31:18) was an “inspired prayer.”⁴² Nahum’s description of God’s jealous revenge that found expression in earthquakes was penned in “the language of

³⁶Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:73.

³⁷Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:77–92.

³⁸Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:88. Davies here overlooked Christendom’s more violent chapters during the medieval period.

³⁹Davies, “The Love of Souls,” in *Sermons*, 3:521.

⁴⁰Samuel Davies, “The Office of a Bishop a Good Work,” in *Sermons*, 3:530.

⁴¹Samuel Davies, “The Doom of the Incurrible Sinner,” in *Sermons*, 2:332.

⁴²Samuel Davies, “Arguments to Enforce our Looking to Christ,” in *Sermons*, 2:361. See also idem, “A Time of Unusual Sickness and Mortality Improved,” in *Sermons*, 3:250.

inspiration.”⁴³ Paul’s characterization of the lost as “hateful, and hating one another” (cf. Titus 3:3) was written with an “inspired pen.”⁴⁴ The author of Hebrews could write of Christ’s compassionate character because of “experience, as well as inspiration.”⁴⁵ When the apostle John wrote of Christians being transformed into the likeness of Christ through the “vision of the blessed God in his unveiled glory” (cf. 1 John 3:1–2), he did so by “unerring inspiration.”⁴⁶ In Davies’ view, inspiration extended also to the apostolic use of Old Testament texts for Peter offered an authoritative reading of Isaiah 28:16–17 when he took Isaiah’s “foundation stone” as a reference to the Messiah (cf. 1 Peter 2:4, 6).⁴⁷

Due to the fact that God had inspired the text of Scripture, the Bible possessed divine authority to govern one’s theology and to regulate the believer’s attitudes and behavior, especially as it concerned the spiritual life. Samuel Davies regularly asserted this authority when applying passages of Scripture to his audience. To those so-called Christians who neglected family religion, Davies declared that “the omission of a known, practical duty against the remonstrances of your conscience, is a certain evidence that you are entirely destitute of all religion; and therefore I must discharge the artillery of heaven against you in that dreadful imprecation which, as dictated by inspiration, is equivalent to a prediction, or denunciation.”⁴⁸ He cited Paul’s apostolic authority when declaring “that I, and all around me, yea, all the sons of men, have been dead; in the spiritual sense, utterly dead.”⁴⁹ The authority of Scripture was not simply a matter for preachers, but for

⁴³Samuel Davies, “The Religious Improvement of the Late Earthquakes,” in *Sermons*, 3:265.

⁴⁴Samuel Davies, “The Happy Effects of the Pouring Out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:202.

⁴⁵Samuel Davies, “The Compassion of Christ to Weak Believers,” in *Sermons*, 1:266.

⁴⁶Samuel Davies, “The Nature and Blessedness of Sonship with God,” in *Sermons*, 2:177.

⁴⁷Samuel Davies, “Jesus Christ the Only Foundation,” in *Sermons*, 2:53. Davies noted that Peter was citing the Septuagint translation of the passage.

⁴⁸Samuel Davies, “The Necessity and Excellence of Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:93.

⁴⁹Samuel Davies, “The Nature and Universality of Spiritual Death,” in *Sermons*, 1:169. See

all the godly as well. Citing Isaiah 66:2, Davis preached that the truly humble person “trembles . . . at the authority of the word.”⁵⁰

When the authors of Scripture addressed a matter, their writings were consistently true and accurate. For example, when Scripture declares that one must experience “spiritual birth,” there is a consistency between Jesus’ teaching that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:5) and the “infallible inspiration” of Galatians 6:15 that external religious conformity cannot make one right before God.⁵¹ By describing Paul’s epistle as “infallible inspiration,” Davies was certainly within the bounds of the Westminster Confession, which itself spoke of the “infallible truth” of the Bible.⁵²

In a funeral sermon, Davies noted the prophet Ezekiel’s declaration that the wicked must surely die (cf. Ezekiel 33:8) was “eternal truth, which cannot fail” because it arose from “the unchangeable constitution and authentic declaration of a wise and righteous God, which must infallibly stand good, whoever oppose.”⁵³ For Davies, Scripture is infallible because it originates from God, who is himself perfect:

The authority upon which we are required to receive the doctrines, and observe the precepts of Christianity, is no less than the authority of God, the supreme Lawgiver and infallible Teacher; whose wisdom to prescribe and right to command, are indisputable; and we may safely submit our understandings to his instructions, however mysterious, and our wills to his injunctions, however difficult they may seem to us.⁵⁴

This passage has significant implications for understanding the place of Scripture Davies’ spirituality. First, Scripture is the ultimate grounds for one’s piety. When the Bible

also idem, “Saints Saved with Difficulty, and the Certain Perdition of Sinners,” in *Sermons*, 1:587.

⁵⁰Samuel Davies, “Poor and Contrite Spirits the Objects of Divine Favour,” in *Sermons*, 1:224.

⁵¹Davies, “Nature and Blessedness of Sonship,” in *Sermons*, 2:180.

⁵²WCF 1.5.

⁵³Samuel Davies, “The Certainty of Death; a Funeral Sermon,” in *Sermons*, 3:436.

⁵⁴Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:92.

provides teaching and direction, it speaks with the very voice of God and is therefore authoritative and demands obedience. Next, although every command and teaching of Scripture is *right*, some teachings are veiled and some directions difficult. The believer obeys the biblical text in faith, trusting that God himself has spoken these words and that they are reliable, even if they are mysterious or challenging. In asserting Scripture's place as the grounds of Christian piety, Davies followed the Westminster Confession:

The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.⁵⁵

Sufficiency

Samuel Davies found the Bible unquestionably sufficient “to bring men to repentance.”⁵⁶ Following the Westminster Confession (WCF 1:6), Davies stated that Scripture “gives us sufficient instructions in matters of faith, and sufficient directions in matters of practice.”⁵⁷ He believed that Christian faith and practice must be grounded upon revelation, that any supposed revelation which could address both faith and practice “has the directest tendency to make us truly religious, and to bring us to a happy immortality,” and that biblical revelation, “particularly in the New Testament” was indeed “the immediate foundation of Christianity.”⁵⁸ He explained the Bible's relationship to both matters.

Faith must be based in reality; true religion requires “right notions of God,” but such notions require more insight than the powers of natural observation allow (cf. WCF

⁵⁵WCF 1.4.

⁵⁶Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:77.

⁵⁷Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:77.

⁵⁸Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:77.

1:1).⁵⁹ Davies likened Scripture to a “collection of rays of light,” that allows one to go beyond natural reason and “brings to light” hidden things (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9).⁶⁰ Further, the Bible “gives us a complete system of practical religion and morality” that reveals “our duties towards God, towards our neighbours, and towards ourselves.”⁶¹ These moral duties are presented simply and memorably that they might be ever present among Christians, shaping attitudes and behaviors. In its revelation of so complete a moral system, the Bible is sufficient to render “the least in the kingdom of heaven, *i. e.*, any common Christian . . . greater than all the Socrateses, the Platos, the Ciceros, and the Senecas of antiquity; as one that is of a weak sight can see more clearly by the help of day-light, than the clearest eye can without it.”⁶²

Scripture was also eminently reasonable. “It is certain,” Davies wrote, “that as God can accept no other worship than rational from reasonable creatures, he cannot require us to believe a revelation to be divine without sufficient reason; and therefore, when he gives us a revelation, he will attest it with such evidences as will be a sufficient foundation of our belief.”⁶³ He found the Bible attended with both intrinsic and extrinsic evidences of its authenticity.

Intrinsically, “the religion of the Bible has the directest tendency to promote true piety and solid virtue.”⁶⁴ Biblical piety checks love of self, enjoins love of others, and is “directly calculated to banish all sin out of the world; to transform impiety into devotion; injustice and oppression into equity and universal benevolence; and sensuality

⁵⁹Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:78.

⁶⁰Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:78.

⁶¹Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:79.

⁶²Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:81.

⁶³Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:82–83.

⁶⁴Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:83.

into sobriety.”⁶⁵ Second, biblical prophecy offers intrinsic evidence that Scripture is sufficiently reasonable. Put simply, only God could reveal future contingent events with certainty; such events are beyond the ability of the best humans, yet numerous biblical texts reveal such contingent events and do so with striking accuracy.⁶⁶ Finally, Davies argued that the Bible’s “glorious energy on the minds of men, in convincing them of sin, easing their consciences, inspiring them with unspeakable joy, subduing their lusts, and transforming them into its own likeness,” which effects Christians experience daily, was sufficient evidence of its authenticity.⁶⁷

Extrinsically, Davies offered two evidences that the Bible provided a sufficiently rational ground for its claims: biblical miracles and gospel propagation. First, the New Testament attests to a great number of miracles which Jesus or his followers performed, miracles not done in secret but in public. Such miracles served to confirm Jesus’ teaching in his own day and continued to authenticate the written testimony of his teaching in Davies’ time.⁶⁸ Second, although the earliest Christians “met with the most strenuous opposition from all the powers of the earth,” and even though the first evangelists were unlikely emissaries, the gospel overcame these obstacles to conquer the ancient world. Unlike Islam, however, Christianity was propagated by “force of evidence, [not] by the force of arms.”⁶⁹

Aside from the more general sufficiency of Scripture, Davies also emphasized the sufficiency of the gospel. In a sermon on John 3:16-18, Davies remarked, “Sure the heavenly rivers of pleasure flow in these verses. Never, methinks, was there so much

⁶⁵Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:83.

⁶⁶Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:84-86.

⁶⁷Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:86.

⁶⁸Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:87-88.

⁶⁹Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:88-92.

gospel expressed in so few words These verses alone, methinks, are a sufficient remedy for a dying world.”⁷⁰ Scripture’s testimony of Jesus’ resurrection provided a “sufficient ground of faith” to convince sinners of a coming future judgment.”⁷¹ Preparation for glory occurs in this life and is fraught with difficulties, yet it is the biblical path and no other path can claim sufficient authority.⁷² Davies was convinced “both from reason and revelation, that an unholy impenitent sinner, while such, can never enter the kingdom of heaven.”⁷³ Davies presented his hearers a catena of biblical passages touching on the new birth, arguing that such passages were “sufficient to convince [them] of the necessity of this great change.”⁷⁴ Further, Davies believed the various biblical metaphors representing people as “spiritually dead” (cf. Eph 2:1), “blind” (cf. 2 Cor 4:4), and “deaf” (cf. Ps 58:4) “sufficiently prove the degeneration of mankind.”⁷⁵ Although some elements of Adam’s fall are difficult to understand, some knowledge of his transgression is necessary and the Bible provides “sufficient light” for such knowledge.⁷⁶ The authority of Scripture provides “sufficient evidence” of peoples’ natural disinclination toward God and holiness.⁷⁷ Then, Scripture’s “repeated declarations” provide “sufficient proof to those who believe their divine authority,” of God’s sovereign rule over kingdoms and war.⁷⁸

⁷⁰Samuel Davies, “The Method of Salvation through Jesus Christ,” in *Sermons*, 1:111.

⁷¹Samuel Davies, “The Universal Judgment,” in *Sermons*, 1: 520.

⁷²Samuel Davies, “The Vessels of Mercy and the Vessels of Wrath Delineated,” in *Sermons*, 2:380.

⁷³Samuel Davies, “The Tender Anxieties of Ministers for their People,” in *Sermons*, 2:419–20.

⁷⁴Samuel Davies, “The Nature and Author of Regeneration,” in *Sermons*, 2:498.

⁷⁵Samuel Davies, “The Success of the Ministry Owing to a Divine Influence,” in *Sermons*, 3:14.

⁷⁶Samuel Davies, “The Primitive and Present State of Man Compared,” in *Sermons*, 3:407–08.

⁷⁷Samuel Davies, “Evidences of the Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons* 3:460–61.

⁷⁸Samuel Davies, “God the Sovereign of All Kingdoms,” in *Sermons*, 3:334.

Perspicuity

In a sermon on Ephesians 2:5, Samuel Davies explained the sinner's desperate condition of spiritual death and followed with an observation from Paul's epistle: "Let any man carefully read these verses, and consider their most natural meaning, and I cannot but think common sense will direct him thus to understand them. The Scriptures were written with a design to be understood."⁷⁹ Davies' comments demonstrate his commitment to the Bible's clarity, or in Reformation parlance, its perspicuity.

As recently as a century before Davies' ministry, the Roman Catholic Church rejected the notion of the laity interpreting Scripture, insisting that trained clergy were its only appropriate interpreters.⁸⁰ Early Protestant reformers, most notably Martin Luther (1483–1546), had challenged this notion in the mid-sixteenth century, insisting on Scripture's inherent clarity.⁸¹ By the time the Westminster theologians took up the subject, there were divergent positions within Protestantism regarding the Bible's clarity.⁸² The Confession recognized varying degrees of biblical clarity:

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.⁸³

Davies admitted that some parts of Scripture were "difficult and strange," but quickly noted that there were also "many strange things in the book of nature," which did not undermine his confidence in its author or the clarity of those things which were more easily understood. Such difficulties within the Bible, Davies asserted, were intended to

⁷⁹Davies, "Nature and Universality of Spiritual Death," in *Sermons*, 1:163–64.

⁸⁰Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 120. See also Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 142.

⁸¹Allison, *Historical Theology*, 128–31.

⁸²Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 142–44. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 135–38.

⁸³WCF 1.7.

promote godliness: “It is necessary we should meet with difficulties in the Scriptures to mortify our pride.”⁸⁴

Davies believed that biblical revelation was progressively clearer in the New Testament than in the Old. Though he valued the Old Testament, he found the Mosaic covenant “less clear and efficacious” than the new covenant.⁸⁵ This situation was in part due to the abiding presence and work of the Holy Spirit among Christians: though “external evidences” such as miracles and prophecies were “sufficiently clear,” under the new covenant, the Spirit of Christ indwells believers, providing a greater degree of “internal illumination” to the biblical text.⁸⁶ While the Spirit empowered certain key leaders under the Old Covenant, he did not abide upon the entire believing community as characterized his presence in the New Covenant.

The doctrine of justification by faith illustrates the increased clarity of New Testament Scripture. Davies noted that “this is the only way in which any of the sons of Adam have been saved since the fall . . . and that now, by the gospel, it is more fully and illustriously revealed, the object of a more distinct, particular, and explicit faith.”⁸⁷ Further, Davies described the doctrine of justification by faith as “the substratum of all the ceremonies and institutions of the law of Moses” and stated that “the prophets also received this Evangelical light, and continued to diffuse it around them, till the Sun of Righteousness arose; but all these discoveries were but dark, when compared to the clearer revelation we have of it in the New Testament.”⁸⁸

In keeping with Westminster, Davies considered the gospel of salvation

⁸⁴Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:97.

⁸⁵Davies, “Success of the Ministry,” in *Sermons*, 3:16.

⁸⁶Davies, “Success of the Ministry,” in *Sermons*, 3:26.

⁸⁷Samuel Davies, “The Law and the Gospel,” in *Sermons*, 2:618–19.

⁸⁸Davies, “Law and Gospel,” in *Sermons*, 2:619.

through Jesus an especially “clear and perfect revelation.”⁸⁹ Davies believed his own day to be part of the “dispensation of the gospel,” a period which he characterized as “a bright and illustrious day” described by numerous biblical metaphors: Jesus is the “*Sun of righteousness*” (cf. Mal 4:2); and “*the Light of the world*” (cf. John 8:12).⁹⁰ As daytime provided a clear view of nature, so the gospel:

reveals the perfections of God, the wonderful scheme of Providence, the beauties of holiness, the nature of true religion, the duty of man in all its extent, the wonders of the scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ, and the method in which obnoxious sinners of the race of man may be reconciled to God, the prospects of life and immortality, and the important realities of the eternal world.⁹¹

Peter described the gospel as a “marvelous light” (cf. 1 Pet 2:9) and through Scripture this light shines forth with tremendous brilliance: “Then in what a new and glorious light does the great God appear, and all the truths revealed in the gospel! What new and surprising views [the sinner] has of himself, of sin, and of the eternal world! all is real, interesting, and affecting!”⁹²

Samuel Davies and the Interpretation of Scripture

Samuel Davies approached Scripture with reverence, attentiveness, and concern to understand and articulate the meaning and message of a text. As a preacher, Davies followed the Puritan plain style, beginning his sermons by explaining a text before deducing several doctrines and improvements (or applications) from that text.⁹³ Given that the bulk of Davies’ writings are sermons, a detailed examination would

⁸⁹Samuel Davies, “The Crisis, or the Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:124.

⁹⁰Samuel Davies, “A Sight of Christ the Desire and Delight of Saints,” in *Sermons*, 2:588.

⁹¹Davies, “A Sight of Christ,” in *Sermons*, 2:589.

⁹²Davies, “A Sight of Christ,” in *Sermons*, 2:590.

⁹³For a discussion of this style in its Colonial Puritan context, see Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 25th anniv. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 34–35.

require a thesis unto itself. This exploration will take a doctrinal sounding to show how Davies' reading of Scripture shaped his theology and piety. It is clear that Davies read the Bible in a straightforward, literal manner, proudly claiming its supernatural elements over and against contemporary interpreters who favored more naturalistic readings. When Davies wanted to illustrate those who rejected the Bible's supernatural message and authority, he most often turned to the deists.⁹⁴

Deism in the Eighteenth Century

Deism began in England late in the seventeenth century and its influence spread abroad during the eighteenth century.⁹⁵ Grounded in the ever expanding confidence in human reason which marked the enlightenment, deism favored natural religion to the supernaturalism of the Bible. Deism flourished in England from the 1690s when John Toland's (1670–1722) *Christianity Not Mysterious* was first published, until roughly the early 1740s.⁹⁶ Toland's religious journey began in Irish Catholicism and ended in pantheism.⁹⁷ His *Christianity Not Mysterious* drew upon John Locke's (1632–1704) theory of knowledge and rejected elements of mystery in Christianity as corruptions introduced in the early church, especially through the allegorical and

⁹⁴Samuel Davies mentioned deism directly in at least eight sermons, often describing deists as “infidels,” “free-thinkers,” and “enemies to Christianity.” See Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:87, 99, 103, 107; idem., “The Universal Judgment,” in *Sermons*, 1:524; idem., “The Preaching of Christ Crucified the Mean of Salvation,” in *Sermons*, 1:646–47; idem., “The Rule of Equity,” in *Sermons*, 2:112; idem., “The Way of Sin Hard and Difficult,” in *Sermons*, 2:542; idem., “Religious Improvement Earthquakes,” in *Sermons*, 3:270; idem., “On the Defeat of General Braddock, Going to Fort Duquesne,” in *Sermons*, 3:316–17; and idem., “The Objects, Grounds, and Evidences of the Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:495–99.

⁹⁵For a thorough introduction to English deism, the best account is still John Orr, *English Deism: Its Roots and its Fruits* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1934), 59–178 and 200–20.

⁹⁶John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious: Or, A Treatise Shewing, That there is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, Nor above it: And that No Christian Doctrine can be Properly call'd a Mystery* (London: n.p., 1702). Toland first published this work in 1696 anonymously. He affixed his name to the second printing in 1702.

⁹⁷Orr, *English Deism*, 116.

typological interpretive methods of the early apologists and fathers.⁹⁸ In another work, *Amyntor*, Toland criticized the canon of Scripture, arguing that there was little difference between canonical New Testament writings and several apocryphal books from the same period. Since the New Testament epistles ignored the four canonical gospels, one could surmise that these gospels were not widely-known among early Christians. Further, discrepancies between the gospel stories, such as are found in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke, raise questions as to their authenticity and therefore their authority.⁹⁹

Toland's works spurred further deistic writings by Anthony Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), Anthony Collins (1676–1729), Thomas Woolston (1669–1731), and Matthew Tindal (1656–1733). Deistic treatments of the Bible grew increasingly bold, challenging literal readings of biblical prophecies and miracles and also the deity of Christ.¹⁰⁰ According to Orr, English interest in deism was beginning to ebb by the early 1740s as authors from this point forward failed to produce new ideas or arguments. Their writings mainly repackaged earlier themes.¹⁰¹ One instance of this repackaging is particularly noteworthy, for it was the posthumously published writings of Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke (1672–1751), which provoked Samuel Davies' ire.

Lord Bolingbroke's *Works* went to press in 1754 in four volumes. Orr has summarized their content thus: "Bolingbroke's works abound in destructive and unfriendly criticism of nearly everybody and everything he mentions but especially of the Bible, the Church Fathers and the clergy."¹⁰² Bolingbroke was more summative than inventive. He rejected Moses' account of the creation of the universe as inferior to that of

⁹⁸Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious*, 115–19.

⁹⁹John Toland, *Amyntor: Or, A Defence of Milton's Life* (London: n.p., 1699), 69–80.

¹⁰⁰Orr, *English Deism*, 122–44.

¹⁰¹Orr, *English Deism*, 149.

¹⁰²Orr, *English Deism*, 156.

Nicholas Copernicus (1473–1543), Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), Johann Kepler (1571–1630), and Isaac Newton (1643–1727).¹⁰³ He dismissed the prospect of the divine revelation of Scripture, calling men who supposed themselves inspired by God to be “mad.”¹⁰⁴ Bolingbroke also lampooned theology as making Christianity insensible.¹⁰⁵ He took particular umbrage to the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement of Christ.¹⁰⁶

In the colonies, deism spread more quietly. New England clergyman Cotton Mather (1663–1738) noted his concern at the spread of deism in England in 1701.¹⁰⁷ He further opposed deism in his *Reasonable Religion*, published in 1713 and also explicitly rejected Toland’s arguments in a 1716 tract, *Utilia*.¹⁰⁸ In 1732, Jonathan Dickinson took on the topic in his *The Reasonableness of Christianity* and later revisited the subject in *Familiar Letters upon a Variety of Religious Subjects*.¹⁰⁹ From 1747–1761, the years of Davies’ ministry and presidency, deism was becoming increasingly influential in North America. According to Morais, “Prior to 1784, the American deistic movement made no real effort to examine openly and critically ‘the revealed word of God.’”¹¹⁰ But during the

¹⁰³Henry St. John, *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1841), 495.

¹⁰⁴Henry St. John, *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1841), 381.

¹⁰⁵Henry St. John, *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1841), 6.

¹⁰⁶St. John, *Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, 4:6–15 and 302–06.

¹⁰⁷Cotton Mather, *American Tears upon the Ruines of the Greek Churches* (Boston: B. Green and J. Allen, 1701), 46. I am indebted to the work of Richard F. Lovelace for this reference. See his *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather: Origins of American Evangelicalism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1979), 42.

¹⁰⁸Lovelace, *American Pietism*, 52–53.

¹⁰⁹Jonathan Dickinson, *The Reasonableness of Christianity, in Four Sermons* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1732) and idem., *Familiar Letters upon a Variety of Religious Subjects*, 4th ed. (Glasgow: John Bryce, 1775).

¹¹⁰Herbert M. Morais, *Deism in Eighteenth Century America* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1933), 16.

mid-eighteenth century, men indispensable to America's future found intellectual satisfaction in deism.¹¹¹ Samuel Davies was not among these men.

Samuel Davies and Deism

Samuel Davies was familiar with deism from at least 1754.¹¹² He read Bolingbroke's *Works* in the spring of 1757 and summarized his views to a correspondent that April.¹¹³ Davies was impressed with Bolingbroke's "manly Style, and strong Imagination," but with little else.¹¹⁴ How could one applaud the religion of Jesus while simultaneously rejecting the religion of Moses upon which Jesus' teachings were founded?¹¹⁵ How could Bolingbroke consider Christianity a true religion revealed from God while attacking the very possibility of genuine divine revelation at the same time?¹¹⁶ How could Bolingbroke's "Christianity" flourish when it was devoid of prayer?¹¹⁷ In sum, Davies wrote, "I could defie his Lordship's strongest Advocate to point out one Thing

¹¹¹Among these notable was Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790), who had become an avowed deist by the late 1720s. See Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 84–88, for a helpful discussion of Franklin's religious sentiments. Further, in 1755, Massachusetts Attorney General Paul Dudley (1675–1752) endowed at Harvard lectures on religion named in his honor, which featured the topic of natural religion prominently. See G. Adolph Koch, *Republican Religion: The American Revolution and the Cult of Reason* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1933), 16. Also, the young Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) was growing in his appreciation of deism by the start of his college career at William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, from 1760–1762. I have omitted Thomas Paine (1737–1809) from this list because he came to accept deistic beliefs while living in England, before his arrival in North America in 1774.

¹¹²George William Pilcher, ed., *The Reverend Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753–55* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 72 and 113. Davies journal indicates that he "had a long Conversation with Samuel Dicker Esquire a notorious Deist" (72) and that he was troubled by the spread of deism among Presbyterian clergy (113).

¹¹³Samuel Davies, "A Recovered Tract of President Davies: Now First Published," in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 9 (1837): 349–64.

¹¹⁴Davies, "Recovered Tract," 351.

¹¹⁵Davies, "Recovered Tract," 353.

¹¹⁶Davies, "Recovered Tract," 353.

¹¹⁷Davies, "Recovered Tract," 354.

offered by his Lordship upon this Head, that has the Appearance of a solid Argument.”¹¹⁸

Davies had encountered deism well before this review.

As Bolingbroke’s *Works* summarized most all the arguments of his predecessors, and as Davies was acquainted with these works, they serve as an appropriate place to examine Davies’ interpretation of the Bible in light of alternative approaches with which he was familiar. Though one might contrast Bolingbroke and Davies on any number of subjects, the doctrine of Christ’s divinity provides an accessible point to measure the marked relief between their interpretive approaches.

Bolingbroke rejected the notion of Jesus’ divinity. More broadly, he found the doctrinal terminology of the Trinity “sometimes ambiguous and sometimes quite unintelligible.”¹¹⁹ He demurred the incarnation as “gross” and “obscene.”¹²⁰ He thought the New Testament silent on the matter: “Christ had nowhere called himself God. His apostles called him Lord. Peter had once declared him to be a man: and Paul preaching to the Athenians speaks of him rather as a man than as God.”¹²¹ First century Jews “would have been revolted against Christianity more than they were, if they had heard the man, whom they had seen crucified and buried, called God.”¹²² Bolingbroke summarized his view: “In short, the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was never taught explicitly and positively by any divine authority. It was a vague opinion in heathen theology, which intended no more, perhaps, than to personify the wisdom and goodness of the supreme omnipotent Being.”¹²³

¹¹⁸Davies, “Recovered Tract,” 357.

¹¹⁹St. John, *Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, 4:7.

¹²⁰St. John, *Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, 4:8–9.

¹²¹St. John, *Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, 4:9.

¹²²St. John, *Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, 4:10.

¹²³St. John, *Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, 4:11.

Davies, by contrast, could state that “the Denial of the Divinity of Xt. introduces an essential Innovation into the Xn. System.”¹²⁴ He affirmed the doctrines of the Trinity and Jesus’ divine nature knowing that this approach put him at odds with some among his contemporaries.¹²⁵ In his ordination vows, Davies had subscribed to the Westminster Confession, which certainly contained an “orthodox” doctrine of the Trinity:

In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.¹²⁶

The Confession also offered a strong statement on Christ’s deity:

The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.¹²⁷

Davies professed devotion to the “sacred Trinity,” linked this devotion to the Trinitarian baptismal formula of Matthew’s gospel, and expected such devotion from his congregants.¹²⁸ With particular regard to Jesus, Davies owned his ordination vows: “Being God and man, all the advantages of divinity and humanity centre in him, and render him more fit for this office [of universal judge] than if he were God only or man only.”¹²⁹ Jesus is “A God-man, divinity and humanity united in one person.”¹³⁰ Though

¹²⁴Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 113.

¹²⁵Davies, “Divine Authority and Sufficiency,” in *Sermons*, 1:96.

¹²⁶WCF 2.3.

¹²⁷WCF 7.2.

¹²⁸Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded of their Obligations,” in *Sermons*, 3:597.

¹²⁹Davies, “The Universal Judgment,” in *Sermons*, 1:522. Later in this sermon, Davies challenged “Deists and Infidels” to “dispute [Jesus’] divinity and the truth of his religion if you can” (524).

Davies had little appreciation for setting December 25th apart as a “holy day,” he took the opportunity to preach upon the glories of the incarnation, which he found majestic rather than crude.¹³¹

Samuel Davies was well aware of the variety of biblical genres and various literary devices employed by Scripture’s human writers; however, it is clear that he read the Bible in a literal manner.¹³² Though he was aware of alternative ways of reading Scripture, namely of downplaying or rejecting its supernatural elements, Davies rejected these approaches in favor of a decidedly conservative approach to the biblical text. His method of interpretation relied on careful exegesis of the Greek and Hebrew texts, which are scattered throughout his sermons.¹³³

Scripture as a Mean of Grace

Samuel Davies’ devotion to Scripture as God’s word was greater than a series of doctrinal propositions and interpretive strategies. He found Scripture of matchless

¹³⁰Samuel Davies, “The Divine Perfections Illustrated through the Sufferings of Christ,” in *Sermons*, 2:264.

¹³¹Samuel Davies, “A Christmas-Day Sermon,” in *Sermons*, 3:562–64. Davies offered multiple reasons as to why he did *not* observe Christmas as a divinely appointed sacred day (566–71). For the purposes of this chapter, it is noteworthy that he refused to sanctify Christmas Day because of Scripture: “Now that there is not the least appearance in all the Bible of the Divine appointment of Christmas, to celebrate the birth of Christ, is granted by all parties; and the Divine authority is not so much as pretended for it. Therefore, a Bible-Christian is not at all bound to observe it” (567).

¹³²Davies occasionally mentioned the genre of a particular sermon’s text. For example, he identified Luke 16:27–31 as a “parabolic dialogue.” See Davies, “Divine Inspiration and Authority,” in *Sermons*, 1:73. See also idem, “The Nature and Danger of Making Light of Christ and Salvation,” in *Sermons*, 1:230. He recognized that biblical authors used Jesus’ “blood” and “cross” as a synecdoche for the totality of his sufferings. See idem, “The Preaching of Christ Crucified the Mean of Salvation,” in *Sermons*, 1:630. These examples are illustrative, not exhaustive.

¹³³As nearly all of Davies’ sermon manuscripts are no longer extant, a detailed analysis of his sermonic composition is impossible. However, two of Davies’ manuscripts housed at Princeton indicate the precision with which he prepared his sermons. A sermon on Luke 14:27, missing from Davies’ collected works, began with the Greek text of his passage. Similarly, a sermon on 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20 began in the same manner, with the Greek text of the sermon written out in full. See Samuel Davies Collection, Firestone Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ. Davies also made frequent annotations in Greek in the margins of his English Bible. See Samuel Davies, New Testament, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

spiritual value: “The word of Christ has been the treasure, the support, and the joy of believers in all ages.”¹³⁴ While Davies’ exhortations to Christians for using various means of grace in pursuing communion with God will be addressed more completely in chapter 6, this section explores specific spiritual practices related to the Christian’s appropriation of the Bible in maintaining a vital life of faith. When instructing congregants in using various means to pursue holiness, Davies’ frequently mentioned disciplines which involved Scripture.¹³⁵

Public Means: Preaching and Hearing

While some historians remember Samuel Davies as a champion of religious toleration, an educator of slaves, and a college president, his chief vocation was as a preacher. To date no comprehensive study of Davies’ homiletics has appeared and such a study is beyond the scope of this dissertation.¹³⁶ Yet to understand Davies’ spirituality, one must examine the connections between proclamation and piety.

For Davies, preaching was vitally connected to the beginning and continuance of Christian spirituality. The laity were responsible for attending to the public preaching while the clergy must faithfully deliver the Word. The Westminster Directory of Publick Worship provided guidelines for the public reading and preaching of Scripture.¹³⁷

Davies articulated his thoughts on the responsibility of preachers in a 1759

¹³⁴Samuel Davies, “Christ Precious to all True Believers,” in *Sermons*, 1:384.

¹³⁵See Samuel Davies, “A Sermon on the New Year,” in *Sermons*, 2:207; idem, “Tender Anxieties,” in *Sermons*, 2:424; idem, “The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced,” in *Sermons*, 2:464–65; and idem, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:608.

¹³⁶For a recent doctoral dissertation that begins to develop Davies’ homiletic theology and method, see Charles Stewart Holloway, “The Homiletical Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Gilbert Tennent, and Samuel Davies” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008).

¹³⁷The Westminster Directory for Publick Worship (WDPW), *Of Publick Reading of the Holy Scriptures and Of Preaching of the Word*.

ordination sermon.¹³⁸ The sermon was given to exhort newly ordained ministers to preach the good news of Christ crucified. The gospel message of Christ's atoning death was singular in its transformative power. The gospel's "peculiar excellency" is "that it publishes a crucified Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour to a guilty, perishing world. It is its glorious peculiarity that it reveals a method of salvation every way honourable to God . . . and every way suitable to our necessities."¹³⁹ Ministers were to emulate the Apostle Paul for whom the gospel was the central theme of his preaching: "to instruct mankind in these [truths] is the great object of our ministry, and the unwearied labour of our lives."¹⁴⁰ Such preaching stands at the head of Christian spirituality because it "gives the strongest assurance to the guilty sons of men, that their offended God is reconcilable to them, and willing to receive them into favour again, upon their penitent return to him."¹⁴¹ The gospel proclaims hope and "the hope of acceptance is the spring of repentance and all attempts for reformation" among sinners.¹⁴² Further, such preaching "gives the most moving display of the love of God; and love is a strong attractive to repentance and obedience."¹⁴³

Here Davies placed preaching at both the genesis and continuance of the Christian life. Davies urged his hearers to use the "cross of Christ" as a "weapon to slay your sins, and break your hearts" that they might "place yourselves under the warm

¹³⁸Davies, "Preaching of Christ Crucified," in *Sermons*, 1:621–51. Near the sermon's conclusion, Davies added a note that the sermon was delivered "At a Presbytery in Augusta, April 25, 1759."

¹³⁹Davies, "Preaching of Christ Crucified," in *Sermons*, 1:621. Davies' theology of conversion is covered in more fully in chapter 4 below.

¹⁴⁰Davies, "Preaching of Christ Crucified," in *Sermons*, 1:621.

¹⁴¹Davies, "Preaching of Christ Crucified," in *Sermons*, 1:641.

¹⁴²Davies, "Preaching of Christ Crucified," in *Sermons*, 1:642.

