

ABSTRACT

The Prevenient Piety of Samuel Wesley, Sr.

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The life and times of Samuel Wesley, Sr. have been addressed since the time of John and Charles Wesley as an absentee father with little positive influence on the Wesley family. However, the literary contributions of Samuel have been overlooked. Having examined his writings, this dissertation offers a fuller portrait of Samuel Wesley.

The thesis of this work is that Samuel Wesley was a complex person whose thoughts, actions, and positions were based on his understanding and practice of his traditions, experience, scripture, and reasoning. A key to understanding Wesley's life and thought can be found in the Pietist strains evident in his writings, published and unpublished, which formed the basis of his decisions and actions. The chapters explore the dynamics of late seventeenth-century England's cultural milieu where Wesley was raised and educated within post-Uniformity Dissent and provide his rationale for gradually conforming to the Established Church. The origins of Continental Pietism is summarized and its influence on the Established Church through Anthony Horneck.

Also discussed is Samuel's view of scripture within the context of the nascent critical apparatus introduced by Richard Simon and Baruch Spinoza. Samuel's rejection

of this critical approach is a key to understanding his scriptural hermeneutic which formed the basis of his actions.

The overarching characteristic of Samuel Wesley's life and thought was his understanding of Piety which he passed along to his sons, most notably John and Charles, but also Samuel, Jr. Samuel's life is examined using Ernest Stoeffler's tenets of Pietism: the experiential, perfectionism, biblicism, and the oppositive or prophetic, and concludes that Samuel passed these on and had a profound influence on his sons.

This work presents a revised portrait of Samuel as reflected in his literary contributions, rather than one based on an anachronistic moral template imposed on aspects of his behavior. The most familiar sketch of Samuel is the profile on the frontispiece in his commentary on Job. This paper seeks to move from the one-sided portrayals of Samuel Wesley, Sr. toward a fuller understanding of his life, thought and actions which were emulated by his sons.

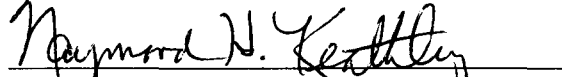
The Prevenient Piety of Samuel Wesley, Sr.

by

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A Dissertation

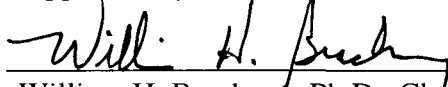
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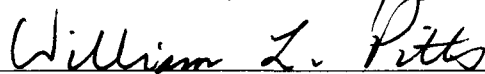
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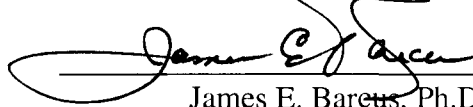
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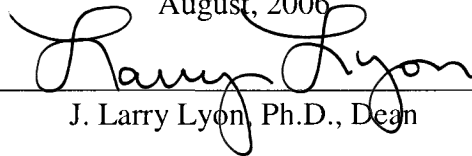
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To Susan, Wil, and Abby

ABBREVIATIONS

SPCK	The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge
SPG	The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
SRM	The Society for the Reformation of Manners

CHAPTER ONE

Samuel Wesley in Historical Context

Paradoxical Profiles

The man Samuel Wesley has been portrayed in a variety of ways. He has been presented from a perspective which focuses on Samuel's personality traits to an examination of his relationships with others, specifically, his family. Because of a paucity of available primary source material, significant gaps occur in understanding him, particularly in his early life. The presentation of him as student, husband, father, priest, and scholar are wanting with most accounts based largely on anecdotal material, using snippets here and there to build a hypothetical personality. From these kinds of presentations, inadequate conclusions have been drawn from limited primary sources.

Initial research based on a review of primary and secondary sources reveals strong and conflicting views of Samuel Wesley. He was a lightning rod for both his contemporaries and subsequent interpreters. His personality and character have had the capacity to bring out both negative and positive responses. Samuel was misunderstood and misrepresented by many in his day and continues to be so since his death, bringing out strong reactions in those who have written about him.

Samuel has invariably been presented from two divergent perspectives. Generally, most recent scholarship on the Wesleys of England has, in order, focused particularly on John, the "founder" of Methodism; then Charles, the hymn writer for the

movement; and then more recently the eminent role of Susanna Wesley, wife of Samuel and mother of John and Charles, co-leaders of the eighteenth-century Methodist movement. The interest in Susanna has grown, particularly since the late 1960's.¹

Samuel, however, continues to be overlooked, though there are those who have used primary source material to paint a more positive picture of Samuel.² Early portrayals have been largely positive represented by the accounts of Adam Clarke,³ Luke Tyerman,⁴ and George J. Stevenson,⁵ who generally presented Samuel as a person who possessed zeal, single-mindedness, discipline, and commitment to guiding principles. Later twentieth century reaction produced novella type presentations. The two most recognized were by Arthur Quiller-Couch⁶ and G. E. Harrison⁷ who took these very same attributes and made Wesley a stubborn, hard-headed, hard-hearted and uncompromising individual. Quiller-Couch's *Hetty Wesley*, who wrote in more in the genre of

¹Numerous books and articles have been written on Susanna that mirror the growth of the women's movement and the increased emphasis on women's roles and the part they played in history. See Frank Baker, "Salute to Susanna," *Methodist History* 7 (April 1969): 7. Baker's article early on reinvigorated interest in Susanna. Charles Wallace's *Susanna: The Complete Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) filled a gap by publishing the extant writings of Susanna.

²Kenneth Collins, "John Wesley's Correspondence With His Father." *Methodist History* 26:1 (October 1987): 15.

³Adam Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family* (NY: Lane and Tippet, 1848).

⁴Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, M.A., Rector of Epworth, and Father of the Revs. John and Charles Wesley, the Founders of the Methodists* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1866).

⁵George J. Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family: Including Biographical and Historical Sketches of All the Members of the Family for Two Hundred and Fifty Years* (London: S. W. Partridge and Co., 1876).

⁶Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, *Hetty Wesley* (London: Macmillan, 1903).

⁷G. Elsie Harrison, *Son to Susanna: The Private Life of John Wesley* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, LTD., 1937).

biographical fiction, painted a negative picture of Samuel as a monolithic unfeeling and unsympathetic father who refused to forgive a youthful indiscretion by a love-struck daughter.

Samuel Wesley was, in fact, not a simple character. Some scholars recount examples of rash behavior and outspokenness to verify their interpretations of the elder Mr. Wesley. For example, when the personalities of Samuel and Susanna are compared, they most often are framed in contrast to each other. V. H. H. Green, fellow for thirty years and a former rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, stated, “The relationship between a couple in many ways so unlike, more especially where one was obstinate and the other strong-willed, could not be continuously harmonious.”⁸ There is also the illustration of the well-known marital rift in 1702 between Susanna and Samuel over their political differences. Susanna’s refusal to agree with Samuel’s position is seen as positive, even principled, while Samuel is cast in the negative as stubborn and unreasonable.⁹ Susanna, though, understood their disagreements in a different light, offering her own alternative description of him. Whether it was from tactfulness or a clear understanding and acceptance of her husband’s motivations, she wrote in a letter to John with measured

⁸V. H. H. Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, Ltd., 1961), 49.

⁹Susanna, a non-juror, meaning she refused to renounce her oath of loyalty to James II for William III, was a devotee to the Stuart royal family, but Samuel was not. In her view, King William III was not a fully legitimate king since it was by virtue of his marriage to Mary Stuart, daughter of James II that he held his position. When Samuel noticed that Susanna had withheld her “Amen” to his prayer for King William, he asked for a reason. Her response: “Because I do not believe the Prince of Orange to be King.” Samuel’s reaction was to proclaim: “If that be the case, you and I must part: for if we have two kings, we must have two beds.” This statement he sealed with an oath. See Frank Baker, “Salute to Susanna,” *Methodist History* 7 (April 1969): 7.

words, “But ‘tis an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family that your father and I seldom think alike.”¹⁰

Later twentieth-century critiques have continued to view Wesley with scholarly guffaws which denigrate many aspects of his life, personality, character and scholarship with few redeeming attributes.¹¹ Elizabeth Hart, contemporary author of articles and books on the Wesley family, notes that one biographer believed Susanna’s informal church meetings while Samuel was away “probably did more good than all her husband’s labours of forty years.”¹² Other interpreters of the last half of the twentieth century include Rebecca Lamar Harmon who characterizes Wesley as “absentminded”; V. H. H. Green contended he was “obstinate, passionate, partisan, and pedantic”; Robert L. Moore who claims Samuel “possessed an arrogant manner and was a tremendously domineering yet ineffective man”;¹³ and Maldwyn Edwards (1903-1974), eminent scholar of the mid-to-late twentieth century, added that the father of the Wesleys “showed all the massive qualities of a bulldog.”¹⁴

¹⁰Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley* 34 vol. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) 25: 158. Cf. Charles Wallace, Jr., ed., *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 106.

¹¹Elizabeth Hart portrays Samuel as an unfeeling husband. “We might suggest that Samuel was unaware of his wife’s true feelings for she had learned circumspection and resignation except in matters affecting her conscience. While he was attending to parish duties or working on his polyglot Bible or his huge Latin dissertation on Job, Susanna was managing a large household, educating her children, and . . . conversing with parishioners.” See Elizabeth Hart, “Susanna Annesley Wesley – An Able Divine” *Touchstone* (May 1988): 8-9.

¹²Hart, “Susanna,” 4.

¹³He has looked at the Wesleys from a psychological point of view in his *John Wesley and Authority: A Psychological Perspective* (Missioulia, MT: Scholar’s Press, 1979).

¹⁴See Kenneth J. Collins’s summation in “John Wesley’s Correspondence With His Father,” *Methodist History*, 26:1 (October 1987): 15.

These depictions have taken on a life of their own and paint a one-dimensional view of Samuel Wesley. They have, however, overlooked both the scholarly and sermonic writings which reveal another side of Wesley. While this study could continue to make a case for either a positive or negative depiction, it would serve only to add to an already large body of material. My primary focus rather will examine who Samuel was from what can be gleaned from the body of his writings. Many of Samuel's scholarly accomplishments have been either overlooked completely or passed over superficially. In an effort to create a more adequate picture of Samuel, there is a need to examine more closely his fairly extensive writings. It would be beyond the scope of this paper to examine the totality of the body of his work as it included seventeen books, articles, sermons, poetry and letters.¹⁵ Attention will be given to primarily three of four areas which will serve as templates to examine selectively and to evaluate his theological life. The categories are familiar within the Wesleyan tradition: tradition, scripture, experience, and reason.¹⁶ I do not believe these are an anachronistic imposition on Samuel's thinking, but reflect his perspectives religiously, culturally, and intellectually. He, in fact, used the very terms in his *Pious Communicant*, where he defended the Lord's Supper as "perpetual" (a part of tradition) in duration and its "obligation" as universal

¹⁵See Bibliography for complete listing.

¹⁶These four categories have come to be known as the Wesleyan "Quadrilateral". The term was coined by Albert C. Outler, twentieth century American Methodist scholar at Duke University and later Southern Methodist University. Having examined Wesley's work, Outler theorized that John Wesley used Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience as the four sources in coming to theological conclusions. Samuel Wesley also used all four, but I will focus on his use of tradition, scripture and experience. For Albert Outler's theory, see *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) or www.wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology.theojrn.16-20/20-01.htn.

and these are “evident from Scripture as ‘tis from Reason.”¹⁷ He also maintained that a person can be “fully perswaded, by Reason, Experience, and Scripture.”¹⁸ Tradition was also presupposed as he considered himself fully integrated into the Church of England.

Additionally, one aspect which has been overlooked but which is present throughout his writings was the influence of Pietism. His writings reveal much of what were the foundations of his thought and offer insight into what gave impetus to his life. Specifically, Wesley’s *Pious Communicant* (1700) showed that his synthesized form of Pietist thought was a sacramental pietism which, if dutifully practiced, could reform, sanctify, and strengthen an individual in one’s devotion to God and humanity. The piety Samuel espoused was influenced by the Continental Pietism of Anthony Horneck (1641-1697) who adapted his continental piety to the Church of England. Wesley’s piety also stemmed from his indebtedness to the religious work, *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658), one of the most influential devotional books of the second half of seventeenth-century England.

Samuel’s was not a patient piety as he was an intensely driven individual who would not suffer fools or foolishness. However, he could also exhibit charm and demonstrate great compassion. Aspects of Pietism provided the lens through which he embraced scripture and evaluated the behavior of himself and others. Suffice it to say at this point, Pietism was a major influence upon the life and work of Samuel Wesley.

¹⁷Samuel Wesley, *The Pious Communicant Rightly Prepar’d, or a discourse concerning the Blessed Sacrament wherein the nature of it is described, our obligation to frequent communion enforced, and directions given for due preparation for it, behaviour at, and after it, and profiting by it: with prayers and hymn, suited to the several parts of that holy office: to which is added, a short discourse of baptism.* (1700) 33.

¹⁸Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 96.

Significantly, most of Samuel's writings were produced before he was forty-five years old when neither John nor Charles had yet been born. Later published writings were minimal due to increasing parish concerns, his crop failures, and domestic fires, along with the added financial pressures of a large family which kept him from publishing as much as he had earlier in his life. He also concentrated on underwriting the education of Samuel, John, and Charles as well as working on his *Dissertationes in Librum Jobi*.

Most everything that has been written about Samuel has been from the perspective of writing retrospectively through the lives and eyes of John or Charles Wesley as a starting point. Sometimes material is presented as if Samuel could not be understood without first understanding the sons. Samuel, however, can be understood in his own right, particularly if one focuses on his published writings. They reflect his contextual setting, a perspective which has been too long ignored or avoided in scholarship. He was a man remarkably in touch with his times.¹⁹ He was not only aware of the major literary figures of his day but also of the dynamics of change, and he made efforts to embrace the movements that he believed would bring reform to both the Church of England and to his country. By the same token, he challenged those trends which he viewed as a danger to the well-being of his church and of his country.

His larger world view was tempered by his efforts to work locally on an individual basis as a parish priest. Therefore, a major part of my effort will be to revisit the context in which Samuel grew up and lived. The period of time in which he lived,

¹⁹In one undated ms in the Lamplough Collection at the Bridwell Library at Southern Methodist University, Samuel listed thirty-one different religions during the times of confusion and fourteen different forms of government.

particularly between 1660 and 1714, was a dynamic and transitional period in which many ideas and movements were in their nascent stages of development. The Age of Reason, partially co-equal in England with the Restoration (1660-1689), was beginning to shape the minds of people and turn society from superstition toward rationalism. For some, human reason was working to establish a person's faith, whether it was a Church of England member, Dissenter, Roman Catholic or Quaker. For others, reason meant a turning from traditional faith.²⁰ The possibility of Deism and even Atheism was a fashionable position assumed by many. New critical approaches were making inroads into how one read and understood scripture. These changes were relevant to the education Samuel received while a student at Oxford (while he attended from 1684-1688) and involved issues he addressed in his later writings. The university was at a linguistic peak in its ability to teach a variety of Oriental languages and was challenging the application of reason and empirical evidence which were being applied to the Bible by Richard Simon and Baruch Spinoza.²¹

The continuing emergence of various dissenting groups during the Cromwell Protectorate did not simply vanish with the Clarendon Code which included the *Corporation Act* (1661), the *Act of Uniformity* (1662), the *Conventicle Act* (1664) and two years later, in 1666, the *Five Mile Act*.²² The Pietism that was making inroads in Germany would be imported and incorporated into the Church of England through the

²⁰John Biddle, serves as one example, whose Socinian writings Samuel would refuse to translate.

²¹See Mordechai Feingold, "Oriental Studies" *The History of the University of Oxford* v. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 456.

²²J. R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1980), 252.

efforts of Anthony Horneck, Thomas Bray, and others. The Church itself was being shaped by its embrace of the liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer*. The philosophies of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) through his *Leviathan* (1651) and John Locke's (1632-1704) *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) were making an impact. The sciences were gaining ground fostered by the minds of Robert Boyle (1627-1691) and Isaac Newton (1642-1727). Agricultural advances were making it possible to produce more food by fewer people. Concurrently, the cities, particularly London, were expanding at astonishing rates. London, rising from the devastating fire of 1666, would become the most populous city in Europe during the last half of the seventeenth century, approaching a half million. It was an age of recovery with the restoration of the Stuart monarchy when Charles II made his celebrated return in 1660. The beginnings of the Tory and Whig political traditions were being established. It was a time of searching for truth. Answers were coming through reason rather than through superstition or the exercise of faith. Confidence in reason rather than having a reasonable faith was becoming the methodology for gaining insight into the world. Answers were gained through acquiring knowledge of new disciplines and recovery of ancient church traditions. All were attempts to maintain and regain order, both individually and in society.

In many ways Samuel Wesley was, both in step and out of step at the transitional time from the reign of James II to the end of the Stuart dynasty with the death of Anne. It was a period in time when England and the Established Church were trying to define themselves and not many people fit neatly into one class or category. Also, Samuel reflected a complexity in interests and personality and was representative in that regard of that period. He was aware of the numerous variety of religious beliefs and types of

governments which were in existence. On one page of a manuscript there are listed fourteen “forms of governments” and thirty-one “religions and seats and opinions in England during the late times of Confusion.”²³ On a corner of the page he has quoted Judges 31: “Every man did what is right in his own eyes as there was no king” which no doubt reflected his understanding of the times.

Dated Presentations

When Adam Clarke (ca 1762-1832), a Methodist preacher-scholar and early compiler of John Wesley’s papers, wrote *Memoirs of the Wesley Family*, (1824) it was the first attempt to gather all the papers or memoirs of the extended Wesley family (exclusive of John and Charles). He included both grandfathers of Samuel and Susanna through the correspondence of the siblings of John and Charles. He wrote that “a new history of the founder of Methodism should be compiled from original documents, many of which had not been seen by his previous biographers.”²⁴

It was more than one hundred and thirty years after Samuel’s death before Luke Tyerman (1820-1889)²⁵ wrote what was the first and still remains the most exhaustive

²³The forms of government start with King Charles II through the current Parliament of 1720. The various religious traditions included Jews, Papists, Church of England, Presbyterians, Independents, Antinomians, Pelagians, Anabaptists, Sleepers, Hobbists, Vanists, Family of Love, Sweet-Singers, Quakers, Muggletonians, Fifth Monarchists, Biddelians, Ranters, Atheists, Arians, Socinians, Adamists, Preadamists, Deists, Heathens, Perfectionists, Rosicrucianists, Seekers, Baxterians, Family of Love (repeated), and Sabbatarians. Bridwell Library, Methodist Archives: Lamplough Collection 598, Southern Methodist University. n.d.

²⁴Clarke, *Memoirs*, 8.

²⁵Tyerman was a British Wesleyan Methodist historian and minister. He was the first to produce scholarly biographies of John Wesley (1871), George Whitefield (1876-77), and John Fletcher (1882), as well as his *Life and Times* (1866).

biography of Samuel Wesley.²⁶ In the preface to his book, he rued the fact that the father of the Wesleys was a neglected figure. “I have the conviction that due honour has never yet been paid to Samuel Wesley. The praises of his noble wife have been sung loudly and long.”²⁷ While in contrast to her status, Samuel, “though learned, was often foolish; and though pious, was painfully eccentric, stern, and quarrelsome. This is utterly unfounded, and cruelly unjust.”²⁸ He set out to disprove this perception in the following four hundred plus pages of text. While he considered himself successful in the attempt, later historians remained unconvinced. In the years following Tyerman’s book, Samuel returned to the shadows. He remained cast aside, save for passing glances which used him to introduce John and Charles to the world.

Tyerman gathered significant primary source material, though according to later Wesley specialists, his interpretations are often suspect because of his tendency to defend Samuel against these previous criticisms. Also, nothing of that scope has been written since it was published in 1866. Unfortunately Tyerman included few citations and little bibliography of his sources. Since Tyerman, there have been only a few other attempts to present a biography of Samuel to the reading public.

George Stevenson’s (1818-1888)²⁹ *Memorials of the Wesley Family* (1876) served to bring to light additional unpublished material not known or available to Clarke. His

²⁶Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Samuel Wesley* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1866), vii.

²⁷*Ibid.* vii.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Stevenson was a British Methodist whose expertise was on Methodist hymns but who also edited *Wesleyan Times* (1861-1867), *The Methodist Hymnbook and Its Association* (1869), *Methodist Worthies* (1884-1886), and *Memorials* (1876).

stated aim was to “make a record of facts, as full and complete as possible, leaving all the adornments of language and the polish of rhetoric to the genius of the reader.”³⁰ Thus his intended scope was limited to presenting new material rather than commenting on it, though oftentimes he was unable to resist offering his personal interpretation.

Maldwyn Edwards’s (1903- 1974) *Family Circle* (1949) was his effort to introduce the whole Wesley family apart from John and Charles. In it he presented the brothers “in relation to the others because the whole intention of the book was to show what sort of parents, what [kind of] sister, and what sort of a brother they possessed.”³¹

Edwards’s work, while having interesting content, also presented Samuel sympathetically. This was intentional in order to be a corrective to previous unwarranted criticisms of Samuel. Edwards echoed Tyerman in ruing the continued neglect and harsh representation of Samuel and acknowledged “that despite his imperfections Samuel Wesley, the father, was a great man. If he has suffered in the past by the uncritical adulation of his biographers, he has often suffered in the present by a too severe criticism that has lacked proper perspective.”³² Edwards’s presentation of Samuel is limited to the larger family portrayal surrounding John and Charles.

The most recent biography of Wesley was Franklin Wilder’s *The Father of the Wesleys*, published in 1971.³³ His purpose was to “set the record straight and to show

³⁰George J. Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family: Including Biographical and Historical Sketches of All the Members of the Family for Two Hundred and Fifty Years* (London: S. W. Partridge and Co., 1876), ix.

³¹Maldwyn Edwards, *Family Circle: A Study of the Epworth Household in Relation to John and Charles Wesley* (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), viii.

³²*Ibid.* vii.

³³Franklin Wilder, a Ft. Smith, Arkansas, attorney, has authored of a number of books on the Wesley family.

what a magnificent part Sam Wesley did play in the great religious drama that occurred in his day and age.”³⁴ Wilder’s book was intended for a popular audience rather than as a scholarly work.

All of the above lack scholarly documentation to help direct the reader to the original sources. These biographies only rudimentarily touch on Wesley’s own works which are considerably more extensive. Remarkably, little analysis has been applied to Samuel Wesley’s writings, most of which he wrote during the 1690s and the first decade of the eighteenth century.

There have been a few notable efforts to fill in some biographical gaps through short articles. H. A. Beecham’s,³⁵ “Samuel Wesley: More Bibliographic Evidence” gave a brief review of Samuel Wesley scholarship and offered a more balanced presentation than the works of Clarke and Tyerman in favor, and Quiller-Couch and Harrison against. While correcting some of the mistakes made by Clarke, Tyerman, and Stevenson, she viewed all three books as laying a sympathetic foundation for understanding Samuel.³⁶ She also noted their efforts to minimize the negative attributes of Samuel by “denying the less savoury episodes in his career and even resorting “to the destruction of evidence.”³⁷ Not only was her presentation more balanced, but more important, she introduced some

³⁴Franklin Wilder, *Father of the Wesleys* (New York: Exposition Press, 1971), 11.

³⁵Dr. Helen A. Beecham was a lecturer at the University of Nottingham, England. Her article included a transcription of Samuel’s 1692 Ormsby letter.

³⁶H. A. Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior: New Biographical Evidence” *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 7 (1963): 78-79.

³⁷*Ibid.*

new manuscripts unknown to Clarke, Tyerman, and Stevenson. Beecham also summarized Quiller-Couch and Harrison who emphasized Samuel's darker side.

Maldwyn L. Edwards, Frank Baker, and R. Walmsley have all added periodical articles.³⁸ Even though Franklin Wilder's *Father of the Wesleys* was published a decade after Beecham's article, he added nothing new to the life of Samuel. His hope was to revisit and "show what a magnificent part Sam Wesley did play in the great religious drama that occurred in his day and age."³⁹ Unfortunately, he was evidently unaware of Beecham's 1963 article. A more recent biographical contribution can be found in Sheila Himsworth's 2003 article in *The Proceedings of the Wesley Society*.⁴⁰ In it she surveys the early years of Samuel's life leading up to his time of service at St. Botolph's Church before his placement in Lincolnshire.⁴¹

Most of these accounts revolve around the personality traits of Samuel, either questioning or defending his actions and reputation. What can be concluded is that Samuel possessed a strong personality, causing all who knew him then or later to reflect on the kind of man he was. Because of tendencies to oversimplify Samuel, many aspects of his life have been overlooked. There is a dearth of insight into the societal, religious

³⁸Maldwyn Edwards, *Family Circle, A Study of the Epworth Household in Relation to John and Charles Wesley* (1949), *Sons to Samuel* (1961), Frank Baker, "Birth of Charles Wesley" *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 31(June 1957) and R. Walmsley, "John Wesley's Parents," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 39 (September 1953).