¹⁴³Davies, "Preaching of Christ Crucified," in *Sermons*, 1:642.

beams of that love.”¹⁴⁴ Then, preaching the gospel “gives such a representation of the evil of sin, and the dreadful punishment due it, as naturally tends to turn sinners from it, and bring them to repentance.”¹⁴⁵ Finally, this sort of preaching “presents us with such a perfect pattern of obedience, as has at once the force of an example, and an inducement to holiness.”¹⁴⁶ Such preaching engendered a decidedly Christocentric spirituality:

Do we suspend all our hopes upon the cross of Christ? Do we glory in it above all other things? Do we feel our necessity of a Mediator in all our transactions with God, and depend entirely on the merit of his death for acceptance, sensible that we have no merit of our own to procure one smile from God. . . . Do our thoughts frequently hover and cluster about the cross with the tenderest affections?¹⁴⁷

Davies directed these questions to fellow preachers, yet this pattern of application was consistent with his sermons to lay congregants.

Davies’ sermons tend to follow the Puritan “plain style” of explaining a biblical text, identifying several doctrines arising from the text, and offering improvements (applications) to his hearers. As the following sampling of his sermon applications show, Davies’ regularly exhorted Christians to a deepening, Christ-focused piety.¹⁴⁸

After calling Christians to reject every human foundation for their faith and to recognize the unique “preciousness” of the foundation of Christ, Davies asked, “Where is your habitual dependence? Is it on Christ alone? or is it on something else? Do you not feel the need of strength, of spiritual life, of pardon, and righteousness, and eternal life?”¹⁴⁹ Davies also asked believers to take stock of God’s sanctifying work in their life:

¹⁴⁴Davies, “Preaching of Christ Crucified,” in *Sermons*, 1:643.

¹⁴⁵Davies, “Preaching of Christ Crucified,” in *Sermons*, 1:644.

¹⁴⁶Davies, “Preaching of Christ Crucified,” in *Sermons*, 1:645.

¹⁴⁷Davies, “Preaching of Christ Crucified,” in *Sermons*, 1:648.

¹⁴⁸The sermons that follow are representative of Davies’ preaching and demonstrate that he saw preaching as a key method of promoting vital spirituality among believers.

¹⁴⁹Davies, “Christ the Only Foundation,” in *Sermons*, 2:69.

“Has God hewn you . . . by his word, and broken off whatever was rugged, irregular, and unfit to be compacted into the building [of a spiritual temple]? Has he shaped and polished your souls for a place in it? Do you feel the divine Architect daily carrying on this work in you, polishing you more and more into a resemblance of Christ?”¹⁵⁰

Davies challenged young Christians to be wary of spiritual lethargy: “Even sincere Christians are too often apt to fall into negligence and security; they contract an indolent, dull, lazy temper, as to the duties of religion and divine things.”¹⁵¹ This state was often described as “sleep” for in the same way that natural sleep dulled one’s senses, “so this spiritual sleep indisposes the soul for the service of God and spiritual sensations.”¹⁵² Davies challenged his hearers to undertake the “important but neglected duty of self-evaluation” that they might be sensible and growing in grace.¹⁵³ He exhorted them to “take some hour of retirement” for self-reflection on whether they had used their time during the previous year profitably or not, and to dedicate themselves at the beginning of a new year,

by casting yourselves upon Jesus Christ and devoting yourselves for this new year entirely to him; resolved to live more on him than you have hitherto done, and depending upon him to conduct you safe through whatever this year may bring forth . . . this is the true and only means whereby we can attain that happiness we ought all to be in pursuit of: that pleasure which will never end.¹⁵⁴

This pursuit of pleasure was indeed a pursuit of piety.

Samuel Davies believed that one’s love of God was “essential to religion” and “necessary as a principle of obedience,” yet lamented that such love appeared to be so

¹⁵⁰Davies, “Christ the Only Foundation,” in *Sermons*, 2:69–70.

¹⁵¹Samuel Davies, “A New Year’s Gift,” in *Sermons*, 3:53. Davies delivered this sermon at the College of New Jersey on January 1, 1760, almost six months after he began his tenure as president of the school.

¹⁵²Davies, “A New Year’s Gift, in *Sermons*, 3:53.

¹⁵³Davies, “A New Year’s Gift, in *Sermons*, 3:55.

¹⁵⁴Davies, “A New Year’s Gift, in *Sermons*, 3:66.

rare among humanity.¹⁵⁵ He sought to help professing Christians evaluate their own affections toward God. First, anyone who maintained a natural enmity toward God marked by consistent unrepentant sin clearly did not love God.¹⁵⁶ Second, if professing Christians valued any created thing more highly than their creator such a disordered affection challenged their claim to truly love God:

Now if you love God *sincerely* at all, you love him *supremely*; you love him *above* all persons and things in the universe. To offer *subordinate* love to *supreme* perfection and excellency, what a gross affront! It is essential to the love of God, that it be prevalent, or habitually *uppermost* in your souls.¹⁵⁷

If a person gives priority to things other than God, such misplaced priorities provide no evidence of genuine love for God. Those who truly love God “will not only allow him chief place in your hearts, but you will show that you do . . . by your habitual practice.”¹⁵⁸ Next, “the love of God is not in you, if you do not labour for continual conformity to him.”¹⁵⁹ Such conformity is both duty and characteristic of true believers. “Thus if we love God, we shall naturally imitate him; we shall love what he loves, and hate what he hates. We shall imitate his justice, veracity, goodness, and mercy; or in a word, his holiness.”¹⁶⁰ Fifth, those who neglect God’s appointed ordinances of prayer, meditation, the Lord’s Supper, or of hearing God’s word preached show that they do not truly love God. To those who neglect secret and family prayer, Davies warned, “is it not evident that devotion is not your delight; and consequently not your daily practice? How then can you pretend, that the love of God dwells in you?”¹⁶¹ Davies offered these and other heart-

¹⁵⁵Samuel Davies, “Evidences of the Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:457.

¹⁵⁶Davies, “Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:460–62.

¹⁵⁷Davies, “Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:462.

¹⁵⁸Davies, “Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:464.

¹⁵⁹Davies, “Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:465.

¹⁶⁰Davies, “Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:466.

¹⁶¹Davies, “Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:466–67.

focused challenges to cause his audience to examine their own affections that their faith might be found genuine and that they might grow in piety.

Samuel Davies considered “hearing the word of God” as a religious duty for Christians.¹⁶² While such hearing normally occurred in an assembled congregation, Davies also expected that the heads of households within his congregations would read the Bible to their families.¹⁶³ Citing 1 Timothy 5:8, Davies exhorted men to care for the spiritual needs of “domestics,” specifically one’s “wife, children, and servants.”¹⁶⁴ This care was to follow the pattern of Deuteronomy 6:6–7 and consisted of the regular rehearsal of God’s words to instruct one’s children and household.¹⁶⁵ This pattern was reiterated in the New Testament in Colossians 3:16, which, in its immediate context, referred to the gathered church, but which Davies, following the church’s Directory for Family Worship, also enjoined upon families.¹⁶⁶

Private Means: Reading and Meditation

Hearing the Bible read and proclaimed was part of congregational spiritual exercises and domestic responsibilities, but public piety was only part of the Christian’s duty, for genuine spirituality thrived in a believer’s “secret” or personal duties.¹⁶⁷ For Davies, reading the Bible was a necessary and vital way of pursuing personal holiness.¹⁶⁸ He exhorted congregants to “read the word of God and other good books, with diligence,

¹⁶²Samuel Davies, “Sinners Entreated to be Reconciled to God,” in *Sermons*, 1:148.

¹⁶³Davies’ treatment of family worship is considered more fully in Chapter 6 below.

¹⁶⁴Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:76.

¹⁶⁵Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:91.

¹⁶⁶Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:91. See DFW, II and III.

¹⁶⁷See DFW, I.

¹⁶⁸Samuel Davies, “A Sermon on the New Year,” in *Sermons*, 2:207.

attention, and self-application.”¹⁶⁹ As his people read Scripture, God meets with them.¹⁷⁰ Reading Scripture might also stir the affections, as Davies recalled from his own reading of 1 Thessalonians 2: “I can remember the time, when the reading of [this chapter] has drawn tears even from [a] heart so hard as mine.”¹⁷¹ On the other hand, the neglect of reading Scripture often contributes to “cooling in religion.”¹⁷² The diligent reading of Scripture may also convince the unsaved sinner of their need for Christ.¹⁷³ Hearing and reading Scripture are a delight for Christians, because through these disciplines they enjoy filial and communal fellowship with God.¹⁷⁴

Samuel Davies expected Christians to meditate. He included meditation among various “duties of religion” and encouraged his hearers to make meditation a habitual practice.¹⁷⁵ He followed the Directory for Family Worship in this emphasis.¹⁷⁶ By meditating, believers were following Christ’s own practice of devotion.¹⁷⁷ Davies never defined “meditation” or offered specific details on its mechanics, nor did he describe his own practice of this discipline; rather he expected that his hearers were acquainted with this practice. Davies considered meditation to be an act of the mind that involved sustained, attentive reflection on God, his attributes, works, creation, and word, for the

¹⁶⁹Samuel Davies, “The Connection between Present Holiness and Future Felicity,” in *Sermons*, 1:281. His exhortation was consistent with the DPW’s concern for pastors to encourage their congregants to read the Bible.

¹⁷⁰Davies, “Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:464–65.

¹⁷¹Davies, “Love of Souls,” in *Sermons*, 3:501.

¹⁷²Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:608.

¹⁷³Davies, “Tender Anxieties,” in *Sermons*, 2:424.

¹⁷⁴Davies, “Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:464–65.

¹⁷⁵Davies, “Sinners Entreated,” in *Sermons*, 1:148. See also idem, “Present Holiness and Future Felicity,” in *Sermons*, 1:281, and idem, “A Sermon on the New Year,” in *Sermons*, 2:207.

¹⁷⁶DFW, I.

¹⁷⁷Samuel Davies, “The Sacred Import of the Christian Name,” in *Sermons*, 1:348.

purpose of stirring one's affections toward God.

Davies proposed several subjects upon which his hearers could affix their thoughts: God's infinite and saving love;¹⁷⁸ heaven and hell;¹⁷⁹ "the glories of God displayed in a crucified Jesus . . . the scheme of salvation through his blood";¹⁸⁰ as well as God's glory and kindness.¹⁸¹ During a fundraising voyage to England, he found the "various Phenomena of the ocean" to provide useful fuel for meditation.¹⁸² Davies also encouraged meditation upon Scripture: "Read, and hear, and meditate upon his word, till you know your danger and remedy."¹⁸³ Davies mentioned his own deliberate, meditative study of Romans.¹⁸⁴ By citing these objects, Davies placed himself within the Puritan tradition of meditation.¹⁸⁵ Yet Davies believed that even unbelievers who were spiritually dead could "meditate upon divine things," warning his hearers against adherence to spiritual disciplines as a sure indication of genuine faith.¹⁸⁶ Believers ought to meditate

¹⁷⁸Samuel Davies, "The Method of Salvation through Jesus Christ," in *Sermons*, 1:130–31.

¹⁷⁹Samuel Davies, "The Nature and Process of Spiritual Life," in *Sermons*, 1:194. Here Davies suggested subjects upon which believers ought to meditate by mentioning subjects upon which *unbelievers* may ponder without affect.

¹⁸⁰Samuel Davies, "The Divine Perfections Illustrated in the Method of Salvation, through the Sufferings of Christ," in *Sermons*, 2:273.

¹⁸¹ Davies, "Nature of Love to God," in *Sermons*, 2:480.

¹⁸²Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 145.

¹⁸³Samuel Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:167–68.

¹⁸⁴Samuel Davies, "The Nature of Justification, and the Nature and Concern of Faith in it," in *Sermons*, 2:663.

¹⁸⁵Although a survey of the discipline of meditation within the Puritan tradition is outside the scope of this dissertation, it is clear that the objects of meditation Davies mentioned are consistent with those recommended by Puritan authors for more than one hundred years prior to Davies' ministry. For a detailed summary of the Puritan meditative tradition, see Joel R. Beeke, *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 73–100. For a more recent treatment of Puritan meditation, see Tom Schwanda, *Soul Recreation: The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Puritanism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012).

¹⁸⁶Samuel Davies, "The Nature and Universality of Spiritual Death," in *Sermons*, 1:166.

before taking the Lord's Supper.¹⁸⁷ Davies believed that meditation afforded the believer delight and helped one to grow in holiness, which fueled happiness.¹⁸⁸

While Davies did not describe his *methods* of meditation, he recorded some the *fruits* of his practice in his poems, and these poems illustrate the linkage between reflection on Scripture and personal piety.¹⁸⁹ In a poem affixed to a sermon on Revelation 22:17, Davies mused on the spiritual refreshment of the gospel: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (AV).

Today the living streams of grace
Flow to refresh the thirsty soul:

Pardon and life and boundless bliss
In plenteous rivers round us roll.

Ho! ye that pine away and die,
Come, and your raging thirst allay:
Come all that will, here's rich supply;
A fountain that shall ne'er decay.

'Come ALL,' the blessed *Jesus* cries,
'Freely my blessings I will give.'
The spirit echoes back the voice,
And bids us freely drink and live.

The saints below, that do but taste,
and saints above, who drink at will,
Cry jointly, 'Thirsty sinners! haste,
and drink, the spring's exhaustless still.'

Let all that hear the joyful sound,
To spread it thro' the world unite;
From house to house proclaim it round,
Each man his fellow-man invite.

¹⁸⁷Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:167.

¹⁸⁸Samuel Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:278. See also Samuel Davies, "The One Thing Needful," in *Sermons*, 1:556.

¹⁸⁹Samuel Davies, *Collected Poems of Samuel Davies, 1723–1761*, ed. Richard Beale Davis (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1968), xix in the editor's introduction and iii in Davies' preface.

Like thirsty flocks, come let us go;
Come every colour, every age:
And while the living waters flow,
Let all their parching thirst assuage.¹⁹⁰

Here the “water of life” took on the character of “living streams,” “plenteous rivers,” and a lasting “fountain,” given to satisfy the spiritual thirst of sinners. This grace is offered without qualification for it is a “rich supply” that gives no hint of being exhausted and “all” may come to these waters. It is noteworthy that the “all” was truly inclusive of persons from every race. Davies used imagery drawn from the realm of nature to illustrate spiritual truths.

In another poetic meditation, Davies contemplated God’s holiness as a motive for human affection.

Come, Holy Spirit! Come, enflame
Our lukewarm Hearts with Sacred Fire:
May all our Passions, to Thy Name,
In Transports most refin’d aspire.

May Love sublime our Hearts possess,
From every selfish Mixture free,
Fir’d with the Charms of Holiness,
The Beauty of Divinity.

Thus in the glorious Worlds on high,
Where Holiness is most ador’d,
Th’ Angelic Choirs incessant cry,
‘Thrice HOLY, HOLY, HOLY LORD!’

Refine our Hearts, inspire our Tongue,
And We in humble Notes below
Will imitate the heav’nly Song,
And eccho ‘HOLY, HOLY,’ too.¹⁹¹

In this meditation, Davies invoked the Holy Spirit’s affective work, much as the classical poets might have invoked the muse. Yet the Spirit’s work here is to equip the saints for

¹⁹⁰Samuel Davies, “[The Fountain],” in *Collected Poems of Samuel Davies*, ed. Davis, 203. Davies included a note that this poem was “Annexed to a Sermon on Rev. XXII.17. April 9, 1753.” This sermon is no longer extant.

¹⁹¹Samuel Davies, “Love to God for His Holiness,” in *Collected Poems*, ed. Davis, 100–01. This poem was associated with 1 John 4:16, in a sermon which Davies preached on December 2, 1750. This sermon is no longer extant.

worship by giving them a pure vision of God’s total purity, a vision drawn from the biblical imagery of Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4–5 where heavenly worshippers behold God’s holiness and overflow with praise. In both examples of Davies’ meditation, biblical passages, theological doctrines, and natural observations join to create powerful imagery to stir one’s heart for devotion.

Psalmody

Though references in his writings are scarce, Samuel Davies found the practice of singing the Psalter to be an especially edifying one. In September 1753, while lodging with Aaron Burr, Sr. (1716–1757), then president of the College of New Jersey, Davies recorded in his diary that he “attended in the Evening on a Meeting for Psalmody, and was much charmed with the power of Harmony.”¹⁹² Davies urged families to sing the Psalms as regular expressions of praise: “As to family praise, it is a duty, because thanksgiving is so often joined with prayer in Scripture . . . and psalmody must be owned the most proper method of expressing thankfulness by such as own it a part of divine worship.”¹⁹³ He also recognized that psalmody brought a particular “delight” to enslaved Africans among his congregations, and that many slaves were especially musically inclined.¹⁹⁴ The Westminster Confession called Christians to sing the Psalms as part of their regular worship, as did the church’s Directory for Publick Worship.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, by during the 1750s, the decade of Davies’ ministry, psalmody had already been part of the

¹⁹²Pilcher, ed., *The Reverend Samuel Davies Abroad*, 16.

¹⁹³Davies, “Family Worship,” in *Sermons*, 2:91.

¹⁹⁴Samuel Davies, *Letters from the Rev. Samuel Davies shewing the state of religion in Virginia, particularly among the Negroes. Likewise an extract of a letter from a gentlemen in London to his friend in the country, containing some observations on the same* (London: R. Pardon, 1757), 12.

¹⁹⁵WCF 21.5; DPW, *Of Singing of Psalms*. Curiously, the DFW did not enjoin psalmody upon families.

worship of the Reformed churches for over 200 years.¹⁹⁶

John Calvin's (1509–1564) *Geneva Psalter* of 1542 shaped worship in the Reformed tradition, especially among the English and the Scots, who largely ignored hymnody until the late seventeenth century.¹⁹⁷ During Davies' lifetime, Colonial Presbyterians had no prescribed psalm book; some used the Scottish Psalter while others preferred the *Bay Psalm Book*.¹⁹⁸ Davies likely advocated for the use of Isaac Watts' (1674–1748) *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* as Davies admired Watts' paraphrases and original compositions.¹⁹⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Bible was foundational to Samuel Davies' theology and vision of genuine Christian spirituality. It was the authoritative fount of his theology and the reliable aid for his piety. One of the principle uses of the Bible was to give Christian's directions for drawing near to God. The Bible shaped Davies' view of ultimate reality: of the nature and person of God; of God's works of creation, judgment, redemption, and consummation; of unseen beings and powers; and of unseen punishments and rewards. Scripture provided a sufficient framework for "life and godliness" (cf. 2 Peter 1:3). For Davies, spiritual life was not something that one discovered; it was a new creation, a distinct work of God marked by one's conversion.

¹⁹⁶Paul Conkin's brief statement is apt: "The Reformed musical heritage is complex." Because of this complexity, the following survey omits a discussion of psalmody and hymnody in the Lutheran tradition, which is itself a rich study. See Paul K. Conkin, *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 199.

¹⁹⁷Conkin, *Uneasy Center*, 199–200. Conkin notes that traditional English and Scottish Psalters did contain some hymns. On the nearly exclusive use of psalmody among Colonial Presbyterians, see Morton H. Smith, "The History of Worship in Presbyterian Churches," in *The Worship of God: Reformed Concepts of Biblical Worship* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 76–79.

¹⁹⁸Conkin, *Uneasy Center*, 204.

¹⁹⁹Davies admiration for Isaac Watts is discussed more fully in chap. 2 above.

CHAPTER 4

CONVERSION: THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

What is it to be born again? To gain your attention to this inquiry, I need only put you in mind, that whatever be meant by the new birth, it is not an insignificant speculation, not the disputed peculiarity of a party, not the attainment of a few good men of the first class, but it is essential to every good man, and absolutely necessary to salvation. You cannot doubt of this, if you look upon Jesus Christ as a person of common veracity, and worthy of credit in his most solemn declarations; for he has declared over and over again, with the utmost solemnity, that *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.*¹

Samuel Davies was persuaded that the Bible located the beginning of spiritual life at the point of regeneration. For Davies, Christianity was an interior religion not determined by mere external ritual nor outward practice, but rather by the hidden, enlivening work of God upon one's heart. Davies' theology of conversion was shaped by historic Presbyterianism, a body of Puritan literature, and the practice of contemporary eighteenth-century ministers. This chapter explores the influence of these various sources on Samuel Davies' own theology of conversion and its implications for Christian spirituality. This exploration will show that Samuel Davies' theology of conversion was decidedly shaped by certain Puritan authors.

Conversion in the Westminster Confession of Faith

The Westminster Confession of Faith provided Davies with a trustworthy exposition of the Christian life, and thus serves as the appropriate starting point for investigating the sources of Davies' theology of conversion. The Confession addressed

¹Samuel Davies, "The Nature and Author of Regeneration," in *Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Davies, A.M. President of the College of New Jersey*, vol. 2 (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1854, repr. 1993), 483–84. This work will be henceforth cited as *Sermons*.

conversion first of all under the heading of free will: “Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”² Here the Confession emphasized the total inability of people to relate to God aright and presented a bleak picture for humanity, identifying sin as the source of this disordered relationship. “Sin” is not merely specific acts of commission or omission, but rather the “state of sin,” so all-encompassing that it is described as death. Yet the Westminster divines did not leave the sinner without hope:

When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, He frees him from his natural bondage under sin; and, by His grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so, as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he does not perfectly, or only, will that which is good, but does also will that which is evil.³

Where the former article emphasized human inability, this article celebrated God’s gracious sovereignty in saving sinners. The Confession identified salvation as a monergistic divine work: God converted sinners, changed their natural fallen state for a supernatural state of grace, freed them from sin’s bondage, and renewed their wills. Yet the statement also balanced God’s free and unhindered work with humanity’s finite capacity. Though spiritually renewed, people lived imperfect Christian lives during their earthly pilgrimage.⁴

The Westminster Confession of Faith presented an *ordo salutis* that followed a logical rather than strictly temporal arrangement.⁵ Following its articulation of free will,

²WCF 9.3.

³WCF 9.4.

⁴WCF 9.5 promised complete renewal for the believer only after death: “The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only.”

⁵Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009), 245–46.

the Confession addressed effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, saving faith, repentance, works, perseverance, and assurance.⁶ Though this arrangement corresponded generally to the experience of Christian conversion, some elements might be temporally displaced. For example, in classic Protestant theology, justification and adoption denote a legal status that follows effectual calling, but may not be *experienced* by converts until the exercise of saving faith and repentance. Similarly, faith and repentance are notoriously difficult to divide in terms of the believer's experience of salvation. Further, assurance, which the Confession associated with the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, might be immediate or gradual and is prone to fluctuation during one's lifetime.⁷

The Confession's treatment of effectual calling definitely shaped Davies' theology of conversion:

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.⁸

Davies' preaching exemplified his confidence that the "Word and Spirit" were means through which God converted sinners. In his sermons, the imagery of spiritual enlightenment, renewed understanding, and a new heart were expressed clearly. Although the Westminster Confession of Faith sets forth a formal statement of Davies' theology of conversion, he was also shaped by various pastors whom he knew as close mentors and contemporaries but mostly through their writings.

⁶WCF 10–18. Glorification is addressed in WCF 32.

⁷WCF 18.2–4. The topic of assurance will be treated more full in chap. 6 below.

⁸WCF 10.1.

Conversion in Puritan and Early Evangelical Theology

When Samuel Davies wrote Joseph Bellamy (1719–1790) in 1751, he described his pastoral ministry in Virginia, noting specifically the work of conversion:

It may suffice in general to observe, that abstracting peculiar Appendages, and in different Circumstances, the Work of Conversion here has been generally carried on in those Steps that are described by experimental Divines, as *Alliene, Shepherd, Stoddard, Flavel, &c.* And there's nothing confirms me more in the Truth of their Notions of experimental Piety, than the Universal Uniformity and Agreement in Substance of the Exercises of those that can make the fairest Claim to saving Grace, however different their Residences, Education, external Means, &c. be.⁹

Davies' testimony highlights the place which conversion held in his theology. First, conversion was crucial to his ministry. Bellamy had encouraged Davies to publish a narrative of his Virginia mission, which was originally a piece of personal correspondence.¹⁰ Davies published the letter that it might "not only gratify good People, but (as you give me Reason to hope) animate their Prayers for us, and also encourage Preachers to come into these Parts."¹¹ After a lengthy recounting of the geography of Virginia and a history of the gospel's spread therein, Davies turned to his pastoral work and provided sundry examples of people who had experienced genuine heart transformation.¹² His desire for the prayers of the people of New England and for a fresh influx of ministers was owing to the great spiritual need among the people of Virginia, the vast majority of whom, in Davies' estimation, were spiritually benighted and whose only remedy was the gospel.

In the second place, Davies' statement reveals that he believed conversion

⁹Samuel Davies, *The State of Religion among the Protestant Dissenters in Virginia; In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bellamy, of Bethlehem, in New-England: from the Reverend Mr. Samuel Davies, V. D. M. in Hanover County, Virginia* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1751), 25.

¹⁰William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical*, 2nd series (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1856), 42. Apparently Bellamy had requested Davies publish an account of his missionary work in Virginia, yet Davies was unacquainted with Boston ministers and sent the letter to Bellamy for publication.

¹¹Davies, *State of Religion*, 3.

¹²Davies, *State of Religion*, 4–25.

occurred in something of an established manner, or in his word, “those Steps that are described by experimental Divines.”¹³ For Davies, conversion took a particular shape and had certain characteristic hallmarks. Then, the manner of conversion and its hallmarks were hardly novel; they had been described by certain “experimental” theologians whose works were presumably well-known to Bellamy and more broadly among Christians and ministers in New England, and whose theologies and practices were well-received.¹⁴ Davies hoped that by publishing this letter, he would attract ministers to Virginia who had a similar view of the importance and work of conversion, a fact highlighted by his attempts to have Jonathan Edwards join him in Virginia.¹⁵

Finally, Davies’ own pastoral experience confirmed for him the soundness of various Puritan theologians’ writings on conversion. These divines, removed from Davies by time and location, described a pattern of heart transformation which he found reliable and repeatable, even in the remote parts of Virginia. Perhaps Davies also found them agreeable because of the influences of his own theological mentors and contemporaries. What were these “Notions of experimental piety” that Davies found so widespread? How did these notions influence Davies’ own theology? Though Davies certainly read more broadly than the four Puritan theologians he mentioned to Bellamy, and though Puritan theologies of conversion were somewhat diverse, these writers provide a helpful context for understanding Davies’ own theology of conversion.

¹³Davies, *State of Religion*, 25.

¹⁴In Davies’ listing of particular “experimental Divines,” he included two prominent New England clergy, Thomas Shepard (1605–1649) and Solomon Stoddard (1643–1729) in the middle of two English theologians, Joseph Alleine (1634–1668; Davies misspelled his name as Alliene) and John Flavel (1628–1691). Although one ought not make too much of this list, it is interesting that he includes two well-respected New England Congregationalists in the midst of a treatise which was designed for publication in Boston and which sought to recruit New England clergy to come to Virginia.

¹⁵ Foote, *Sketches of Virginia*, 41. Davies wrote Bellamy and asked him to appeal to Edwards in person. Davies’ admiration for Edwards is apparent: “Of all the men I know in America, he appears to me the most fit for this place; and if he could be obtained on no other condition, I would cheerfully resign him my place, and cast myself into the wide world once more” (41).

Joseph Alleine (1634–1668)

Joseph Alleine “openly began to run his Christian Race” around the age of eleven.¹⁶ His older brother Edward had been a minister and following Edward’s death, Joseph expressed a desire for the service of the church. Joseph began preparing for the ministry at Lincoln College, Oxford, around age fifteen. By 1651 he had moved to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he completed his Bachelor of Arts two years later. In 1655, at the age of twenty, he began to assist the vicar of St. Mary Magdalene Church, Taunton.

The vicar, George Newton, recalled Alleine fondly and afforded the young minister opportunities for preaching and public prayer, but noted that Joseph excelled in the more personal work of house-to-house ministry, especially catechetical instruction.¹⁷ Alleine was accused of breaking the Act of Uniformity in 1662, ejected from the church, and imprisoned for continuing to preach.¹⁸ His wife recalled his passion for sinners: “He was very urgent with those that were Unconverted, to look with more care after their Salvation.”¹⁹ Alleine was in and out of prison from 1662–1665, and during his intervals of freedom, he exhausted himself in preaching sometimes up to four times a day.²⁰ His body broken by strenuous labor for the gospel, he died 1668, at the age of 34.

Alleine’s most enduring and influential work, published posthumously, first appeared under the title *An Alarm to the Unconverted* in 1671. After its initial printing,

¹⁶The earliest biography of Alleine is that written by his wife. See Theodosia Alleine, *The Life and Death of Mr. Joseph Alleine, Late Teacher of the Church at Taunton, in Sommersetshire, Assistant to Mr. Newton, Whereunto are Annexed Diverse Christian Letters of His, Full of Spiritual Instructions tending to the Promoting of the power of Godliness, both in Persons, and Families* (London: n.p., 1672), 29.

¹⁷Alleine, *Life and Death*, 43–48.

¹⁸Alleine, *Life and Death*, 63–65.

¹⁹Alleine, *Life and Death*, 66.

²⁰Alleine, *Life and Death*, 66–70.

which sold 200,000 copies, the title was changed to *A Sure Guide to Heaven*.²¹ Alleine sought to correct common mistakes about conversion (chap. 1) and to plead its necessity and nature (chaps. 2–3). He addressed unconverted sinners, showing them marks of their spiritual condition and warning them of its attendant miseries (chaps. 4–5), and offered directions for and motives to conversion (chaps. 6–7).

Conversion was not simply assuming the designation “Christian” nor was it synonymous with water baptism.²² Conversion also went beyond morality, external piety, and rule keeping.²³ Rather, conversion “lies in the thorow change both of the heart, and life.”²⁴ Though the Father and Son are involved in conversion, it is chiefly the work of the Holy Spirit, never a human endeavor: “Never think thou canst convert thy self. If ever thou wouldst be savingly converted, thou must despair of doing it in thy own strength.”²⁵ Internally, conversion was the work of God’s free grace while externally it was accomplished by “the merit and intercession of the blessed Jesus.”²⁶ The gospel minister was the instrument of conversion and conversion’s ultimate end was God’s glory.²⁷

Conversion affected the whole person. It focused one’s mind on God and his glory and away from self; it altered the intention of one’s will that Christ might become preeminent and that one might freely choose to follow Jesus; it changed the affections

²¹Joseph Alleine, *A Sure Guide to Heaven: or An Earnest Invitation to Sinners to turn to God, in order to their Eternal Salvation. Shewing the thoughtful Sinner what he must do to be saved* (London: Bible and Three Crowns, 1689). Regarding the history of publication, see Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 22–23.

²²Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 6–11.

²³Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 12–16.

²⁴Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 16.

²⁵Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 16–17.

²⁶Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 17–19.

²⁷Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 19–21.

such that one now hoped in Christ and not earthly gain, desired grace instead of gold, rejoiced in God's word rather than wealth, cared for the soul more than the body, feared displeasing God rather than his own ruin; and loved the crucified Christ as his beloved bride.²⁸ Conversion also affected one's body, not through some inherent physical change, but through the washing of renewal (cf. Titus 3). Eyes no longer coveted, ears were now closed to Satan's call, the mind was concerned with more glorious subjects, the heart turned from lusts, and the mouth turned from corrupt speech to grace-seasoned tones.²⁹ As the body changed, so did one's habits and practices.³⁰

Alleine offered five reasons why conversion was necessary: first, because people are created for God's glory and cannot glorify God so long as they remain in their sins, conversion is necessary to ensure that their life is not lived in vain.³¹ Then, because humans are created as God's vice-regents upon earth, their spiritual condition affects the entire created order: the world cannot be truly glorious until mankind is set aright spiritually.³² Third, while one remains unconverted, "all thy religious performances will be but lost; for they can neither please God . . . nor save thy soul."³³ Further, the unconverted soul is without hope in this world and in the next.³⁴ Finally, "without [conversion], all that Christ hath done and suffered will be (as to you) in vain . . . that is, it will no way avail to your salvation."³⁵

The book's reissued title, *A Sure Guide to Heaven*, most aptly captured

²⁸Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 22–28.

²⁹Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 28–29.

³⁰Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 30–32.

³¹Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 49–51.

³²Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 53–54.

³³Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 54.

³⁴Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 55–59.

³⁵Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 59.

Alleine's "Directions for conversion" found in chapter 6. He wrote pastorally, as if he were speaking to the reader face-to face. Readers were to reflect on the impossibility of entering heaven while remaining unconverted, to "labour to get a thorough sight and lively sense and feeling of thy sins" by meditating on the sheer volume of their sins, on the distance these sins placed between themselves and God, and also on the just recompense due because of these transgressions.³⁶ They were to continually bring to mind their "present misery": "O study thy misery, till thy heart do cry out for Christ, as earnestly, as ever a drowning man did for a Boat, or the wounded for a Chirurgeon."³⁷ As readers reflected upon their desperate state, they were to remind themselves that they were powerless in and of themselves to alter this state and thus to renounce their sins, turning to God alone for rescue.³⁸

In Alleine's work, Davies would have found a young non-conformist minister passionate for the salvation of souls. Davies would have also seen the repeated encouragement to use means in pursuing one's conversion. Alleine was sure of God's sovereignty in salvation and his all-sufficient resources to save all who would come to him. He was certain that nominal Christianity lacked saving power, that people left to their own natural condition could never warrant nor secure salvation, that they must be born again (cf. John 3:3). While Alleine's treatment of conversion is the simplest of those Davies cited, it was undoubtedly influential as Davies reiterated these basic elements of conversion throughout his sermons.

John Flavel (1628–1691)

John Flavel's father, Richard, was a Presbyterian minister who died as a

³⁶Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 113–18.

³⁷Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 121. Here Alleine used the phrase "Chirurgeon," which in contemporary parlance is "surgeon."

³⁸Alleine, *Sure Guide to Heaven*, 122–35.

prisoner of the state for his religious convictions.³⁹ John went to University College, Oxford, where he prepared for ministry. His first appointment came in 1650 to Diptford. Here his first wife and child died during labor; he remarried in 1656. That same year, Flavel became minister in Dartmouth, a ministry marked by many conversions.⁴⁰ He felt the effects of the Act of Uniformity, being ejected by authorities in 1662 for nonconformity, yet he maintained a regular and secret pattern of preaching to his congregants in woods, on beaches, and on islands.⁴¹ Following the Declaration of Indulgence (1672), Flavel returned to Dartmouth, now a licensed Congregationalist.⁴² Flavel gave diligent attention to cultivating personal godliness through the means of meditation and prayer and enjoyed a strong preaching ministry, but his writing ministry of the 1670s–1680s was also fruitful. His *Works* went through several printings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Banner of Truth reprint of his works comprises six volumes of over 3,000 pages and includes sermons, tracts, and treatises.⁴³

Among Flavel’s writings, *The Method of Grace* provides the author’s most detailed treatment of conversion.⁴⁴ The treatise consisted of six parts: the application and effecting of redemption, motives to draw sinners to Christ, the benefits purchased by

³⁹Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 245.