³⁹Wilder, *Father of the Wesleys*, 11.

⁴⁰Himsworth's father was a British Methodist minister and she is married to one as well. She oversaw the transfer of numerous Wesleyana manuscripts to the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester, England.

⁴¹Sheila Himsworth, "Samuel Wesley (1662-1735) and St. Botolph-without-Aldersgate: A biographical note of the Early Years," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 52:2 (May 2003): 46.

and cultural context in which Samuel grew and its impact on him. He was uniquely and contextually born, the son and grandson of Dissenting ministers and would be an astute observer of the times he lived. Samuel has been understood through the eyes of his sons, but not been given the opportunity to speak for himself. He was a product of his times and as such revealed his motives and rationale for conforming to the Established Church. He needs to be presented separately from the subsequent lives and interpretation of his sons. I could continue to revisit and re-present the case for and against a particular persona of Samuel in the hope of sparking a new interest in him. I would rather, however, investigate the periods which have only been alluded to or overlooked completely. These areas include his early life, reexamining the dynamic time between the Restoration through the reign of Queen Anne (1660-1714). The first period of time includes his upbringing under the influence of the Dissenters and his gradual decision to conform to Anglicanism. The second reflects his Oxford years where he received his formal training as an Anglican. The third is reflected in the roughly twenty years when he produced the majority of his writings. Of his numerous known published works, most were written between 1690 and 1710, although there is a representative body of his sermons following 1709 to just before his death in 1735, all of which are unpublished. His last significant work, his *Dissertationes in Librum Jobi* (1736), falls outside the scope of this paper, though it reflected the opinions and convictions conveyed the final mature years of his life.⁴² Aside from his sermons, some letters, and *Job*, his scholarly

⁴²Martin Schmidt offered this sketch of *Job*: “Samuel Wesley combined dogmatic orthodoxy with careful regard for textual criticism and archaeology. He used all the available Hebrew editions but modestly disclaimed any pretension of having produced an exhaustive commentary. He considers that Job is an historical figure who himself wrote the book, and goes into all related questions with a thoroughness that could scarcely be surpassed. He discusses the style and compares it with Homer’s; he goes into Job’s knowledge of botany, mineralogy, military science, and jurisprudence; he deals with

contributions after 1714 amounted to very little. It seems his efforts were focused on serving his Epworth parish and ensuring the matriculation of his sons at Oxford.

Samuel's writings possess a degree of complexity and sophistication that has been overlooked by those who attempt to oversimplify his personal portrait. I submit that the crux of his actions had a foundation in the Pietist tradition. Samuel's understanding of experiential Christianity and his practice of it was the source or basis with which he assessed others' actions and character. This Pietistic base was the fountainhead of the passionate expressions of his religious and relational convictions. To understand Samuel's Pietism is to move closer to better understanding him.

questions about Phoenician and Canaanite shepherds, magic, the Babylonian worship of serpents, Behemoth and Leviathan. In the discussion on the origin of evil he reveals his knowledge of ancient philosophy and non-Christian religions like those of Zoroaster and Man. This is all exactly in tune with the spirit of humanism and of the Enlightenment. On the other hand he argues emphatically that the meaning of the whole of Scripture, including the Old Testament, is to be found in Christ, and that accordingly this applies to the Book of Job also, and he protests against that rationalistic type of interpretation once practised by the Arians and now in his own day by the Socinians. He stresses the fact that Job and Elihu believed in the Trinity, and that Job in the well-known reference to his Saviour who would awaken him from the dust (19:21) was referring to Jesus and not to God, as Hugo Grotius maintained. He does not neglect to point out that this is in agreement with the position of the Church of England, which, in the seventh of the Thirty-nine Articles, strongly denies that the saints of the Old Testament looked only for earthly blessings. It is true that in the discussion on the origin of evil the particular standpoint of the humanistic-rationalistic way of thinking comes out. Samuel Wesley traces evil back to God Himself—like Jakob Böhme, but significantly its origin lay not in God but it arose from the nature of the created world, and of man in particular. On the supposition that along with free-will God has conferred on man the propensity for sin and wrong is it possible to include it in the scheme of the creation. If this hypothesis is rejected, then incorruptibility has to be attributed to the creature. But this offends against both natural and revealed religion, which are characteristically placed alongside one another as if they were of equal dogmatic authority.” Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography* Trans. Norman P. Goldhawk. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 45-46.

Adam Clarke also gave a brief comment in *Memoirs*, 262-265 as did Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 376-380.

Of equal importance are the homiletic and scholarly writings of Samuel Wesley because they reveal his Pietistic presuppositions and the integration of its precepts. Examining his writings will prove essential in grasping his perspective. Because these materials have been largely ignored, this study will seek to determine his epistemological framework, inclusive of his early dissenting education, and his world view. These areas need to be explored as background in order to understand his transition from his non-conformity into the Church of England. How did he define himself theologically? This dimension of Samuel Wesley remains unexplored. Further, what was his relationship to the Church of England? Did his theological perspectives deviate from his Church of England contemporaries? If so, in what way? Samuel is usually described either as an exemplar of the Church's tradition or as a forgotten Epworth rector and bane of the Wesley family's existence. On the one hand, his contemporaries chose Samuel as their "convocation man" to represent the area clergy in London in 1701 and 1711. It was an honor to be chosen to serve in this capacity by his peers. On the other hand, his social status was badly injured when an adversary called for the payment of a debt that Samuel could not immediately pay, resulting in his having to serve a prison sentence in Lincoln Castle for a number of months in 1705.

Projection of Chapters Ahead

Attempts have been made to explain the actions of Samuel Wesley but they have presented only a partial picture. This study will attempt to flesh out more of the life and thought of Wesley through his writings and the Pietist strains inherent in them. Chapter Two will review the dynamics of the cultural milieu wherein Samuel moved from his

native Dissent to embrace the tenets of the Established Church. While this early period of his life has been discussed by many authors, errors in chronology have been made as H. A. Beecham has noted. The main assumption which has been perpetuated was that Samuel's 'conversion' was more or less a spontaneous decision to leave Dissent and he "footed over to Oxford." This view has been repeated often since John Wesley's recording of it. I will show through Samuel's writings that his transition was carefully calculated and resulted in a gradual process over the course of time

Chapter Three will examine the primary role or lens of Scripture in Samuel's understanding of his and other's actions as well as in the life of the Established Church. The traditional view of Scripture as an inspired text was beginning to come into question with the critical apparatus being introduced by the French priest Richard Simon, Thomas Hobbes, and the Danish philosopher Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza to name a few. The traditional view of scripture at Oxford was defended by John Owen against others who espoused this new critical thought. While Samuel held to the increasing importance of reason along with tradition, Scripture was the penultimate interpreter which trumped tradition, experience and reason. This embrace of Scripture was consistent with Pietism.

Chapter Four will explore the origins of the Pietism in Europe and its spread into England by emigres such as Anthony Horneck. Wesley heartily endorsed the Piety modified by Horneck for the late seventeenth-century Established Church. Samuel's writings, particularly his sermons, are examined to see if they reflect Ernest Stoeffler's four elements of Pietism: the experiential, perfectionism, biblicism, and the oppositive or prophetic.

Chapter Five explores the intersections of commonality between Samuel and his sons John, Charles, and Samuel, Jr. Similarities in thought and practice of Samuel are evident in all three sons. This chapter outlines the final twenty years of Samuel's life and what preoccupied his time and energies. Chapter Six presents my conclusions and offers some possibilities for future work on Samuel Wesley in the hope he will be researched in a new, more productive light.

CHAPTER TWO

Redefining and Defying Tradition

Introduction

The tradition, or better traditions which embraced Samuel Wesley and that he, in turn, embraced were both intentional and unintentional. As the son and grandson of Dissenting ministers, he was intentionally nurtured within the social and religious conditions of Dissent. He was educated in the best Dissenting schools and a good enough student to receive monetary support to enable him to attend. When he reached his maturity, it was expected that he, like his family before him, would rise to become a minister to Dissenters.

But against all these planned intentions, Wesley ultimately chose differently, conforming to the Established Church, receiving his education at Oxford as a Church of England man and later earning his M.A. at Cambridge.¹ There must have been cultural and educational forces which influenced him to make so dramatic a change. There is

¹Maldwyn Edwards noted, “It is one of the ironies of history that John Wesley [Samuel’s Father] should have left the Established Church and become a Dissenter at the dictation of conscience, whilst his son, Samuel, should, after an independent course of reading, conducted within a Dissenting academy, decided, for conscience’ sake, to leave the Dissenters and enter the Established Church.” Maldwyn Edwards, *Family Circle* (London: The Epworth Press, 1946), 3.

some evidence within his writings that mention his reasons for making this transition from Dissent to the Established Church² and they offer both explicit and implicit reasons.

The reasons for his leaving the Dissenters are variously expressed in numerous writings. They can be found in his *Letter from a Country Divine* (1703) and his response, *Defense of Dissenting Letter* (1704).³ H. A. Beecham offered new light with her introduction and transcription of Samuel's Ormsby letter written in 1692.⁴ In it, Wesley wrote a short autobiography tracing significant events from the time of his dissenting parentage to his time of service at Ormsby in 1692.

But the most familiar reference to Samuel's move to Conformity is found in John Wesley's second hand recollection in his diaries when Samuel set out to defend Dissenters from "severe invectives." He found he could no longer remain faithful to the Dissenting tradition and immediately he set out for Oxford without telling his mother and aunt, both dedicated Dissenters.⁵ "He lived at that time with his mother and an old aunt,

²See Adam Clarke's *Memoirs*, 82-94; Luke Tyerman's *Life and Times*, 64-79; George Stevenson's *Memorials*, 54-57, 86-93; Edwards' *Family Circle*, 1-3, 6, 18-20; and H. A. Beecham's "New Biographical Evidence," *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, v. VII (1963): 86-87. All examined Samuel's *Letter Concerning the Education of Dissenters* (1703) and his *Defense of the Letter* (1705). Beecham also introduced two other Rawlinson mss, The South Ormsby letter, a transcription of a letter written by Wesley in 1692 and a letter addressed from Epworth, undated and without address. A third letter is a ms of the *Letter from a Country Divine*. (1703) A fourth letter not mentioned by anyone to my knowledge is Wesley's letter to a Mr. Smith, a student at Cambridge, dated 1696.

³Samuel Palmer challenged Wesley's critique of the Dissenters in his *Vindication of the Dissenters*, (1705) which was subsequently protested by Wesley in his *A Reply to Mr. Palmer's vindication of Learning, loyalty, morals, and most Christian behaviour of the dissenters towards the Church of England*, (1707).

⁴Rawlinson MS, 406. Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

⁵Adam Clarke, *Memoirs*, 89. See also Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, 56; M. Schmidt, *John Wesley, A Theological Biography*, 40.

both of whom were too strongly attached to the dissenting doctrines to have borne with any patience the disclosure of his design. He, therefore, got up one morning at a very early hour, and, without acquainting anyone with his purpose, set out on foot to Oxford, and entered himself of Exeter College.”⁶ This reason has been copied and further advanced by Clarke, Tyerman and Stevenson all who followed John Wesley’s statement of a one time, rapid, and spontaneous move from Dissent to Conformity by Samuel. John Wesley’s account is given by Clarke:

Some severe invectives being written against the Dissenters, Mr. S Wesley being a young man of considerable talents, was pitched upon to answer it. This set him on a course of reading which soon produced an effect very different from what had been intended. Instead of writing the wished for answer, he himself conceived he saw reason to change his opinions; and actually formed a resolution to renounce the Dissenter, and attach himself to the Established Church.⁷

These accounts reflected the family account and their relating it to John. I believe, however, this explanation of Samuel’s departure compressed two visits to Oxford into a single one.

The rationale behind this supposition is fourfold. First, Samuel’s own stated intention of looking into the moral climate of Oxford to see for himself if it was a veritable “Sodom and Gomorrah.” Second his expressions of a relative dis-ease with some aspects of Dissent as a gradual process and not a spontaneous early morning decision to leave his mother and aunt. Third, there is clear documentation that Wesley made more than one visit to Oxford for different reasons. Last, there is the record of the payment of his fees at Oxford dated September 22, 1684, but no such record for 1683

⁶Clark, *Memoirs*, 89.

⁷Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior,” 86.

when he made his first visit. These issues will be discussed within a review of Samuel's early years from Dissent to his entry into Oxford in 1684.

Raised and Nurtured in and by Dissent.

It was not always Wesley's intention to leave the Dissenters. He could have echoed Paul's affirmation of being a Pharisee of Pharisees, but in Samuel's case of being the chiefest of Dissenters. His pedigree in Dissent has already been addressed,⁸ but to summarize, his grandfather, Bartholomew Westley, and father, John Westley were both Dissenting ministers. John Westley ended up in prison and Samuel believed that he died there as intimated in the Ormsby Letter,⁹ something which is omitted in his other writings. Following his father's death, Samuel was taken under the wing of Dissent. The Dissenters would provide both a positive impetus and negative reasons for Wesley leaving Dissent.

Wesley received a good education from some of the leading Dissenting teachers of his day. Being the son of one who would have been considered a martyr,¹⁰ as well as being a good student, he was nurtured and given funds to attend three outstanding schools. Indirectly some leaders would play a part in convincing Samuel to conform.

⁸Clarke, *Memoirs*, Tyerman, *Life and Times*, Stevenson, *Memorials*.

⁹The Ormsby Letter was written by Samuel to an unknown recipient (see H. A. Beecham for her discussion of his identity) from his parish church in Lincolnshire, Ormsby, England in 1692.

¹⁰According to Samuel, John Westley's death was due to his imprisonment as a Dissenting minister.

Henry Dolling was his first teacher, the master of the free school in Dorchester where Samuel was taught until he was fifteen. Dolling's impact may have been indirect¹¹ through his translation of *The Whole Duty of Man* into Latin which influenced Samuel's moral beliefs more than any specific teaching.¹² Throughout his whole life he read, quoted, endorsed and promoted this book to people and his church. It would be the most influential book outside of the Bible for Wesley.¹³ He later answered a question in the *Athenian Gazette* by a Querist, "Whome do you suppose the author of the *Whole Duty of Man* [is]?" His answer suggested the late archbishop, Dr. [Henry] Hammond, Dr. Allestree, or Bishop Fell, adding, "*The Whole Duty of Man* is the best book next to the Bible."¹⁴

The duty-bound moral teachings of the *Whole Duty of Man* were wholeheartedly embraced by Wesley.¹⁵ He endorsed it to those who would receive its teachings. In his

¹¹Wesley dedicated his first published work, *Maggots* (1685) to Dolling.

¹²Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley, A Theological Biography*, 39. Peter Greetham suggests that Wesley acquired his knowledge of Latin and Greek with Dolling at Dorchester. Unpublished Thesis *Aspects of the Life and Times of Samuel Wesley Senior*. 1991. Dr. Williams Library, London, England. 13.

¹³While Wesley was content to accept the anonymous authorship of *The Whole Duty of Man*, as an act of modesty: "The Author of the Whole Duty of Man, whose modesty in concealing his Name is not inferiour to his other Excellencies. . . ." *Athenian Oracle*. v. 2 p. 359. Wesley considered it too magnificent a work to have been composed by a single individual. Most accept the authorship of Richard Allestree though also considered were Henry Hammond who contributed the preface and possibly John Fell. Published in 1658 it became a manifesto for those seeking a closer relationship with God. Pragmatic in format, demanding in its expectations, it served to direct the thoughts and actions of those seeking true piety throughout the second half of the seventeenth century. "Richard Allestree" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1478.

¹⁴John Dunton, *The Athenian Gazette*, v. 1, p. 64.

¹⁵The *Whole Duty of Man* was parallel to Johann Arndt's *True Christianity*, a Pietist classic of the same era. Wesley made reference to the *Whole Duty of Man* in

July 6, 1696, letter to Mr. Smith, a student at Cambridge, he wrote, “In earnest of what I would do, I send you according to my promise; the works of the author of *The Whole Duty of Man*, which comes by this weeks carrier from London”¹⁶

His initial school experience under Dolling was followed by the influence of Samuel Edward Veal (1632/3-1708). It was originally decided that he should be sent to Dr. G’s private academy in London, but upon arrival “on the 8th of March *An. Dom. 1678* . . . found him newly deceased. On which I was continued some time longer at a grammar school, from whence my master would have had me gone to the University.”¹⁷ He would be nearly sixteen. But it was decided instead to send him to Mr. Veal’s Academy in Stepney where he remained for two years.¹⁸ John Dunton said of Edward Veal, “he was an universal scholar, and a man of great piety and usefulness. His principles were very moderate.”¹⁹

many of his writings. Endorsements can be found in *The Athenian Gazette*, v. 1: 64, 475; v. 2: 63, 306, 359, 525; v. 3: 82, 171, 356; v. 4: 29, 83; his letter to Mr. Smith, ms Rawlinson, Letters 45 orig. misc. Letters II, Bodleian Library, Oxford. ; his *Pious Communicant*, and references in a number of his sermons. (See ms sermon no. 27 3rd sermon on First Peter, IV cap. 3, 4, 5 verse, “The Time passed of our life may suffice . . . the second proof of this matter shall be from the excellent, though unknown author of the *Whole Duty of Man* in his discourse of temperance in drinking, Sund: 8, 11 . . .”

¹⁶Ms Rawlinson Letters 45 orig. misc. Letters II. Bodleian Library, Oxford. 1696 letter to “Mr. Smith.”

¹⁷Samuel Wesley, *A Letter from a Country Divine to His Friend in London. Concerning the Education of the Dissenters, in Their Private Academies*. (London: R. Clavel, MDCCIII), 4.

¹⁸Samuel Wesley, *A Letter from a Country Divine to His Friend in London*. 5.

¹⁹Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 66.

The third and most significant Dissenting teacher for Samuel was Charles Morton (1627-1698), who headed Morton's Academy of Newington Green.²⁰ His teachings exhibited broad perspectives and he personified a tolerating disposition. Morton, the son of a parson, was raised in the Puritan tradition within the bounds of Cornwall. At age twenty he enrolled in the Puritan-controlled Cambridge until the expulsion of the Royalists at Oxford. He entered New Inn Hall and later Wadham College, where he received his B.A. and M.A. in 1649 and 1652 respectively. His interest in science was fostered by his association with the likes of Robert Boyle, William Petty, and Christopher Wren, each of whom was committed to empiricism, that is adding experiment, apparatus, and mathematical logic to scholastic reasoning.

Following the receipt of his masters degree, Morton probably served as a parish priest until 1660 when the Act of Uniformity effectively removed many dissenting ministers. As a committed nonconformist, Morton set up his "dissenters" academy at Newington Green for those excluded from the universities. His teaching emphasized Aristotelianism and the recent thought of Descartes and Boyle, as well as empirical scientific method and a staunch piety.

Tyerman wrote that Morton "began his ministry in Oxford, and here for several years he lived as a Conformist . . ." until "after his ejection by the Act of Uniformity. He was in all respects an excellent man" and "of a sweet natural temper, and of a

²⁰www.amphilsoc.org/library/mole/m/mortonc.htm. "Charles Morton's System of Physicks" Accessed January 31, 2006.

John Dunton said of him that "his high character led many of the persecuted Nonconformists to join him in America. He was the very soul of philosophy, the repository of all arts and sciences, and of the Graces too." (Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 68)

Stevenson wrote of Morton, that his "scholarly attainments and gentlemanly manners had raised the reputation of his school to the highest position, amongst Dissenters, in England." Stevenson, *Memorials*, 55.

generous public spirit, an indefatigable friend, pious, learned, ingenious, useful, and beloved by all who knew him.”²¹ He was “exceedingly studious, and, at the same time, zealous for the rites and ceremonies of the Established Church while at Oxford until the controversy between the Prelatist and Puritans caused a change of mind toward the latter.”²² In time, because of his nonconformist views, he would leave England on Cotton Mather’s invitation to become president of the Puritan-run Harvard in 1685. He was worthily praised by Wesley who stated that Morton was “an ingenious and universally learned man . . . excellent in mathematics . . . paid well . . . He thought more of the glory of God than of his own private profit.”²³ Tyerman believed Wesley was further influenced by Dissent because of the sermons he heard and his “taking down many hundreds” of noteworthy Dissenting preachers’ sermons. “Though he left the Dissenters, it would be folly to deny that these dissenting sermons greatly enriched his mind, and helped to mould his moral character.”²⁴

Dr. John Owen (1616-1683) was another influence who also gave financial support to Wesley which played a part in drawing him into the Church. “Before the two years spent at Veal’s academy had expired, he received an additional £10 per annum from the hands of Dr. Owen, who encouraged him in the prosecution of his studies, and advised him to have a particular regard to critical learning.”²⁵

²¹Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 67-68.

²²Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 67-68.

²³Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 68

²⁴Samuel Wesley, *Defense*, 47; Clarke mentioned “more than fifty”, *Memoirs*, 87; Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 76.

²⁵Luke Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 66. See also George J. Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, 55.

Growing Disenchantment with Dissent

Even while there were forces shaping Wesley in Dissent, other's influences were at work which were altering his mindset and pulling him in another direction. He was growing troubled at some of the actions he was a part of against reputable ministers of the Established Church and it was beginning to prick his conscience. He was becoming more disturbed by the vindictive climate which was growing within Dissent. Later he would consider some aspects of his behavior within the academies with regret. In particular his memory of their encouragement of him to lampoon noteworthy Churchmen bothered his conscience.²⁶ Wesley recollected, "Some of their (the Dissenters) gravest, eldest, and most learned ministers encouraged me in my silly lampoons, both on Church and State. They gave me subjects, and furnished me with matter; some of them transcribed my writings, and several of them revised and corrected them before they were published."²⁷ Two of the people he ridiculed included the Rev. Thomas Doolittle and Dr. Williams, Bishop of Chichester.²⁸

Also troublesome was his acknowledgment of failing to fully forgive. According to Tyerman, Wesley believed "that he was too keen and revengeful, and that if he thought a person had injured him, he could not forgive such a person, without receiving

²⁶Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 69-70. See also Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, 56.

²⁷Wesley, *Reply to Palmer*, 138; Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 69-70. See also Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, 56; Clarke, *Memoirs*, 86.

²⁸"Rev. Thomas Doolittle, A. M., of Pembroke Hall. He kept an academy at Isington about the year 1672, and prepared several young men for the ministry, among whom was Matthew Henry, the commentator. He died May 24, 1707, and was buried at Bunhill Fields. He was the last of the ejected minister in London." Clarke, *Memoirs*, 84, 87.

something which he thought to be satisfaction. That seems to have been one of his greatest crimes; but now all such revengeful feeling was done away; and it was the greatest pleasure of his life to forgive and to oblige an enemy.”²⁹

Even more disturbing to Wesley was the offer for pay to translate doctrinal works which he believed to be unorthodox. He began, but then objected to the request to translate the writings of John Biddle (1615-1662) when he saw in them a deism he could not accept.³⁰ He would ultimately refuse to involve himself in this activity. This action was consistent with his growing concern with the doctrinal direction that some within Dissent were moving.

Wesley later wrote of this time at Dr. Morton’s academy when he was a student of about twenty years old.³¹ He indicated he “began now to make some more observations of things than while with my first tutor, and the more I saw into what was about me, the more, I confess, I disliked it, and began to doubt whether I was in the right.”³² His doubts were about the schismatic criticisms against the government and Established Church polity. “Whenever the young men had any discourse of the government, and talk’d disaffectedly or disloyally, he (Mr. Morton) never fail’d to

²⁹Wesley, *Defense*, 59; Clarke, *Memoirs*, 86; Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 74.

³⁰Wesley was employed to translate Biddle’s *Twelve Arguments*, an anti-Trinitarian manifesto, and was promised a considerable gratuity for doing it. He says, ‘When I saw what it was, I proceeded no farther.’” Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 71-2; Wesley, *Defense*, 52; Clarke, *Memoirs*, 87.