⁴⁰Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 245. One noteworthy example of Flavel’s powerful ministry is the conversion of Luke Short. At age fifteen, Short heard Flavel preach in Dartmouth from 1 Cor 16:22: “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.” Eighty-five years later, Short, now living in New England, remembered this sermon and experienced deep conviction over a long lifetime of sin and was converted at the age of 100. I am indebted to Michael Haykin for this reference, which can be found in Robert Murray M’Cheyne, *The Works of the Late Rev. Robert Murray M’Cheyne, Complete in Two Volumes* (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), 2:221–22. For further analysis of Flavel’s piety, see Adam Embry, ed., “An Honest, Well Experienced Heart”: *The Piety of John Flavel* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

⁴¹Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 247.

⁴²Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 247.

⁴³John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel*, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968).

⁴⁴John Flavel, *The Method of Grace in the Gospel Redemption*, in *The Works of John Flavel*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 3–474.

Christ for believers, things which ordinarily precede conversion, distinctions between true and nominal Christians, and finally the present and future state of the unconverted. Each of the books six parts contains several chapters and each chapter is a sermon framed upon a biblical text, chosen predominately (though not exclusively) from John's Gospel or Paul's letters to the Romans, Ephesians, or Corinthians.

Flavel addressed his readers: "It is thy *one thing necessary* to get a cleared interest in Jesus Christ; which being once obtained, thou mayest face the storm with boldness and say, come troubles and distresses, losses and trials, prisons and death, I am provided for you; do your worst, you can do me no harm."⁴⁵ Flavel emphasized the doctrines of regeneration and adoption and noted that these doctrines allow one to stand secure in God. He hoped that the "stranger to *regeneration* . . . a person that makes a *powerless profession* of Christ" might "meet with something that will convince thee how dangerous a thing it is to be an old creature in a new creature's dress and habit" and that "God may help thee to put on Christ, as well as the name of Christ."⁴⁶

For Flavel, regeneration was "one of the greatest, and most noble effects of the [Holy] Spirit upon our souls."⁴⁷ He appealed to 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." One's "being in Christ" did not mean "a general profession of Christianity, which gives a man a *reputation* of an interest in him; but by being in Christ, he means an interest in him, by *vital union* with his person, and real participation of his benefits."⁴⁸ The one who experienced this vital union was "renewed by gracious principles, newly infused into him from above, which sway him and guide

⁴⁵Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:12.

⁴⁶Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:13.

⁴⁷Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:345.

⁴⁸Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:345.

him in another manner, and to another end than ever he acted before.”⁴⁹ These gracious principles were not simple refinements of one’s character, rather “infused *de novo*, from above.”⁵⁰

Flavel found parallels between the biblical account of creation and the work of regeneration: “The same almighty Author who created the world, createth also this work of grace in the soul of man.”⁵¹ He believed that the Spirit’s illuminating work on sin-darkened minds (cf. Col 3:10) mirrored the creation of light (cf. Gen 1:3).⁵² Then, as God created the world *ex nihilo*, so the Spirit’s saving actions constituted “a new work of creation.”⁵³ Indeed, as the Spirit moved upon the waters like a brooding hen over her eggs (cf. Gen 1:2), so “a quickening influence must come from the Spirit of God, or else the new creation can never be formed in us.”⁵⁴ Further, just as “the word of God was the instrument of the first creation (cf. Ps 33:6, 9), so Christians are born again by the instrument of the word (cf. 1 Pet 1:23 and Jas 1:18).”⁵⁵

Conversion apart from supernatural regeneration was impossible, for regeneration brought spiritual life (cf. 1 John 3:14), a tender soul (cf. Heb 9:14), and a transformed “practice and conversation” (cf. Eph 2:1-3, 1 Cor 6:11, and 1 Pet 4:4).⁵⁶ Flavel insisted that “there is an absolute necessity of the new creature to all that expect interest in Christ, and the glory to come, since all the characters, marks, and signs of such

⁴⁹Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:346.

⁵⁰Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:346.

⁵¹Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:348.

⁵²Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:348.

⁵³Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:348.

⁵⁴Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:348.

⁵⁵Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:349.

⁵⁶Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:349–50.

an interest, are constantly taken from the new creature wrought in us.”⁵⁷ Thus, “purity of heart,” “holiness in both principle and practice,” “mortification of sin,” and “longing for Christ’s appearance” all arose from regeneration.⁵⁸

While regeneration was a sovereign work of God by the Holy Spirit, certain preparatory means normally preceded it.⁵⁹ Flavel stated “that there is no coming ordinarily to Christ without the application of the law to our consciences, in a way of effectual conviction.”⁶⁰ While God’s law could not justify sinners, it could “convince us, and so prepare us for Christ.”⁶¹ Because “unregenerate persons are generally full of groundless confidence and cheerfulness, though their condition be sad and miserable,” they needed to be convinced of their desperate condition, for which the law of God was a powerful instrument.⁶²

Flavel made fine distinctions between those upon whom God worked conviction using the imagery of gestation. He compared some under the initial work of conviction to “embryos” and encouraged them to accept the spiritual distress they surely felt: “O! it is better to weep, tremble, and be distressed now, than to mourn without hope forever.”⁶³ Flavel compared those who had been converted to “complete births of the Spirit,” indicating that the pain of the law had been shown to be for their benefit, certain that the God who wounded them had also bound their wounds.⁶⁴

⁵⁷Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:357.

⁵⁸Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:357.

⁵⁹For a recent analysis of John Flavel’s preparationism, see Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Prepared by Grace, for Grace: The Puritans on God’s Ordinary Way of Leading Sinners to Christ* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013), 177–90.

⁶⁰Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:287.

⁶¹Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:287.

⁶²Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:288, and 293.

⁶³Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:304.

⁶⁴Flavel, *Method of Grace*, in *Works*, 2:305.

In Flavel, Davies would have found the necessity of regeneration and conversion not only asserted but argued with dozens of Scripture proofs. Like Alleine, Flavel warned readers of the danger of claiming the name of Christian apart from the real, divine work of God upon one's soul. Flavel's discussion of preparatory means was longer and more nuanced than Alleine's, but both men asserted that God's normal pattern of conversion began temporally prior to the believer's experience of the new birth and that such work was indispensable.

Thomas Shepard (1605–1649)

By the time Thomas Shepard emigrated to New England in 1635, he had earned two degrees from Cambridge and had been an ordained minister for the better part of a decade. His life had been far from easy.⁶⁵ Shepard was born in Northamptonshire in 1605, the youngest of nine siblings. By the age of ten he had lost both his parents, first his mother, then his father, and suffered neglect at the hands of a disinterested stepmother. Entrusted to his older brother's care, Shepard flourished, entering Emmanuel College, Cambridge, at fifteen.⁶⁶ Though he squandered his early years at Cambridge in drunkenness, Shepard sat under the deeply affective preaching of John Preston (1587–1628), where he was awakened spiritually by a sermon of Preston on 1 Corinthians 1:30, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”⁶⁷ Shepard's awakening came as the culmination of an intense, protracted period of remorse for his sin, and his conversion

⁶⁵John Albro, *Life of Thomas Shepard*, in *The Sincere Convert and the Sound Believer* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853; repr. Soli Deo Gloria, 1999), xi, xxix. See also Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 524–26. Shepard earned the BA in 1723/24 and the MA in 1727.

⁶⁶Thomas Shepherd, “The Autobiography,” in *God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge*, rev. ed., ed. Michael McGiffert (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 39–41, 72. See also Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 524.

⁶⁷Shepard, “Autobiography,” 47. See also Albro, *Life of Shepard*, xxviii.

was neither “a speedy or an easy work.”⁶⁸ The Anglican Church ordained him as deacon, then priest, in 1627 at Peterborough, and he ministered in Earls Colne, Essex from 1627 to 1630.⁶⁹

Harassed by William Laud (1573–1645) and his surrogates for nonconformity, Shepard settled in Yorkshire where he soon married. Under increasing pressure from religious authorities, Shepard and his family made a failed attempt to sail for Boston in 1634, a voyage that they completed successfully a year later.⁷⁰ They settled in Newtown (Cambridge), Massachusetts.⁷¹ Within four months of their arrival, Shepard’s wife, Margaret, died.⁷² He had been installed as pastor of Newtown’s Congregational Church and was now left bereaved to care for the souls of this congregation as well as that of his infant son, also named Thomas. Shepard stayed in Newtown for the remainder of his life. In 1636, Shepard was influential in the founding of Harvard College and assisted in raising funds for scholarships.⁷³ He supported missionary work among Native American peoples, notably through his friend John Eliot (1604–1690).⁷⁴ Shepard played a role in the *Cambridge Platform* of 1648 that defined congregational polity for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As early as 1640, Shepherd had expressed serious reservations about the state of the community in Newtown and even his own desire to

⁶⁸Albro, *Life of Shepard*, xxii–xxiii.

⁶⁹Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 525.

⁷⁰Shepherd, “Autobiography,” 35–39. Shepard addressed the autobiography to his son: “To my dear son Thomas Shepard with whom I leave these records of God’s great kindness to him, not knowing that I shall live to tell them myself with my own mouth, so that he may learn to know and love the great and most high God, the God of his father.” Thomas Shepard and his wife Margaret had lost a first son, also named Thomas, during the failed voyage of 1634 (35–36) and named their second son, the recipient of this autobiography, in his older brother’s honor (36).

⁷¹Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 525–26.

⁷²Shepard, “Autobiography,” 38.

⁷³Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 104.

⁷⁴Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, 527.

remain in ministry.⁷⁵ Within a year he was dead.

In the late 1630s, Shepard became a key voice of opposition during the Antinomian Controversy, which erupted over the preaching of Boston Congregationalist pastor John Cotton (1584–1652) as set forth by his ardent lay supporter Anne Hutchinson (1591–1643).⁷⁶ The issues of conversion and piety were central to the controversy. Holifield has well-summarized the doctrinal question for the controversy: “whether sanctification provided evidence of justification.”⁷⁷

Cotton taught that sanctification provided no sure evidence that one’s faith was genuine. Rather, one must wait for an immediate knowledge of one’s standing before God given by the Holy Spirit. Hutchinson, who had been part of John Cotton’s congregation in England before following him to New England, defended her pastor in lay meetings held in her Boston home. She rejected the preaching of the law, a hallmark of those Massachusetts Congregationalists who opposed Cotton. Shepard and fellow Massachusetts ministers Thomas Hooker (1586–1647) and Peter Bulkeley (1583–1659) were vehement in their opposition to the views of Cotton and Hutchinson. These ministers argued that the Spirit worked through Scripture, not apart from the word, and that biblical promises of holiness could provide a reliable basis for assurance of salvation. The controversy culminated in a congregational trial in which Hutchinson was banished from Massachusetts.⁷⁸ It is within this context that Shepard’s writings on conversion must be considered. Though Davies did not specify which of Shepard’s writings he valued,

⁷⁵Pettit, *The Heart Prepared*, 104.

⁷⁶Shepard, “Autobiography,” 67–70. Shepard’s account of the controversy is one-sided. For a balanced summary of the controversy, see E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 44–48. For a recent scholarly interpretation of the controversy that favors Cotton and Hutchinson, see Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

⁷⁷Holifield, *Theology in America*, 44.

⁷⁸Holifield, *Theology in America*, 48.

three of Shepard's works addressed the topic of conversion directly and became classics among Puritans after their publication.

The first of these works was *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, which consisted of sermons Shepard preached to his Newtown congregation from 1636–1640.⁷⁹ Shepard understood the minister's work "to woo for Christ, and so to present chaste virgins for Christ."⁸⁰ Shepard's sermons follow two main divisions: Matthew 25:1–5, which focused on the church's preparation to receive Jesus and 25:6–12, which announced Christ's return.⁸¹ Shepard used the analogy of human marriage to understand the beauty of spiritual marriage to Christ. Those who sought communion with Christ must be "divorced from all others, and espoused only to Jesus Christ."⁸² They must be separated from idols, fellow creatures, and even self-reliance on keeping God's law.⁸³ On this last point, Shepard was careful to explain that the law remained vital for the believer, but that it was not the grounds for one's salvation.⁸⁴ Rather, Shepard believed that "if ever we look to have communion with Christ, to do all spiritual work, all we do . . . [is] from the mighty power of Christ, from the life and spirit of Christ."⁸⁵ Shepard maintained that conversion was a mighty work of God through the Spirit.⁸⁶ Yet conversion ordinarily took place as

⁷⁹Thomas Shepard, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," in *The Works of Thomas Shepard*, ed. John A. Albro, vol. 2 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Books Society, 1853), 8. Jonathan Mitchell (1624–1668), Shepard's ministerial successor at Newtown, compiled the book using Shepard's own sermon notes (8).

⁸⁰Shepard, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," 41.

⁸¹Though the following analysis is necessarily brief, see the excellent summary by Randall C. Gleason in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 123–37.

⁸²Shepard, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," 27.

⁸³Shepard, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," 27–29.

⁸⁴Shepard, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," 36–41.

⁸⁵Shepard, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," 50.

⁸⁶See Shepard, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," 269–73.

the culmination of God's preparatory work, "wrought by the power of Christ, out of his eternal love to the vessels of glory, as an antecedent, not moving cause of his eternal fellowship."⁸⁷ Shepard's *Parable of the Ten Virgins* was a massive work of pastoral ministry aimed to provide spiritual comfort for those who trusted in Christ by means of rigorous biblical argumentation. Gleason has noted the work's influence upon later Puritans and early Evangelicals.⁸⁸

The second of Shepard's influential works was *The Sincere Convert*.⁸⁹ Shepard sought to prove God's existence and glory from Exodus 33:18.⁹⁰ He set forth humankind's initial blessed estate when Adam and Eve loved God perfectly with unblemished understanding, affections, and will. Yet this fellowship was broken in the fall,⁹¹ and followed by misery. God did not leave humanity in such a miserable situation, but wrought a way of deliverance through the unique redemption of Christ. He also emphasized that the number of people who would be saved was small, and that the damned received a just punishment for their rebellion against God.⁹²

By means of the fall, "Adam was the poisoned root and cistern of all mankind: now, the branches and streams being in the root and spring originally . . . are tainted with the same poisoned principles."⁹³ As a result of this ruin, "Every man is born stark dead in sin . . . empty of every inward principle of life, void of all grace, and hath no more good

⁸⁷Shepard, "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," 549.

⁸⁸Gleason, *The Devoted Life*, 124n4.

⁸⁹Thomas Shepard, *The Sincere Convert: Discovering the Small Number of True Believers and the Great Difficulty of Saving Conversion*, in *The Sincere Convert and the Sound Believer* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society; repr. Soli Deo Gloria, 1999), 1–109. Numerous editions of *Sincere Convert* appeared during Shepard's life. The earliest appears to be the London edition of 1641.

⁹⁰Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 8.

⁹¹Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 9–17.

⁹²Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 18–24.

⁹³Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 25.

in him (whatsoever he thinks) than a dead carrion hath.”⁹⁴ Shepard adduced ten warnings from this fact of spiritual death: dead people cannot perform any good actions, nor do they fear danger. They cannot respond to “the best of offers” and are totally spiritually insensitive: blind, deaf, tasteless, unfeeling, speechless, and breathless. The spiritually dead lacked all beauty, were worm-riddled, and destined for eternal judgment.⁹⁵ Yet in Christ, God provided dead sinners hope.

Shepard argued for the singular efficacy of Jesus to save sinners. Jesus satisfied God’s justice, took upon himself the sins of the elect, and bore God’s wrath, thus he was uniquely qualified to impute his righteousness to chosen sinners.⁹⁶ Shepard anticipated the objection that if Christ’s sacrifice was intended only for the elect, how could one know that they were numbered among these chosen ones? Some people assumed that because Jesus’ sacrifice was limited in its scope, that they were likely excluded from those who were to be saved? But on what grounds could sinners base this assumption? Shepard asked how a person could know that he or she was *not* among the elect. Some who entertained these despairing notions might do so wrongly. Then, Jesus’ kingly authority compelled the universal proclamation of the gospel; because he possessed all authority in heaven and earth (cf. Matthew 28:18–19), all people owed him allegiance as omnipotent king first, then as savior.⁹⁷ Yet in Christ, God provided dead sinners with hope.

Citing Matthew 7:14, Shepard declared “the paucity of them that shall be saved” and the “difficulty of being saved.”⁹⁸ Shepard divided the known world into four

⁹⁴Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 26.

⁹⁵Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 27–28.

⁹⁶Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 46.

⁹⁷Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 49.

⁹⁸Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 55.

parts: Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. Only Europe was generally given to Christianity, and even there the Roman Catholic Church exercised a great hold among many people, assuring their ruin.⁹⁹ Even among those who were blessed with great access to the means of grace (preaching, prayer, the ordinances, etc.), they must remember that the Pharisees had such access yet were hopeless.¹⁰⁰ Further, those who found salvation were saved with great difficulty. One's wishes, tears, frequent prayers, or church attendance would not save them. Drawing upon the imagery of his text, Shepard proposed four "strait gates" through which the sinner must pass: first, the gate of humiliation, through which God truly brought sinners to recognize their state of despair. Then, sinners passed through the gate of faith, and Shepard believed that true faith was rare indeed. Third, sinners traversed the gate of repentance, which was easily feigned. Finally came the gate of opposition from the "devils, the world, and one's own flesh, who knock a man down when he begins to look toward Christ and heaven."¹⁰¹

Despite these difficulties, some would be saved, and in his final section, Shepard provided meticulous directions for those who would flee hell. Those who were damned received God's just judgment.¹⁰² Many were deluded by Satan, false teachers, a false spirit, and the false application of Scripture.¹⁰³ Shepard provided eleven warnings against sinners who trusted religious performance and their own selves for salvation.¹⁰⁴ Yet the means that carried sinners to Jesus were to be used diligently.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 56–57.

¹⁰⁰Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 60–61.

¹⁰¹Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 64–65.

¹⁰²Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 68–82.

¹⁰³Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 82–87.

¹⁰⁴Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 94–105.

¹⁰⁵Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 105–09.

The third of Shepard's enduring writings was *The Sound Believer*, a sustained reflection on conversion.¹⁰⁶ Shepard reasoned that there were four ways in which sinners had ruined themselves: "Ignorance of their own misery . . . security and unsensibleness of it . . . carnal confidence in their own duties . . . and presumption or resting upon the mercy of God by a faith of their own forming."¹⁰⁷ To counter these ruinous acts, Shepard posited a "fourfold work of Christ's power" to save sinners: conviction, compunction, humiliation, and faith.¹⁰⁸ Shepard ascribed the work of conviction to the Holy Spirit and saw it as the initial stage in redeeming elect sinners. The Spirit convicted a person of his or her sinful state, but also of specific sins and of the heinousness of those sins. This conviction was more than an awareness of sin, but a "real" and "constant" light that kept sin ever before the person.¹⁰⁹

Where conviction of sin worked principally in one's mind, compunction for sin worked in a person's heart: "[compunction] is in the affections and will, and seated therein principally: a man may have sight of sin without sorrow or sense of it."¹¹⁰ He further defined compunction as "a pricking of the heart, or the wounding of the soul with such fear and sorrow for sin and misery as severs the soul from sin, and from going on towards its eternal misery."¹¹¹ For the elect, compunction for sin always followed conviction of sin, even if some biblical examples of conversion seemed to lack this deep

¹⁰⁶Thomas Shepard, *The Sound Believer: A Treatise of Evangelical Conversion, Discovering the Work of Christ's Spirit in Reconciling a Sinner to God*, in *The Sincere Convert and the Sound Believer* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society; repr. Soli Deo Gloria, 1999), 111–284. This work first appeared in London in 1645.

¹⁰⁷Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 116.

¹⁰⁸Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 116–17.

¹⁰⁹Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 119–29.

¹¹⁰Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 136.

¹¹¹Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 146.

remorse.¹¹² Compunction consisted in the “marvelous fear and terror of the direful displeasure of God, of death, and hell, [and] the punishment of sin.”¹¹³ Further, compunction brought spiritual sorrow that the joy promised in the gospel might be sweeter. Finally, compunction separated the sinner from sin as a branch might be lopped from a tree, severing the branch from the enlivening power of its roots.¹¹⁴

Shepard believed that those who felt compunction for their sin were to be brought lower yet through gospel humbling. Humility, then, was a work of God that caused one to despair of self-righteousness and to look wholly to God for the righteousness of Christ.¹¹⁵ Here, Shepard wrote of the relationship between preaching the gospel and the law: “As for the preaching of the gospel before the law to show our misery, it is true that the gospel is to be looked at as the main end; yet you must use the means, before you can come to the end, by preaching of the law, or misery in despising the gospel.”¹¹⁶ The law brought humility in four ways: it brought to light the radical extent of inward corruption, showed the full depth of original sin, overwhelmed the soul with a vision of total sinfulness, and magnified God’s justice in judging sinners.¹¹⁷ Shepard viewed the work of conviction, compunction, and humiliation as preparatory works for genuine faith.

¹¹²Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 140. Here Shepard stated, “Do not make the examples of converted persons in Scripture patterns for all things of persons unconverted; do not make God’s work upon the one run parallel with God’s work upon the other” (140). He addressed criticisms that some converts such as Lydia (Acts 16:4), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 7:27), and the Roman centurion (Acts 10:2) did not appear to show compunction by stating that Scripture did not necessarily record every detail about one’s experience (141).

¹¹³Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 146.

¹¹⁴Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 146–55.

¹¹⁵Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 175–77.

¹¹⁶Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 160. Samuel Davies followed Shepard’s pattern of balancing law and gospel, as is discussed in chap. 5 below.

¹¹⁷Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 177–80.

“Faith is the complement of effectual vocation; which begins in God’s call, and ends in this answer to that call.”¹¹⁸ For Shepard, faith was “a gracious work of the Spirit of Christ” whereby sinners actually trust Christ alone for salvation.¹¹⁹ Faith included assent to the truths of the gospel, but moved beyond intellectual recognition of truths to a whole-hearted trust in Christ.¹²⁰ The Spirit communicated faith to the human soul by means of the preached word of God, drawing the sinner toward Christ.¹²¹ Faith was the key to union with Christ and Shepard identified various privileges of this union in chapter 2 of *The Sound Believer*.

Shepard articulated his *ordo salutis*: preparation (conviction, compunction, and humiliation), vocation, faith, justification, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, audience with God, and glorification.¹²² Justification was the immediate imputation of Christ’s righteousness into the believer.¹²³ Reconciliation followed justification and consisted of peace with God and God’s “love and favor.”¹²⁴ Then, God poured out his Spirit upon reconciled sinners, adopting them into his family, showing the same love to each reconciled sinner that he showed to Jesus.¹²⁵ The reigning power of sin was broken in God’s adopted children and God then impressed his image upon these children through sanctification, which consisted of total inward renewal after the image of Christ.¹²⁶

¹¹⁸Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 191.

¹¹⁹Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 194–212.

¹²⁰Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 192–93.

¹²¹Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 200–02.

¹²²Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 164–70. Shepard’s schema differed slightly from that of Thomas Hooker in that he included audience. See Holifield, *Theology in America*, 42.

¹²³Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 237.

¹²⁴Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 248.

¹²⁵Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 252.

¹²⁶ Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 255–57.

Shepard elevated audience with God in prayer as one of the most essential benefits of salvation. He encouraged his readers to pray in the name of Christ, which he understood to mean praying “with reliance upon the grace, favor, and worthiness of the merits of Christ,” praying “from his command, and according to his will,” and praying “for the sake and use of Christ, and the glory of Christ.”¹²⁷ Finally, Shepard anticipated a future “immediate communion with God in Christ” in which all remnants of sin would be purged from the believer in a glorious place with a glorious body with a glorious soul among a glorious company.¹²⁸

From Shepard, Davies would have learned that conversion was a difficult and perplexing matter that required a minister to be ever vigilant on behalf of his congregation. The preacher was to herald the gospel by returning often to the Old Testament law that sinners might ever be reminded of their want of holiness and holiness among the saints might be encouraged. Davies was convinced that God converted sinners according to a certain pattern, and in Shepard he would have found just such a pattern, tested by time and approved by five generations of colonial ministers.¹²⁹ As shown below, Davies imbibed Shepard’s theology.

Solomon Stoddard (1643–1729)

The fourth listed source for Davies’ understanding of conversion was Solomon Stoddard of Northampton, Massachusetts. Stoddard was a powerful ministerial force in the Connecticut River Valley in the late 1600s and early 1700s.¹³⁰ He graduated from

¹²⁷Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 263–65.

¹²⁸Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 267–72.

¹²⁹Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 25th anniv. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5. Stout grouped colonial clergy into five cohorts based on their graduation from colleges in England and in the colonies. Samuel Davies would fall into Stout’s fifth generation, those trained from 1745–1776.

¹³⁰For an overview of Stoddard’s life and ministry, see Perry Miller, “Solomon Stoddard, 1643–1729,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 34, no. 4 (1941): 277–320. On Stoddard’s theology of

Harvard in 1662 and came to Northampton in 1669, where he remained until his death in 1729. “Pope” Stoddard exerted a tremendous influence on religion and politics throughout the Connecticut River Valley during his long life and exceptionally enduring ministry in Northampton.¹³¹ According to Kidd, “Stoddard developed the most elaborate Evangelical theology of conversion prior to [Jonathan] Edwards.”¹³² As Jonathan Edwards, his grandson, recounted in his *Faithful Narrative*, Stoddard “was eminent and renowned for his gifts and grace; so he was blessed, from the beginning, with extraordinary success in his ministry in the conversion of many souls.”¹³³ Stoddard’s focus on conversion was grounded in the theology he had learned at Harvard, that is, the theology of the first New England Puritans such as Shepard, Hooker, and John Norton (1606–1663).¹³⁴ Stoddard received this conversionist tradition of his forefathers, developed it further, and preached it forcefully. Yet Stoddard also modified this tradition, most notably as it related to church membership and the Lord’s Supper.

New England Congregationalism had sought a pure church composed of those persons who could offer a credible testimony of God’s converting work and their children. Stoddard demurred. He developed the following doctrine from Exodus 12:47–48: “Sanctifying Grace is not necessary unto the Lawfull attending of any duty of

revival, including his views on conversion, see Thomas A. Schaffer, “Solomon Stoddard and the Theology of Revival,” in *A Miscellany of American Christianity: Essays in Honor of H. Shelton Smith*, ed. Stuart C. Henry (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1963), 328–61.

¹³¹Holifield, *Theology in America*, 66.

¹³²Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 6.

¹³³Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 4, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 145.

¹³⁴In his preface to *A Guide to Christ*, Stoddard cited eleven Puritan theologians by name, including the first-generation New England Puritans and their teachers back in England. See Solomon Stoddard, *A Guide to Christ, or The Way of directing Souls that are under the Work of Conversion. Compiled for the help of Young Ministers: And may be Servicable to Private Christians, who are Enquiring the Way to Zion* (Boston: J. Allen, 1714), preface.

Worship.”¹³⁵ While this sanctifying grace was necessary for one to serve God, commune with God, and experience salvation, it did not bar one from public worship.¹³⁶

Longstanding forms of biblical worship such as prayer and hearing as well as preaching the word might be practiced by the unconverted as well as the true believer.¹³⁷ Similarly, some old covenant forms of worship such as circumcision, Passover, sacrifice, and even priestly duties might be carried out by unregenerate persons.¹³⁸ Even essential New Testament rites such as baptism, gospel ministry, and the Lord’s Supper might be administered to the unregenerate.¹³⁹

Stoddard appealed to Scripture’s silence on the matter of testing conversions: “There is no certain rule given in the Scripture to the guides of the church, whereby they can distinguish Saints from Hypocrites,” and though they ought to know their own spiritual condition, people may even be confused as to their own standing before God: some who were godly were so sensitive to sin that they imagined themselves unconverted, while some who were clearly godless had false confidence and believed themselves genuine Christians.¹⁴⁰ More importantly, worship provided sinners a means to obtain true grace as “the giving of Converting grace is not limited to any one Ordinance.”¹⁴¹ Thus by attending corporate worship, sinners might be converted through prayer, hearing the word, baptism, or especially the Lord’s Supper.¹⁴² Stoddard’s

¹³⁵Solomon Stoddard, *The Inexcusableness of Neglecting the Worship of God, Under a Pretence of Being in an Unconverted Condition* (Boston: B. Green, 1708), 3.

¹³⁶Stoddard, *Inexcusableness of Neglecting Worship*, 3.

¹³⁷Stoddard, *Inexcusableness of Neglecting Worship*, 4–6.

¹³⁸Stoddard, *Inexcusableness of Neglecting Worship*, 7–10.

¹³⁹Stoddard, *Inexcusableness of Neglecting Worship*, 10–14.

¹⁴⁰Stoddard, *Inexcusableness of Neglecting Worship*, 14.

¹⁴¹Stoddard, *Inexcusableness of Neglecting Worship*, 17.

¹⁴²Stoddard, *Inexcusableness of Neglecting Worship*, 17.

theology brought him into dispute with other New England clergy, notably Boston's Increase (1639–1723) and Cotton (1663–1738) Mather and Edward Taylor (1642–1729) of Westfield, Massachusetts. What was indisputable was Stoddard's concern for souls.

Stoddard addressed conversion in several works. His *Treatise Concerning Conversion* first appeared in 1719.¹⁴³ By this time, he had already issued a handbook for younger ministers, his *Guide to Christ* (1714), which became a pastoral classic.¹⁴⁴ Even earlier was Stoddard's massive *Safety of Appearing* (1687).¹⁴⁵ Stoddard defined the nature of genuine conversion at the outset of his *Treatise Concerning Conversion*: “Persons are said to be savingly converted when they are turned from the power of Satan unto God; when they have a work of Regeneration wrought in them; when they are made holy and so are justified and made heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven; and this change is made at once in the Soul.”¹⁴⁶ Conversion rendered one “wholly new; when God converts a man he gives him a new heart, and puts a new Spirit within him.”¹⁴⁷ God effected conversion through the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁸

Though conversion was an instantaneous work, it normally followed a period of preparation, marked by “contrition and Humiliation” over one's sin.¹⁴⁹ Stoddard was

¹⁴³Solomon Stoddard, *A Treatise Concerning Conversion: Shewing the Nature of Saving Conversion to God, and the Way wherein it is wrought; Together with an Exhortation to Labour after it* (Boston: James Franklin, 1719).

¹⁴⁴Stoddard, *A Guide to Christ*.

¹⁴⁵Solomon Stoddard, *The Safety of Appearing at the Day of Judgment, in the Righteousness of Christ, Opened and Applied* (Boston: n.p., 1687; repr. Northampton: Thomas M. Pomroy, 1804). This section will be relatively brief and follow the outline of Stoddard's *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, amplified by notes from his other works on conversion. For a fuller treatment of Stoddard's doctrine of conversion, see Schaffer, “Solomon Stoddard and the Revival,” 333–61.

¹⁴⁶Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 1–2.

¹⁴⁷Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 9.

¹⁴⁸Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 30.

¹⁴⁹Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 2.

clear that this preparation was “Antecedent to Conversion, but no part of Conversion.”¹⁵⁰ Sinners undergoing preparation for salvation were still “under the dominion and government of Sin.”¹⁵¹ Such preparation enabled one “to be sensibly seeking after reconciliation” with God.¹⁵² Under this work, sinners saw the horrors of hell, their own lack of inherent righteousness, and God’s justice in condemning them.¹⁵³

Saving faith preceded conversion: “When the Soul has performed one holy Action it is converted. One holy action may be performed in the twinkling of an eye: An Act of Faith in Jesus Christ is done at once: And when the Soul has performed one holy Action it is converted.”¹⁵⁴ For Stoddard, faith consisted in believing the testimony of Scripture regarding Jesus, loving God and Christ, repenting for sin, humbling and denying oneself, thanksgiving, and obedience.¹⁵⁵ For his emphasis on work, Stoddard held firmly to a doctrine of inability. Sinners were “utterly depraved, dead in trespasses and sins,” unable to see God’s glory.¹⁵⁶

Though Stoddard valued the Old Testament law, he explained that “the Gospel is the means of Conversion. It is by the Gospel that the hearts of men are made holy . . . so the Law . . . teacheth men that they should be holy, but that don’t make them holy.”¹⁵⁷ Stoddard believed that it was a minister’s job to “guide souls through the work of conversion,” and offered a general method for this task.¹⁵⁸ If one sought a minister’s

¹⁵⁰Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 3.

¹⁵¹Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 3.

¹⁵²Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 53.

¹⁵³Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 54–56.

¹⁵⁴Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 4.

¹⁵⁵Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 19–24.

¹⁵⁶Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 35.

¹⁵⁷Stoddard, *Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 18.

¹⁵⁸Stoddard, *Guide to Christ*, 1.

counsel, the minister was to affirm the great danger of remaining unconverted, encourage the sinner to use means in pursuing conversion, and to prescribe a gospel balm consisting of secret, daily acts of piety, self-reformation, and openness to the Spirit's convicting work.¹⁵⁹

From Solomon Stoddard, Davies would have imbibed a great concern for the conversion of sinners, similar in intensity but different in practice to that of Shepard. Both Shepard and Stoddard regarded conversion as difficult for the sinner, even with a skilled minister as a guide. Davies did not follow Stoddard's doctrine or practice of allowing all to partake of the Lord's Supper, reserving the ordinance strictly for believers.¹⁶⁰ Yet, he would have found in Stoddard's writings an exemplar of preparation for conversion and the minister's personal work in dealing both with people who were indifferent to the gospel as well as those under the weight of conviction.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)

As noted in chapter two, Jonathan Edwards' ministry was marked by serious reflection on conversion.¹⁶¹ Under both his grandfather's and father's ministries, Edwards learned the art of guiding souls through what his relatives regarded as the oft-treacherous straits of the new birth. In his own congregations, Edwards reflected upon the received wisdom of his forbears, and formulated his own theology of conversion that left an indelible mark on American theology.¹⁶² Samuel Davies respected Edwards greatly.

¹⁵⁹Stoddard, *Guide to Christ*, 1–3.

¹⁶⁰Samuel Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:141. In this sermon, Davies sought to prepare those who would partake of the Supper for the celebration. For Davies, the supper was given as a seal of God's covenant of grace with believers and allowed believers to enjoy communion with God (150–60). He did not see it as a rite for the unconverted. Davies' views on the Lord's Supper are developed more fully in chap. 6 below.

¹⁶¹Pages 23–24 above.