³¹Wesley, *A Dissenting Letter*, 6.

³²Wesley, *A Dissenting Letter*, 6.

rebuke and admonish 'em to the contrary . . . We almost universally entertained a mortal aversion to the episcopal order, and very few but equally abhorred monarchy itself."³³

Besides the financial assistance Samuel received from John Owen, he was instrumental in the general encouragement of Dissenters to seek admission at reputable schools, particularly Oxford where he had once been vice-chancellor. As a former prominent Churchman turned Dissenter, he had a great deal of influence with the students. He believed the Church of England offered the possibility of educational respectability and stability for Dissenters. Owen encouraged talented Dissenting students to attend Oxford, believing there was dawning a change in the attitude toward Dissenters and an education there would offer future credibility to the Dissenting movement. His hope was for them to graduate and return to lead and teach so they might gain a degree of respect. Wesley wrote:

For Dr. Owen being formerly (as you know) Vice-Chancellor [of Oxford from 1652-1658], had still an inclination for the universitys and expectin[g] the times would sometime or other wheel about and favour them, for this reason he would have as many young men as he had any influence upon entred at som[e] College or other tho not matriculated, and then return to their old dissenting Tutors, hopeing upon a change in their favour (which they did as confidently look for as if an Angel had told it them) they might so far prevail as to have all the time allowed them in order to their degrees, which had past after they entered at the Colleg[e]. For this reason they sent Me to Oxford, tho I had others of my own, and was willing to be satisfied whether the university were really as bad as they described it, which they made us beleeve was a perfect Sodom and Gomorrah.³⁴

³³Wesley, *A Dissenting Letter*, 6.

³⁴Beecham, "Samuel Wesley Senior," 103.

Owen's encouragement to all Dissenting students was conditional upon their refusal to take the oaths of loyalty [matriculate] to the Established Church or subscriptions while attending Oxford.³⁵

Changing Times

The general tenor of the times in which Wesley lived also played a part in his decision to leave Dissent and embrace the Established Church. Dissent was losing its moral focus and splintering into numerous groups. The Clarendon Code put severe restrictions on Dissenter's ability to preach or teach and response varied widely from acquiescence, to plots against the government. Samuel expressed his reasons for leaving Dissent and can be gleaned from his writings. Some statements are specific but other comments expressed general beliefs he held which were contrary to Dissent. These are found in his sermons and some of his published writings which reflected his particular theological, ecclesiastical and political beliefs.

One rationale stemmed from his embrace of the ancient church tradition of the primitive church and early church fathers. He viewed the early apostolic and post-apostolic period as a time of purity before the doctrines of the church were corrupted by the Catholic Church. He, like many within both Dissent and the Established Church, distrusted the Catholic Church which he viewed as in need of reform. He saw within the Established Church attempts to recover and reclaim the orthodoxy of the primitive church.

Another area of concern was Wesley's uneasiness with the low moral climate of England in the 1680s and 1690s. The moral depravity and irreligion among those

³⁵Stevenson, 57.

professing allegiance to the Established Church in the late seventeenth century brought responses from different quarters. First literary responses came from William Cave,³⁶ Anthony Horneck,³⁷ William Reeves,³⁸ (and later) Nathaniel Marshall³⁹ who wrote “to expose the laxity of the official church and to call the church’s adherents to the primitive Christian character. These writers were fortunate in that James Ussher, (1581-1656) John Pearson, (1613-1686) John Fell, (1625-1686) and George Bull (1634-1710) had been pouring over patristic documents, dramatically enhancing the knowledge of patristics within the Established Church during the late seventeenth century.”⁴⁰ The moral behavior of people and groups also drew Wesley from Dissent to the Established Church. While neither group was immune from moral impurity as Samuel understood it, the Church in his view was moving in the direction of recovering moral purity while Dissenters were growing increasingly more distant from their Puritan moral sensibilities. This may have been a perspective which both Samuel and his wife, Susanna shared as both would leave Dissent and embrace the Established Church.

³⁶William Cave, (1637-1713) *Primitive Christianity, or the Religion of the Ancient Christians in the First Ages of the Gospel* (London: 1673).

³⁷Anthony Horneck, (1641-1697) *The Happy Ascetick; or The best Exercise, Together with a Letter to a Person of Quality, Concerning the Holy Lives of the Primitive Christians* (London: 1673).

³⁸William Reeves, (1667-1726) *The Apologies of Justin Martyr . . . With a Prefatory Dissertation about the Right Use of the Fathers* (London: 1716).

³⁹Nathaniel Marshall, (Bap.1680-1730) *The Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church* (London: 1714).

⁴⁰Kelly D. Carter, “The High Church Roots of John Wesley’s Appeal to Primitive Christianity,” *Restoration Quarterly*. 37: 2.

In addition, Wesley was embroiled in the debate over the immutability of Holy Scripture. His understanding of scripture reached back to its earliest origins of the Bible's formation, predating the early Church, to the time of Ezra. He embraced the textual superiority of the Hebrew Bible over that of the Greek Septuagint (LXX) as well as arguing for the antiquity of Hebrew vowel pointings. He believed the vowel points provenance was from the time of Ezra rather than the Masoretes. He was critical of the biblical criticism espoused by Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza (1632-1677), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), et al. He embraced the meticulous study of the text of the Bible as the very word of God given to humankind through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ It was the Established Church's holding to the historical truths of the early church and to the authority of Scripture as God's word which also helped draw Samuel toward the Church and leave behind his Dissenting heritage.

The Established Church also represented historic stability for Samuel, an aspect which Puritan Dissent could not claim. Albert Outler at Duke University has noted, "[Samuel and Susanna] had each, separately and before they married, renounced their Nonconformist birthrights and had converted to Anglicanism, chiefly because of their common horror of disorder, which was always associated in their minds with the old puritan theocracy . . . the Puritans, they thought, had plunged Britain into a tragic Civil War. They had justified a king's beheading on theological grounds, and then had

⁴¹Robert Monk maintained that Wesley came to this high view of scripture from the Puritan heritage of his father John Westley [old spelling] and grandfather, Bartholomew Westley. 11.

unleashed a bedlam of religious and social anarchy that left the country demoralized, literally, for a full century and more.”⁴²

All these people, experiences, and perceptions were prerequisite to Wesley’s decision to visit Oxford, but still his initial visit was as a prospective Dissenting student. He had not come to any conclusions or made any definitive decisions about leaving either Dissent or conforming to the Established Church. That decision would only be settled after he decided to go to Oxford and see for himself the “perils” which resided there. His first visit, then, was not as has been suggested, a sudden impulse to leave Dissent and family to become an Established Churchman. Rather, it was a decision he made to experience Oxford first-hand and deliberate whether he would attend there as a Dissenter or not. His definitive decision and final move would occur when he left a second time with the conviction to become a part of the Established Church.

Experiencing Oxford for the First Time

John Owen may have had more influence on Samuel through his death than in his life, for it is possible that his death precipitated Samuel’s first visit to Oxford. Owen’s encouragement to students may have carried more weight now that he was dead. Wesley always held this former Church of England man turned Dissenter in high regard. He wrote of his financial assistance and repute in the Ormsby letter, “I do not give an account of the £10 a year which I rec’d of Dr. Owen besides that £30 I had from others of them while I was among the dissenters, tho I cannot now remember whether ‘twas collected among his people (which were some of the best quality)”⁴³ Owen’s death may

⁴²Bob W. Parrott, ed. *The Albert Outler Library*, v. 2. (Anderson, IN: Bristol House, 1995), 403-4.

⁴³Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior,” 102-3.

have provided the financial means for Samuel to visit and to explore the moral climate at the school.

When Owen died on August 24, 1683, Samuel was one Dissenter who heeded half of Owen's advice to pursue an education at Oxford. He probably first visited in late August 1683 to investigate Oxford's moral climate.⁴⁴ Samuel wrote:

Accordingly I went and found it, God knowes bad enough, and so bad that as I never yet did disclose it to anyone . . . the stream of debauchery, especially in drinking ran so violent, that tis next to impossible to stand against it . . ." [The character of the students was such that drunkenness was looked] "upon by most of the younger sort, as a disgrace to keep ones Reason." [He did not know more than] "half a score in our Colleg (I speak with the vary largest, and ours was as sober I think as any in the university) who had not unmann[e]d themselves as som[e] of those (drinking) seasons."⁴⁵

Commenting on these temptations, he continued:

I found twas possible to live soberly there as I know severall did when I came thither . . . and was pretty well satisfied in many things, tho not so well as to come quite over at that time, resolving to consider further on a thing of that consequence, which I did at my return to London, where I tarry'd about a quarter of a year and during that time endeavour'd to inform myself as well as I could concerning the differences already mentioned and being at length satisfied in my judgment that I lived in a groundless seperation [*sic*] from the established Church, resolved again for Oxford in good earnest as soon as opportunity offered which it soon did."⁴⁶

He may have had the "advantage" of having insufficient funds to drink to the extent the others did. In addition, he was older and possessed greater maturity the others lacked, his being an older student of twenty-one. (Note his use of the phrase, "most of the younger

⁴⁴Stephen Porter writes, that "there were about 370 ale houses in Oxford in 1679." "University and Society" *The History of the University of Oxford. IV Seventeenth Century Oxford* (Nicholas Tyacke, ed. NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), 72n207.

⁴⁵Beecham, "Samuel Wesley Senior," 103.

⁴⁶Beecham, "Samuel Wesley Senior," 103.

sort.”)⁴⁷ It is clear that Wesley affirmed the immorality he had been warned about, but only up to a point; he focused only on the excessive drinking as the major fault at Oxford, and he was convinced he could resist that temptation.

In his diary, Anthony á Wood offered a collaborating glimpse into life at Oxford during the 1680s. He wrote, or better jotted notes of events, deaths within the community and country, weather, and personal information, such as payment of his expenses.⁴⁸ For example, he documented the death of Dr. John Owen on August 24,⁴⁹ the various outbreaks of smallpox and those affected,⁵⁰ an earthquake,⁵¹ the weather,⁵² convocation,⁵³ the beginning of the term,⁵⁴ and the end of the term.⁵⁵ Of particular interest here, was his mention of drinking episodes at Oxford. He wrote of one occasion:

[Thomas] Edwards of S. John's—not among them, but there by accident. These having been drinking at the Meermaid tavern newly opened after it had been shut a

⁴⁷Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior,” 103.

⁴⁸Anthony á Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary, of Oxford, 1632-1695*/ [microform]/ *Described by Himself; Collected From His Diaries and Other Papers by Andrew Clark*. (Oxford: Printed for the Oxford Historical Society. 1891-1900).

⁴⁹Anthony á Wood, *Wood's Life and Times*, 66.

⁵⁰Anthony á Wood, *Wood's Life and Times*, 6-68.

⁵¹Anthony á Wood, *Wood's Life and Times*, 73.

⁵²Anthony á Wood, *Wood's Life and Times*, 123 (very cold); 135, (lack of rain).

⁵³Anthony á Wood, *Wood's Life and Times*, 75, (5 October, 1683); 109 (19 September, 1684).

⁵⁴Anthony á Wood, *Wood's Life and Times*, 80, (10 October 1683); 112 (October 1684).

⁵⁵Anthony á Wood, *Wood's Life and Times*, 83 (December, 17 1683); 137, (April 10, 1685).

quarter of an yeare, came drunk to the Miter; were let in by a boy then up. They came as they pretended to eat something. The boy said they were all in bed. They enquired where the Mrs. [Lazenby] lyed. The boy shew'd the window (which was a lower window). They thereupon awake'd her and desired to have some meat dressed. She said 'twas late and would or could not rise. Whereupon they called her strang[e] names, as 'popish bitch,' 'old popish whore'; and told her 'shee deserved to have her throat cut.' Whereupon being extreamly frighted, shee fell into fits and died at 3 in the morn.⁵⁶

He also wrote of an expulsion from Exeter, "May 6, W., John Jago of S. Marie Hall. Sometimes pupill to Mr. [William] Painter of Exeter Coll., expell'd by a programma stuck up in publick places for defaming Mr. Painter his tutor by laying a bastard at his dore in Exeter Coll. Jago was forc'd out of Exeter Coll. some time before for debauchery, by his tutor Painter."⁵⁷

Upon arrival at Oxford, Wesley met a Mr. Crabb who helped welcome him. He described Crabb as "a Dorsetshire man and my countryman who was then the librarian" with whom he had "severall discourses on the subjects in controversy between the dissenters and Church of England, and was pretty well satisfied in many things, tho Not so well as to come quite over at that time, *resolving to consider further* on a thing of that consequence, which I did at my return to London."⁵⁸ Wesley continued, "I . . . endeavour'd to inform myself as well as I could concerning the differences [between Dissenters and the Church]."⁵⁹

The question of why Wesley did not stay in Oxford, but returned to London sometime during the fall of 1683 is intriguing. His primary intention was to explore for

⁵⁶Anthony á Wood, *Wood's Life and Times*, 83.

⁵⁷Anthony á Wood, *Wood's Life and Times*, 142.

⁵⁸Beecham, "Samuel Wesley Senior," 103. My emphasis.

⁵⁹Beecham, "Samuel Wesley Senior," 87.

himself the moral climate of Oxford which was accomplished. But there were also other reasons which can be suggested besides his expressed lack of readiness and “resolving to consider further on a thing of that consequence.”⁶⁰

First, he may not have had the money to matriculate in the fall of 1683. He was short of money, (as he had been his whole life), and totally dependent on the beneficence of Dissenters who funded young scholars at their schools. Without their support, he had no financial resources. Wesley would articulate these fiscal restraints in the Ormsby letter when he had to delay his return (this time a convinced churchman) until he was given money to help cover his travel expenses.⁶¹

A second factor may have involved the health climate at Oxford. The year 1683 was particularly risky one health-wise. Parents’ anxiety about epidemics in Oxford was reflected in their correspondence with both their children and their tutors. Epidemics certainly were disruptive, and during the more severe outbreaks of plague or other infectious diseases the university dispersed. By the middle of the century smallpox was beginning to arouse concern. “There were outbreaks in Oxford in 1649 and 1654 and they became increasingly common in the 1670s and 1680s, with particularly virulent ones in 1675 and 1683.”⁶² The 1683 date is the one of interest here as there were numerous smallpox outbreaks at Oxford. Again, Anthony à Wood’s diary is helpful in shedding

⁶⁰Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior,” 103.

⁶¹Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior,” 103.

⁶²Stephen Porter, *The History of the University of Oxford: The Seventeenth Century Oxford*. v. 4 Nicholas Tyacke, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 45-6. Also, there are two excerpts in Anthony Wood’s diary: July 28 1683, “news that A. a. D fell sick of smal-pox, Wedn. before July 25” and Oct. 11, (1683) Thursd. E. à. D. fell sick of small pox at Oxford.” in *The Life and Times of Anthony à Wood*. Abridged from Andrew Clark’s Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

some light. He recorded these interesting accounts which reflect the period of Wesley's first visit. "Aug. and Sept., the University very empty, not only because it is vacation, but that the small pox rages in Oxon, which drives away [those] that would not otherwise goe. Many in severall parishes dy of it. Reported worse than 'tis. The markets small. Citizens of London and other travellers afraid to come this vacation, whereas before wee had many of them. Aug., Sept., Oct., small pox hot and frequent in Oxon, mostly among maids and children; and tho' few colleges were visited with it, yet the Universitie was very emptie."⁶³

Wood also noted the negative impact of the small pox outbreak from August through October, naming numerous people whose deaths were attributable to the disease, "After many scholars were return'd against the beginning of the term (10 Oct.), the small pox then increased in Oxon and in the colleges. Whereupon those that were lately come left the University againe, notwithstanding [the disease] was spread about the country."⁶⁴ His December 17 entry further added, "terme ended and but 49 matriculated from the beginning thereof to the end—occasioned by the smal pox."⁶⁵

The most significant reason Wesley left, however, was that he had not completely worked through in his own mind his position with regard to Dissenters and the Established Church. He had resolved his question on the moral state of Oxford but had not totally answered whether he would remain a Dissenter or become a Church of England Man. He was however moving closer to the Church. He began to see in the

⁶³Anthony á Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, 67. This was fewer than usual.

⁶⁴Anthony á Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, 80-81.

⁶⁵Anthony á Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood*, 85.

Established Church doctrines which were historically closer to the early church. He would eventually claim that the Church “rested on the foundation of true doctrine, which Dissent did not secure for him.”⁶⁶ This view is consistent with the attraction and appeal of the Established Church during the 1670s and 1680s. Martin Schmidt has recognized that there was the influence of the “powerful early Christian and primitive Church motif in the Anglicanism of his [Wesley’s] day.”⁶⁷ These beliefs could be found in William Cave’s *Primitive Christianity* (1672) and the “programme of the ‘religious societies.’”⁶⁸ All provided a positive enticement for Wesley to conform.

During the intermittent time (following his return to London: from the end of the term on December 17, 1683 to August 1684), he continued to reflect on whether or not to remain a Dissenter or to conform. Wesley resolved to consider further the issues which divided Dissenters and the Established Church. One aspect Wesley may have needed “to consider” was whether or not he could swear the vows required. Porter indicates that Dissenters were not “excluded from the university for the oaths of allegiance and uniformity and subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles.” However, “some dissenters were prepared to modify their views sufficiently to take the oaths required at matriculation and so enable them to go forward eventually for a degree.”⁶⁹

The moral climate was no longer an issue for Wesley and while financial concerns and the small pox outbreak may have been a factor contributing to Wesley’s not

⁶⁶M. Schmidt, *John Wesley, A Theological Biography*, 44.

⁶⁷M. Schmidt, *John Wesley, A Theological Biography*, 44.

⁶⁸M. Schmidt, *John Wesley, A Theological Biography*, 44.

⁶⁹Porter, *Oxford History*, 49.

remaining the whole first year, it was his own words that reflect a hesitancy to break ties with the Dissenters by swearing allegiance to the Established Church. This conviction is consistent with Wesley's serious view of oath taking and demonstrates he was not yet prepared to swear his allegiance during his first visit of 1683. It was within the character of Wesley not to compromise points of conviction, especially when it came to oaths. He would not allow himself (as Porter put it) "to modify [his] views sufficiently to take the oaths required at matriculation and so enable [him] to go forward eventually for a degree."⁷⁰

After returning to London, he "tarry'd about a quarter of a year and during that time endeavour'd to inform myself as well as I could concerning the differences already mentioned and being at length satisfied in my judgement that I lived in a groundless separation [*sic*] from the establishe'd Church, resolv'd again for Oxford in good earnest as soon as opportunity offer'd which it soon did."⁷¹

Following his return to London (after his August 1683 visit), he was helped to gain assurance for the Established Church through the assistance of an unnamed relative who came to visit. Wesley acknowledged his previous Dissenting leanings following his first visit. "When I came from the university, my acquaintance lay chiefly among the Dissenters."⁷² But this influential relative convinced him further. "A reverent and worthy person, my relation, who lived a great distance, coming to London, was so kind as to see me while I was at Mr. Morton's, and gave me such arguments against the

⁷⁰Porter, *Oxford History*, 49.

⁷¹Beecham, "Samuel Wesley Senior," 103.

⁷²*Defense of Letter*, 4; Clarke, *Memoirs*, 92.

Dissenting schism, which I was then embarked with, as added weight to my resolutions when I began to think of leaving it.”⁷³

Wesley concluded with his moment of truth:

I earnestly implor'd the Divine direction in a business of so weighty a concern, and on which so much of my whole life depended: I examin'd things over and over, as calmly and unpassionately as possible; and the farther I look't, still the more the mist cleared up, and things appeared in another sort of a light than I had seen 'em all my life before. And so far were the sufferings of that people at that time, from influencing my resolution to leave 'em, that I profess't was a thing which retarted me the most of any: the ungenerosity of quitting 'em in their meaner fortunes, when I had been a sharer in their better, I knew not how to get over; tho' I at last perceived this was more a pique of honour than any solid reason, and not weighty enough to stand against a certain Duty. These I remember were some of the uppermost of my thoughts about that time, and on the whole, I began to have some Inclinations to the University, if I knew how to get thither, or live there when I came: Not being acquainted, to my knowledge, with one Soul of the Ch. of England, at least with none of any figure or interest, to whom I might address for Assistance or Advice.⁷⁴

This account accurately reflected Samuel's state of mind while at London to consider his future. With this epiphany he resolved to return to Oxford a second time, only now as an intended conformist to the Church of England. He cut financial ties and even withheld his decision to leave the Dissenters from his dissenting mother and aunt.⁷⁵ After about a half of a year, he was ready to return having made the necessary changes in his polity.

⁷³Clarke, *Memoirs*, 92; Stevenson, *Memorials*, 57. My emphasis.

⁷⁴Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior,” 86. Cf., *Dissenting Letter*, 11.

⁷⁵A. Clarke, *Memoirs*, 89.

Returning to Oxford Again for the First Time: A Churchman

Before departing on his second trip to Oxford, Wesley stated he “discharged some debts” and “footed it to Oxford.”⁷⁶ This is the trip he made early in the morning without telling his mother, knowing it would probably upset her (as perhaps his first visit had?). Upon arriving, Wesley expressed gratitude to Mr. Crabb, “who received me with great humanity and kindness, and . . . supplied me with 20 s[terling] more which made up my caution money required by the college of all that enter.”⁷⁷

With this return to Oxford he entered as a Poor Scholar at Exeter College. The Ormsby letter tells us he arrived on September 22, 1684, a whole year after his first visit, but this time, convinced of his decision to conform. According to Southey, the registration records showed Wesley’s caution money⁷⁸ was paid September 26, 1684,⁷⁹ and he matriculated on November 18, 1684. With the oaths which accompanied matriculation, Wesley in his heart became a Church of England man. “Thus I remain’d at the university too happy for about a quarter of a year.” While at Oxford, Wesley continued to solidify his conviction to conform. He immersed himself in the study of the Oriental languages that is, Hebrew and Aramaic. This interest probably stemmed from the influence of Edward Pococke,⁸⁰ the premier orientalist of the seventeenth century.

⁷⁶Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior,” 104.

⁷⁷Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior,” 104.

⁷⁸Caution money was “money deposited as a security for good conduct, esp. by a student on entering a college, or an Inn of Court.” *Oxford English Dictionary* on line. Oxford University Press, 2005. Accessed 12-23-05.

⁷⁹Clarke, *Memoirs*, 89-90; Stevenson, *Memorials*, 58.

⁸⁰Pococke had taught John Owen at Oxford. Owen later defended Pococke in the early 1650s.

This initial period at Oxford was not without difficulties. Wesley's first months at Oxford were stressful, for he was ridiculed. This treatment stemmed from his background as a Dissenter with a dissenting education. "The odium which the name of dissenter brought my fellow collegiates having heard of my education, frightening me beyond the rules of temperance and virtue, to avoid which I was so foolish and cowardly to incline rather to the contrary extreme and was inde[e]d almost all in evil."⁸¹ He would also soon face deprivation as well as ridicule. [See chapter four on piety below; *Ormsby Letter*; Beecham, 104]. The combination of the two led to an experiential crisis of faith from which he came out convinced that his chosen course was indeed part of God's providence.

Another factor in Wesley's conformity was the social dynamics of his era. He recognized the need for reform within both church and society. Not stuck in a nostalgic past, he was a social moderate who vigorously advocated societal change through the re-embracing of a scriptural and primitive church orthodoxy which he believed was best represented in the Established Church. While he did not see the church as perfect, it was the best choice and he worked to bring about church reform from within. He saw within the Church, concerted efforts to reform, even purify itself through these efforts. He did not see comparable efforts within the Dissenters. Over the course of time, he came to see Dissenters as a whole, increasingly schismatic, fragmented and immoral. This was a gradual process as even Palmer⁸² acknowledged in his *Defence*: "He corresponded for

⁸¹Beecham, "Samuel Wesley Senior," 104.

⁸²Palmer himself would in time conform to the Established Church. See Adam Clark, *Memoirs*, 153n.

some time with us as Friends, and accepted of many kind offices from men of condition among us.”⁸³ He did not ever separate himself from the orthodox doctrinal teachings or even the individual Dissenters whom he saw as ‘moral livers’.