¹⁶²Among Edwards' significant contributions on the topic of conversion, see especially *A Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 97–212; idem, *The Distinguishing Marks*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. C. C. Goen, 4:213–88; and idem, *Religious Affections*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*,

During his farewell sermon to the people of Hanover, Virginia, Davies remembered Edwards as “the profoundest reasoner, and the greatest divine . . . that AMERICA ever produced.”¹⁶³ Davies’ wish for Edwards to settle in Hanover as a co-laborer in ministry indicates his appreciation for Edwards and a tacit approval of Edwards’ pastoral theology.¹⁶⁴

Though Davies’ extant works rarely mention Edwards’ writings, he was certainly familiar with *A Faithful Narrative*.¹⁶⁵ During a trip to England from 1753–1755, Davies met John Guyse (1680–1761), a dissenting minister who, along with Isaac Watts, had assured that Edwards’ *Faithful Narrative* was printed and distributed in Great Britain in 1737.¹⁶⁶ During his meeting, Davies noted that one of those present “talked in a sneering manner” about this conversion account.¹⁶⁷ It goes without saying that Davies did not share this gentleman’s opinion of the work.

The context for Edwards’ *Faithful Narrative* is straightforward. During the winter of 1733–1734, revival came to Northampton, Massachusetts’ young people following the death of one of their peers. Soon a great concern for spiritual matters gripped the larger community, a concern which transformed Northampton well into 1735.¹⁶⁸ What surprised Edwards was that the revival had occurred in a town on the very edge of the British Empire. Edwards was also amazed that the revival’s affects were not

vol. 2, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959). In his fine introduction to *Religious Affections*, Smith traces Edwards’ intellectual sources, which, as did Davies’ reading, included Shepard, Stoddard, and Flavel. See Edwards, *Religious Affections*, ed. Smith, 2:52–73.

¹⁶³Samuel Davies, “The Apostolic Valediction Considered and Applied,” in *Sermons*, 3:639.

¹⁶⁴See chap. 4, n8 above.

¹⁶⁵William Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753–55* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 61–62.

¹⁶⁶For a thorough discussion of the publication and reception of this work, see Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:32–46.

¹⁶⁷Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 61.

¹⁶⁸Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:148ff.

limited to young adults, but also involved young and old alike. Neither were the revivals affects limited to one social class. Edwards was also struck by the speed with which the awakening spread, its deep emotional impact, and its wide geographic disbursement.¹⁶⁹

Edwards was amazed at how quickly the work of conversion progressed among his people and with the sheer number of those saved: “the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner, and increased more and more; souls did as it were come by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day, for many months together, might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvellous light.”¹⁷⁰ Edwards calculated “that more than 300 souls were savingly brought home to Christ in this town in the space of half a year.”¹⁷¹

Edwards described conversion as “a great and glorious work of God's power, at once changing the heart and infusing life into the dead soul.”¹⁷² This work was “very mysterious,” and Edwards likened it to “a glorious brightness suddenly shining in upon a person” or “the dawning of the day, when at first but a little light appears, and it may be is presently hid with a cloud; and then it appears again, and shines a little brighter, and gradually increases, with intervening darkness, till at length, perhaps, it breaks forth more clearly from behind the clouds.”¹⁷³

Ever the observer, Edwards documented and reported the various experiences of those who had been converted. Though there was “vast variety, perhaps as manifold as

¹⁶⁹Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:158. For a helpful analysis of Edwards' pneumatology and a summary of his *Faithful Narrative*, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *Jonathan Edwards: The Holy Spirit in Revival* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2005), 53.

¹⁷⁰Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:150.

¹⁷¹Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:158.

¹⁷²Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:177.

¹⁷³Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:177–78.

the subjects of the operation,” Edwards saw similar patterns.¹⁷⁴ Sinners became self aware of their spiritual danger and of the necessity of some escape. This awareness might come gradually or suddenly, but when it came, those awakened to their distress “quit their sinful practices” and made “earnest application to the means of salvation—reading, prayer, meditation, the ordinances of God’s House, and private conference.”¹⁷⁵ There was also great variety with regard to people’s experience of assurance of conversion: some “carried on with abundantly more encouragement and hope than others; some have had ten times less trouble of mind than others, in whom yet the issue seems to be the same.”¹⁷⁶

Edwards described the inner struggle of those awakened to their sin: “The corruption of the heart has discovered itself in various exercises, in the time of legal convictions; sometimes it appears in a great struggle, like something roused by an enemy, and Satan the old inhabitant seems to exert himself like a serpent disturbed and enraged.”¹⁷⁷

God worked through the various means of grace “to make way for, and to bring to, a conviction of their absolute dependence on his sovereign power and grace, and universal necessity of a Mediator” that those awakened might recognize God’s absolute justice in condemning them for their sin, which they came increasingly to see were more than external acts but matters of a corrupt heart.¹⁷⁸ This awareness of their dire circumstances prepared them for the incomparable hope of the gospel of grace.

Edwards noted that this grace seemed first to arise “in earnest longings of soul

¹⁷⁴Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:160.

¹⁷⁵Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:161.

¹⁷⁶Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:161.

¹⁷⁷Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:163.

¹⁷⁸Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:163–64.

after God and Christ, to know God, to love him, to be humbled before him, to have communion with Christ in his benefits.”¹⁷⁹ Such awakened sinners often began to see the sweetness of Christ’s mercy and trusted him for their relief and were converted. According to Edwards, many of the townspeople who underwent similar experiences did not yet know that they were converted because of prior misapprehensions as to the nature of true conversion.¹⁸⁰ Yet those who knew this change often moved from terror to comfort: “they have a little taste of the sweetness of divine grace, and the love of a Saviour.”¹⁸¹

In Edwards’ work, Davies would have found a vision of conversion compatible with his Puritan heritage: a vision that stressed God’s sovereignty and man’s inability, promoted the use of means for the conviction of sin and the administration of comfort, emphasized the need for a powerful work of God’s Spirit, and described specific instances of conversions that had happened during Davies’ own lifetime, guided by a pastor whom Davies respected.

Samuel Blair (1712–1751)

Although Samuel Blair’s extant works are relatively few, especially when compared with the corpus of an Edwards, Flavel, or Shepard, yet Blair’s influence must be considered, for he trained Davies for ministry and it was from within Blair’s congregation that Davies would have observed his mentor’s affective preaching and counseling of those wrestling with conversion.¹⁸² In his letter to Joseph Bellamy, Davies

¹⁷⁹Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:172.

¹⁸⁰Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:173–74. Here Edwards may have been quietly noting deficiencies in his grandfather Solomon Stoddard’s longstanding ministry in Northampton. Many who were converted had sat under Stoddard’s ministry and had entertained wrong conceptions about conversion.

¹⁸¹Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, ed. Goen, 4:179.

¹⁸²Blair’s collected writings were published posthumously in 1754 and contain roughly 400 pages of sermons, treatises, and addresses, along with eulogies for Blair. See Samuel Blair, *The Works of*

described Blair as “the brightest Light in these Parts of Zion” and also as “My Father! Tutor! [and] Friend!” as he lamented his passing.¹⁸³

As described in chapter 2, Blair sought to stir his hearers’ hearts by preaching for “conviction and conversion” of sinners, which he understood as sovereign works of God.¹⁸⁴ Blair believed that God had decreed from eternity some people to be saved by conversion and some to remain damned as “Examples of his punishing Justice.”¹⁸⁵ For Blair, God worked his “Power and Influence” upon those who were converted while he withheld these graces from the reprobate.¹⁸⁶ Unless God were “effectually to renew and sanctify them,” they would continue to reject “true Holiness.”¹⁸⁷ He understood preaching to be a key mean of awakening sinners, and preached the necessity of the new birth.¹⁸⁸ From his own experience, Samuel Blair recognized that conversion might come very quickly and be accompanied by dramatic physical and psychological stresses. Though he sought to curb his hearers’ physical responses to his preaching, he called for sinners to flee to the kingdom of God immediately.¹⁸⁹

Due to the lack of extant materials, a more detailed examination of Blair’s influence on Davies is impossible, but by Davies’ own estimation, Blair was a minister worthy of imitation. Samuel Blair’s practices reinforced the theologies that Davies had

the Reverend Mr. Samuel Blair (Philadelphia, PA: Bradford, 1754). Jonathan Edwards owned a copy of this work. See Jonathan Edwards, *Catalogues of Books, The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 26, ed. Peter J. Thuesen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 210. While Edwards owned a copy of this work, it can be assumed that Davies also owned a copy.

¹⁸³Davies, *State of Religion*, 31–32.

¹⁸⁴See pages 21–22 of chapter 2.

¹⁸⁵Blair, *Works*, 308.

¹⁸⁶Blair, *Works*, 308–09.

¹⁸⁷Blair, *Works*, 309.

¹⁸⁸Blair, *Works*, 192.

¹⁸⁹For Blair’s recounting of his preaching, see Samuel Blair, *A Short and Faithful Narrative of the Late Remarkable [sic] Revival of Religion in the congregation of New-Londonderry, and other parts of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, PA: Bradford, 1744), 13–28.

read and studied and provided. From Blair and others, Davies inherited a rich tradition of theological reflection upon the nature and practice of Christian conversion which helped form his own vision for the beginning of the Christian life.

Samuel Davies' Theology of Conversion

The following analysis of Samuel Davies' theology of conversion is drawn largely from his sermons and shows that Davies understood conversion as a mighty and decisive act of God in which dead sinners were brought into spiritual life through various means, most notably the preached word of God. Because conversion was God's work, it produced a humble assurance within the converted that their faith rested not on performance but upon God's mercy in Christ through the instrumentality of the Spirit. Such faith encouraged genuine piety.

Predestination

While people experienced conversion temporally, its foundation rested in eternity. Samuel Davies was a committed Presbyterian and held unswervingly to God's sovereignty in saving sinners, yet he appears to have been somewhat reserved in preaching the doctrine of predestination. The theme was not commonplace in his corpus of extant sermons and the one sermon devoted to this doctrine demonstrates that Davies preferred a more practical explanation of the idea.

Davies took up the topic of predestination in a sermon on Romans 9:22–23.¹⁹⁰ His interest was practical: he wanted to help his congregants determine their “preparation for glory” or “fitness for destruction” by examining their “habitual dispositions.”¹⁹¹ The dispositions Davies cited as evidence of fitness for glory demonstrate the vital link

¹⁹⁰Samuel Davies, “The Vessels of Mercy and the Vessels of Wrath Delineated,” in *Sermons*, 2:364–85. The sermon is undated.

¹⁹¹Davies, “Vessels of Mercy and Wrath,” in *Sermons*, 2:368.

between theology and piety. Davies asked a series of interrogatives to those who questioned their fitness for heaven: first, “Do you love and delight in God—in a God of infinite purity? . . . Do you delight in the service of God, in contemplating his glories, in celebrating his praises, and in the humble forms of worship in his church on earth?”¹⁹² Similarly, they must love holiness and act benevolently towards their fellow man. For those whose lives were so characterized, Davies insisted that they remember the truly pious heart was humble: “If you are fit for these pure and blessed regions, it is God that has made you so, by his own almighty power.”¹⁹³

Likewise, Davies addressed those fit for destruction in terms of their want of piety: “Are there not some of you who have no pleasure in devotion, no delight in conversing with God in his ordinances? The posture of humble worshippers at the throne of grace is not easy and agreeable to you; and hence you have prayerless families and prayerless closets.”¹⁹⁴ Following a similar series of indictments, Davies assured his hearers that “it is God alone that can work in you both to will and to do.” More particularly, Davies ascribed this work to the Holy Spirit as none other was “equal to this arduous work.”¹⁹⁵

Even with his practical emphasis, Davies recognized that the doctrine of predestination was controversial. He anticipated his hearers’ objections to the “horrible doctrine of predestination.”¹⁹⁶ Yet Davies reassured his congregation that he was more interested in helping them than confusing them: “My present design is to speak to your hearts, about an affair which you are all concerned and capable to know, and not to

¹⁹²Davies, “Vessels of Mercy and Wrath,” in *Sermons*, 2:368–69.

¹⁹³Davies, “Vessels of Mercy and Wrath,” in *Sermons*, 2:369.

¹⁹⁴Davies, “Vessels of Mercy and Wrath,” in *Sermons*, 2:372.

¹⁹⁵Davies, “Vessels of Mercy and Wrath,” in *Sermons*, 2:378.

¹⁹⁶Davies, “Vessels of Mercy and Wrath,” in *Sermons*, 2:367. The designation of the doctrine as “horrible” are words Davies projected onto his hearers.

perplex your minds with a controversy, of which not many of you are competent judges.”¹⁹⁷ Then, Davies offered a tepid apology for the doctrine:

I must own, indeed, I am not altogether a sceptic in that doctrine. It is not an entire blank in my creed; nor am I at all ashamed to declare my sentiments in a proper time and place. At present I shall only tell you, that I cannot be persuaded God has made such a world as this, without first drawing the plan of it in his own omniscient mind. I cannot think he would produce such a numerous race of reasonable and immortal creatures, without first determining what to do with them. I cannot think the events of time, or the judicial process of the last day, will furnish him with any new intelligence to enable him to determine the final states of men more justly than he could from eternity.¹⁹⁸

Davies’ statement is interesting for several reasons. First, his insistence that predestination was not “an entire blank in my creed” indicates that the topic was not one his congregation was accustomed to hearing him discuss. An examination of his extant sermons reinforces this fact, for Davies was far more likely to preach on such core doctrines such as grace and justification, faith and repentance, or even heaven and hell than on predestination. Then, his caveat that he was willing to discuss his opinion “in a proper time and place” begs the question of precisely what his ideas were; the brief summary he offered appears non-controversial in that he upheld God’s omniscience as the logic for predestination. If his pulpit was not the appropriate venue for such a discussion, perhaps a 1755 controversy with Anglican William Stith, then president of William and Mary College, afforded Davies the “proper” occasion to explain his position.

Davies left Virginia in 1753 to undertake a fundraising trip to Great Britain on behalf of the College of New Jersey. Not long after Davies’ departure, President Stith delivered a sermon before Virginia’s general assembly in Williamsburg upon Matthew 7:13–14.¹⁹⁹ In this sermon, Stith took aim at Davies, who had previously stated his belief

¹⁹⁷Davies, “Vessels of Mercy and Wrath,” in *Sermons*, 2:367.

¹⁹⁸Davies, “Vessels of Mercy and Wrath,” in *Sermons*, 2:367.

¹⁹⁹William Stith, *The Nature and Extent of Christ’s Redemption: A Sermon Preached before the General Assembly [sic] of Virginia: at Williamsburg, November 11th, 1753* (Williamsburg, VA: William Hunter, 1753).

that most people would not be saved.²⁰⁰ Stith “firmly believed” that Davies was wrong and took the “strait gate” and “narrow way” as references to unbelieving Jews living in Jesus’ own time, “not to be extended to all Christians, or to Mankind in general.”²⁰¹ Stith proceeded to advance the idea that just as Old Testament saints such as Abel, Noah, and Moses were saved by Jesus, even with nearly no knowledge of his actual person, so might many others be saved.²⁰² Further, “It seems equally unreasonable to think, that God will condemn to eternal Perdition, for the Want of Faith, those honest and virtuous Heathens, who, as far as human Frailty would permit, acted sincerely and conscientiously, according to the best of their Knowledge and Understanding.”²⁰³ Upon returning from England in 1755 and learning of the challenge, Davies replied to Stith in a series of six letters, which he decided to leave unpublished since Stith had recently died.²⁰⁴ Near the end of his final letter, Davies addressed the doctrine of predestination at length.

Stith rejected the notion that God had damned some people by eternal decree.

²⁰⁰Stith, *Nature and Extent*, 9. Davies had made the statement in his pamphlet, *The Impartial Trial, Impartially Tried, and Convicted of Partiality: in Remarks on Mr. Caldwell’s, alias Thornton’s Sermon Intituled [sic], An Impartial Trial of the Spirit, &c. and the Preface of the Publisher in Virginia* (Williamsburg, VA: W. Parks, 1748), 47.

²⁰¹Stith, *Nature and Extent*, 12.

²⁰²Stith, *Nature and Extent*, 23–24.

²⁰³Stith, *Nature and Extent*, 24.

²⁰⁴Samuel Davies, “Charity and Truth United or the Way of the Multitude exposed in Six Letters to the Rev; Mr. William Stith, A.M., President of William and Mary College. In Answer to Some Passages in William Stith’s Sermon Entitled *The Nature & Extent of Christ’s Redemption, Preached Before the General Assembly of Virginia, Nov. 11, 1753*,” ed. Thomas Clinton Pears, *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 19 (1940–1941): 193–323. Pears has provided an excellent overview of the history of these letters’ transmission (194–95). Davies explained his reason for leaving the letters unpublished in a prefatory statement: “The following Answer was finished July 4, 1755. And while the Author was circulating it among a few Friends, in order to receive their Remarks, before it should go to the Press, the Country was alarmed, & struck into a Consternation, with the News of General Braddock’s Defeat (July 9). He therefore tho’t the Publication of it unseasonable at that Time; & let it lie by him, for some Months; designing to publish it, when the Attention of the Public should not be so much engaged. But during this Delay, M^r. Prest. Stith died; & then he tho’t the Publication entirely improper, lest he should seem to insult the Memory of the Dead, for which he had a sincere Regard, or to triumph without an Antagonist. Decem. 23, 1755” (202).

Davies responded, “I make the actual Providence of God in Time, the Expositor of his Decrees from Eternity; and learn his eternal Plan of Government from his actual Administration.”²⁰⁵ God created humans “mutable and fallible” and, Davies reasoned, God had chosen from eternity to create people as such. God had decreed that people would “fall into Sin,” yet Davies did not charge God with *causing* them to sin; God’s “Decree and Foreknowledge do not influence Men to sin.”²⁰⁶ From all eternity, God had determined to show grace to certain sinners while allowing “the greater Number [of people]” to follow their course of sin. According to Davies, all who are saved find salvation through Jesus Christ; all who are damned are condemned because of their own actual sin: “In short, I find that God does actually govern the World, and particularly the Affairs of Men; and therefore I believe that he decreed to do so, and formed the Scheme of his Government before-hand; or, that he knew what to do with the World, before he made it.”²⁰⁷

Echoing his sentiment in *The Vessels of Mercy and Wrath*, Davies stated, “If it be just for the supreme Judge actually to condemn impenitent Sinners at the last Day, it could not be unjust for him to purpose to condemn them from all Eternity: for the Formality of a public Trial will not be intended for his Information; but he was as well acquainted with their Characters from all Eternity, as he will be then.”²⁰⁸ While Davies may have been reticent to address predestination from the pulpit, he clearly found the doctrine “amiable, glorious and majestic,” whether or not “blinded Mortals” could see it.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵Davies, “Charity and Truth United,” 320.

²⁰⁶Davies, “Charity and Truth United,” 320.

²⁰⁷Davies, “Charity and Truth United,” 320–21.

²⁰⁸Davies, “Charity and Truth United,” 321.

²⁰⁹Davies, “Charity and Truth United,” 321.

Immediate Regeneration

Samuel Davies was persuaded that the Bible located the beginning of spiritual life at the point of regeneration. Passages such as 1 Peter 1:3, James 1:18, and Ephesians 2:5 describe the infusion of spiritual life as “begetting” or “quickening” while Ezekiel describes this change as the implantation of a new heart and Spirit (cf. Ezekiel 36:23). John’s Gospel and letters refer to this experience as the “new birth” (cf. John 3:3, 1 John 3:9).²¹⁰ The consistent theme of these passages is the new and instantaneous nature of spiritual life, a theme which seemed quite contrary to the notion, held by some, “that a power of living to God is universally conferred upon mankind in creation” and that Christ’s atoning death made such living possible for all because Christ had died for all.²¹¹ Davies rejected this teaching by way of several arguments. First, the presence of a “new” or “second” birth is inexplicable if spiritual life were naturally communicated at physical birth.²¹² Additionally, biblical texts describing the distinction between the old and new man would be nonsensical (cf. Rom 6:6, Eph 4:22, Col 3:9,10).²¹³ Second, Davies appealed once more to Ephesians 2:5 and Ezekiel 36:26, which locate God’s work of enlivening dead sinners “posterior to, and consequently distinct from, [natural] creation.”²¹⁴ As spiritual life is connected with regeneration, Davies understood that this

²¹⁰Samuel Davies, “The Divine Life in the Soul Considered,” in *Sermons*, 2:519. Regeneration is a key theme in Davies’ theology and piety, as evidenced by its frequency in his sermons. See, representatively, Samuel Davies, “Method of Salvation,” in *Sermons*, 1:109–36; idem, “The Nature and Universality of Spiritual Death,” in *Sermons*, 1:162–88; idem, “The General Resurrection,” in *Sermons*, 1:493–515; idem, “The Nature and Author of Regeneration,” in *Sermons*, 2:481–502; idem, “The Nature and Blessedness of Sonship with God,” in *Sermons*, 2:174–94; idem, “Religion the Highest Wisdom, and Sin the Greatest Folly,” in *Sermons*, 2:274–92; idem, “The Success of the Ministry Owing to a Divine Influence,” in *Sermons*, 3:9–34; and idem, “The Certainty of Death,” in *Sermons*, 3:434–56.

²¹¹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:520.

²¹²Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:520.

²¹³Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:520.

²¹⁴Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:521. In locating the starting point of spiritual life, Davies appealed to Scripture at every point, but did not offer his own positive exegesis of those passages which some would cite as evidence of a general spiritual life flowing from the cross. Instead, Davies remained close to those passages that supported his view.

life was communicated instantaneously and not by gradual acts.²¹⁵ Now, while repeated acts serve to nourish and confirm spiritual life, they do not confer it upon one's soul. Davies believed that to claim that spiritual life was generated by good actions would be to suppose its existence and non-existence at the same time, which was an irrational notion.²¹⁶

The biblical language of “begetting,” “quickening,” or “resurrection” to describe the communication of this life were at odds with a developmental concept of its impartation, and as holiness is the “source and principle” of spiritual life, and since, in Davies' view, this holiness is superadded to human reason at a particular point in time, it could not be brought into being before it existed.²¹⁷ Unlike morality, which was obtained through “frequent and continued exercise,” gospel-holiness “proceeds from a principle divinely implanted.”²¹⁸ Only those persons who had experienced the new birth could possess spiritual life. Davies noted two corollaries to this truth: first, any person who would serve God acceptably must receive the grace to do so and second, even the best religious actions of the unregenerate do not merit God's favor.²¹⁹ Davies did not, however, believe that the unregenerate should disavow religious activity: “It is true their performing the duties of religion and virtue in the best manner they are capable of, is less displeasing to God than the willful neglect of them, or the commission of the contrary sins, and therefore they should endeavour to perform them; but yet it cannot said to be positively pleasing to him.”²²⁰ In Davies' theology, spiritual life is communicated in the

²¹⁵Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:522.

²¹⁶Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:522–23.

²¹⁷Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:523.

²¹⁸Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:525.

²¹⁹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:525–26.

²²⁰Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:526.

act of regeneration, which is a monergistic work of God upon the soul, yet this act follows God's preparatory work.

Preparation for Conversion

In a sermon on Ephesians 2:4-5, Davies observed that, "though spiritual life is instantaneously infused, yet God prepares the soul for its reception by a course of previous operations."²²¹ As God created the world in six days, "though he might have spoken it into being in an instant," so Davies believed God worked to prepare a soul to receive quickening grace.²²² God prepares every soul, though the duration of this preparation will differ. Davies traced these steps for his audience to enable them to discern "whether ever divine grace has carried you through this gracious process."²²³ God works upon "all the principles of the rational life" among those who are spiritually dead in order to stir up in them spiritual desires: "He brings the sinner to exert all his active powers in seeking this divine principle: nature does her utmost, and all outward means are tried before a supernatural principle is implanted."²²⁴

Rather than following his normal pattern of text-doctrine-application, Davies here imagined the spiritual journey of a congregant through vivid imagery. "You lay for ten, twenty, thirty years, or more, dead in trespasses and sins; and you did not breathe and pant like a living soul after God and holiness; you had little more sense of the burden of sin than a corpse of the pressure of a mountain." This person ignored those who tried to warn them of their spiritual peril until one day they heard the gospel message: "the terrors of the Lord were thundered in your ears to awaken you." The Holy Spirit then moved effectually upon this person: "Perhaps a verse in your Bible, a sentence in a sermon, an

²²¹Samuel Davies, "The Nature and Process of Spiritual Life," in *Sermons*, 1:192.

²²²Davies, "Nature and Process," in *Sermons*, 1:192.

²²³Davies, "Nature and Process," in *Sermons*, 1:192-93.

²²⁴Davies, "Nature and Process," in *Sermons*, 1:194.

alarming Providence, the conversation of a pious friend, or something that unexpectedly occurred to your own thoughts” moved them. Perhaps this person then sought moral reformation, yet apart from heart-implanted “divine supernatural life,” such reforms were fruitless.²²⁵ But God then gave this one new spiritual perception to see their awful condition and their inability for self-rescue. It is at this moment of helplessness that God infuses a new principle into the heart: “The pulse of spiritual passions began to beat towards spiritual objects; the vital warmth of love spread itself through your whole frame; you breathed out your desires and prayers before God; like a new-born infant you began to cry after him, and at times you have learned to lisp his name with filial endearment.”²²⁶ Throughout the sermon, Davies used the raising of Lazarus as a controlling image. Davies utilized his rhetorical abilities to provide his hearers with an overwhelming sensory experience of the preparatory work of God in the soul. The implications of Davies’ theology for Christian spirituality are significant: while it may take different forms in each person, sinners should expect to move through various experiences as God draws them to himself, culminating in an immediate new spiritual birth. Though Davies’ sermon is sprinkled with biblical allusions, he was clearly unable to develop specific doctrinal points based on the exegesis of particular texts to support his theology of preparationism.²²⁷ Elsewhere, Davies encouraged sinners to use prayer as the appropriate means to prepare their heart for salvation: “You must accustom yourselves to frequent, importunate prayer. If ever you be saved, or prepared for salvation, it will be in answer to prayer: therefore, engage in it, persevere in it, and never give out until you

²²⁵Davies, “Nature and Process,” in *Sermons*, 195–99.

²²⁶Davies, “Nature and Process,” in *Sermons*, 199–203.

²²⁷Davies’ emphasis on God’s preparatory work seems more consistent with earlier Puritan thought. For a helpful overview of preparationism in Colonial Puritanism and early Evangelicalism, see Pettit, *The Heart Prepared*, 86–124 and 158–216. See also Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 197–203.

obtain your request.”²²⁸ Though these doctrines were critical in Samuel Davies’ theological vision of spiritual life, yet perhaps more central to his thought, however, was the vital spiritual relationship between Christ and the believer.

Spiritual Life Communicated through Christ

Samuel Davies believed that spiritual life was possible only by the union of believers with Christ and he expounded on this union in his second sermon on Galatians 2:20. In explaining this relationship, Davies first addressed the ways in which spiritual life is communicated to the believer through Christ and then how Christ supports and nourishes this life. In describing the ways in which Christ communicates spiritual life to believers, Davies emphasized the headship of Adam and of Christ.

Due to the sin and resultant forfeiture of spiritual life by Adam, who “was constituted [by God] the representative of his posterity,” all people are born spiritually dead, that is, they lack the power to obey God.²²⁹ Davies believed this scenario was just as God was both powerful and righteous enough “to suspend the continuance of the powers of upright moral agency conferred upon his creatures” when such powers are abused.²³⁰ While men and women inherit Adam’s guilt, they also sin personally. One’s personal sin deprives that person of spiritual life both morally and physically: morally, personal sin renders one guilty of subverting God’s righteous standard and moral image conferred upon men and women in creation (cf. Gen 1:26–27). Physically, personal sin tends to “strengthen and encourage” habits which weaken and ultimately destroy their actors.²³¹ If spiritual life is to flourish in the sinner, the moral and physical influences of

²²⁸Davies, “Vessels of Mercy and Wrath,” in *Sermons*, 2:379.

²²⁹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:526. Here Davies noted that he lacked the time to prove that Adam’s sin was imputed to subsequent generations and took this doctrine for granted.

²³⁰Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:527.

²³¹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:526–27.

sin must be removed and replaced by a holy influence. Davies believed that Christ was the only being capable of these actions.

By both his active and passive obedience to God, Christ actually broke the power of sin and secured salvation, regeneration, and holiness for his people (cf. Heb 10:10, 14; Titus 2:14): “The Lord Jesus, by his sufferings, made a ‘complete satisfaction to divine justice;’ and thereby redeemed the blessing forfeited; and by the merit of his obedience, purchased divine influence for the extirpation of the principles of spiritual death which lurk in our natures, and the implantation of holiness.”²³² “It is only on the account of his righteousness,” Davies noted, “that spiritual life is first given and afterwards maintained and cherished.”²³³

Christ was not only the purchaser of spiritual life, but also its mediator. Davies encouraged his hearers that Christ actually communicated spiritual life to his people (cf. John 5:21; Acts 5:31; Col 3:3-4; Heb 12:2).²³⁴ According to Davies, Christ reigned over “a sovereign empire of grace founded in his own blood (cf. Matt 28:18).”²³⁵ Davies articulated several implications of Christ’s unique mediatorial role for spiritual life: believers ought to look to Christ alone “for the supplies of his grace to support and nourish their spiritual life.”²³⁶ He warned his hearers against an attitude of spiritual self-sufficiency: “If you ‘compass yourself with sparks of your own kindling’ (cf. Isa 50:11),

²³²Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 528. The published editions of “Divine Life” include Davies’ statement that Jesus made a “complete satisfaction to divine justice” in quotation marks, yet do not cite the source of Davies’ quote, if indeed he was quoting a source. It is possible that Davies quoted the English Puritan Thomas Brooks (1608–1680), whose *Golden Key* contains this exact phrase. Further supporting this link is the fact that Brooks followed this phrase by citing Hebrews 10:10 and 10:14, which are the first biblical passages that Davies cited to support his statement. See Thomas Brooks, *The Golden Key to Open Hidden Treasures*, in *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, vol. 5, ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1867; Repr., 2001), 251.

²³³Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:528.

²³⁴Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:528–29.

²³⁵Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:529.

²³⁶Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:529.

your devotions will be cold and languid, and a deadly chillness will benumb your spirit. Place yourselves, therefore, under the vivifying beams ‘of the Sun of righteousness, and you shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall (cf. Mal 4:2).’²³⁷ If Christ is the only procurer and mediator of spiritual life, how ought Christians to seek spiritual nourishment from him?

Christ’s communication of grace is “peculiar and distinguishing” and restricted to his own people.²³⁸ Davies drew upon the biblical imagery of marriage (cf. Eph 5:28, 32) and also the communication between the head and the body (cf. Col 2:19) as well as the vine and branches (cf. John 15:5) to illustrate the relation between Christ and his followers. Davies noted that “spiritual life, as to its infusion and preservation, proceeds from the Lord-Mediator, both morally and physically.”²³⁹ Now, believers are united to Christ morally by a “special legal union” whereby the faithful enjoy the merits of Christ’s obedience and physically they are united by faith.²⁴⁰

Davies described faith as the “grand ligament” whereby believers are “indissolubly conjoined” to Christ, both in an initial and continuing union.²⁴¹ Though spiritual life consisted of multiple essential parts, namely repentance, love, grace, virtue—no part is as central as is faith because faith, or simply “trusting in the Lord,” reminds believers of “their own weakness” and produces humble dependence on Christ.²⁴² Through faith, Christ dwells in the believer’s heart (cf. Eph 3:17) and faith also

²³⁷Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:529.

²³⁸Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:530.

²³⁹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:530.

²⁴⁰Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:530–31.

²⁴¹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:532.

²⁴²Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:532–33.

empowers spiritual adoption (cf. John 1:12).²⁴³ Faith, for Davies, was essential for Christian spirituality. Davies offered his hearers three applications of this doctrine. First, “saving faith is always operative,” for it is continually looking to Christ for grace, and Christ is ever ready to give what that faith seeks.²⁴⁴ Second, “Faith has so important a place in the union of the soul with Christ, and, consequently, in entitling us to his righteousness, and deriving vital influence from him, that without it we cannot be at all united to him, or share in the happy consequences of this union, no more than there can be a circulation of the blood without veins and arteries.”²⁴⁵ Finally, faith is the distinguishing mark between mere morality, which is natural and “gospel holiness,” which is supernatural.²⁴⁶ Davies concluded his sermon by noting several implications for the Christian life.

Many people, reasoned Davies, found religion burdensome because they lacked spiritual life: “Religion is not natural to them, for want of a new nature,” yet believers experience the light yoke of Christ (cf. Matt 11:30).²⁴⁷ Davies suggested soul-probing questions to his hearers: “Do we feel, or have we felt, a supernatural principle working within . . . is the habitual bent of our wills God-ward Is our religion more than a mere acquired habit . . . do we derive our strength for obedience from Christ by faith?”²⁴⁸ Because godliness is a great mystery (cf. 1 Tim 3:16), “it ought, therefore, to engage our most serious and intense thoughts.”²⁴⁹ Then, Davies exhorted his audience to

²⁴³Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:533.

²⁴⁴Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:534.

²⁴⁵Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:534.

²⁴⁶Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:535.

²⁴⁷Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:535.

²⁴⁸Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:535–36.

²⁴⁹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:536.

acknowledge God for his “distinguishing grace” at work in their lives: “Can you restrain your wonder, that you should be the chosen objects of sovereign grace? Or avoid breaking forth into ecstatic praises at so surprising a dispensation?”²⁵⁰ Believers ought to life according to the inclinations of their new nature: “Indulge the propensions and tendencies of the new nature; obey and cherish all the impulses and motions of the divine principle within you.”²⁵¹ Finally, those among Davies auditors who lacked spiritual life should seek it diligently, utilizing all “proper means” to obtain it, yet recognizing that the final judgment might be closer than they supposed.²⁵²

Christians Formed into Christ’s Image

If believers were united to Christ, Davies believed that they ought to progressively grow in likeness to Jesus. Preaching from Galatians 4:19–20, Davies explicated Paul’s longing for Christ to be formed among the Galatians: “They are made new creatures after the image of Christ; until the sacred foetus be formed in their hearts; until the heavenly embryo grow and ripen for birth, or until they be conformed to Jesus Christ in heart and practice.”²⁵³ Further, this conformity consisted in “our being made conformable to him in heart and life, or having his holy image stamped upon our hearts. This is essential to the character of every true Christian.”²⁵⁴

Davies rejected the idea that a Christian might perfectly imitate Christ during this life, but believed that Paul’s language indicated a new “prevailing temper” of the soul:

That filial temper towards God, that humble veneration and submission, that ardent

²⁵⁰Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:537.

²⁵¹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:537.

²⁵²Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:537–38.

²⁵³Samuel Davies, “The Tender Anxieties of Ministers for their People,” in *Sermons*, 2:409.

²⁵⁴Davies, “Tender Anxieties,” in *Sermons*, 2:420.

devotion, that strict regard to all the duties of religion, that self-denial, humility, meekness and patience, that heavenly-mindedness and noble superiority to the world, that generous charity, benevolence and mercy to mankind, that ardent zeal and diligence to do good, that temperance and sobriety which shone in the blessed Jesus with a divine, incomparable splendor: these and the like graces and virtues shine, though with feebler rays, in all his followers. They have their infirmities indeed, many and great infirmities—but not such as are inconsistent with the habitual prevalency of this Christ-like disposition.²⁵⁵

This conformity to Christ distinguished Christians from the world: “If you are like him, you will certainly be very unlike the generality of mankind,” and Davies assured believers that rejecting worldly patterns of behavior would bring reproach.²⁵⁶ Yet how was Christ formed in believers?