In his social mindedness Wesley was progressive. He invested his energies in the Pietism of Anthony Horneck, in the newly arisen Society movements, particularly the Society For the Reformation of Manners (SRM) and the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) that Dr. Thomas Bray founded in 1698.⁸⁴ Wesley was one who believed Luther’s Reformation was incomplete. While successfully reforming doctrine, it failed to extend to Christian practice. This conviction was consistent with Pietism. It met the challenge of Christian orthodoxy, but not orthopraxy.⁸⁵ He also helped establish and popularize the *Athenian Gazette* which functioned as a paper and a small society. The paper helped disseminate knowledge through a novel means of a thrice weekly paper. In other words, Samuel worked to establish new traditions (societies) faithful to orthodox Christianity as he understood it. The *Athenian Gazette*

⁸³Palmer, *Vindication*, A2.

⁸⁴Dr. Thomas Bray along with four other laymen sought to pioneer free schools and local libraries through the publication, distribution and promoting the use of Christian literature on a worldwide scale. Stephen Neill, ed. *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971), 557.

⁸⁵Samuel made a distinction between the orthodox beliefs of the Dissenters and the polity or practices which they favored. Those who did not conform to the prayer book required by the Act of Uniformity included Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Quakers and some Puritans. There were others who separated because they held Puritan sympathies and wanted moral reform within the Church of England. See Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage*, page 21 for John’s distinction between Dissenter and Nonconformist. John included Dissenter’s writings which addressed moral or Puritan sympathies. A Dissenter left voluntarily because of polity differences, but Nonconformists were forced out. They were expelled, thus, left involuntarily.

was the brain child of John Dunton, a Dissenter, Wesley's first publisher and brother-in-law.⁸⁶ Schmidt observed that Wesley did not disavow all Dissenting principles:

...he consciously retained the interest in the biblical instruction he had received in them. In London he visited such leading Puritan preachers as Stephen Charnock and John Bunyan. He desired the end of Dissent, but repudiated the use of all forceful means. He knew that he was truly at home in the Established Church of his country, but was conscious of being in the succession of Bishop Launcelot Andrewes and not that of William Laud. This is to say that he regarded as most important catholic continuity with the early Church and the whole church on earth, rather than the system of the hierarchy and canon law. For these reasons he felt attracted to the free and broad spirit of the Established Church.⁸⁷

Further distancing from Dissenters occurred when he witnessed what he perceived as not only corruptible morals of the Calves-head Club, but stepping over the bounds of loyalty to the King. He saw this part of Dissent as seditious and it led him to write his initially unpublished *Letter Concerning the Education of Dissenters* written ten years before it was surreptitiously published without his knowledge or approval. When purloined by a person, (probably his Dissenter mother) and publically published in 1702, Samuel was put at the forefront of the widening gap between the Dissenters and the Tory-led Established Church. He wrote his *Defense of the Letter* in response to Mr. Palmer's *Vindication of Dissent*. At this point, Samuel socially and politically separated himself from Dissent. These very public publications created the final irreconcilable breach between Wesley and the Dissenters. His official separation was complete and reflected a process that had taken more than twenty years to finalize.

⁸⁶Dunton and Wesley married sisters. Dunton married Elizabeth and Samuel, Susanna Annesley.

⁸⁷M. Schmidt, *John Wesley, A Theological Biography*, 40-1; *Defense*, 47; Clarke, 87.

Summary

The tradition in which Samuel Wesley grew up assumed he would be a Dissenter, but he began to question the very Dissenting tradition in which he was educated. His move from Dissent to conformity to the Established Church was a gradual process. Change in conviction came with Samuel's being introduced to new information, and from the questions that arose, he began to rethink his position on Dissent and whether to move toward joining the Established Church.

Likewise, the literary tradition which has defined Samuel has come to be accepted with little challenge. However, with the introduction of Beecher's "New Evidence" as well as a re-examination of Clarke, Tyerman, and Stevenson, new aspects to Wesley's state of mind have come forth, specifically that his decision to leave the Dissenters was not an immediate, impulsive decision, but one which took a number of years to make, which entailed visits, conversations, and careful reflection. When he finally made up his mind, it was decisive and he never looked back. Contrary to the tradition of an impulsive Samuel, we begin to see a man who gave serious forethought before he decided to leave the Dissenters and commit to the Established Church.

CHAPTER THREE

The Word of God and the Words of Samuel: Samuel's Use of Scripture and His Doctrine

Introduction

The strongest case for the integration of Pietism in the thought of Samuel Wesley emanates from two sources: his understanding of the Word of God and the influence of others peoples' writings. While it is clear Wesley distanced himself from organized Dissent, particularly in its orthopraxy, that is its polity and lived-out practices, it is not as evident that he disavowed all aspects of the doctrinal beliefs within the Dissenting tradition, especially in their high regard for scripture.¹ The first section of this chapter will discuss Samuel's literalist view of scripture and the various ways he defended his position. He appealed to the precedent established and embraced by the traditions of the Medieval rabbis and the early Church Fathers. Citing them, he offered his adamant adherence to the inspired originality of the Hebrew vowel points in the Bible, which reflected his high opinion of scripture as the *ipsissima verbi* of the Hebrew text of the Bible. He mirrored the contemporary tradition he gained from his training from Oxford and also cited his favorite source outside of the Bible, *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658), to defend scripture from his perceived misuse of scripture by the Catholics and Quakers.

¹E. Gordon Rupp at Cambridge has written, "The majority of their [dissenting] students . . . were able to keep alive the tradition of Biblical learning and piety . . ." *Religion in England, 1688-1791* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 179. Adam Clarke believed Wesley was most adverse to the Dissenter's political views. *Memoirs*, 82.

The second section will address Samuel's own words: his published and unpublished works. They offer numerous genre of writing where he revealed aspects of Piety that were a part of his makeup. Representative examples include his contribution to the *Athenian Gazette*, a newspaper which introduced an innovative informational format for a popular audience, and his *Pious Communicant* which expressed a sacramental piety, written for religious, Anglican Church faithful, both local and beyond.

Samuel also expressed a form of piety in his personal correspondence and examples, which included an unpublished letter to a "Mr. Smith," a student at Cambridge in 1696; and letters to Samuel, Jr., John, and Charles. Also included are unpublished examples from Samuel's sermons.

Wesley's personal correspondence showed his interest in an individual's growth as a Christian. His letter to Mr. Smith, a student at Cambridge University in 1696, displayed an emphasis which reflected his interest in the spiritual growth in a person and endorsed the piety reflected in *The Whole Duty of Man*. Also revealing was his correspondence which began in 1706 to Samuel Jr., his oldest son. His initial letters to Samuel, Jr. began with a father's encouragement to embrace, cultivate, and maintain his (Samuel, Jr.'s) piety.²

From his sermons it can be seen that he put into his messages many of the gleanings from his reading, writing, and experience.³ If there was a particular Pietist trait which he emphasized, it was the ethical dimension. It is important to note that this lifestyle was not an end in itself, but the result of a life lived in relationship to God, even

²Samuel's letters to Samuel, Jr. will be discussed in Chapter Four.

³Samuel's sermon material is largely unexamined.

a strenuous striving to draw near to God. How one lived in relationship to God was a lifelong passion for Samuel Wesley. Nothing was more important than striving to live as God willed. If what he taught and preached sounded and looked difficult, that is, because for Wesley, it was difficult, but possible.

The expression of Wesley's Pietism has been noted by his biographers, but no one has explored in detail the depth or specificity of his Pietist leanings as revealed in his understanding of scripture, the influence of other works, and his writings.

The Word of God: Scripture, the Basis of Piety

A Foundational Belief

For Samuel Wesley, nothing held priority over Holy Scripture. In answering a question in the *Athenian Gazette*, he wrote, "We think the *Whole Duty of Man* the best book, next to the Bible, that ever was printed, and they the best writers, next to those who writ by inspiration."⁴ When he responded to his son John's enquiry to what was the best commentary on the Bible, Samuel wrote, "I answer, the Bible."⁵ Scripture was his starting point for living and understanding life. Earlier in the *Athenian Oracle*, he held to the trilateral proof in answering one question. "We will prove . . . first from Scripture, then from Reason, lastly from the Authority, Judgment and Practice of the Church of

⁴The *Athenian Gazette* was originally written between 1691 and 1697. The source from which I quote is the four volume 1728 *Athenian Oracle* which was a compilation of all the original *Athenian Gazette* articles and lacked specific dates. While the *Athenian Gazette* was the original title, my citations will reflect the 1728 title. v. 1, 64.

⁵Stevenson, 120.

England.”⁶ He expanded on these authorities in his *Pious Communicant* when he referred to “the practice of all the Churches of God, to plain Scripture, experience, and reason.”⁷

There is nothing more clear than the high regard Samuel had for Holy Scripture. It formed the foundation for all his beliefs, for him it was the very Word of God. Its importance was made evident in all of his writings and is easily illustrated in his sermons where he either quoted directly or alluded to scripture with regularity. It was the moral instruction book where one learned what personal piety was and how to be pious, not as an end in itself, but the result of moving toward and becoming closer to God. Scripture did not make one righteous or pious, that came by the atonement of Christ, but it directed one’s efforts. In contrast, the wicked were those “who have no regard to the word of God who have taken no care to guide their lives by it.”⁸ The pious way of life was made possible by God’s revelation of God’s Son, the eternal Word of God and through the words of the Son, written and preached. When asked by a young man what was the best course of study, Wesley’s response was, “Piety ought to be your chief care,” and further recommended “for [striving for] divinity: the Bible, the *Whole Duty of Man*, Grotius’ [Hugo, 1583-1645] *Truth of the Christian Revelation* [*De Veritate Religionis Christianae*, 1622], Dr. William Sherlock’s [1641-1707] *Two Treatises of death and Judgment* [1689], with Judge Hale’s [Sir Matthew, 1609-1676] *Contemplations*.”⁹

⁶*Athenian Oracle*, 2: 61.

⁷*Pious Communicant*, 177. See also *Athenian Oracle*, 1:142. Remarkably, Wesley anticipated not only John’s use of these four evaluative lenses, but Albert Outler’s as well.

⁸Ms sermon no. 11, December 10, 1721, 186

⁹*Athenian Oracle*, 2: 306.

A Literalist View of Scripture

Defenders of Literalism: The Rabbis, The Early Fathers, and Wesley's

Contemporaries. Wesley was a literalist, embracing the whole of scripture as having historical origins from the traditionally assigned authors of each book. For instance, he believed Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Being historical in approach, he held to Archbishop James Ussher's (1581-1656) young earth chronology of seven millennia. In addition, the text was immutable, inclusive of the Hebrew vowel pointings.¹⁰ He did make distinctions between various differing texts of the Bible and he did have his preferences. He believed the Hebrew text to be superior to the Greek Septuagint (LXX). The scope of Samuel's canon of Scripture seemed to have included some of the apocryphal books. In a sermon initially preached February 6, 1723/4, he quoted from Ecclesiasticus 4: 11-19.¹¹ He also answered a questioner in the *Athenian Oracle* about *Esdras* in the *Apocrypha*.¹²

When asked in the *Athenian Oracle* whether an ordinary person could be satisfied “that the Bible that is now used in this kingdom [England], is the same that was written

¹⁰Biblical criticism emerged in the seventeenth century with various treatises being written challenging Mosaic authorship and the inspiration of the vowel points. The first extensive textual treatises were *Exercitationum biblicarum de hebraei graecique textus sinceritate libri duo* (Paris, 1633; 2nd ed. 1660) by J. Morinus; L. Cappellus' *Critica Sacra*, (Paris, 1650; 2nd ed. Halle, 1775-1786); and Richard Simon's *Historire critique du VT* (Paris, 1680 and Rotterdam, 1685; repr. Frankfurt, 1969); idem, *A Critical History of the OT* (London, 1682). This latter treatise was one which Wesley was familiar. See, E. Tov's *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd rev. ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. 16. Among those who defended the divinely given vowel points were Johann Buxtorf (the younger, 1599-1664) and John Owen.

¹¹Ms sermon no. 6, St. Luke 13: 23-24; revised 3rd sermon, March 19, 1725, 116.