Davies believed this work was of the Holy Spirit: “It is the hand of God that draws the lineaments of this image upon the heart, though he makes use of the gospel and a variety of means as his pencil.”²⁵⁷ More particularly, the Spirit caused the believer to become painfully aware of her lack of natural righteousness before God and drove her to various means such as prayer and hearing the preached word of Scripture to mortify sin. Davies likened the Spirit’s work to that of a servant clearing a house of “rubbish.”²⁵⁸

Following this purgative work, the Spirit “enlightened your minds to view the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and the method of salvation revealed in the gospel,” and “the view of his glory proved transformative: while you were contemplating the object, you received its likeness; the rays of glory beaming upon you (cf. 2 Cor 3:18), as it were, rendered your hearts transparent, and the beauties of holiness were stamped upon them.”²⁵⁹ Though the work of forming Christ in a believer belonged to the Spirit, it was also incumbent upon the believer to “endeavour to improve and perfect this divine

²⁵⁵Davies, “Tender Anxieties,” in *Sermons*, 2:421.

²⁵⁶Davies, “Tender Anxieties,” in *Sermons*, 2:421.

²⁵⁷Davies, “Tender Anxieties,” in *Sermons*, 2:422. The “variety of means” mentioned by Davies are covered fully in chap. 6 below.

²⁵⁸Davies, “Tender Anxieties,” in *Sermons*, 2:424.

²⁵⁹Davies, “Tender Anxieties,” in *Sermons*, 2:424.

image.”²⁶⁰ Christians were to continually examine their hearts and actions for instances of deformity from the divine image and to yield to the Spirit’s shaping work.²⁶¹ Davies addressed a similar theme from Romans 8:29, noting that want of conformity to the image of Christ was a sure indication that God’s love was absent.²⁶² Such conformity was at once “the duty and the peculiar character of every sincere lover of God.”²⁶³ People imitate that which they love, and for someone to confess love to God while neglecting holiness was an “elusive and absurd” pretence to faith.²⁶⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Samuel Davies understood conversion as the beginning of the Christian life and the commencement of genuine spirituality. Only those who had been truly converted, who were partakers, of the covenant of grace, could draw near and experience communion with God. Conversion was God’s work, wrought immediately through faith and marked by real and abiding spiritual change as sinners were brought from spiritual death to life (cf. Eph 2:8–9). Davies inherited his theology of conversion from the Puritans and so placed great emphasis on the role of preparation for conversion, yet the work of preparation might be relatively brief; he preached with great urgency for sinners to be converted *today*. Though it was communicated instantly in conversion, spiritual life was marked by progressive conformity to the image of Christ as believers grew in gospel holiness.

²⁶⁰Davies, “Tender Anxieties,” in *Sermons*, 2:425.

²⁶¹Davies, “Tender Anxieties,” in *Sermons*, 2:425–27.

²⁶²Samuel Davies, “Evidences of the Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:465.

²⁶³Davies, “Want of Love,” in *Sermons*, 3:465.

²⁶⁴Davies, “Want of Love,” in *Sermons*, 3:466.

CHAPTER 5

HOLINESS: THE VITAL PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

The blessed Jesus by his mediation opened a way for the communication of Heaven. In truth sir, I cannot inculcate the religion of The holy Jesus without inculcating holiness; & therefore this has been, & I hope shall ever be, the darling subject of my Discourses, wherever I have the honour of preaching the everlasting Gospel to ye [the] sons of men.¹

Samuel Davies thought often of spiritual life and holiness, so much so that even a decade before his death, he intended to write a treatise on the subject.² As Davies opened his heart to a ministerial correspondent, spiritual life and holiness were much on his mind:

But, alas! my brother, I have but little, very little true religion. My advancements in holiness are extremely small; I feel what I confess, and am sure it is true, and not the rant of excessive or affected humility. It is an easy thing to make a noise in the world, to flourish and harangue, to dazzle the crowd, and set them all agape, but deeply to imbibe the spirit of Christianity, to maintain a secret walk with God, to be holy as he is holy, this is the labour, this the work. I beg the assistance of your prayers in so grand and important an enterprise.³

For Davies, the spiritual life that began at one's conversion was marked by a steady obedience to God, patterned after God's own character. God, through the Holy Spirit, "turned the prevailing bent of [Christians'] souls towards holiness," yet it was also to be

¹Samuel Davies, letter to unspecified recipient, Samuel Davies Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

²William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical*, 2nd series (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1856), 42. Foote transcribes a letter between Davies and Joseph Bellamy of Bethlehem, Connecticut, in which Davies mentioned that he had "dropped the thoughts of my intended treatise on the Morality of Gospel-Holiness, till I have more leisure, and a larger acquaintance with divinity" (42).

³Samuel Davies, letter to Thomas Gibbons, in *Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Davies, A.M. President of the College of New Jersey*, vol. 1 (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1854, repr., 1993), 60. This work will be henceforth cited as *Sermons*.

the believer's earnest desire, both in this life and the life to come:

Do you delight in holiness? If not, what would you do in a region of holiness? Alas! to you it would be an unnatural element. Are the saints, those whom the world perhaps calls so with a sneer, because they make it their great business to be holy in all manner of conversation, are these your favourite companions? Is their society peculiarly delightful to you? And are they the more agreeable to you, by how much more the holy they are?⁴

This chapter examines Samuel Davies' theology of the Christian life, which he understood to be a vital spiritual life communicated and sustained by God's Spirit and characterized by holiness. Though the Westminster Standards undoubtedly shaped Davies' view of holiness, his theology was far more detailed than that articulated by Westminster.

The Westminster Confession of Faith addressed the necessity of holiness among believers in its treatment of sanctification. According to the confession:

They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.⁵

According to the Westminster theologians, holiness was an essential fruit of the gospel and was a synergistic work in which the regenerated person now yielded to God's "Word and Spirit" working within him or her. Though imperfect in this life, sanctification was best understood as a "a continual and irreconcilable war" between Spirit and flesh and "through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part does overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."⁶ Such holiness manifested itself in works performed in obedience to God's

⁴Samuel Davies, "The Vessels of Mercy and the Vessels of Wrath Delineated," in *Sermons*, 2:368–69.

⁵Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) 13.1.

⁶WCF 13.2–3.

commands.⁷ Davies' own reflection on the nature and need of holiness and the Christian life understandably went deeper than that of the Confession.

The Nature and Communication of Spiritual Life

Samuel Davies offered his most detailed exposition of spiritual life in two sermons on Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God."⁸ As Davies explained the text, he noted first that "believers are endowed with spiritual activity."⁹ He identified this doctrine in the seemingly contradictory statements "I am crucified" and "I live." The first statement bespoke "the mortification of indwelling sin, the subduction and extirpation of corrupt principles and inclinations."¹⁰ Following a typically Reformed treatment of sanctification, Davies declared that "mortification of sin is part of the service of God, at least a necessary prerequisite."¹¹ The second statement, "I live," signifies vivification, or what Davies called "spiritual activity; a vigorous, persevering serving of God."¹²

Due to its inherently mysterious nature, spiritual life was difficult to articulate in words and to understand completely, as is true of much of life. One might explain the "effects and many of the properties" of biological life, yet who was able to explain life in itself? This difficulty is compounded with the spiritual life because this form of life more nearly approached God's own divine life, "that boundless ocean of incomprehensible

⁷WCF 16.2.

⁸Samuel Davies, "The Divine Life in the Soul Considered," in *Sermons*, 2:503–38.

⁹Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:504.

¹⁰Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:504.

¹¹Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:504.

¹²Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:504.

mysteries.”¹³ The mind-darkening effects of sin compounded the difficulty of understanding spiritual life. In this context, Davies cited 1 Corinthians 2:14, which described the inability of non-Christians to “receive or know the things of the spirit of God.”¹⁴ This inability seemed an impenetrable barrier to genuine understanding among some of Davies’ hearers. Only those persons who had themselves experienced the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit could comprehend the doctrine of spiritual life clearly.¹⁵ In the same way that the wisest animal was incapable of rational self-awareness, so the unbeliever, though rational, was incapable of perceiving the true nature of spiritual life.¹⁶ Davies reiterated the necessity of the Spirit’s work of illumination elsewhere:

True faith includes not only a speculative knowledge and belief, but a clear, affecting, realizing view, and a hearty approbation of the things known and believed concerning Jesus Christ; and such a view, such an approbation, cannot be produced by any human means, but only by the enlightening influence of the holy Spirit shining into the heart.¹⁷

Though Satan had blinded humanity and obscured a true sight of Christ’s glory, the Holy Spirit’s “divine illumination pierces the cloud that obscured his understanding, and enables him to view the Lord Jesus in a strong and striking light; a light entirely different from that of the crowd around him; a light, in which it is impossible to view this glorious object without loving him.”¹⁸ The Presbyterian minister thus encouraged his hearers to call out to God for his enlightening Spirit to overcome unaffected hearts.¹⁹ Even with

¹³Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:508.

¹⁴Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:508.

¹⁵Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:508.

¹⁶Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:508.

¹⁷Samuel Davies, “Christ Precious to All True Believers,” in *Sermons*, 1:396.

¹⁸Davies, “Christ Precious to All True Believers,” in *Sermons*, 1:397.

¹⁹Samuel Davies, “The Preaching of Christ Crucified the Mean of Salvation,” in *Sermons*, 1:649. See also Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Justification, and the Nature and Concern of Faith in it,” in

these attendant difficulties, Davies undertook an explanation of the nature of spiritual life in the hopes of giving his hearers “a faint glimmering” of the doctrine. He arranged his topic under three headings: first, the vital principle of spiritual life; second, the disposition of the spiritual life; and third, spiritual empowerment for service.²⁰

Holiness, for Davies, was the vital principle of spiritual life.²¹ Davies described the necessity of holiness and its relationship to spiritual life yet left the term itself undefined in these sermons. Humans are rational beings, yet reason alone is an inadequate animating principle for spiritual life because “life and all its operations will be of the same kind.”²² Reason is a normal human operation, yet it may be, and often is, performed apart from holiness. What, then, would distinguish normal animal life from spiritual life? For Davies the two were quite distinct: the normal person might think and will, but these rational exercises never proceeded from a morally good nature. Spiritual life, however, was marked by a willing and thinking that proceeded from a morally good nature.²³ Davies imagined someone objecting to this claim: are not all of the acts of the spiritual life reducible to mere rationality? Are not such actions merely “thinking and walking in a holy manner?” The spiritual life is indeed marked by the operation of rationality (thinking and willing), so Davies said, and these exercises may involve objects consistent with those required by God’s law, yet such operations are “morally good and acceptable to God” because their fitness is only possible when holiness is superadded to rationality.²⁴ God is the one who joins holiness to rationality (cf. 1 John 3:9) and this

Sermons, 2:656.

²⁰Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:509.

²¹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:509.

²²Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:509.

²³Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:509.

²⁴Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:510–11.

merger occurs at the moment of regeneration.²⁵ The implications of Davies' assertion for spirituality are significant. Only those persons who have been "quicken by efficacious grace" are capable of exercising a morally acceptable act. So though both Christian and pagan pray, the pagan's prayer is fundamentally different than the prayer of the righteous person because it is morally unacceptable to God. The sinner remained "everlastingly incapable of living religion" apart from the monergistic work of God.²⁶

Davies' second point was that "spiritual life implies . . . a spontaneous inclination towards holiness."²⁷ All forms of life have unique tendencies, so spiritual life is marked by "a savour, a relish of divine things," and these tendencies are as natural to spiritual life as eating is to animal life.²⁸ In fact, the biblical authors describe these holy affections with language of "hungering and thirsting (cf. 1 Pet 2:2), and cultivating spiritual mindedness (cf. Col 3:2)," and "the strongest bent of their souls is God-ward."²⁹ Davies continued: "By virtue of this [God-ward bent] they incline to keep all God's commandments; they have an inward tendency to obedience; they love God's law; they *delight in it after the inner man* (Ps 119:97) . . . and their love and delight will habitually sway them to observe it; religion is their element, their choice."³⁰

Those who possess spiritual life obey God out of a deep love for holiness and for the perfectly-holy God who commands true fatherly affections and not out of a fear of the consequences of disobedience only.³¹ What should one make of those people who

²⁵Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:510.

²⁶Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:511.

²⁷Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:511.

²⁸Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:511.

²⁹Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:512.

³⁰Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:512.

³¹Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:512.

seem naturally inclined towards or even delighted by religious activities or attitudes? Davies suggested that two distinguishing marks separate such people from those who possess supernatural holiness: first, if one performs religious duties as an end unto themselves, without heed to the God who has prescribed that activity, such a person is acting from a motive of self-gratification, not out of deference to God. Second, spiritual life brings a universal delight in holiness for anything God has commanded, even if that which is commanded is contrary to one's "natural inclinations." So, a seemingly "natural" bent towards some religious duties, while ignoring others, is no indication of genuine spiritual life.³² While self-gratifying obedience "is always a maimed, imperfect, half-formed thing," obedience flowing from a holy principle has an aesthetic quality of an "amiable symmetry and uniformity" that flow from a changed heart.³³

In the third place, Davies claimed that "spiritual life implies a power of holy operation. A heavenly vigour, a divine activity animates the whole soul."³⁴ Christians are those who "have strength given them; renewed and increased by repeated acts, in the progress of sanctification."³⁵ Davies cautioned that this animating power may at times wane in one's actual experience: "I do not mean that spiritual life is always sensible and equally vigorous; alas! It is subject to many languishments and indispositions: but I mean there is habitually in a spiritual man a power, an ability for serving God which . . . is capable of putting forth acts of holiness, and which does actually exert itself frequently."³⁶ Davies cautioned that this animating power will wax and wane in one's

³²Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:513.

³³Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:514.

³⁴Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:514.

³⁵Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:514.

³⁶Davies, "Divine Life in the Soul," in *Sermons*, 2:514.

actual experience.³⁷ It is divine grace that animates this power, and it is nothing short of “the life of God in the soul of man.”³⁸

Davies offered several avenues of application of his discussion of the nature of spiritual life. First, natural human powers, apart from the principle of holiness, are insufficient to produce or sustain spiritual life—rather, it is “supernatural” and a “divine, heaven-born thing” implanted by God.³⁹ Second, holiness consists in more than good acts. True holiness flows from a new heart and new spirit (cf. Ezek 36:26, 27) and the shedding abroad of God’s Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers (Rom 5:5).⁴⁰ Furthermore, spiritual life is to be distinguished from morality in that the former has a divine origin and the latter a natural origin. The animating principle of the act determines its significance.⁴¹ Finally, even though believers may at times grow faint, “the pulse of the spirit, though weak and irregular, still beats.”⁴² For Davies, then, holiness-empowered living was the true mark of genuine spiritual life: “The design of the whole dispensation of God’s grace towards fallen sinners, is their vivification to holiness, *that they may bring forth fruit unto God*” (cf. Rom 7:4).⁴³ He encouraged Christians that,

Moreover, the design of your vivification, and the natural tendency of the principle of spiritual life is, that you may live to God; and therefore you are peculiarly obliged to make your whole life a series of obedience to Him. Indulge the propensions and tendencies of the new nature; obey and cherish all the impulses and motions of the divine principle within you.⁴⁴

³⁷Samuel Davies, “The Nature and Process of Spiritual Life,” in *Sermons*, 1:203.

³⁸This reference may have been an allusion to the famous seventeenth-century work, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* by Scottish theologian Henry Scougal (1650–1678).

³⁹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:515.

⁴⁰Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:516.

⁴¹Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:517.

⁴²Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:518.

⁴³Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:518.

⁴⁴Davies, “Divine Life in the Soul,” in *Sermons*, 2:537.

Interestingly, Davies omitted any discussion of the precise nature of holiness. But given the significant place of this doctrine in his theology, it is unsurprising to find other sermons which clarify and further his thought.

In a sermon on Hebrews 12:14, Davies treated a text that commands Christians to “follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”⁴⁵ Davies first defined holiness; next, he urged his hearers to endeavor to obtain this holiness; finally he reiterated the “absolute necessity” of holiness.⁴⁶ Davies’ description of holiness is significant for understanding his theology and spirituality. According to Davies, God formed human beings to pursue happiness, yet because of their natural proclivity toward sin, people seek “supreme happiness in sinful, or at best created enjoyments, forgetful of the uncreated fountain of bliss.”⁴⁷ All earthly enjoyments are, however, inadequate and ultimately unsatisfying. Recognizing this fact, many people look beyond this world for unseen rewards, yet not everyone who looks should expect to find this reward because it is promised only to those who are holy.

Now, Davies described holiness as “conformity in heart and practice to the revealed will of God.”⁴⁸ God is the final standard of perfection and his holiness is the Christian’s own standard: “We are holy when his image is stamped upon our hearts and reflected in our lives” (cf. Rom 8:29).⁴⁹ Davies further defined holiness as “conformity to God in his moral perfections.”⁵⁰ These moral perfections could only be known as they are revealed in Scripture, thus his emphasis on conformity to God’s revealed will. Davies

⁴⁵Samuel Davies, “The Connection between Present Holiness and Future Felicity,” in *Sermons*, 1:268–84. This sermon is undated.

⁴⁶Davies, “Present Holiness and Future Felicity,” in *Sermons*, 1:271.

⁴⁷Davies, “Present Holiness and Future Felicity,” in *Sermons*, 1:268.

⁴⁸Davies, “Present Holiness and Future Felicity,” in *Sermons*, 1:271.

⁴⁹Davies, “Present Holiness and Future Felicity,” in *Sermons*, 1:271.

⁵⁰Davies, “Present Holiness and Future Felicity,” in *Sermons*, 1:271.

believed that God revealed his will in both law and gospel. Law informs one's duty to God as creator and other humans as fellow created beings. Gospel informs one's duty as a sinner to God.⁵¹ Holiness, then, is "absolutely necessary" to see the Lord, which Davies described as a beatific vision, or "the vision and fruition of his face."⁵² From this principle of holiness flow several "dispositions and practices in which it consists."⁵³

Those who are holy are the ones who "delight in God for his holiness."⁵⁴ This affection is unnatural for sinners, yet the perfectly holy God commands his creatures to "be holy as he is holy" (cf. 1 Pet1:16), and Davies explained that "this disposition is connatural to a renewed soul only, and argues a conformity to his image."⁵⁵ Indeed, "holiness in fallen man is supernatural."⁵⁶ This delight in God's holiness characterizes the worship of heaven (cf. Rev 4:8) and indeed apart from this delight, "the perfections of God lose their luster, or sink into objects of terror or contempt."⁵⁷

For Davies, those who love God's holiness will also love his revealed will that promotes holiness: "Holiness consists in a hearty complacency in the law of God, because of its purity (cf. Pss 19:7-10; 119:140)."⁵⁸ Sinners reject the law because they believe it an unattainable standard of precision, yet those regenerated by God become "its willing subject."⁵⁹ Davies also suggested that holiness embraced the gospel and its method of

⁵¹Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:272.

⁵²Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:272.

⁵³Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:272.

⁵⁴Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:272.

⁵⁵Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:272.

⁵⁶Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:273.

⁵⁷Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:273.

⁵⁸Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:274.

⁵⁹Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:275.

salvation. The gospel promotes God's moral perfections and the "beauties of holiness."⁶⁰

The gospel explained divine justice through Christ's substitution and the Spirit's sanctification of sinners, and this sanctification renders people "capable of enjoying God" and the way in which God maintains "intimate communion with them."⁶¹ Christ's propitiatory cross-work illustrates God's holiness in requiring punishment for sin and his choice of his co-equal son as the only adequate object of judgment shows the infinite extent of God's holiness.⁶² Sinners cannot stand before God, but through the gospel they are being sanctified in this life and will be perfected at death. Those being sanctified trust fully Christ's righteousness for justification before God and rejoice in the necessity of holiness.⁶³

Just as people delight in God's holiness as it is revealed in Scripture, so they rejoice in the religion that the Scriptures reveal: "Holiness consists in an habitual delight in all the duties of holiness towards God and man, and an earnest desire for communion with God in them."⁶⁴ Davies believed that the Psalter supported this idea that the singular delight of the believer is holy service to God, but he was careful to distinguish between formal religion and revealed religion. Only that religion that is founded upon "divine friendship" offers true delight.⁶⁵ Elsewhere, Davies argued that holiness and happiness were inseparable and that God himself was the true source of happiness for believers: "Every creature in the universe, as far as he is holy, is happy," and "Therefore, by how

⁶⁰Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:275.

⁶¹Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:275.

⁶²Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:276.

⁶³Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:276–77.

⁶⁴Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:278.

⁶⁵Davies, "Present Holiness and Future Felicity," in *Sermons*, 1:278–79. Davies cited Pss 27:4, 63:5–6, 73:28, and 139:17 in support of the idea of delighting in holy service. He believed Ps 42:1–2 taught the friendship with God was the essence of genuine religion.

much the more holy Jehovah is, by so much the more fit he is to communicate happiness to all that enjoy him; and consequently he is an infinite happiness, for he is infinitely holy.”⁶⁶ Again, “The truth of the matter is, the conduct of sinners . . . is the greatest absurdity; they are willing to be happy, but they are not willing to be holy, in which alone their happiness consists.”⁶⁷

The heart transformed by grace grew in its capacity to love holiness; through habitual practice, the formerly rebellious heart becomes disposed to serve God gladly (cf. John 15:15; 1 John 3:2-10, 5:3).⁶⁸ Growth in holiness was essential: “True Christians are far from being perfect in practice, yet they are prevailingly holy in all manner of conversation; they do not live habitually in any one known sin, or willfully neglect any one known duty” (cf. Ps 119:6).⁶⁹ Further, “even in the present state, [Christians] are laboring after perfection in holiness. Nothing can satisfy them until they are conformed to the image of God’s dear Son.”⁷⁰ Even when a Christian felt distant from God, he was inclined toward holiness: “Even the poor creature that often fears he is altogether a slave to sin, honestly, though feebly, labours to be holy . . . he has a heart that feels the attractive charms of holiness, and he is so captivated by it, that sin can never recover its former place in his heart.”⁷¹ Davies described these inclinations and affections as sources of joy in the believer: “Since your conformity to him consists in holiness, let me beg you to inquire again, Do you delight in holiness? Is it the great business of your life to

⁶⁶Samuel Davies, “God is Love,” in *Sermons*, 1:469.

⁶⁷Samuel Davies, “The Wonderful Compassions of Christ to the Greatest Sinners,” in *Sermons*, 2:443.

⁶⁸Davies, “Present Holiness and Future Felicity,” in *Sermons*, 1:279.

⁶⁹Davies, “Present Holiness and Future Felicity,” in *Sermons*, 1:279.

⁷⁰Samuel Davies, “The Sacred Import of the Christian Name,” in *Sermons*, 1:345.

⁷¹Samuel Davies, “The Compassion of Christ to Weak Believers,” in *Sermons*, 1:261.

improve in it? ”⁷² Personal holiness was the hallmark of genuine devotion to Christ:

Our bodies are his, and therefore all our members should be instruments of righteousness unto holiness. Your eyes are his, therefore let them glorify him by viewing the wonders of his word and works. Your ears are his, therefore let them hear his voice. Your tongues are his, therefore use them as instruments of praise, and of making known his glory. In short, you are all entirely his, therefore be all entirely devoted to him.⁷³

Believers used various means in order to grow in holiness. In a sermon on Luke 10:41–42, Davies understood the *unum necessarium* of the text as “the salvation of the soul, and an earnest application to the means necessary to obtain this end above all other things in the world.”⁷⁴ Means such as prayer and hearing and meditating on Scripture were “appointed to produce or cherish holiness in us” and Christians were to “use these means with constancy, frequency, earnestness, and zeal.”⁷⁵

Davies placed great emphasis on the role of obedience in pursuing holiness. Genuine believers were far from antinomian; rather, they viewed obedience as “pleasant”:

Here then, you that profess to love the Lord Jesus, here is an infallible test for your love. Do you make it the great study of your life to keep his commandments? Do you honestly endeavor to perform every duty he has enjoined, and that because he has enjoined it? And do you vigorously resist and struggle against every sin, however constitutional, however fashionable, however gainful, because he forbids it?⁷⁶

Davies warned his congregation of the *necessity* of obedience: “The only way to please God, and the best test of your love to him, is obedience to his commandments.”⁷⁷ Davies

⁷²Samuel Davies, “Evidences of the Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:466.

⁷³Samuel Davies, “Dedication to God Argued from Redeeming Mercy,” in *Sermons*, 2:130.

⁷⁴Samuel Davies, “The One Thing Needful,” in *Sermons*, 1:555–56.

⁷⁵Davies, “One Thing Needful,” in *Sermons*, 1:556. Davies’ teachings on the various means of grace are discussed in chap. 6 below.

⁷⁶Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced,” in *Sermons*, 2:467.

⁷⁷Davies, “The Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:466.

cited a catena of passages from John's gospel to prove his point, which he punctuated with 1 John 5:3, arguing that Christians who obey the law out of love find God's commands delightful.⁷⁸ Davies afforded no room to those who refused to forsake sin:

they who have not practical respect to all God's commandments, without exception, and who do not inwardly delight in his law, are of a spirit and character directly contrary to David and Paul ; in other words, they are wicked. The wilful and habitual practice of any known sin, and the wilful and habitual neglect of any known duty, are repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures, as the sure signs of a wicked man.⁷⁹

For Davies, then, holiness was the true substance of spiritual life. Holiness was practical consistency with God and his revealed will. Holiness is supernatural in its origin and progressive in its development and was marked by reordered affections. Further, Davies' definition emphasizes the central place that Scripture held in Davies spirituality: one cannot be holy apart from conformity to God's revealed will, law and gospel. Yet a discussion of Davies' understanding of the spiritual life would be incomplete without reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and the "Spiritual" Life

Kidd has well-noted the special place of pneumatology among early colonial Evangelicals, and Samuel Davies' is no exception.⁸⁰ In Davies' theology, the Spirit applied the work of Christ to God's elect, and was thus the immediate source of "spiritual" life. In his atoning death, Christ had "purchased" the Spirit's influence, and the Spirit "[quicken] dead souls."⁸¹ The Holy Spirit worked his "enlightening influence" upon believers, enabling them to behold the glory of Christ, an affecting sight

⁷⁸Davies, "The Nature of Love to God," in *Sermons*, 2:466–67. Davies cited John 14:14, 21, and 23–24, as well as 15:14.

⁷⁹Samuel Davies, "The Certainty of Death; A Funeral Sermon," in *Sermons*, 3:440.

⁸⁰Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xiv.

⁸¹Samuel Davies, "The Nature and Universality of Spiritual Death," in *Sermons*, 1:165.

that remained hidden to sinners.⁸² Sinners were

estranged from God, and engaged in rebellion against him; and they love to continue so. They will not submit, nor return to their duty and allegiance. Hence, there is need of a superior power to subdue their stubborn hearts, and sweetly constrain them to subjection; to inspire them with the love of God, and an implacable detestation of all sin.⁸³

Through his Spirit, God exerted saving power over rebellious sinners: “many a stubborn will has he sweetly subdued; many a heart of stone has he softened, and dissolved into ingenuous repentance . . . many a depraved soul has he purified, and at length brought to the heavenly state in all the beauties of perfect holiness.”⁸⁴

Davies also often described the work of the Holy Spirit in drawing Christians near to God. The Spirit “urged and sweetly constrained” Christians to yield themselves fully to God, a dedication they could not make apart from the Spirit’s gracious operations.⁸⁵ Noting the interplay between Word and Spirit, Davies insisted that it was the Spirit who affected people’s hearts through the preached word.⁸⁶ In his words, “Has not the blessed Spirit at time borne home the word upon your hearts with unusual power, and roused your conscience to fall upon your with terrible, though friendly violence?”⁸⁷ During the Lord’s Supper, God “communicates his love and the influences of his Spirit to [believers]; and they pour out their hearts, their desires, and prayers before him.”⁸⁸ It was

⁸²Samuel Davies, “Christ Precious to All True Believers,” in *Sermons*, 1:396.

⁸³Samuel Davies, “The Preaching of Christ Crucified the Mean of Salvation,” in *Sermons*, 1:639.

⁸⁴Davies, “Mean of Salvation,” in *Sermons*, 1:639. Elsewhere, Davies stated that “To bring sinners to repentance, God has instituted the gospel and its ordinances, and for this end they are dispensed among you; for this end also he rouses your consciences within you, and communicates his Holy Spirit to work upon your hearts.” See Samuel Davies, “A Time of Unusual Sickness and Mortality Improved,” in *Sermons*, 3:238–39.

⁸⁵Davies, “Dedication to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:136–37.

⁸⁶Samuel Davies, “Rejection of Christ a Common but Most Unreasonable Iniquity,” in *Sermons*, 2:307.

⁸⁷Samuel Davies, “The Doom of the Incurable Sinner,” in *Sermons*, 2:323–24.

⁸⁸Samuel Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:154. The nature of the Eucharist and

the “sanctifying Spirit” who communicated “purifying, all-healing influences” to those chosen sinners who were to be saved.⁸⁹ Redeemed sinners cherished holiness because of the influence of the Spirit of holiness, who “turned the prevailing bent” of Christians “towards holiness, so that you esteem it the principle ornament of your nature, and make it the object of your eager desires, and most vigorous pursuit.”⁹⁰ Christians were those upon whose souls God had drawn his own image (cf. Romans 8:29), and the Spirit accomplished this radical change.⁹¹ The Holy Spirit worked to sanctify the “poor in spirit,” those who were aware of the insufficiency of their own holiness and of their dependence upon Christ.⁹² To those Christians whose zeal for the Lord had waned, Davies was convinced that God, through the Spirit, “can rekindle the languishing flame of devotion,” and thus he implored his hearers, “O let us apply to him with the most vigorous and unwearied importunity for so necessary a blessing.”⁹³ By means of the Holy Spirit, God gave believers various fruits of the gospel, blessings of being citizens of the kingdom of God. Among these fruits was the Spirit’s influences “to support his subjects under every burden, and furnish them with strength for the spiritual warfare.”⁹⁴ Finally, one of the Spirit’s most important ministries was providing Christians assurance that God had really adopted them into his kingdom.⁹⁵

Christian piety is described more fully in chap. 6 below.

⁸⁹Samuel Davies, “A Sermon on the New Year,” in *Sermons*, 2:204.

⁹⁰Samuel Davies, “The Vessels of Mercy and the Vessels of Wrath Delineated,” in *Sermons*, 2:370.

⁹¹Samuel Davies, “The Tender Anxieties of Ministers for their People,” in *Sermons*, 2:422.

⁹²Samuel Davies, “Poor and Contrite Spirits the Objects of the Divine Favour,” in *Sermons*, 1:221.

⁹³Samuel Davies, “The Divine Government the Joy of our World,” in *Sermons*, 1:433.

⁹⁴Davies, “Divine Government,” in *Sermons*, 1:436.

⁹⁵Samuel Davies, “The Objects, Grounds, and Evidences of the hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490. The issue of assurance is discussed more fully in chapter 6 below.

Samuel Davies encouraged congregants to pray that God would send his Holy Spirit in special and powerful manifestations: “Betake yourselves to earnest prayer; and confess your guilt . . . cry for his Spirit to shed abroad his love in your hearts: here let your petitions centre; for this is the main thing.”⁹⁶ Equally direct was his appeal for congregants to pray for the Spirit in the midst of the Seven Years’ War:

And how are we to expect his sacred influences? Or in what way may we hope to attain them? The answer is, Pray for them: pray frequently, pray fervently. “Lord, thy spirit! O give thy spirit! that is the blessing I want; the blessing which families, and nations, and the whole human race want.” Pray in your retirements; pray in your families; pray in societies appointed for that purpose; pray in warm ejaculations; pray without ceasing, for this grand, fundamental blessing.⁹⁷

Elsewhere, Davies exhorted believers, “Above all, pray that the Holy Spirit of God may be poured out upon us, to work a general reformation.”⁹⁸

Davies’ most sustained reflection on the work of the Spirit came in a sermon on Isaiah 32:13–19.⁹⁹ Davies preached the sermon on a called fast-day, October 16, 1757, during the early years of the Seven Years’ War. In Davies’ view, the colonial way of life, the British kingdom, and even the future of Protestantism were uncertain. He framed his sermon against the backdrop of the question, “what is the best remedy in this melancholy case?”¹⁰⁰ The Virginia preacher noted first that Isaiah’s prophecy described the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah to Babylon, an attack by a heathen people against God’s chosen nation, which had been orchestrated by God himself, in order to chastise his

⁹⁶Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced,” in *Sermons*, 2:479–80.

⁹⁷Samuel Davies, “The Crisis, or The Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:145. Davies repeated this prayer in another sermon, adding “Therefore, brethren, let us earnestly cry to God for his Spirit. Would you beg for bread, when famishing? Would you beg for life, if condemned to die? O then beg for the Spirit: for this gift is of more importance to you and the world, than daily bread, or life itself.” See Samuel Davies, “Serious Reflections on War,” in *Sermons*, 3:301.

⁹⁸Samuel Davies, “The Signs of the Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:201.

⁹⁹Samuel Davies, “The Happy Effects of the Pouring Out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:202–28.

¹⁰⁰Davies, “Pouring out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:204.

backslidden followers who had grown to love wealth more than Yahweh. It was a situation not unlike the then-present state of the colonies.¹⁰¹ The remedy proposed in Isaiah's text was exactly that which Davies thought most meet: an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰²

Now, Scripture represented the Spirit as “the original fountain of the real goodness and virtue which is to be found in our degenerate world; the only author of reformation, conversion, sanctification, and every grace included in the character of a saint, or a good man.”¹⁰³ Isaiah described a time of the “plentiful communication of [the Spirit's] influence to effect a thorough reformation”; a “copious effusion . . . like a mighty shower or, or torrent that carries all before it.”¹⁰⁴ Davies believed that God had sent such an outpouring during the era of Ezra and Nehemiah and that “The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the great and only remedy for a ruined country.”¹⁰⁵

Davies focused his hearers' thoughts on a nation-wide outpouring of the Spirit, rather than a primarily personal reformation, and noted God's various promises to Israel to pour out the Spirit (cf. Ezek 11:17–20, 36:16–25, and 39:25–29; Zech 4:6).¹⁰⁶ History proved that when God withheld the Spirit, nations faltered, but when he sent the Spirit, “the cause of religion and virtue is promoted, almost without means; then sinners are awakened by a word; religion catches and circulates from heart to heart, and bears down all opposition before it.”¹⁰⁷ Yet Davies did not need to go back as far as ancient Palestine

¹⁰¹Davies, “Pouring out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:205–07.

¹⁰²Davies, “Pouring out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:207.

¹⁰³Davies, “Pouring out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:207–08.

¹⁰⁴Davies, “Pouring out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:208.

¹⁰⁵Davies, “Pouring out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:211.

¹⁰⁶Davies, “Pouring out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:213.

¹⁰⁷Davies, “Pouring out of the Spirit,” in *Sermons*, 3:216.

for an example of the Spirit's effusion; he recalled a period just sixteen years earlier as he spoke of the Great Awakening in New England to illustrate the effects of the Spirit's outpouring.

Prior to its awakening, New England had fallen into a state of religious discontent until "suddenly, a deep, general concern about eternal things spread through the country; sinners started out of their lumbers, broke off from their vices, began to cry out, What shall I do to be saved? and made it the great business of their life to prepare for the world to come."¹⁰⁸ Here Davies reminisced about his days under Blair's ministry: "I have seen thousands at once melted down under it; all eager to hear as for life" and while many so-called conversions of this period proved spurious, "blessed be God, thousands still remain shining monuments to the power of divine grace in that glorious day."¹⁰⁹ Davies offered several anecdotal evidences of the Spirit's current work, in England, in New England, and in Virginia; yet these works were but a "dew" when what the the sin-sick land required was a fountain, which Davies concluded was "the most important blessing, both to our country and our souls, both with regard to time and eternity; and without it, both our country and our souls will be lost in the issue."¹¹⁰

Davies' reflection on the Holy Spirit was not restricted to his sermons, but also appeared in two of his hymns. Davies appended the first hymn to his sermon on Isaiah 32:13–19 just considered. The first two stanzas recounted the dire situation colonists faced in the midst of war:

WHILE in a thousand open'd Veins
Contending Nations bleed,
While Bri'rs and Thorns on blooming Plains
And fruitful Fields succeed;

¹⁰⁸Davies, "Pouring out of the Spirit," in *Sermons*, 3:217.

¹⁰⁹Davies, "Pouring out of the Spirit," in *Sermons*, 3:217. Davies' reminiscence here helps shed some light on his early ministerial training.

¹¹⁰Davies, "Pouring out of the Spirit," in *Sermons*, 3:223.

While Desolation rages round,
Like an o'erwhelming Flood,
Where can a Remedy be found
To stop these Streams of Blood?¹¹¹

Stanzas 3–5 invoke the Spirit's presence, offering a variation on Davies' sermon application. Here Davies envisioned the Spirit's outpouring in powerful natural imagery: the Spirit's coming is like a "Flood" and "reviving Show'r":

Eternal Spirit! Source of Good!
The Author of our Peace,
Pour down thine Influence, like a Flood,
On this wide Wilderness.

O grant us one reviving Show'r,
And let it spread afar:
Thine Influence alone can cure
The bleeding Wounds of War.

Come, Thou—and then the Wilderness
Shall bloom a Paradise,
And heav'nly Plants t' adorn and bless
O'er this wild Waste shall rise.¹¹²

Davies likened the colonies, gripped by war, as a "Wilderness" and a "wild Waste," parched by drought. As a torrential downpour could saturate a dry ground, enlivening the vegetation, so Davies sought the Spirit's abundance. Davies also expected that the Spirit's coming would produce a moral change: the barren, untamed "Wilderness" would "bloom a paradise" Isaiah provide the imagery: Isaiah had prophesied that Judah would be plagued by "thorns and briers," military fortresses and cities would become the domain of wild animals; yet when God would pour out the Spirit, the wilderness would be transformed into a "fruitful field." The vision was eschatological, and Davies captured the nature of the prophecy in stanzas 6–7:

Then Peace shall in large Rivers flow,
Where Streams of Blood have run;

¹¹¹Samuel Davies, "The Hymns of President Davies," ed. Louis F. Benson, *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* 2, no. 7 (December 1904): 347.

¹¹²Davies, "The Hymns of President Davies," ed. Benson, 347–48.

Then universal Love shall glow,
And all the World be one;

Then num'rous Colonies shall rise,
A People all Divine,
To fill the Mansions of the Skies,
And bright as Angels shine.¹¹³

In a second hymn, not associated with a sermon or a specific biblical text, Davies again invoked the Holy Spirit. Where the first hymn was broad in scope, like the sermon to which it was annexed, this hymn is a more personal plea for revival:

ETERNAL Spirit, Source of Light,
Enliv'ning, consecrating Fire,
Descend, and with celestial Heat
Our dull, our frozen Hearts inspire,
Our Souls refine, our Dross consume!
Come, condescending Spirit, come!

In our cold Breasts O strike a Spark
Of the pure Flame which Seraphs feel,
Nor let us wander in the Dark,
Or lie benumb'd and stupid still.
Come, vivifying Spirit, come,
And make our Hearts thy constant Home!

Whatever Guilt and Madness dare,
We would not quench the heav'nly Fire:
Our Hearts as Fuel we prepare,
Tho' in the Flame we should expire:
Our Breasts expand to make Thee Room:
Come, purifying Spirit, come!

Let pure Devotion's Fervors rise!
Let ev'ry pious Passion glow!
O let the Raptures of the Skies
Kindle in our cold Hearts below!
Come, condescending Spirit, come,
And make our Souls thy constant Home!¹¹⁴

In this hymn, Davies used contrasting elements of darkness and light as well as coldness and heat to picture the Spirit's work in the believer. The Holy Spirit was the "Source of Light" who illuminated darkened minds. He was a fire who melted frozen hearts, and,

¹¹³Davies, "The Hymns of President Davies," ed. Benson, 348.

¹¹⁴Davies, "The Hymns of President Davies," ed. Benson, 367–68.

burning with greater heat, refined holiness in a believer's soul by purifying them of their sins. The Spirit worked upon the heart, which the believer prepared as one might lay wood for a fire. Yet this fire was dangerous: it brought the prospect of consuming the one in whom it burned. As the refiner's fire purified gold of dross, so overlong exposure to such heat might destroy the precious metal itself. Davies' mention of "Guilt" and "Madness" in the first line of stanza 3 help explain his imagery here: though freed from sin's power, the believer still lived with sin's presence, or in Davies' words, "Guilt," and this sin operated at one's very core, in one's "heart." If the Spirit were to purge one's heart of sin completely, then who could survive such a work? To invite the Spirit's purifying presence in the presence of such copious fuel was tantamount to a madman's dare, nevertheless, Davies cried, "Come!" The Spirit enflamed the believer's devotion and "pious Passion," causing them to glow as brightly as the sun. The Spirit's coming was no solitary event, rather it was an abiding presence, made clear by Davies' repeated refrain, "make our Hearts thy constant Home!"¹¹⁵

Samuel Davies considered the spiritual life to be a supernatural work of God, wrought in believers by the Holy Spirit, whose sanctifying influences were among the blessings of the gospel. The Spirit worked through the word, never apart from it, and was the immediate cause of spiritual life. During the Seven Years' War, Davies implored his hearers to seek the Spirit's fullness; as individuals, families, and congregations. As the Spirit purified the believer, burning away the dross of sin which remained in every Christian, the believer was enabled to draw ever closer to God in spiritual communion.

Spiritual Communion

The language of communion or fellowship was also used by Samuel Davies when describing the nature of spiritual life: "If you love God and the Lord Jesus Christ,

¹¹⁵Davies, "The Hymns of President Davies," ed. Benson, 368.

you delight in communion with them.”¹¹⁶ True friends seized every opportunity for fellowship and a dear companion’s “absence is tedious and painful to them.”¹¹⁷ God was such a friend to believers. Davies balanced God’s transcendence and immanence:

Though God be a spirit, and infinitely above all sensible converse with the sons of men, yet he does not keep himself at a distance from his people. He has access to their spirits, and allows them to carry on a spiritual commerce with him, which is the greatest happiness of their lives.¹¹⁸

Jesus had promised this communion (cf. John 14:21–23) and it was a “mystical fellowship” that believers enjoyed, and which was unknown to sinners.¹¹⁹ Davies returned to the analogy of human relationships to explain this friendship. Just as friends experienced communion through mutual exchanges, so God drew near to his people as a father might approach his child, showering grace, inflaming love, and assuring them of his closeness. For their part, Christians had freedom to approach God through acts of devotion, especially prayer, yielding themselves to his presence. Davies celebrated God’s nearness:

And oh! how divinely sweet in some happy hours of sacred intimacy! This indeed is heaven upon earth: and, might it but continue without interruption, the life of a lover of God would be a constant series of pure, unmingled happiness.¹²⁰

Contrary to the opinion of some detractors, true religion was “a source of happiness” and provided the faithful “a happiness more pure, more noble, and more durable than all the world can give.”¹²¹ This happiness was not only a future pleasure, but a believer’s present joy, and consisted of “the pleasures of a peaceful, approving conscience, of communion with God, the supreme good, of the most noble dispositions and most delightful

¹¹⁶Davies, “Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:463.

¹¹⁷Davies, “Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:463.

¹¹⁸Davies, “Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:463.

¹¹⁹Davies, “Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:463.

¹²⁰Davies, “Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:464.

¹²¹Samuel Davies, “The Ways of Sin Hard and Difficult,” in *Sermons*, 2:549.

contemplations.”¹²² Such blessings and happiness were bound up in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it was through Christ that believers had “sweet communion” with God, and experienced his love and grace which allowed them to persevere through the trials of life.¹²³

Occasionally, though, the believer’s experience of God did not seem as intimate, for “at times their Beloved withdraws himself, and goes from them, and then they languish, and pine away, and mourn.”¹²⁴ Though Davies left this thought undeveloped, he was describing a phenomenon well-known and addressed by the Puritans, namely that of spiritual desertion.¹²⁵ Though it was likely a theme common to his pastoral ministry, it is found only here among his extant sermons.

Davies recognized that the deep communion with God that he had described was probably foreign to many of his congregants, and he anticipated their objections that such talk was “enthusiasm, fanaticism, or heated imagination.”¹²⁶ He had already appealed to more than a half-dozen passages of Scripture which promised such intimacy, but here replied only that such communion was indeed true of God’s friends and if some critics questioned the possibility of this close relationship, then their distance from God testified that they were no friends of God.¹²⁷

¹²²Davies, “Ways of Sin,” in *Sermons*, 2:549.

¹²³Samuel Davies, “The Gospel Invitation,” in *Sermons*, 2:631.

¹²⁴Davies, “Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:464.

¹²⁵For a helpful overview of the subject of spiritual desertion in Puritan literature, see Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism* (England: Carey Publications, 1977 ed.; reprinted, 66–136. A classic Puritan treatment of this theme is that of Thomas Goodwin in his treatise *A Child of Light Walking in Darkness*, in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, vol. 3 (Eureka, CA: Tanski Publications, 1996), 235–344.

¹²⁶Davies, “Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:464.

¹²⁷Davies, “Nature of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:464.

Conclusion

Samuel Davies thought much about the spiritual life. Though remembered as an evangelist and a preacher of revival, this examination has shown that Davies' called Christians to seek lasting satisfaction in communion with God. Such communion was founded upon the believer's union with Christ and empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who worked to sanctify believers. While this communion might be variable, it was "sweet," even more profound than the closest human friendship. Davies believed that such communion was neither automatic nor accidental, rather it was cultivated through the intentional practice of certain spiritual exercises; specific means of grace, which brought the believer experientially close to God.

CHAPTER 6

THE MEANS OF GRACE: THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Now the ordinances of the gospel are, as it were, the places of interview, where God and his people meet, and where they indulge those sacred freedoms [of communion]. It is in prayer, in meditation, in reading or hearing his word, in communicating at his table; it is in these and like exercises that God communicates, and, as it were, unbosoms himself to those that love him.¹

Genuine Christian spirituality was a monergistic work of God who graciously rescued sinners, yet Samuel Davies frequently urged his hearers to make use of various means of grace in pursuing personal holiness and divine communion. This chapter locates Davies' understanding of spiritual practices within the Puritan and early Evangelical contexts and describes those disciplines that Davies most frequently mentioned.

The Means of Grace in the Puritan and Early Evangelical Traditions

As has been noted, Samuel Davies placed himself within the Puritan tradition with regard to his doctrine of conversion and his insistence upon certain means of grace also indicates his reliance upon this tradition for devotional expressions of Christian spirituality.² According to Chan's excellent work on the discipline of meditation, the Puritan doctrine of the means of grace states that "God does not work directly in the world but chooses to operate at the natural and human level. Thus if he regenerates a

¹Samuel Davies, "The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced," in *Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Davies, A.M. President of the College of New Jersey*, vol. 2 (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1854, repr., 1993), 464. This work will be henceforth cited as *Sermons*.

²In a letter to Joseph Bellamy, Davies indicated that his pastoral ministry, specifically his work for the conversion of sinners, was grounded in the pattern of his Puritan forbearers. Samuel Davies, *The State of Religion among the Protestant Dissenters in Virginia; In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bellamy, or Bethlehem, in New-England: From the Reverend Mr. Samuel Davies, V. D. M. in Hanover County, Virginia* (Boston, MA: S. Kneeland, 1751), 25. For an analysis of these influences, see chap. 4 above.

soul, it is by a process that could be easily discovered via faculty psychology, namely, from the understanding to the affections and will.”³ Puritans suggested a variety of means that the believer might use to draw near to God. Such means “consist of those practical duties, the regular performance of which were thought to lead, in some inexplicable way, to an increase in virtues or godliness.”⁴ Chan notes that the various means “invariably includes prayer, meditation and conference as private means; ministry of the word, sacraments, and public prayer as public means,” and as these means were divinely ordained, they were to be practiced regularly.⁵

Haykin suggests that “prayer, the Scriptures, and the sacraments or ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper” were key means practiced by Puritans and later Christians who were heirs to their heritage.⁶ Hambrick-Stowe’s work on the spirituality of seventeenth-century colonial Puritans shows significant overlap between the various means of grace practiced in England and New England. He includes such disciplines as Psalm singing, Scripture reading, the Sacraments, conference, family devotions, study, meditation, personal writing, and especially prayer, as common means practiced by Davies’ ministerial predecessors.⁷ Lovelace, in his treatment of Cotton Mather’s ascetical practices, noted that the disciplines of meditation, prayer, family devotions, Sabbath keeping, and the Sacraments remained constant into the second and third generation of

³Simon K. H. Chan, “The Puritan Meditative Tradition, 1599-1691: A Study of Ascetical Piety” (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge, 1986), 9.

⁴Chan, “Puritan Meditative Tradition,” 14.

⁵Chan, “Puritan Meditative Tradition,” 14.

⁶Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘Draw Nigh unto My Soul’: English Baptist Piety and the Means of Grace in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 4 (2006): 54.

⁷Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 136–93.

New England Puritans.⁸ In their respective recent studies of Jonathan Edwards' piety, Whitney and Strobel indicate that practices such as hearing, reading, or meditating on Scripture, as well as prayer, attending the ordinances, family worship, Sabbath keeping, fasting, and journaling, among other disciplines, marked this Evangelical contemporary of Davies.⁹ Even closer to Davies was fellow New-Side Presbyterian Jonathan Dickinson, who compiled a similar list of religious exercises, intended to help one walk closely with God: prayer, biblical and occasional meditation, family worship, public worship, and observing the ordinances.¹⁰ Trinterud has shown that the use of these various means of grace was commonplace among other New Side Presbyterians who were contemporaries of Davies.¹¹ Davies also inherited a set of devotional practices from his own religious tradition.

The Westminster Confession addressed various means of grace under the heading of religious worship. According to the divines, all people knew that God existed and was worthy of devotion, yet only those patterns of devotion revealed in Scripture were appropriate means to seek fellowship with God.¹² The Confession noted that prayer was required of all and was to be "made in the name of the Son, by the help of His Spirit, according to His will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love and

⁸Richard F. Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather: Origins of American Evangelicalism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1979), 110–45.

⁹Kyle Strobel, *Formed for the Glory of God: Learning from the Spiritual Practices of Jonathan Edwards* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 83. See also Donald Stephen Whitney, "Finding God in Solitude: The Personal Piety of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) and Its Influence on his Pastoral Ministry" (Ph.D. diss., University of the Free State, 2013), 163–207.

¹⁰Jonathan Dickinson, *Familiar Letters upon a Variety of Religious Subjects*, 4th ed. (Glasgow: John Bryce, 1775), 349–68.

¹¹Leonard J. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-Examination of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949), 179.

¹²Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), 21.1.

perseverance; and, if vocal, in a known tongue.”¹³ Prayer was restricted for the living or those who were yet to be born, but was never offered for the dead. Nor was prayer’s efficacy strengthened by location, “but God is to be worshipped everywhere, in spirit and truth; as, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself; so, more solemnly in the public assemblies.”¹⁴ The Confession also addressed the special use of Sundays as a means of grace. From creation forward, God had appointed Saturday for holy observance, but because of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, Christians were to observe Sunday as the “Christian Sabbath,” marked by rest, worship, and merciful works.¹⁵

While the confession drafted at Westminster provided doctrinal cohesion for Reformed Christians in Great Britain, the pastor-theologians who framed the statement also produced directories for both public and private worship which encouraged various means of grace for the purpose of godliness. These works both replaced and surpassed the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* in their scope of suggesting various disciplines for congregations, families, and individuals.

The *Directory for the Publick Worship of God* offered ministers directions on praying during the worship service, during the administration of the ordinances, and during pastoral visitations or special ceremonies.¹⁶ It directed congregations on conducting fasts and keeping the Lord’s Day holy.¹⁷ Similarly, the *Directory for Family Worship* encouraged individual “secret” worship through the means of prayer and

¹³WCF, 21.3.

¹⁴WCF, 21.4, and 6.

¹⁵WCF, 21.7–8.

¹⁶*Directory for the Publick Worship of God* (DPW), Of the Publick Prayer before the Sermon, Of Prayer after the Sermon, Of the Administration of the Sacraments, The Solemnization of Marriage, Concerning Visitation of the sick, and Concerning Burial of the Dead.

¹⁷DPW, Concerning Publick Solemn Fasting, and Of the Sanctification of the Lord’s Day.

meditation, “the unspeakable benefit whereof is best known to them who are most exercised therein; this being the mean whereby, in a special way, communion with God is entertained, and right preparation for all other duties obtained.”¹⁸ For families, the divines suggested that the “ordinary duties” included prayer, praises, reading Scripture, and catechetical instruction.¹⁹ It suggested ways in which families could sanctify the Lord’s Day, namely through meditation and conference upon the day’s sermon.²⁰ It also offered specific directions for prayer:

So many as can conceive prayer, ought to make use of that gift of God; albeit those who are rude and weaker may begin at a set form of prayer, but so as they be not sluggish in stirring up in themselves (according to their daily necessities) the spirit of prayer, which is given to all the children of God in some measure: to which effect, they ought to be more fervent and frequent in secret prayer to God, for enabling of their hearts to conceive, and their tongues to express, convenient desires to God for their family.²¹

The Means of Grace in Samuel Davies’ Ministry

Samuel Davies insisted that certain devotional practices were hallmarks that characterized and sustained a vital Christian piety. In a sermon on Acts 11:26, Davies linked the practice of various disciplines such as “prayer, . . . meditation, . . . fasting, and every religious duty” to the believer’s imitation of Christ, who himself “abounded” in these activities as well as in certain virtues.²² Davies concluded that “this resemblance and imitation of Christ is essential to the very being of a Christian, and without it, it is a vain pretence.”²³ In a sermon on Galatians 4:19–20, Davies identified secret and family prayer as well as public worship, the sacraments, and fasting as the “outward duties of

¹⁸*Directory for Family Worship (DFW)*, 1.

¹⁹DFW, 2.

²⁰DFW, 8.

²¹DFW, 9.

²²Samuel Davies, “The Sacred import of the Christian Name,” in *Sermons*, 1:348.

²³Davies, “Sacred Import,” in *Sermons*, 1:348.

religion.”²⁴ In a new year’s sermon preached just a month before he died, Davies encouraged his congregants to hear and read Scripture, meditate “upon divine things,” and have fellowship with wiser Christians “as means instituted for your conversion.”²⁵ In other sermons Davies reiterated the importance of prayer, hearing and reading Scripture, meditation, the Lord’s Supper.²⁶ Nothing about Davies’ lists of disciplines is surprising, but it was through these simple, reliable means of grace that Davies believed communion with God was sustained. Those disciplines related to Scripture have been covered in chapter 3. The means of prayer, fasting, conference, the ordinances, and the Lord’s Day will be explored below.

Prayer

Though the means of accessing Davies’ own personal piety are few, those artifacts that do survive indicate that he was a man of prayer. Nowhere was his commitment to prayer more evident than during his fundraising journey to Great Britain, on behalf of the College of New Jersey, from 1753–1755. During this trip, Davies maintained a private diary, which has preserved some of his habits and forms of prayer.²⁷ Davies had promised his wife Jane that he would set apart Saturday evenings for special times of prayer for her during his voyage and on Saturday, December 7, 1753, Davies noted that he had “Found more Freedom than usual in Intercession for my dear absent Friends, particularly for Mr. Rodgers, and my Chara.”²⁸ Though the content of these

²⁴Samuel Davies, “The Tender Anxieties of Ministers for their People,” in *Sermons*, 2:413.

²⁵Samuel Davies, “A Sermon on the New Year,” in *Sermons*, 2:207.

²⁶Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced,” in *Sermons*, 2:464; and idem., “Christians Solemnly Reminded of their Obligations,” in *Sermons*, 3:608.

²⁷George William Pilcher, ed., *Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753–55* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967).

²⁸Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 34. Mr. Rodgers was John Rodgers (1727–1811), a close ministerial friend of Davies. “Chara,” from the Greek for “joy,” was Davies’ nickname for his wife.

prayers was undoubtedly richer than Davies left in his diary, his brief written prayers show the tenor of his concern for his beloved spouse during their separation: “O! Thou God of our Life, with all the importunity so languid a Soul is capable of exerting, I implore thy gracious Protection for her, that she may be supported in my Absence, and that we may enjoy a happy Interview again.”²⁹ Two months later, as Davies thought of his wife and children, he prayed, “To thee, O Lord, I then solemnly committed them and now I renew the Dedication. I know not, if ever I shall see them again; but my Life and theirs is in the Hand of divine Providence; and therefore shall be preserved as long as is fit.”³⁰ Just two weeks later, Davies family weighed heavy on his heart: “Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.”³¹

The following Saturday, Davies “was much depressed in Spirit at the Prospect of the Voyage, and the Tender Tho’ts of Home,” when he prayed, “May the God of my Life support me!”³² Just two days later, Davies’ recorded that his “Tho’ts often take a sudden Flight to Hanover, and hover over my Chara, and my other Friends there.” He implored, “O may indulgent Heaven preserve and bless them!”³³ Davies’ ship sailed in the early morning of November 18, and the following evening he asked, “O Lord, bless my dear Family.”³⁴ During the treacherous voyage home in 1755, Davies recounted that he “often fell upon my Face, praying in a Kind of Agony, sometimes for myself, sometimes for the unhappy Ship’s Company, and sometimes for my dear, destitute

²⁹Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 7.

³⁰Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 9.

³¹Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 12.

³²Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 15.

³³Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 16.

³⁴Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 29.

Family, whom the nearest Prospect of Death could not erase from my Heart.”³⁵

Gilbert Tennent, the renowned Presbyterian pastor from New Jersey, accompanied Davies on the journey to England. During the voyage, the two ministers encouraged one another through prayer. Davies was seasick for about the first ten days of the voyage, yet on November 26, he and Tennent “prayed in our Room together in the Morning and Afternoon with some Freedom.”³⁶ They began these meetings a day earlier: “Yesterday and today we prayed together alternately in our Room; and I felt some Tenderness and Importunity in so doing. O that we may in this inactive Season be laying up proper Furniture for active Life upon Shore!” They maintained this pattern of regular prayer during the voyage across the Atlantic: “Since I noted it last, Mr. Tennent and I have prayed each of us twice in our Room, and one of us alternately in the Cabin in the Evening.”³⁷ Moreover, Davies and Tennent maintained this pattern of praying twice daily once they arrived in Great Britain.³⁸ One Wednesday night, after spending the evening with the “Wonder of the Age,” George Whitefield, “Mr. Tennent’s heart was all on Fire, and after we had gone to Bed, he suggested we should watch and pray; and we rose, and prayed together ‘till about 3 o’clock in the Morning.”³⁹ Tennent and Davies prayed often during their trip. When they encountered difficulty raising funds, they prayed for God’s direction.⁴⁰

Davies also prayed in the pulpit, sometimes experiencing God’s blessing and at

³⁵Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 144.

³⁶Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 30.

³⁷Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 32.

³⁸Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 48.

³⁹Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 44.

⁴⁰Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 60.

other times feeling confused.⁴¹ When he heard others pray, Davies could not help but noting the impressions they made upon him. When in Northampton, Davies visited the late Philip Doddridge's congregation, then under the oversight of Robert Gilbert (d. 1760), and was "pleased to find him a weeping Petitioner to Heaven in Prayer."⁴² At Yarmouth, Davies visited Congregationalist pastor Richard Frost (1700–1778), who "In Prayer . . . has an uncommon Dexterity in descending to particulars."⁴³ In Halesworth, Davies stayed with the Congregationalist minister Samuel Wood (d. 1767), and recounted that "His Expressions in Prayer are remarkably striking and solemn."⁴⁴ What do reflections such as these say about the place of prayer in Davies personal life?

First, Davies' own prayers reveal that he was theologically consistent in recognizing God's sovereign control over every aspect of life and death. Although he loved and missed his family, he expressed confidence in God's ability to protect and bless them during his absence. Then, when he was fearful, Davies sought consolation in prayer, entrusting his own life to God's mercy. His mention of praying from the pulpit shows that he recognized his effectiveness as a preacher was linked to God's blessing and not primarily his own rhetorical abilities. Further, Davies' reflections on his habit of praying at set times with Gilbert Tennent indicates that he found such discipline helpful and spiritually edifying, not stifling or ritualistic. This sentiment is reinforced by their especially rich time of watching and praying until the early morning. Finally, the fact that Davies recalled the specific gifts or abilities of others in prayer shows that prayer was something that he valued enough to notice, especially when one showed a particular

⁴¹Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 83 and 113.

⁴²Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 118.

⁴³Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 123. For Frost's biography, see John Browne, *History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1877), 246.

⁴⁴Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 125.

freedom in conversing with God. Davies' various diary entries have the cumulative force of showing that prayer was a normal and significant part of his Christian experience.

With regard to prayer, Davies preached what he practiced.

Samuel Davies' delight in prayer carried over from the closet to the pulpit. In his sermons, Davies prayed for his hearers, both believers and unbelievers, and exhorted both to draw near to God through prayer. Although Davies never set down a systematic treatment of prayer, frequent references to prayer abound in his sermons. In examining Davies' theology of prayer and its implications for Christian piety, a key question is that of the relationship between prayer and communion with God.

Those who love God and Jesus delight in prayer, the exercise of which was the believer's chief experience of communion with God:

Friends, you know, delight to converse together, to unbosom themselves to one another, and to enjoy the freedoms of society. They are fond of interviews, and seize every opportunity for that purpose; and absence is tedious and painful to them. . . . Now, though God be a spirit, and infinitely above all sensible converse with the sons of men, yet he does not keep himself at a distance from his people. He has access to their spirits, and allows them to carry on a spiritual commerce with him, which is the greatest happiness of their lives.⁴⁵

Believers foster such communion through prayer. For Davies, true prayer bespoke of a Trinitarian faith in the Father, Son, and Spirit. Warning his congregants of the danger of Laodician tepidity in religion, Davies encouraged them to pray, "Lord, fire this heart with thy love."⁴⁶ Prayer was the proper remedy for a lukewarm heart; only God could instill this "sacred fire," and Davies exhorted believers "fly to him in agony of importunity, and never desist, never grow weary till you prevail."⁴⁷ The God to whom Davies directed his prayer was omniscient, the "Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth," and the human petitioner was variously a criminal who sought pardon or a "famished

⁴⁵Samuel Davies, "The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced," in *Sermons*, 2:463.

⁴⁶Samuel Davies, "The Danger of Lukewarmness in Religion," in *Sermons*, 1:421.

⁴⁷Davies, "Danger of Lukewarmness," in *Sermons*, 1:422.

beggar” who sought relief.⁴⁸ Davies characterized prayer as the “natural language” of the spiritually poor.⁴⁹ For Davies then, prayer was no less than worship, which could be offered fittingly or poorly, and therefore genuine prayer could never become a cool, detached ritual.

At various points in his sermons, Davies emphasized prayer as the pathway of vital spiritual communion between the believer and each member of the Godhead. Davies insisted that the Father was indeed a prayer-hearing God and insisted that Christians ought to approach him in prayer reverently and confidently (cf. Ps 65:2). The Bible contained a rich history of God acting upon the prayers of his people: God heard Moses’ cry, “Show me, I Pray thee, thy glory” (cf. Exod 33:18–19) and revealed his glorious name and character to the aging prophet-leader.⁵⁰ God heard Hezekiah’s prayer for deliverance from the Assyrians (cf. 2 Kngs 19:14–19) and rescued his people.⁵¹ For Davies, however, the Father was even more willing to hear the prayers of believers.

Christians were those who had been born again, and one of the signal benefits of regeneration was that the Christian was now adopted into God’s family and related to God as a child would relate to a father. Just as in human relationships, where a child had freedom to approach a loving father, so Christians enjoyed the “peculiar privileges” and a “liberty of access” to their heavenly Father, especially in prayer.⁵² “As the children of God have liberty to address their Father, so they have the privilege of having their petitions graciously heard and answered. A human parent is ready to give gifts to his

⁴⁸Davies, “Danger of Lukewarmness,” in *Sermons*, 1:415.

⁴⁹Samuel Davies, “Poor and Contrite Spirits the Objects of Divine Favour,” in *Sermons*, 1:222.

⁵⁰Samuel Davies, “The Name of God Proclaimed by Himself,” in *Sermons*, 1:442.

⁵¹Samuel Davies, “Ingratitude to God and Heinous but General Iniquity,” in *Sermons*, 1:653.

⁵²Samuel Davies, “The Nature and Blessedness of Sonship with God,” in *Sermons*, 2:180–81.

children, and much more is our heavenly Father” (cf. Luke 11:11–13 and Matt 6:6–9).⁵³

With regard to the Son, Davies insisted that Jesus was “precious to believers as a great High Priest.”⁵⁴ In his death on the cross, Jesus had atoned for sin, yet through his ongoing heavenly session, Jesus continued to pray for sinners.⁵⁵ Though Davies certainly emphasized the centrality of the cross, he also rejoiced in the mediation of Christ. Jesus stands before the Father as a slaughtered lamb (cf. Revelation 5:6), “bearing the memorials of his sacrifice, and putting the Father in remembrance of the blessings purchased for his people.”⁵⁶ Just as Jesus had prayed for his followers during his time on earth (cf. John 17:24), so he now prayed that the blessing he secured on the cross would be applied to the faithful. Such thoughts moved Davies to exclaim, “Now how precious must Christ appear in the character of Intercessor! That the friendless sinner should have an all-prevailing advocate in the court of heaven to undertake his cause!”

As believers prayed on earth, so Jesus prayed in heaven, offering up “the great incense of his own merit” comingled with the petitions of the saints. Davies appealed to the covenant of grace between the Father and the Son as the believer’s grounds for praying with assurance. Further, he insisted that Christians could pray with the confidence, even in their weakest moments, knowing that Jesus was ever available to hear their petitions and to plead their cause with the Father.⁵⁷ Prayer, however, was more than merely asking Jesus for needs and blessings; it was the chief means through which the believer maintained fellowship, or in Davies’ words, “intercourse,” with the ascended

⁵³Davies, “Sonship with God,” in *Sermons*, 2:181.

⁵⁴Samuel Davies, “Christ Precious to all True Believers,” in *Sermons*, 1:386.

⁵⁵Davies, “Christ Precious,” in *Sermons*, 1:386.

⁵⁶Davies, “Christ Precious,” in *Sermons*, 1:387.

⁵⁷Davies, “Christ Precious,” in *Sermons*, 1:387–88.

Christ.⁵⁸ Prayer, for Davies, was a key way in which one looked to Christ for saving relief. In an unforgettable illustration, Davies asked his hearers to picture one of their own dear children kidnapped by a murderer. If the parents were to arrive in time, and were to lock eyes with their terrified son or daughter before the death blow was struck, how loud would be the child's unspoken cry for deliverance in that moment? In the same way, when the sinner came to apprehend his desperate state, she cried out to God in prayer.⁵⁹ Such a sinner would not only pray in public, but in secret, shaking off the tendency of so many to go through life as in a trance, ever ready to seek help from Christ.⁶⁰

Davies also encouraged his hearers to pray for the work of the Holy Spirit among them. For Davies, the Spirit awakened benighted sinners to see the glory of Christ; therefore he encouraged Christians to pray that the Spirit would communicate God's love and other "sacred influences" among them and so bring a general reformation to the colonies.⁶¹ By looking at Paul's frequent prayers for divine assistance, Davies concluded that such prayers were necessary, for who would pray for what they already possess? More particularly, Davies recognized that it was the Holy Spirit himself who strengthened believers' weakness in prayer and devotion (cf. Rom 8:24).⁶² Christians also

⁵⁸Davies, "Christ Precious," in *Sermons*, 1:402. See also Samuel Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:154–55.

⁵⁹Samuel Davies, "The Nature of Looking to Christ Opened and Explained," in *Sermons*, 2:344.

⁶⁰Davies, "Looking to Christ," in *Sermons*, 2:345.

⁶¹See, for example, Samuel Davies, "The Nature of Love to God and Christ Opened and Enforced," in *Sermons*, 2:479–80; idem., "The Crisis, or The Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times," in *Sermons*, 3:145; and idem., "Serious Reflections on War," in *Sermons*, 3:301.

⁶²Samuel Davies, "The Success of the Ministry Owing to a Divine Influence," in *Sermons*, 3:22–23. Elsewhere, describing the seriousness with which Christians were to seek eternal life, Davies appears to have taken Rom 8:26 to apply to Christians, when he stated that Christians are those who "pray with unutterable groans." In Rom 8:26, it is the Spirit, not believers, who prays with unutterable groans on behalf of believers. See Samuel Davies, "Saints Saved with Difficulty and the Certain Perdition of Sinners," in *Sermons*, 1:591.

depended on the Spirit's aid in prayer during times of spiritual adversity: "Sometimes, alas! they fall; but their general lifts them up again, and inspires them with the strength to renew the fight. They fight most successfully upon their knees."⁶³ Davies likened Christians to soldiers, engaged in ongoing warfare. This warfare was both internal and external: from without, Christians faced a nearly continuous stream of temptations; from within, they battled sin's insurrection. Given the unceasing nature of their battle, Christians ought not to be surprised when beset with weakness and fatigue in their fight, yet through prayer they had hope of success. Such prayer was the "most advantageous posture for soldiers of Jesus Christ," through which their captain would send reinforcements to assist in battle, enabling even the weakest soldier to "overcome, through the blood of the Lamb."⁶⁴

Though all Christians were soldiers in God's "spiritual army," ministers were especially called to prevail in prayer, arming themselves with the "humble doctrines of the cross" to "rescue enslaved souls from the tyranny of sin and Satan."⁶⁵ For the minister to pray was for him to wage an attack against the forces of evil. Davies modeled such attacks in his sermons, especially with regard to the success of the gospel. When Davies considered the universality of spiritual death, he was astonished that "the generality of mankind are habitually careless about the blessed Jesus; they will not seek him, nor give their hearts and their affections, though they must perish for ever by the neglect of him!"⁶⁶ This sad state drove him to pray, "'Father of spirits, and Lord of life, quicken, oh quicken these dead souls!'"⁶⁷ He expected his congregants to unite their voices also in

⁶³Samuel Davies, "The Mediatorial Kingdom and the Glories of Jesus Christ," in *Sermons*, 1:303.

⁶⁴Davies, "Mediatorial Kingdom," in *Sermons*, 1:303.

⁶⁵Davies, "Mediatorial Kingdom," in *Sermons*, 1:303–04.

⁶⁶Samuel Davies, "The Nature and Universality of Spiritual Death," in *Sermons*, 1:183.

⁶⁷Davies, "Spiritual Death," in *Sermons*, 1:183.

prayer: “Oh, Sirs, while we see death all around us, and feel it benumbing our own souls, who can help the most bitter wailing and lamentation? Who can restrain himself from crying out to the great Author of life for a happy resurrection?”⁶⁸ As a pastor preaching to spiritually dead hearers, Davies likened himself to the prophet Elijah, praying over the Shunamite widow’s son, ““Oh Lord my God, I pray thee, let this sinner’s life come into him again” (cf. 1 Kngs 17:21).⁶⁹ Davies’ commitment to battling for souls through prayer extended well beyond his own congregations in Virginia; he had a more global perspective. Davies rejoiced that Christians had a benevolent divine king who ruled an “empire of grace,” and asked his hearers to pray that this kingdom would be expanded: “Let us pray that all nations may become the willing subjects of our gracious Sovereign.”⁷⁰

Fasting

Samuel Davies had been back in Virginia less than a month after his trip to England when his Hanover congregation spent Wednesday, March 5, 1755, in fasting and prayer.⁷¹ Though Davies undoubtedly led his congregation in observing this sacred day, aimed at securing God’s gracious intervention on behalf of the British against the French and their Indian allies, he made no mention of his own habits of fasting. As he stood in the pulpit, he declared,

If God dispose the victory as he pleases, then it is most fit, and absolutely necessary, that we should seek to secure his friendship. If we have such an Almighty Ally, we

⁶⁸Davies, “Spiritual Death,” in *Sermons*, 1:183.

⁶⁹Samuel Davies, “The Nature and Process of Spiritual Life,” in *Sermons*, 1:208.

⁷⁰Samuel Davies, “The Divine Government the Joy of our World,” in *Sermons*, 1:437. The concept of praying for the conversion of the nations is not as frequent in Davies’ published works as it was for his contemporary, Jonathan Edwards. Perhaps this paucity of references indicates that the subject was not often one he considered, or perhaps it is due to the fact that only a fraction of Davies’ sermons have survived.

⁷¹Davies appended a note to his sermon that March 5, 1755 was “a day of fasting and prayer.” See Samuel Davies, “God the Sovereign of All Kingdoms,” in *Sermons*, 3:329.

are safe; and if we have provoked his displeasure, and forfeited his friendship, what can we do but prostrate ourselves in the deepest repentance and humiliation before him? for that is the only way to regain his favour. This is the great design of a fast; and from what you have heard, you may see it is not a needless ceremony, but a seasonable and important duty.⁷²

In his sermons, letters, and diary, Davies has left no record of his own practice of this “important duty.” Perhaps he took Jesus’ admonition to “appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret” (Matt 6:16–18) seriously, believing that to discuss his own practices would forfeit the discipline’s blessings. Or maybe Davies thought fasting so commonplace as to need no elaboration. One can reasonably assume that Davies would not have been guilty of hypocrisy on this count. His sermons reveal a twofold message on fasting: positively, fasting was a sign of heartfelt repentance; negatively, it could become a form of works-righteousness.

Although not wholly unknown in England, fast-day observances were commonplace in New England and the other American colonies.⁷³ In New England, ministers relied on a simple pattern of using Sunday sermons as vehicles of primarily spiritual concern and used weekday sermons or lectures for more civil matters.⁷⁴ This pattern does not mean that Puritan minister separated spiritual and civil affairs, but rather serves as a reminder that the coextensive nature of the covenantal relationship of the political fabric of New England with the covenant of grace necessitated careful attention lest eternal salvation and moral obedience be conflated. Puritan New England valued its seasons of fasting from its earliest days forward, yet by 1755, other colonies held similar days.⁷⁵ Though the practice of setting apart fast-days appears to have been less common

⁷²Davies, “God the Sovereign,” in *Sermons*, 3:350–51.

⁷³For an excellent survey of the development of public fasts in New England, the best study is still that of W. DeLoss Love, *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England* (Boston: The University Press, 1895). See also Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*, 25th anniv. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27–31 and 77–78.

⁷⁴Stout, *New England Soul*, 27.

⁷⁵Love, *Fast and Thanksgiving Days*, 299–304.

in Anglican Virginia than in Puritan Massachusetts or Connecticut, Virginians had indeed observed such days.⁷⁶ Davies' sermons recount three fast days during his ministry in Virginia, each occurring during the tumult of the Seven Years' War.⁷⁷

Stout has well-noted the serious nature with which congregations and communities observed fast days.⁷⁸ Due to the fact that the regular patterns of life and commerce were interrupted to implore God's special grace or favor, Davies used such days to remind his hearers of both the blessings and dangers of such religious observances. As already mentioned, Davies described fasting as a "seasonable and important duty" which expressed a believer's genuine mourning over sin.⁷⁹ He based this assessment on Joel 2:12–18, which called God's people employ fasting as a sign of repentance. Following General Braddock's defeat in the summer of 1755, Davies returned to this theme and this text, encouraging his Hanover congregation to "join earnest prayer to your repentance and fasting."⁸⁰ Yet Davies knew that some of his hearers might take pride in their religious austerity and warned such against trusting ceremonies instead of Christ.

Can you pretend that you have always perfectly obeyed the law? That you have never committed one sin, or neglected one duty? Alas! You must hang down the head, and cry, guilty, guilty . . . Set about obedience with ever so much earnestness;

⁷⁶Love, *Fast and Thanksgiving Days*, 304. With regard to Anglicanism, Davies himself observed that the Anglican calendar included no fewer than ninety-five stated fast days. See Samuel Davies, "A Christmas-Day Sermon," in *Sermons*, 3:570.

⁷⁷Davies, "God the Sovereign," in *Sermons*, 3:329 captured the earliest fast day of this period, occurring in the spring of 1755. See also Samuel Davies, "Serious Reflections on War," in *Sermons*, 3:280, which was both a New Year's sermon and a fast-day sermon for January 1, 1757, called by the Presbytery of Hanover. Finally, see Samuel Davies, "The Crisis, or the Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times," in *Sermons*, 3:120, for a fast-day sermon called by the Synod of New York for October 28, 1756. Unlike New England, where government-sponsored fasts were more common, two of the three fasts Davies mentioned were called by Presbyterian leaders rather than civil magistrates.

⁷⁸Stout, *New England Soul*, 27–28.

⁷⁹Davies, "God the Sovereign," in *Sermons*, 3:351.

⁸⁰Samuel Davies, "On the Defeat of General Braddock, Going to Fort Duquesne," *Sermons*, 3:320.

repent till you shed rivers of tears; fast, till you have reduced yourselves to skeletons; alas! all this will not do, if you expect life by your own obedience to the law.⁸¹

In another setting, Davies remarked that the message of the cross was “unnatural” to sinners, who were more apt to “submit to the heaviest penances and bodily austerities” and to “afflict themselves with fasting” rather than to trust in the righteousness of Christ alone for salvation.⁸² Fasting, then, was an appropriate spiritual practice by which God’s people expressed genuine repentance, but it was a practice which might be easily subverted as a form of self-righteousness.

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

Samuel Davies was certain that all true Christians used the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as means to closer fellowship with God. For Davies, the neglect of these ordinances was an indication of a spiritual malady: “You have not the love of God in you, if you do not delight to converse with him in his ordinances.”⁸³ He challenged those who had “no pleasure in devotion, no delight in conversing with God in his ordinances” to question the genuineness of their religion.⁸⁴ In these ordinances, Christians “do in a more solemn public manner, engage ourselves to the service of God.”⁸⁵

Davies did not address baptism often, yet his reflections emphasized the significance of this rite for the Christian life. Davies understood baptism as “a badge of Christianity, and a mark of our being the disciples, the followers, and servants of Jesus

⁸¹Samuel Davies, “The Law and Gospel,” in *Sermons*, 2:614–15.

⁸²Samuel Davies, “The Nature of Justification and of Faith in it,” in *Sermons*, 2:656.

⁸³Samuel Davies, “Evidences of the Want of Love to God,” in *Sermons*, 3:466.

⁸⁴Samuel Davies, “The Vessels of Mercy and the Vessels of Wrath Delineated,” in *Sermons*, 2:372.

⁸⁵Samuel Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded of their Obligations,” in *Sermons*, 3:591.

Christ.”⁸⁶ Like a soldier who had volunteered to serve in the army, so were Christians who underwent baptism. It was a token of one’s commitment to follow Christ as well as one’s “initiation into the church of Christ.”⁸⁷ Of course, many of the congregants whom Davies addressed did not volunteer as soldiers but rather were baptized as infants, having received it most likely in the Anglican Church. Still, Davies believed they had the obligation to honor this covenant.⁸⁸

Baptism was also an outward “sign of regeneration, or of our dying to sin, and entering into a new state of existence, with new principles and views, to walk in newness of life.”⁸⁹ Yet Davies knew that some who had undergone the physical rite of baptism lacked a genuinely new heart:

Here then, you that have been baptized, and had the sign, inquire whether you have had the thing signified? Whether you have been so thoroughly renewed, in the spirit of your mind, and so have entered upon a new course of life that you may be justly said to be born again, to be quickened with a new life, and to be new creatures? Have you any evidence of such a change?⁹⁰

Perhaps more significantly, Davies understood baptism as “a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and of our dedication to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”⁹¹ Here Davies linked baptism with the gospel and understood baptism as evidence that Christians were “devoted to the sacred Trinity, and each person in the Godhead, under that relation which they respectively sustain in the economy of man’s redemption.”⁹²

Davies offered a more thorough reflection on the sacrament of the Lord’s

⁸⁶Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:592.

⁸⁷Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:592–93.

⁸⁸Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:593.

⁸⁹Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:595.

⁹⁰Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:595.

⁹¹Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:597.

⁹²Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:597.

Supper. The ordinance was commemorative, and thoughtful preparation for the Supper was a mark of one's piety:

In so solemn a posture as at the Lord's table, in so affecting an act as the commemoration of that death to which we owe all our hopes of life and happiness, and with such solemn emblems as those of bread and wine in our hands, which represent the broken body and flowing blood of Jesus, we are to yield ourselves to God, and seal our indenture to be his.⁹³

The meal had replaced the Jewish Passover and commemorated God's might act of delivering people from sin.⁹⁴ The Lord's Supper was a sacrament because "it is intended to represent things spiritual by material emblems or signs which affect our senses, and thereby enlarge our ideas and impress our hearts in the present state of flesh and blood."⁹⁵ Here, Davies described a strong connection between body and mind in one's spirituality: "God consults our weakness, and . . . makes our bodily senses helpful to the devotions of our minds."⁹⁶

In the sacrament, Christians can see Jesus portrayed clearly. Davies described the Lord's Supper as "a bright ray of evangelical light; and it helps you to see the love and agonies of Jesus, the great atonement he made for sin, and the method of your pardon and salvation. Come then, ye children of light, come and gaze, and wonder at these astonishing sights!"⁹⁷ Elsewhere, having described the glories of God and how they are manifest in the suffering of Christ, Davies turned to the table: "these things may endear the institution of the Lord's supper to you as exhibiting these glories, by sacred emblems, to your senses: therefore you should esteem it, and reverently attend upon it."⁹⁸

⁹³Samuel Davies, "Dedication to God Argued from Redeeming Mercy," in *Sermons*, 2:118.

⁹⁴Samuel Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:141.

⁹⁵Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:143.

⁹⁶Davies, "The Christian Feast," in *Sermons*, 2:144.

⁹⁷Samuel Davies, "A Sight of Christ the Desire and Delight of Saints in All Ages," in *Sermons*, 2:593.

⁹⁸Samuel Davies, "The Divine Perfections Illustrated in the Method of Salvation through the

The supper was “a token of love, or memorial left by a friend at parting among his friends, that whenever they see it they may remember him.”⁹⁹ Like baptism, the Supper was a “badge” and “seal” of true faith, and as such, believers were to afford it great attention: “this remembrance of a suffering Savior must be attended with suitable affections.”¹⁰⁰ More significantly, God used the ordinance as a means to “[maintain] communion with his people, and they with him.”¹⁰¹ In the celebration of the meal,

there is a spiritual intercourse carried on between [God] and [believers]. He communicates his love in the influences of his Spirit to them; and they pour out their hearts, their desires, and prayers before him. He draws near to them, and revives their souls; and they draw near to him, and converse with him in prayer, and in other ordinances of his worship.¹⁰²

Further, at the table, “[God] favors them with his spiritual presence, and gives them access to him; and they draw near to him with humble boldness, and enjoy a full liberty of speech in conversation with him.”¹⁰³

As the Lord’s Table was indeed such a place intimate spiritual communion, those who would receive the supper must be reconciled to God, and “delight in communion with him.”¹⁰⁴ The Lord’s Supper was no converting ordinance, but rather a place where the converted experienced spiritual intimacy with God. Here Davies offered his own view of the efficacy of the table, a view that differed significantly from Solomon Stoddard of Northampton: “to what purpose do you communicate? This will not constitute you Christians, nor save your souls. Not all the ordinances that ever God has instituted can do this, without an interest in Christ, and universal holiness of heart and

Sufferings of Christ,” in *Sermons*, 2:272.

⁹⁹Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:145.

¹⁰⁰Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:145–49.

¹⁰¹Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:153.

¹⁰²Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:154–55.

¹⁰³Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:156.

¹⁰⁴Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:157.

life.”¹⁰⁵

As Christians prepared to receive the Lord’s Supper, Davies used the occasion to point believers toward the cross, arguing that their daily carriage was to reflect the significance of what was commemorated in communion. They depended upon God: “Alas! if you separate yourselves from him, you are like a stream separated from its fountain, that must run dry; a spark separated from the fire, that must expire; a member cut off from the body, that must die in putrefy.”¹⁰⁶ He took such preparation seriously and encouraged congregants to use other appointed means such as encountering Scripture, meditation, and prayer to prepare themselves to receive the meal: “read, and hear, and meditate upon his word, till you know your danger and remedy. Take this method first, and when you have succeeded, come to this ordinance, and God, angels, and men will be due welcome.”¹⁰⁷

While the occasion of the eucharistic celebration afforded Davies an opportunity to remind Christians of their devotion to God, he pleaded with them to make this dedication “fixed and habitual”: “it is not a formality to be performed only at a sacramental occasion, not a warm, transient purpose under a sermon, or in a transport of passion; but it must be the steady, uniform, persevering disposition of your souls to be the Lord’s at all times, and in all circumstances, in life, and death, and through all eternity.”¹⁰⁸

Family Worship

Now, family worship nowhere appears in Davies’ list of various means of

¹⁰⁵Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:166. For Stoddard’s position on the Lord’s Supper, see chapter 4 above.

¹⁰⁶Davies, “Dedication to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:132.

¹⁰⁷Davies, “The Christian Feast,” in *Sermons*, 2:167–68.

¹⁰⁸Davies, “Dedication to God,” in *Sermons*, 2:138.

grace, but it was one of the common means that he practiced and enjoined other Christian families to use to promote godliness. No sources survive that describe worship in Davies' household, yet a few sources illuminate Davies' thoughts on the discipline. During his trip to Great Britain, Davies observed some families gathering for devotions and recorded their attention to "examining [their] Children, reading a Sermon, Singing and praying" in his diary.¹⁰⁹ As already noted, the Westminster theologians issued a directory that encouraged family worship as part of its program of national reformation.¹¹⁰ This directory exhorted families to attend to prayer, Bible reading, and catechizing.¹¹¹ Perhaps Davies had this directory in mind when he cautioned his congregants against the neglect of gathering their families morning and evening for prayer and worship.¹¹² It is reasonable to assume that Davies followed these general guidelines in his own family. Davies set down his thought on the matter of family most fully in a sermon on 1 Timothy 5:8.¹¹³

"The heads of families are obliged," Davies preached, "not only to exercise their authority over their dependents, but also to provide for them a competency of the necessaries of life." Such provision did not stop with material provision, which Davies understood to be the primary point of his chosen ext, but extended also to their immortal souls.¹¹⁴ Davies considered those who forsook family worship to be worse than infidels.¹¹⁵ In keeping with his ecumenical spirit, Davies suggested that family religion

¹⁰⁹Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 129–30.

¹¹⁰DFW, Preface.

¹¹¹DFW, 2.

¹¹²Samuel Davies, "The Tender Anxieties of Ministers for their People," in *Sermons*, 412–13.

¹¹³Samuel Davies, "The Necessity and Excellence of Family Religion," in *Sermons*, 2:74–98.

¹¹⁴Davies, "Family Religion," in *Sermons*, 2:75–77.

¹¹⁵Davies, "Family Religion," in *Sermons*, 2:77.

“be not the peculiarity of a party,” but was a common expectation of all believers.¹¹⁶ Davies sought to prove the necessity of family worship from nature and from Scripture, to discuss its frequency, to show heads of households their specific responsibilities to foster such devotion, and to counter various objections to the discipline. Davies contended that “prayer, praise, and instruction” constituted the elements of family worship, going further that the Westminster Directory in his inclusion of psalmody, which he thought “the most proper method of thanksgiving.”¹¹⁷

Davies first sought to justify family devotions by appealing to nature. Just as God alone was worthy of private worship from individual humans, so too was he worthy of family worship. If a family was *capable* of worshipping God, then they were *obligated* to worship him.¹¹⁸ This situation existed in part because God had created people as sociable creatures and instituted the family as the first society. Further, God sustained families and thus they owed him homage. Morning and evening, Davies’ hearers received God’s blessings “flowing down upon your houses.” Would those who had received such unwarranted blessings fail to return thanks and supplications? Worship, then, was the “principal end” of all families.¹¹⁹ To those who rejected this design, Davies asked, “Can you expect that godliness shall run on in the line of your posterity, if you habitually neglect it in your houses?”¹²⁰ Though such regular devotions could not guarantee a godly lineage, “How can you expect that your children and servants will become worshippers of the God of heaven, if they have been educated in the neglect of family religion? Can

¹¹⁶Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:78.

¹¹⁷Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:80.

¹¹⁸Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:81–82.

¹¹⁹Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:83–84.

¹²⁰Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:84.

prayerless parents expect to have praying children?”¹²¹ Davies was unrelenting:

Their souls, sirs, their immortal souls, are intrusted to your care, and you must give a solemn account of your trust; and can you think you faithfully discharge it, when you neglect to maintain your religion in your families? Will you not be accessory to their perdition, and in your skirts will there not be found the blood of your poor innocent children? What a dreadful meeting may you expect to have with them at last?¹²²

Regular family devotion was the only reliable help that families could utilize to keep the gospel ever before their precious children and dependable servants; thus Davies pleaded, “I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of our lives.”¹²³

Family religion was not only an authoritative command of God, it was also a prerogative afforded by grace. What better ways could families spend their days than conversing of heaven and heaven’s God? “To mention our domestic wants before him with the encouraging hope of a supply! To vent the overflowsings of gratitude! To spread the savour of his knowledge, and talk of him whom angels celebrate upon their golden harps in anthems of praise!”¹²⁴ Even pagans understood the necessity of family worship. How could Rachel’s theft of a family idol go unnoticed if Laban had not reared his family to worship such things (cf. Gen 31:34)? If even pagans trained their households for worship, how much more ought God’s people foster true faith under their roofs?¹²⁵ Such worship was well attested in Scripture.

Isaac and Jacob were wont to build altars in their various encampments so they might worship God because they had observed this habit in their father, Abraham (cf. Gen 18:17–18, 26:25, 28:18, and 33:20). Similarly, Job modeled a serious concern for

¹²¹Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:85.

¹²²Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:86.

¹²³Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:86.

¹²⁴Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:86.

¹²⁵Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:88.

godliness in his rising early to offer sacrifices on behalf of his children (cf. Job 1:5). Even the great King David led his family in worship (cf. Ps 101:2) and the godly prophet Daniel “always observed a stated course of devotion in his family” (cf. Dan 6:10).¹²⁶ Such biblical examples continued into the New Testament, where Paul mentioned several house churches (cf. Rom 16:5, 1 Cor 16:19, and Col 4:15). Peter was found praying at home (cf. Acts 10:2, 30). Even the pagan Cornelius led his family in devotion.¹²⁷

Scripture also added precepts to its examples. Paul exhorted the Colossians to pray in their families (cf. Col 4:2). Peter warned husbands to give attention to their relationship with their wife lest their prayers be hindered (cf. 1 Pet 3:7). This last example led Davies to encourage the practice of husbands and wives retiring for secret prayer together:

As there is a peculiar intimacy between them, they ought to be peculiarly intimate in the duties of religion; and when retired together, they may pour out their hearts with more freedom than before all the family, and particularize those things that could not be prudently mentioned before others.¹²⁸

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 and 11:19 provided the basis for family worship in Israel as did the special yearly observance of Passover. While Hebrews 3:13 and Colossians 3:16, which instructed daily teaching, applied immediately to the church, they surely also applied to families. Davies added the duty of praise to family worship based on Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2, and 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18.¹²⁹ The foundation provided, Davies reiterated the vital need for family worship. The choice was simple, and tended to affect the entire community:

If the grateful incense of family worship were ascending to heaven every morning and evening, from every family among us, we might expect a rich return of divine blessings upon ourselves and ours. Our houses would become the temples of the

¹²⁶Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:88–89.

¹²⁷Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:89.

¹²⁸Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:90.

¹²⁹Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:91.

Deity, and our congregation feel his gracious influences.¹³⁰

Such influences would affect children and servants, ending household strife and vice, and reviving true religion.¹³¹ The neglect of family worship would also have striking consequences, turning homes into “nurseries for hell.”¹³²

How frequently ought families to gather for worship? At least daily, answered Davies, preferably morning and evening, for Israel’s sacrifices followed this twice-daily rhythm, and the Psalmists often commended this pattern (cf. Pss 141:2, 145:2, 55:17, and 92:1–2). Even the prophet Amos warned Judah to “Seek him that turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night” (Amos 5:8).¹³³

God had given heads of household the particular responsibility to conduct family worship, using gentle means where possible and compulsion when necessary. Though “the consciences of all, bond and free, are subject to God only, and no man ought to compel another to anything, as a duty, that is against his conscience,” family worship proved to be an exception. How else could Joshua speak for his own household when he proclaimed that they would serve the Lord (cf. Josh 24:15) unless he had authority to compel such service, even if it proved merely external?¹³⁴ Davies also anticipated various objections to family worship and defended his case.

To those who complained that their secular business left them no time for family worship, Davies wondered how such incredibly busy people found time to eat, hold idle conversations, or even sleep, which were of far less importance in light of eternity. How did such people view time, and was their business lawful or unlawful?

¹³⁰Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:92.

¹³¹Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:92.

¹³²Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:92.

¹³³Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:93–95.

¹³⁴Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:95–96.

Surely any legitimate business could be ordered to provide time for family devotions.¹³⁵ Then, Davies imagined some might plead ignorance of how to pray, which he found a pitiful excuse: just as a beggar was perpetually sensible enough to ask for handouts, so one who knew little of prayer was still conscious of the need to seek God. Yet his congregation had no legitimate excuse at this point, for they had long enjoyed the riches of “preaching, Bibles, and good books” which instructed them in prayer. Further, how could one who claimed ignorance of prayer expect to grow in its performance by *neglecting* it? Here Davies was even willing to suggest that those unskilled in prayers might use forms of prayer as crutches, for a season, until they grew in strength.¹³⁶ As nearly all of Davies’ Virginia congregations had been gathered from the Church of England, presumably these forms include those of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* as well as the more basic forms from the Presbyterian *Directory for Publick Worship*. To those who were ashamed to worship God in their families, Davies wondered how one could share in the task of angels, who offered unceasing praise, and remain ashamed. All that was needed was practice.

As his sermon closed, Davies offered sympathetic counsel to those whose hearts had been softened by his sermon. Perhaps they were ashamed of long-neglecting family worship and unsure how to begin this practice. Such past failure ought to be confessed and remedied speedily. Some might be afraid that their family would ignore their pleas for worship, or worse, mock their piety. Davies concluded, “Are you more afraid of a laugh or a jeer than the displeasure of God? Would you rather please men than him?”¹³⁷ In another context, Davies encouraged parents, especially fathers, to remind children often of the importance of their baptism:

¹³⁵Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:96.

¹³⁶Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:97.

¹³⁷Davies, “Family Religion,” in *Sermons*, 2:97–98.

Take your little creatures up in your arms, and with all the powerful oratory which the fond heart of a father and the warm heart of a Christian can make you master of, put them in mind of their early baptism; explain to them the nature of that ordinance; and labour to make them sensible of the obligations that lie upon them in consequence of it. Warn them of the danger of breaking covenant with God, and living a life of perjury.¹³⁸

Davies cited the example of Philip Henry (1631–1696), a Nonconformist minister of Welsh ancestry and father to the famed biblical commentator Matthew Henry (1662–1714), who composed a baptismal covenant for his children, reviewed it with them each Sunday evening, and when they were of a certain age, made them write it out and sign it.¹³⁹ Elsewhere, Davies described the worshipping family of the righteous as “little churches, in which divine worship is solemnly performed.”¹⁴⁰ Given Davies’ reflection on the significance and practice of family worship, including baptismal covenants, we can reasonably assume that his own practice would have been similar to the one he encouraged his congregants to pursue.

Sabbath/Lord’s Day

Hambrick-Stowe has well-noted the Puritan innovation of the Sabbath as a “devotional point of reference,” especially among New England’s Puritans.¹⁴¹ This weekly cycle pictured the gospel and differed significantly from the yearly Anglican cycles of fast and holy days as well as the Roman Catholic calendar of worship from which the Anglican pattern was derived.¹⁴² Puritans saw the Sabbath as a divine institution given to humans as a means of grace through which they might rest from

¹³⁸Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:604.

¹³⁹Davies, “Christians Solemnly Reminded,” in *Sermons*, 3:604. On Philip Henry, see Matthew Henry, *An Account of the Life and Death of Mr. Philip Henry, Minister of the Gospel, near Whitchurch in Shropshire* (London: Angel in the Poultry, 1712).

¹⁴⁰Samuel Davies, “Saints Saved with Difficulty, and the Certain Perdition of Sinners,” in *Sermons*, 1:588.

¹⁴¹Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 96.

¹⁴²Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 97.

earthly concerns and draw near to God. Thomas Shepard, Congregationalist minister in Newtown (Cambridge), Massachusetts, defended the Sabbath's unique and continuing relevance in a series of sermons published as *Theses Sabbaticae*.¹⁴³ Here he argued for maintaining the Sabbath as a holy day, for the Sabbath was the bellwether of true piety:

It is easy to demonstrate by Scripture and argument, as well as by experience, that religion is just as the Sabbath is, and decays and grows as the Sabbath is esteemed: the immediate honor and worship of God, which is brought forth and swaddled in the first three commandments, is nursed up and suckled in the bosom of the Sabbath.¹⁴⁴

Shepard presented hundreds of theses arranged under four headings: the Sabbath's morality, change, beginning, and sanctification. God had given humans the Sabbath and it was incumbent upon people to observe it, not out of superstition or mere custom, but as an act of obedient worship to the creator.¹⁴⁵ Lovelace has indicated that for the Puritans, the Sabbath functioned as a "miniature, day-long retreat each week," which served as a powerful instrument of transformation.¹⁴⁶ The Westminster theologians also addressed the Sabbath in their confession. In Scripture, God had established the Sabbath as "a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages."¹⁴⁷ Like Shepard, the Westminster divines believed that Jesus, by virtue of his resurrection, had changed the Sabbath of creation (Saturday) to the Lord's Day (Sunday).¹⁴⁸ The Sabbath proved a key issue of division between English Puritans and Anglican authorities, notably Archbishop William Laud, yet the Puritan view prevailed, at least initially, in Anglican

¹⁴³Thomas Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticae: Or, the Doctrine of the Sabbath*, in *The Works of Thomas Shepard*, vol. 3 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1967), 7–271.

¹⁴⁴Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticae*, in *Works*, 3:13.

¹⁴⁵Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticae*, in *Works*, 3:14–15.

¹⁴⁶Lovelace, *American Pietism*, 132.

¹⁴⁷WCF, 21:7.

¹⁴⁸Shepard, *Theses Sabbaticae*, in *Works*, 3:204–05; WCF 21.7.

Virginia, where strict Sabbath observance was a founding principle at Jamestown.¹⁴⁹ After the 1620s, when James I (1566–1625) and Charles I (1600–1649) exerted more direct rule over the colony, Puritan influence waned. By the 1700s, Sunday in Virginia had become more a day of relaxation and amusement than devoted worship.¹⁵⁰ Though he never offered a statement on precisely *how* Christians ought to use the Sabbath as a means to draw near to God, Davies shared the Puritan view that the Sabbath was a divine ordinance, a mean of grace, not to be ignored.

For Samuel Davies, Sunday was the “Christian Sabbath,” a positive law founded upon God’s revealed will.¹⁵¹ God had consecrated Sunday “for the commemoration both of the birth of this world, and the resurrection of its great Author.”¹⁵² It was a day set aside for prayer and the concerns of eternity.¹⁵³ Davies included Sabbath breaking among a list of various other sins which testified to one’s guilt before God and warned those who found the Lord’s Day marked by “tedious hours,” who could not bear to set apart worldly concerns for even a few hours each week, that hell would be a place where they would no more be troubled by such concerns, but rather face the horrible prospect of eternal punishment.¹⁵⁴ He insisted that he had long warned his Hanover congregants not to break the Sabbath; rather, they were to consider it an

¹⁴⁹Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 2, *The Reformation to the Present Day* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1985), 219.

¹⁵⁰Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 68.

¹⁵¹Samuel Davies, “Law and Gospel,” in *Sermons*, 2:607.

¹⁵²Davies, “A Christmas-Day Sermon,” in *Sermons*, 3:564.

¹⁵³Samuel Davies, “The One Thing Needful,” in *Sermons*, 1:571.

¹⁵⁴Samuel Davies, “Saints Saved with Difficulty, and the Certain Perdition of Sinners,” in *Sermons*, 1:587, and Samuel Davies, “The Certainty of Death; A Funeral Sermon,” in *Sermons*, 3:439. See also Samuel Davies, “The Vessels of Mercy and the Vessels of Wrath Delineated,” in *Sermons*, 2:372–73.

affecting mean of grace.¹⁵⁵

Personal Writing

On July 2, 1753, Samuel Davies, dipped quill in hand, made his first entry into a travel diary that he kept updated until February 15, 1755, when he returned to Hanover, Virginia. That Davies would keep such a diary is unremarkable; the practice of maintaining a record of one's spiritual progress was well-established by Davies' time. What is surprising is that his diary remained unpublished until fifty-eight years after his death, especially when other Evangelicals' journals, those of Davies' peers, enjoyed wide distribution. How did such personal writings fit into the Puritan and early Evangelical means of grace? Why did Davies maintain this diary? What spiritual or other purposes did it serve? Why did this diary remain out of the public view for nearly six decades?

Charles Hambrick-Stowe has well-summarized the Puritan tradition of maintaining diaries:

In their personal spiritual writing Puritans practiced self-examination; recorded ordinary events and "remarkable providences," which taken together could provide clues to God's plan for the soul; kept track of public worship and private devotional activity; and meditated and prayed. Diary entries also included terse notes of entirely secular transactions, of who visited whom or preached on what text.¹⁵⁶

While the practice of maintaining personal writings to track one's spiritual growth (or declension) may not have been universal, it was certainly practiced among colonial clergy from the earliest days of settlement. Thomas Shepard maintained such a diary, as did the poet-pastor Michael Wigglesworth (1631–1705) of Malden, Massachusetts.¹⁵⁷ Cotton Mather kept a diary that documented his meticulous and sincere use of various

¹⁵⁵Samuel Davies, "The Guilt and Doom of Impenitent Hearers," in *Sermons*, 3:628–29.

¹⁵⁶Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 186.

¹⁵⁷Thomas Shepard, "The Journal," in *God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge*, rev. ed., ed. Michael McGiffert (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 81–134. See also Michael Wigglesworth, *The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth, 1653–1657*, ed. Edmund S. Morgan (New York: Harper and Row, 1946).

means of grace to pursue holiness.¹⁵⁸ Among Davies' peers, Jonathan Edwards kept various personal writings including a diary and his *resolutions*, as well as thousands of miscellaneous thoughts on life, Scripture, and theology.¹⁵⁹ The great revivalists George Whitefield and John Wesley maintained lifelong diaries and journals, some intended to foster private devotion and others clearly intended for public promotion.¹⁶⁰ David Brainerd (1718–1747), Presbyterian missionary to the Indians of Delaware and New Jersey, was closer in age to Davies than these other men, and maintained both a private “diary” and a public “journal” of his mission work.¹⁶¹ While his Puritan forbearers and Evangelical contemporaries used the medium of personal diaries, Davies' own diary is at once similar yet distinct from each of these sources mentioned.

While Davies reflected on his own heart and his motives, his diary entries lack the depth of introspection of a Shepard, Wigglesworth, or Brainerd. Davies recorded no list of guiding personal resolutions as did Edwards. He left no record of his fasts, Bible-reading regimen, or numerous days of prayer as did Mather. Davies was not nearly as meticulous as Wesley, sometimes skipping several days' entries or summarizing large blocks of time with a simple paragraph. Of all those contemporary diary-keepers

¹⁵⁸Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681–1708*, vol. 7 of *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1911). On Mather's use of the genre for tracking his spiritual growth, see Richard Franz Lovelace, “Christian Experience in the Theology of Cotton Mather” (Th.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1968), 87n2.

¹⁵⁹For the diary and resolutions, see Jonathan Edwards, *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁶⁰George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals* (London: Banner of Truth, 1960). See also John Wesley, *Journal and Diaries*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, vols. 18–24 of *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992). Shortly after his conversion in 1736, George Whitefield began keeping a private diary to mark his spiritual progress. According to Thomas Kidd, to whom I am indebted for sharing this information, this diary was clearly not intended for public viewing.

¹⁶¹Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 19), vii. Donald Whitney has noted that Edwards referred to his own personal account as a “diary,” as well as the private account that Brainerd maintained, using “journal” to refer to an intentionally public document, with some exceptions. See Whitney, “Piety of Jonathan Edwards,” 179–80.

mentioned, Davies' diary most closely resembles that of George Whitefield, who maintained a reasonably detailed record of his travels and impressions of his sermons and hearers. Davies' motivations for keeping his diary and his intentions for its use seem largely idiosyncratic, which indicates that his diary was likely a very personal document.

Davies stated his motivation for beginning and keeping the diary:

And now as Divine Providence, quite contrary to my Expectation seems to call me to a very important Embassy for the Church and for the Public; and as it will tend much to my future Satisfaction, to have the Record of my procedure by me for a Review in an Hour of Perplexity; I think it expedient to state the Affair in Writing and to keep [a Diary of] all the remarkable Occurencies I may [meet with in] my Voyage.¹⁶²

By his own admission, Davies was unsure that he was the right person to undertake the fundraising trip to Great Britain and had suggested other ministers he believed to be better suited for the task, yet "Providence" prevailed.¹⁶³ Might Davies' stated reason for maintaining the diary have been simply pious posturing for later readers, a culturally-expected demurral in light of such an honor? Almost certainly not. Although Davies had expressed his desire to live on in "public usefulness" after his death, he never published his diary following his return from Great Britain nor did he leave instructions for it to be published after his death as he did with his sermons.¹⁶⁴ Davies also appears to have been consistent in his personal humility. When the trustees of the College of New Jersey elected him as president, Davies declined the nomination more than once before reluctantly agreeing to the post.¹⁶⁵ Then, Davies took few steps to mask his interactions

¹⁶²Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 2.

¹⁶³Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 2–8.

¹⁶⁴See Samuel Davies, *Sermons on Important Subjects, By the Late Reverend and Pious Samuel Davies, A. M., Sometime President of the College of New Jersey* (New York: T. Allen, 1792), [i] (unnumbered). In the preface to the 1792 edition of Davies' sermons, Thomas Gibbons, dissenting preacher in London and one of Davies' key correspondents, excerpted a letter Davis had sent in 1757: "I want to live after I am dead, not in name, but in public usefulness: I was therefore about to order in my will that all my notes, which are tolerably full, might be sent to you to correct and publish such of them as you might judge conducive to the public good" [i].

¹⁶⁵For the minutes of the trustees and their correspondence with Davies, see John Maclean, 210

with or opinions of numerous Christian leaders in the colonies and Great Britain, which information might have been deemed inappropriate or at least too delicate to commit to print. Of course, he might simply have edited such information out of a print edition, but that he left his original diary unedited in this way makes it less likely that he wanted the material to be public after his demise. Finally, Davies made numerous personal, ministerial, and familial notes in the diary, none of which would be scandalous if published, but most would have been uninteresting for the broader public. Davies' own explanation for keeping the diary, namely as a record of God's dealings and his own travels, seems best taken at face value.¹⁶⁶

Davies maintained his diary in a way that best suited his own devotional needs. Davies followed no systematic schema in what he chose to include or how he structured his entries. He narrated his travels and the hospitality of his hosts. He listed sermons that he had preached in various pulpits, noting his own sense of anointing¹⁶⁷ or powerlessness.¹⁶⁸ He recorded the sermons he had heard preached by others and his thoughts or reactions to them.¹⁶⁹ He preserved descriptions of times of prayer with his friends¹⁷⁰ and for his family.¹⁷¹ He mentioned books and sermons he read during his

History of the College of New Jersey, from its origins in 1746 to the Commencement of 1854, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1877), 198–218.

¹⁶⁶While Davies' desire to maintain a record of his trip and God's dealings seems to have been his primary motivation, it is likely that he may have preserved the detailed records of his visits and funds raised as a log for the trustees for the College of New Jersey, should questions have ever been raised about how he spent his time and efforts abroad.

¹⁶⁷“Preached a Sermon in the Morning from Isai. 66.1,2. and thro' the great Mercy of God, my Heart was passionately affected with the Subject.” See Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 19.

¹⁶⁸“Preached at Mr. Finley's on Deut. 10,-13. a Sermon which I preached in Hanover with great Satisfaction and Prospect of Success; but alas! I have lost that Spirit with which it was first delivered.” See Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 10.

¹⁶⁹“Heard Mr. Rodgers preach a very good Sermon . . . and my Mind was deeply impressed” See Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 25.

¹⁷⁰See Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 26, 30, and 32 representatively.

¹⁷¹See Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 20, 28, 32, 33, among many others.

travels.¹⁷² He documented fundraising visits, noting carefully the amounts collected or promised. Davies also used his diary to capture his occasional poems.¹⁷³

Davies' diary found its way in to the possession of John Holt Rice (1777–1831), publisher and professor at Hampden-Sydney College and later Union Theological Seminary in Virginia.¹⁷⁴ Rice was a distant relative of Davies; his mother was a cousin of Samuel Davies' wife, Jane Holt.¹⁷⁵ By 1818, Rice had acquired some of Davies' papers and wrote Archibald Alexander (1772–1851) of Princeton seeking additional manuscripts.¹⁷⁶ Davies' diary was among these papers. Rice published extracts of the diary in 1819 in his *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*.¹⁷⁷ These extracts were reprinted occasionally during the nineteenth century.¹⁷⁸ Pilcher's 1967 transcription represented the first full publication of the journal.¹⁷⁹ Whether the diary remained private because Davies wished it to be so or whether it simply disappeared among various family

¹⁷²See Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 21, 31, 33, 39–40, 109, 135, among others. Davies recorded at least twenty books, sermons, or treatises that he read during his travels, mostly during his time at sea, but also during his horseback travels on land (109). His reading tastes varied widely from travel journals (33–36) to sermons (31, 34, 60) to novels by Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) (39) and a biography of Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) (109).

¹⁷³See Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 24–25, 26–27, 28, and 143, representatively. See also Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 186–87, for a discussion of the place of poetic and meditative works in Puritan personal writings.

¹⁷⁴See William Maxwell, *A Memoir of the Rev. John H. Rice, D.D.* (Philadelphia: J. Whetham, 1835).

¹⁷⁵Maxwell, *Memoir*, 2.

¹⁷⁶Maxwell, *Memoir*, 139–40.

¹⁷⁷John Holt Rice, ed., "Memoir of the Reverend Samuel Davies," *The Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, 2 (1819), 112–19, 186–88, 201–17, 329–35, 353–63, 474–79, and 560–67. These extracts appeared in vol. 2 of the magazine, not vol. 1, as Pilcher referenced them. See Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, xv.

¹⁷⁸See Samuel Davies, *Memoir of the Rev. Samuel Davies, Formerly President of the College of New Jersey*, rev. ed. (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, 1832). This *Memoir* is simply a reprinting of the material from Rice's magazine. See also William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: William S. Martien, 1850), 227–81.

¹⁷⁹See Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, xii–iii, for a discussion of the transmission of the journal.

artifacts, or more likely through a combination of these reasons, Davies found the discipline of documenting his spiritual life and God's work through his ministry to be helpful for a season, even if he never required it of other Christians as a mark of true piety.

Christian Friendship

In the fall of 1751, Davies wrote a friend who, though unnamed when the letter was reprinted, must have been close to the pastor indeed:

My very dear friend, I REDEEM a few nocturnal hours to breathe out my benevolent wishes for you, and to assure you of my peculiar regards. Human life is extremely precarious and uncertain; and, perhaps, at your return, I may be above the reach of your correspondence; or, perhaps, your voyage may end on the eternal shore. I, therefore, write to you, dear sir, in the last agonies of friendship, If I may use the expression.¹⁸⁰

Davies' thoughts on that particular evening seem laden with the near prospect of death. The minister assured his friend that if he were to return to find that Davies had died during his absence, he could forever treasure their friendship, assured that Davies had often prayed for him. If Davies were to outlive this dear brother, he would be comforted by the fact that he had expressed the depth of their friendship.¹⁸¹ Such thoughts of death stirred Davies to "rest my guilty soul on an all-sufficient redeemer with all the humble confidence of a confirmed faith." Further, these reflections called to Davies' mind God's gracious heart-work of regeneration and earlier seasons of devotion: "when I can recollect the solemn transactions between God and my soul, and renew them in the most voluntary dedication of myself, and all I am and have, to him, through the blessed mediator; then immortality is a glorious prospect."¹⁸²

Davies' indicated that he and his friend had previously discussed

¹⁸⁰Samuel Davies, letter to unspecified recipient, in "Letters of Samuel Davies," *The Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine* 2 (1819), 539.

¹⁸¹Davies, "Letters of Samuel Davies," 540.

¹⁸²Davies, "Letters of Samuel Davies," 540–41.

“experimental religion,” and he wrote this letter with a particular theological motivation: to insist upon the necessity of the new birth. Apparently his friend remained unconvinced that regeneration was necessary to one’s eternal salvation. Davies sought to persuade him otherwise:

That thorough change of heart, usually denominated regeneration; that distressing conviction of our undone condition by sin, and utter inability to relieve ourselves by virtue of that strength common to mankind in general, that humble acceptance of Christ as our only Saviour and Lord, by a faith of divine operation, that humbling sense of the corruption of human nature, and eager pursuit and practice of universal holiness, which I have, I believe, mentioned in conversation and my letters, appear to me of absolute necessity.¹⁸³

Davies directed his friend to the sermons of Philip Doddridge, the Nonconformist polymath of Northampton, England, which provided “a rational account of that important change.”¹⁸⁴ Davies was “inexpressibly anxious . . . lest you should fatally mistake here,” especially in light of his friend’s favorite authors, who treated experimental religion “very superficially” and tended to “mislead us in sundry things of great importance relating to it” by neglecting the doctrines of the new birth.¹⁸⁵ Davies insisted that “our notions of the substance of vital piety ought to be well examined, and impartially formed; as a mistake here may be of pernicious consequences.”¹⁸⁶ This letter’s focus on heart, or in Davies’ words, “experimental” religion provides a helpful vantage point from which to evaluate the place of friendship in Samuel Davies’ spirituality. While it is impossible to say precisely how many close friendships Davies might have enjoyed during his lifetime, it is easier to identify several common features of Davies’ various friendships. The artifacts here are few, yet they show that Davies often approached friendship from the standpoint of piety.

¹⁸³Davies, “Letters of Samuel Davies,” 541.

¹⁸⁴Davies, “Letters of Samuel Davies,” 541.

¹⁸⁵Davies, “Letters of Samuel Davies,” 541–42.

¹⁸⁶Davies, “Letters of Samuel Davies,” 542.

First, genuine Christian friendship concerned itself with matters of eternal significance. This emphasis is apparent in the letter just considered, where Davies took the opportunity of an upcoming trans-Atlantic voyage, fraught with danger, to address a friend's understanding of conversion. Then, true friendship consisted of mutual encouragements to persevere in the faith and in the ministry. Before Davies sailed for Great Britain in 1753, he travelled from Virginia to New York, meeting various colleagues along the journey. During October and November, Davis stayed often with his longtime friend and fellow Presbyterian minister John Rodgers (1727–1811).¹⁸⁷ During this period, Davies was able to comfort Rodgers when John's wife became ill and delivered a daughter about a month early.¹⁸⁸ For his part, Rodgers' preaching stirred Davies' heart, prompting the Virginian to meditate on the love of God and the place of the affections in the believer's life.¹⁸⁹ The two ministers conversed freely on such matters, opening their hearts to one another "with all the freedom of Xn. Friendship."¹⁹⁰ When the two friends parted, Davies noted that they "retired, and each of us prayed in the tenderest and most pathetic Manner, giving Thanks to God for that peculiar Friendship which has subsisted between us, and committing each other to the Care of Heaven for the future."¹⁹¹ Similarly, Davies and Gilbert Tennent shared many days in prayer and edifying conversation during their journey to and stay in England.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷For an overview of Rodgers' life and ministry, see Harris Elwood Starr, "Rodgers, John" in *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 16, ed. Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), 74–75. Samuel Blair had trained both Davies and Rodgers for ministry and they had been ordained less than a year apart and had both sought licensure from the Anglican authorities in Virginia in 1747, but when Rodgers' request was denied, he settled in Delaware. So close were these friends that Davies named a son John Rodgers Davies.

¹⁸⁸Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 21–22.

¹⁸⁹Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 25.

¹⁹⁰Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 26.

¹⁹¹Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 28.

¹⁹²See, representatively, Pilcher, ed. *Samuel Davies Abroad*, 30, 32, and 38.

Davies found discretion to be an equally key element of Christian friendship. When writing to Joseph Bellamy, the Congregationalist pastor of Bethlehem, Connecticut, Davies noted, “I must suppress sundry Particulars that might be proper to mention in the Freedom of amicable Conversation, but are not to be trusted to the Candour of a censorious World.”¹⁹³ Further, Davies indicated that sharing private information in a public setting to be “pregnant with mischievous Consequences,” insisting that only “intimate Friendship” provided the proper occasion to discuss such matters.¹⁹⁴

Friendship between Christians was a valuable means of grace; thus it is unsurprising to find that Samuel Davies encouraged his hearers to meet with fellow Christians for encouragement. Davies specifically urged the faithful to join one another in societies for prayer. At this time, informal “societies” were an established and growing method of promoting piety outside of the congregational setting. Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705), the German Lutheran pastor now regarded as the father of German pietism, had proposed the *collegia pietatis*, or “holy gatherings” in his 1675 introduction to Johann Arndt’s (1555–1621) classic *True Christianity*.¹⁹⁵ This introduction, later published separately as *Pia Desideria*, was widely influential among early Evangelicals.¹⁹⁶ Spener called for Christians to gather in homes and, under the leadership of a minister, to discuss Scripture and, perhaps, to sing, in order to promote spiritual

¹⁹³Samuel Davies, *The State of Religion among the Protestant Dissenters in Virginia; In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bellamy, of Bethlehem, in New-England: from the Reverend Mr. Samuel Davies, V. D. M. in Hanover County, Virginia* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1751), 4.

¹⁹⁴Davies, *State of Religion*, 4.

¹⁹⁵For an accessible contemporary edition, see Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, trans. Peter Erb (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979).

¹⁹⁶See Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1964), 89–91. Spener’s name is spelled variously as “Philipp” or “Philip.” Regarding Spener’s influence upon early Evangelicalism, see Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 17–18, 61–63.

growth.¹⁹⁷ The practice spread among early Evangelicals, notably the Moravians, and especially among Wesleyan Methodists and the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales.¹⁹⁸

While Davies left no discussion on composition or practices of such societies among the Presbyterians of Virginia, he encouraged his hearers to gather in such small groups for the purpose of prayer.¹⁹⁹

The Means of Grace and Assurance of Salvation

Earthly life is fleeting and assurance of how one will spend eternity is essential.²⁰⁰ Samuel Davies believed that Christians could have such an assurance. Proverbs 14:23 warned the wicked of destruction yet declared that “the righteous hath hope in his death.” What sort of hope could the righteous have? First, the righteous could hope for God’s support in death because God had often promised to support his people in both life and death (cf. 2 Tim 1:12; Ps 23:4, and Rom 8:35–39). The righteous could also hope in the immortality of the soul, because everlasting life was promised in the gospel (cf. 2 Tim 1:10). Then, Christians had hope because of the promise that their bodies would one day be resurrected from the grave (cf. 1 Cor 15:53–55). Finally, the righteous had hope in death because of the promise of eternal fellowship with and worship of God

¹⁹⁷Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 89–90.

¹⁹⁸See Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 160. See also William Williams, *The Experience Meeting: An Introduction to the Welsh Societies of the Evangelical Awakening*, trans. Bethan Lloyd-Jones (London: Evangelical Press, 1973; repr., Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003).

¹⁹⁹See Samuel Davies, “The Crisis, or the Uncertain Doom of Kingdoms at Particular Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:145.; and idem, “The Signs of the Times,” in *Sermons*, 3:201. In these sermons, Davies urged his hearers to gather in societies specifically for the purpose of praying that God would pour out his Holy Spirit upon Virginia. In 1747, Jonathan Edwards published his *An Humble Attempt*, a treatise that called Christians to unite in concerts of prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. See Jonathan Edwards, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth, pursuant to Scripture-Promises and Prophecies concerning the last Time*, in *Apocalyptic Writings*, ed. Stephen J. Stein, vol. 5 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 309–436. Was Davies following Edwards’ advice and call to establish such prayer meetings?

²⁰⁰Samuel Davies, “The Objects, Grounds, and Evidences of the Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:474.

(cf. Ps 17:15 and Phil 1:23).²⁰¹ Such were the objects of the righteous person's hopes, but what qualified a person as "righteous?" Though people might disagree over such qualifications as distinguish the righteous and the wicked, surely God was able to establish such criteria, or in Davies' words, the "characters which he has declared essentially necessary to salvation." God had indeed established such a foundation in Scripture, and because God's character and utterly unshakable and his word completely trustworthy, Christians could have reliable assurance of salvation.²⁰²

God's mercy to sinners displayed in the gospel of Jesus Christ was the sinner's only foundation of assurance. While one could not trust in his own inherent righteousness, he could hold fast to the imputed righteousness of Christ: "It is in the mercy, the mere mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, that he trusts."²⁰³ Such who had received Christ's righteousness were empowered to live obedient lives, marked by good works, but these works were no sufficient ground of assurance; one's only hope was in having been born again, possessing an interest in Christ. Yet how was one to know that they had experienced this saving regeneration? Davies believed that by means of a "thorough trial," of their character, a person could know if they had truly experienced the new birth and, consequently, trust God's reliable word that all who had been born again had the promise of eternal salvation.²⁰⁴ Part of this "thorough trial" involved examining one's life in light of Scripture. Those who cherished attitudes or behaviors that God had approbated and rejected personal holiness could have no assurance; even worse, their groundless hope served to undermine Scripture's authority: if the Bible declared that the impenitent would perish (cf. Luke 13:3–5) and yet held out hope of their ultimate

²⁰¹Davies, "Hope of the Righteous," in *Sermons*, 3:478–84.

²⁰²Davies, "Hope of the Righteous," in *Sermons*, 3:484–85.

²⁰³Davies, "Hope of the Righteous," in *Sermons*, 3:485.

²⁰⁴Davies, "Hope of the Righteous," in *Sermons*, 3:486.

salvation, how could it possibly support the hopes of the saints? People who lived in “willful neglect” of duties God had prescribed had no ground for hope.²⁰⁵ Yet not all who sought assurance were so hypocritical; surely some were genuinely faithful followers of Christ.

Those who saw evidence of the new birth in their lives had reliable grounds for hope, but these grounds did not mean that the believer’s experience of assurance was always consistent with the reality of their security in Christ:

Now different believers, and even the same persons at different times, have very different degrees of this evidence. And the reason of this difference is, that sundry causes are necessary to make the evidence clear and satisfactory; and, when any of these are wanting, or do not concur in a proper degree, then the evidence is dark and doubtful.²⁰⁶

Davies’ pastoral concern was evident. Those who have been born from above ought to have hope, not in themselves but rather in the grace of God working in their lives. Yet such people might at various seasons entertain unfounded doubts. How could one maintain a consistent hope of salvation and a steady assurance? They could grow in their certainty, Davies taught, by growing “to some eminence” in their practice of various graces.²⁰⁷ Christians who were weak in their practice of various disciplines might have hope, but such hope would almost certainly be weak in the face of death. Those saints who had “made great attainments in holiness,” however, maintained a steady assurance, yea even with joy.²⁰⁸ Consistent with his emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Davies also taught that the Spirit’s work was essential to one’s assurance.

Davies looked to Romans 8:16, which promised that those whom God had adopted could expect the Holy Spirit to provide an internal testimony confirming God’s

²⁰⁵Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:486–88.

²⁰⁶Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:489.

²⁰⁷Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:489.

²⁰⁸Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

legal declaration: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”²⁰⁹ Davies explained the Spirit’s ministry further: “He excites our graces to such a lively exercise, as to render them visible by their effects, and distinguishable from all other principles.”²¹⁰ Yet Davies believed that such interior confirmation was within God’s purview to grant or to withhold; it did not necessarily accompany regeneration nor was it promised to in the same degree to every saint. Where this testimony was absent, the saint might feel confused, doubtful, and buffeted.²¹¹ When God was pleased to give such assurance, however, “it will be like a ray of heavenly light, to point out his way through the dark shades of death, and to open to him the transporting prospects of eternal day.”²¹² While the Spirit’s heart-ministry was God’s prerogative, the saint ought to use those means within his control, namely the discipline of self-examination. Christians who neglected regular introspection were likely to have only meager assurance whereas those believers who diligently looked after their lives abounded in hope.²¹³ Regardless of a person’s experience of assurance, through the gospel the righteous had hope. While a person might wish for greater assurance, she must remain contented with this objective promise of assurance of salvation through Christ’s merit. “The soldiers of Jesus Christ have generally left this mortal state in triumph; though this is not an universal rule.”²¹⁴ In sum, Davies believed that believers could be assured of salvation because of Christ’s objective cross-work, evidences of a changed life, and the Spirit’s interior witness, yet such assurance admitted to degrees.

²⁰⁹Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

²¹⁰Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

²¹¹Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

²¹²Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

²¹³Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:490.

²¹⁴Davies, “Hope of the Righteous,” in *Sermons*, 3:492.

Samuel Davies' theology of assurance was consistent with the Westminster divines, who extended cautious optimism to the saints when they declared:

such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.²¹⁵

Davies followed the Confession's insistence on the promises of God, testimony of works, and the Spirit's witness as the grounds for an "infallible assurance of faith."²¹⁶ Similarly, he adhered to the Confession's admonition that such assurance was not bound up "to the essence of faith," and that the Christian might wait long to receive the comfort of this hope, and that such believers ought to use "ordinary means" to foster joyful, thankful assurance.²¹⁷ Yet because salvation was based on the objective work of God, even those Christians who lost assurance were "never so utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived; and by the which, in the mean time, they are supported from utter despair."²¹⁸

It is right to locate Davies' treatment of assurance with a discussion of his views on the various means of grace because Davies' saw the two concepts as integrally linked. Christians who neglected fellowship with God through God's ordained means ought not hope of salvation:

Now God has been so condescending, as to represent his ordinances as so many places of interview for his people, where they may meet with him, or, in the Scripture phrase, draw near to him, appear before him, and carry on a spiritual intercourse with him.²¹⁹

²¹⁵WCF 18.1.

²¹⁶WCF 18.2.

²¹⁷WCF 18.3.

²¹⁸WCF 18.4.

²¹⁹Davies, "Evidences of Want," in *Sermons*, 3:467.

As God had been so gracious as to establish means through which his people might commune with him, it followed that true believers delighted in such means as prayer, hearing and meditating on Scripture, and taking the Lord's Supper. Such means were not only duties but "privileges; exalted and delightful privileges, which sweeten their pilgrimage through this wilderness, and sometimes transform it into a paradise."²²⁰

Davies believed that one's disposition toward the means of grace was a necessary indicator of their interest in Christ and their assurance of salvation. Those people who neglected the public assembly, maintained "prayerless closets" and "prayerless families," and avoided the daily practice of devotion had no basis to claim to love God nor could they have any assurance of saving faith.²²¹ Rather, every genuine believer could testify with King David of their soul's insatiable thirst for God (cf. Ps 42:1–2) and sought to satisfy this thirst in the ever-flowing fountain of God's presence through the habitual practice of various means.²²²

Conclusion

For Samuel Davies, Christians maintained communion with God through the diligent spiritual activities such as reading and meditating upon Scripture, prayer, fasting, and Sabbath keeping. Davies stood in a long Christian tradition which emphasized the use of means in pursuing godliness (cf. 1 Tim 4:7). Though such exercises did not make one a Christian, they were simultaneously preparatory to and essential for the Christian life. Sinners were to read Scripture and pray that they might be converted. Christians used such disciplines to maintain vital communion with God. Some disciplines, such as the Lord's Supper, were reserved exclusively for believers, while others, like the Sabbath,

²²⁰Davies, "Evidences of Want," in *Sermons*, 3:467.

²²¹Davies, "Evidences of Want," in *Sermons*, 3:467.

²²²Davies, "Evidences of Want," in *Sermons*, 3:467–68.

were intended for all members of society. Davies himself practiced the disciplines he enjoined upon his congregants, believing that through such means he, and they, could draw near to God.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The question that began this dissertation was “how did Samuel Davies’ theology inform his understanding of spiritual life and piety?” Additional questions followed, such as what role the Bible played in Davies’ vision of the Christian life and spirituality, how spiritual life was communicated and sustained within believers by Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian holiness in spiritual life, and the place of various means in pursuing communion with God.

This dissertation has shown that Samuel Davies was not only an eighteenth-century revivalist, spokesman for religious toleration, and college president, but that he was a deeply pious man whose doctrinal convictions, consistent with his Presbyterian commitments and shaped by Puritan tradition, formed a framework from which he called believers to sustained communion with God. Davies was no theological innovator, but rather a synthesizer and gifted spokesman for those traditions that he had inherited.

The research for this dissertation has been undergirded by several presuppositions. First, the history and theology of the Christian experience is a worthy academic endeavor. Then, theology and spirituality are coinherent; that is, the particular contours of one’s theology shapes one’s experience of the Christian life and such doctrinal and ascetical nuances matter. Third, Samuel Davies’ Christian piety provides a fruitful model for examination and emulation because of the seriousness with which Davies pursued personal piety and the frequent and careful applications he offered his congregants to encourage Christian devotion.

Having reviewed Davies’ life and writings, and the considerable impact of his

ministry, several findings may be drawn from this study. In his critical study of the Evangelical movement in Britain, David Bebbington identified four “special marks” of Evangelical religion: deep commitments to the Bible as God’s Word, the necessity of personal conversion, great emphasis on the cross-work of Christ, and a highly-motivated activism in missions and evangelism.¹ Though Bebbington did not mention Samuel Davies in his study, his quadrilateral is an accurate statement of most of Davies’ core theology and thus forms a fitting conversation partner for review and dialogue. The Bible played a foundational role in Davies’ life and ministry. Though he was widely read, there was no book he treasured more highly than the Bible, for he was convinced that God spoke authoritatively through holy writ. Davies was keenly aware of various challenges to the nature and authority of Scripture but was unflinching in his rejection of such theological skepticism. Davies prized the Bible so highly because it was the place where he and other believers could hear God speaking most clearly. For Davies, to hear, read, study, and meditate upon the Bible was nothing short of enjoying fellowship with God.

Davies believed that sinners must be born again in order to be saved. This was the essential message of all of Davies’ extant sermons. Conversion was a decisive, God-wrought change in which the Holy Spirit imparted new life to spiritually dead people, applying the merits purchased by Jesus, according to the electing design and grace of the Father. Young, old, religious, irreligious, man, woman, slave, or master; such distinctions made no difference to Davies with regard to a person’s spiritual state. He was convinced that *all* were benighted and imprisoned by sin and therefore *all* must receive the new birth to have any hope of eternal life. Davies’ commitment to conversion was related to his commitment to the centrality of the cross of Christ. Jesus was the perfect, obedient son of God who was also the slaughtered Lamb, the great high priest, and the

¹D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 2–3.

conquering king. The only method of salvation was to trust in the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice; no other remedy could save sinners. Davies' commitment to the converting message of the cross impelled his activism, seen most clearly in his sermons, where the call to repent and believe the gospel was ubiquitous. This commitment to activism compelled Davies to minister among enslaved Africans in Virginia, to procure Bible and other works of Christian literature for them, to instruct them in the essentials of the faith, and to treat them as spiritual equals even as he bought and sold them as property. This last point raises a matter that must be addressed: Samuel Davies was a man of contradictions. He preached a gospel of liberation from the tyranny of sin while at the same time owning humans as property. He declared that Christians faced a spiritual enemy and called them to fight through prayer while simultaneously calling for soldiers to wage a holy war against the French and Indians. These contradictions mar his otherwise remarkable ministry.

While Bebbington's quadrilateral of Evangelical commitments rightly describes several of Davies' theological commitments, it fails to capture two critical aspects of his thought, namely his emphases on the necessity of personal holiness and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Davies was convinced that no significant revival of religion could occur unless God effused his Spirit from heaven. As he interpreted his own experiences as a student at Samuel Blair's academy, he attributed the overwhelming success of the gospel to the Spirit, who accompanied the preached word, applying it with power to spiritually-dead sinners and reviving believers whose passion had waned. He called upon Virginians to pray that God might send his Spirit afresh and thus transform a land marked by the ravages of war. The Holy Spirit was the Spirit of holiness, and where the Spirit worked, people ought to be changed. Davies took Hebrews 12:14 as a theme verse in his preaching, insisting that those who had been born again *must* live holy lives. Davies called his hearers to use various means of grace to foster such holiness. The Bible

took chief place among these means. Davies was convinced that Christians ought to hear Scripture, read Scripture, and meditate upon Scripture that they might grow in the knowledge of and conformity to Christ. He found prayer to be the irreplaceable means of enjoying communion with the Triune God and encouraged congregants to pray in private, in public, and certainly within their families. For Davies, the Christian home was an irreplaceable school in which genuine piety was to be fostered as parents prayed for and with their servants and their children. Fasting was a biblical sign of a truly repentant heart and an aid to prayer. Davies insisted that the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper were key covenantal markers intended to remind Christians continually of their need to draw near to God and that these ordinances were places in which believers were to foster vital spiritual communion with their risen Lord. Davies' insistence on holiness as a vital mark of all believers also shows one area in which Davies' theology differed from Bebbington's assessment of Evangelicalism: assurance of salvation.

Bebbington has argued that early Evangelicals, notably Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley, shaped by Enlightenment ideas of the reliability of human reason, moved away from a Puritan conception of assurance that was often skeptical of one's claim to faith and insisted that assurance of salvation was normal for those who had been spiritually reborn.² Garry Williams has demonstrated that Edwards and Wesley were more consistent with the Reformers and Puritans on the question of assurance than Bebbington allowed and also that there was a diversity of opinion among Eighteenth-Century Evangelicals on the nature of assurance.³ Davies' voice has not been considered in this discussion. Though he believed assurance of salvation was possible, Davies' located it in rigorous self-examination and the objective truth of God's promise to save

²Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 42–50.

³Garry J. Williams, "Enlightenment Epistemology and Eighteenth-Century Evangelical Doctrines of Assurance," in *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, ed. Michael A.G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 345–74.

believers, whose lives would give evidence of regeneration. The Spirit's internal witness of one's spiritual adoption was a grace that God allowed saints to have at his own discretion, certainly not universally. Holiness mattered because it was a chief means of evidence that one had indeed experienced the new birth. Davies' activism, then, was not fueled by a sense of easy or early assurance, but rather on the conviction of the universal need to repent and believe the gospel.

No dissertation can claim to exhaust its subject. While this thesis has provided a deeper analysis of key aspects of Davies theology than previous studies, more remains to be examined. For one, Davies' views of trans-denominational ministry and ecclesiology deserve further attention. Davies was certainly a committed Presbyterian but he recognized the necessity of cooperating with pastors from other Christian denominations for the sake of the gospel. Perhaps no incident illustrates this cooperative spirit better than a letter that Davies sent to John Wesley:

Though you and I may differ in some little things, I have long loved you and prayed for your success, as zealous revivers of experimental Christianity. If I differ from you in temper and design, or in the essentials of religion, I am sure the error must lie on my side. Blessed be God for hearts to love one another.⁴

The letter, in full, demonstrates Davies' zeal for missions among slaves and for the propagation of the gospel, but this excerpt is striking as it shows Davies' character: he would not only work with Christians with whom he disagreed theologically, but could do so with humility and genuine Christian affection. Given the global need of cooperation in evangelism and mission, Davies has much to teach modern Evangelicals about how to work with fellow Christians despite significant theological differences. Other areas of inquiry would involve a closer look at Davies' hermeneutical approach to interpreting Scripture as well as his rhetorical approaches to imagination and persuasion. By accounts of his own peers, Davies' sermons were arresting. Their language, imagery, and

⁴See John Wesley, *Journal and Diaries 4 (1755–65)*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, vol. 21 of *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 84–85.

argumentation retain power nearly three centuries later. The modern church would be well-served to consider Davies' preaching afresh.⁵

Perhaps the most significant finding for twenty-first century Evangelicals is that it has reiterated the vital relationship between theology and piety. Davies' life and ministry show that a learned, nuanced theology is no bar to warm piety. Rather, theology serves spirituality by providing it a reliable foundation and rich content while spirituality serves theology by continually reminding the theologian that bare factual knowledge of the great truths of the gospel and the gospel's God is insufficient apart from a heart fired with love to God. Davies modeled this balance of theology and piety in a manner worthy of emulation.

⁵For an important study of Davies' rhetoric, see Barbara Ann Larson, "A Rhetorical Study of the Preaching of the Reverend Samuel Davies in the Colony of Virginia From 1747–1759" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1969).

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ABSTRACT

“THE DIVINE LIFE IN THE SOUL CONSIDERED”: THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKS OF SAMUEL DAVIES

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014
Chair: Dr. Michael A. G. Haykin

This dissertation argues that Samuel Davies’ theology of and vision for the Christian life were inseparable. Although his contribution to American Evangelicalism was not as original nor as widely remembered as that of his contemporaries, Samuel Davies’ insistence on vital Christian piety was far more central to his ministry than was religious toleration or patriotic duty, which are more commonly remembered emphases of his legacy. Chapter 2 recounts the contours of Davies’ life and world.

Chapter 3 argues that Samuel Davies’ vision of the Christian life was grounded in the divine revelation of Scripture. The Bible was essential to a life of godliness.

Samuel Davies believed that Jesus Christ communicated and sustained divine life in people and that this life marked the beginning of genuine piety. Chapter 4 shows that Davies’ emphasis on conversion is grounded in the Puritan tradition yet evinces an emerging Evangelical theology.

Chapter 5 argues that Davies saw gospel holiness as the animating principle of spiritual life, that which separated it from worldly, even religious counterfeits.

Chapter 6 demonstrates that Davies believed that spiritual life was maintained through the conscientious practice of various religious duties, especially through private prayer and public communion.

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