¹²*Athenian Oracle*, 2: 502.

by the Apostles and prophets . . . that it now carries the same sense in the literal understanding, or that 'tis the very word of God," Wesley answered,

the holy scriptures are the word of God, and the same which were written by inspired men and consequently have the same sense, for the main, that they had when first committed to writing, and that sense, in what is necessary for salvation, plain, and easy to be understood any person of an ordinary capacity may fairly argue, since 'tis agreeable to the nature of God to give his creatures some directions or other in the way to heaven. This bare tradition, or reason, are too weak to perform. This, no other writing can pretend to; as this, the same goodness which gave it, is obliged to preserve it from any essential alteration.¹³

For Samuel Wesley, God's Word was a person's absolute rule for living. He had a literalist perspective from which he believed the Bible to be the *ipsissima verbi* of God. In a 1727 sermon he wrote, "They (the faithful) will take no offence at the Word of God, tho' others do, and do not love it. They are satisfied, as has been said, that 'tis all infallibly true, as being dictated by the Holy Spirit, given by the inspiration of God. That 'tis the only perfect Rule to direct us both as to our Faith and Life. For where should we find the will of God but in the Word of God; which is a Lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our Paths?"¹⁴ In a short excursus on God's word, Samuel continued, "God's word is highly excellent and valuable in it self, and incomparably beyond all the other Books and writings in the world, which are only the thoughts and words of man, but the Bible of the Living God, it gives us such directions as if we are but careful to follow them in the course of our lives, cannot fail to make us prudent, wise, and happy, wise to salvation, and happy forever and ever. And such assurances as must needs support us and carry us thro' all the troubles and exigencys of life."¹⁵

¹³*Athenian Oracle*, 1: 260-1.

¹⁴Ms sermon no. 12 2nd Sermon on Psalm 119:165, Epworth, June 18, 1727, 199.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, ms sermon no. 12, Epworth, June 18, 1727, 201.

Words of Precedence

Provenance questioned and defended. During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, particularly when Wesley was a student at Oxford, the question of the composition of scripture was beginning to come under increased scrutiny. A number of scholars, both in and outside the Christian church were beginning to question the provenance of scripture and how it came to be composed. One issue where Samuel expressed interest was the nature of and origin of the Hebrew vowel points. He believed that both the spirit and the letter of scripture were infallible and “that the present Hebrew Bible, and Greek Testament, in the words, letters, points, vowels and accents we now enjoy, is the same uncorrupted Word of God which was delivered of old by the holy Penmen of it to the Church.”¹⁶

In one discourse, Wesley argued against the more ‘atheistical’ stream of biblical scholarship espoused by Elias Levite,¹⁷ Camelus, (Brian) Walton,¹⁸ Benedict/Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) in his *Theological-Political Treatise/Tractates Theologico-Politicus*),¹⁹ and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) in his *Leviathan*. Countering Hobbes, he

¹⁶Dunton, *Young Student's Library*, 243.

¹⁷Wesley called him “a learned grammarian and Jew about the beginning of the Reformation” who “fell upon this conceit that certain Jews [gap] Tiberius, A. D. 500 placed the points as they had received them by oral tradition. This he defendeth in his *Masoret Hammasoret*, preface 3d.” *Young Students Library*, 246.

¹⁸Brian Walton (c.1600-61), was Bishop of Chester and editor of the *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta* (1657). John Owen criticized the work in his *Considerations* to which Walton responded with his *The Considerator Considered* (1659). Owen, in turn, defended in his *Treatise De Natura Theologiae*. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, “Walton, Brian,” 1990. Wesley made mention of both works in the *Young Students Library*, pages 245-46.

¹⁹See Travis Frampton’s “Spinoza, Religious Heterodoxy, and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible.” Especially pages 250-296. (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Baylor University, 2004) 280-288.

wrote that “he owns a material God; denies hell or future punishments” and either “lessens or destroys the miracles of the Saviour . . . and those in the Old Testament.”²⁰

Wesley held to the traditional authorship of the books of the Bible. Moses was the author of the Pentateuch despite contradictions in the texts found in Dt. 1:1, Gen. 36:31, Joshua 14:15; Judges 18:29; Gen. 12:5, 16:35 and Dt. 34:1.²¹ “The substance of these answers are in the Bishop of Bath and Wells dissertation on the Author of the Pentateuch, prefixt to his commentary on the five Books of Moses.”²²

In answering a question on the validity of Mosaic authorship, he responded to the question, “Whether the Pentateuch was written by Moses? . . . Spinoza, Mr. Hobbs [*sic*] and others of the same religion, not daring publickly to set themselves against the authority of the Scriptures, for fear of having their tongues bored, or their cheeks branded, have gone a more cunning way to work, denying their antiquity in order to lessen their authority . . . [to] perswade us that these five books were composed long after Moses’ time.”²³

Of the French scholar, Father Simon (1638-1712),²⁴ he wrote “that numerous heap of objections which he has raked together in his *Answer to the Bible*, we meddle not with

²⁰*Athenian Oracle*, 1: 235.

²¹*Athenian Oracle*, 2: 106-8.

²²*Ibid*, 2: 108.

²³*Athenian Oracle*, 2: 372ff.

²⁴Richard Simon was a French scholar who wrote *Critical History of the Old Testament*. An English translation of this work appeared in 1682. See J. R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church In England*. 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1980) 257.

him at present, none of them being produced . . . only add this, that ‘tis no wonder a Popish Priest should be against the Bible, when the Bible’s against him.”²⁵

Specifically, Samuel held to the greater antiquity of the Hebrew vowel pointings found in the text. There was an ongoing scholarly debate whether the vowel points originated from their inclusion by the Masoretes or by Ezra. The Quaker, Samuel Fisher (1605-1665), believed that these textual emendations were supplied later by the Tiberian Masoretes. In having to choose between the time of Ezra and the time of the Masoretes, (500 C. E.), the former date “makes them of Divine” [origin] and the latter, “of Human origin and authority.”²⁶ For Wesley to be consistent, he had to hold to an early date *viz.*, the vowel pointings originated from Ezra. To embrace the Masoretic text with the late inclusion of the pointings would lead to questioning the Bible’s infallibility.

Wesley’s position on the Hebrew vowel pointings was reflected in his *A Discourse Concerning the Antiquity and Original of the Points, Vowels and Accents that are placed to the Hebrew Bible*.²⁷ This contribution can be found in the *Advice to the Young Students of Divinity*. As a thorough going biblicist, his writing reflected both direct biblical quotes and allusions to scripture. He had literalist leanings and affirmed the study of the scriptures in their original languages. This study of scripture was not an

²⁵*Athenian Oracle*, 2: 503.

²⁶Dunton, *Young Students Library*, 278.

²⁷This work can be found in Dunton, John, Richard Sault, Samuel Wesley, and Charles Gildon. *A supplement to the Athenian oracle: being a collection of the remaining questions and answers in the old Athenian mercuries: intermixt with many cases in divinity, history, philosophy, mathematicks, love, poetry, never before publishe’d: to which is prefix’d The history of the Athenian Society, and An essay upon learning [both by C. Gildon]*. London: Printed for Andrew Bell, 1710.

end in itself, but served the purpose “to know the mind of God, as it is revealed in his word, that you may teach it [to] others, and defend it against all opposers.”²⁸

This mind of God is “contained perfectly in the Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament only.”²⁹ Even having these originals, one must rely on other authorities. In order to “know the mind of God, we must first know what the words themselves do signify, and properly and literally mean: This we cannot do in many places, without the help of the Rabbis, or of those who have been taught by them.”³⁰ Wesley offered numerous reasons they were of help: they were masters of the Hebrew tongue, knowing its grammar and sense; many words were *hapex legomena*, whose meanings were lost in [subsequent years]; many phrases and diverse ways of speech were dubious which were well illustrated and explained by the Rabbis; they clarified many rites and ceremonies, ordinances, and customs only slightly mentioned in scripture; they were needed to answer and convince contemporary Jews; they were of help in translating or expounding the text of scripture; they explained parts of the history of the New Testament as well as proverbial speeches; many names of places, sects, moneys, weights, measures were explained; and the law of Moses inclusive of the moral, judicial and ceremonial was fully explained by them.³¹

²⁸Dunton, *Young Student's Library*, 242.

²⁹Dunton, *Young Student's Library*, 242.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*, 242-3.

He concluded that the Rabbins³² were “very needful to defend and maintain the purity, perspicuity, and divine authority of the text it self, as to the true copy, the character, the points, vowels, and accents, and the like. Without some knowledge of the Rabbins, persons will find themselves very unable to judge of the arguments themselves that are used on such subjects.”³³

In addition to reading and studying the Bible alone, Wesley endorsed other books which helped in one’s understanding. For a good understanding of the Bible, Wesley recommended a number of helps and resources. “He (the student) must get William Robertson’s *First and Second Gate to the Holy Tongue*,³⁴ his *Key to the Bible*, Lessey’s *English Greek Lexicon*, [Johannes] Buxtorf’s (1564-1629 [the elder]) *Epitome*,³⁵ his *Thesaurus*;³⁶ [Victorinus] Bythner’s [Bythner (1605?- 1670?) *Lyra Prophetica in Psalmos*,³⁷ [Johannes] Leusden’s (1624-1699) *Compendium Biblicum*,³⁸ [Benedict or

³²Rabbins was the word in Wesley’s day for the Jewish rabbis.

³³Dunton, *Young Students Library*, 243.

³⁴*A Gate or Door to the Holy Tongue*, 1653. The first book published to teach Hebrew language directly from English to Hebrew rather than Latin to Hebrew.

³⁵*Epitome Radicum Hebraicarum et Chaldaicarum*. (Basel: J. Battersbie, 1613).

³⁶*Thesaurus Grammaticus Linguae Sanctae Hebraeae Duobus Libris Methodice Propositus*” (Basil, 1620).

³⁷*Lyra Prophetica Davidis Regis*. (London: Jacobi Flesher, 1664).

³⁸*Compendium Biblicum, Continens ex 23202 Versiculis Totius Veteris Testamenti, Tantum Versiculos 2289 in Quibus Omnes Voces Tam Hebraicae quam Chaldaicae, Cumversione Latina Inveniuntur*. (J. Luchtman, 1694).

Benito] Arius Montanus (1527-1598), his *Interlinear Bible*³⁹ and Wesley's highest advice, "Let him read the Bible much."⁴⁰

In addition, he included a number of Aramaic *Targums*, "most of them translated," such as the Cabalistical writings, *Zohar* and *Bahir*.⁴¹ These *Targums* were considered to be of great value because it was believed they, being contemporary with Jesus' day, were free from some of the polemical translations of later rabbis. "This they prefer before the Scripture, and suppose it was orally delivered by Moses to Israel, and unlawful to be written."⁴² Mordechai Feingold of Oxford University notes that Sebastian Münster, for example, "regarded the *Targum* as often more explicit than the Hebrew original, and his influential Latin translation of the Bible he often followed the appropriate Aramaic text."⁴³ The *Targums* were appreciated not only "because of the

³⁹*Bible-Hebrew and Latin Interlinear, [Polyglot]* (Geneva: La Rouviere, 1616/1572).

⁴⁰Dunton, *Young Student's Library*, 243.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 244. The *Zohar* (זוהר), meaning, "Splendor, radiance" is widely considered the most important work of *Kabbalah*, Jewish mysticism. It is a mystical commentary on the Torah, written in medieval Aramaic and medieval Hebrew. It contains a mystical discussion of the nature of, the origin and structure of the universe, the nature of souls, sin, redemption, good and evil, and related topics. The *Bahir* or *Sefer Ha-Bahir* meaning, "Book of the Brightness" is an anonymous mystical work, attributed pseudepigraphically to a first century rabbinic sage, Nehunya Ben Ha-Kanah (a contemporary of Yohanan Ben Zakkai) because it begins with the words, "R. Nehunya Ben Ha-Kanah said". It is also known as Midrash of Rabbi Nehunya Ben Ha-Kanah. It was first published in the 12th century, southern France. Historians suspect Rabbi Yitzhak Saggi Nehor, also known as Isaac the Blind, wrote it at that time. It is an early work of esoteric Jewish mysticism which eventually became known as *Kabbalah*. www.Wikipedia.org accessed "Zohar" and "Bahir" on March 27, 2006.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 244.

⁴³Mordechai Feingold, "Oriental Studies", *The History of the University of Oxford: The Seventeenth Century Oxford*. vol. iv. Nicholas Tyacke, ed. (NY: Oxford University Press, 1997) 471.

light such texts might shed not only on difficult Hebrew passages, but also on the ‘true’ meaning of the Old Testament.”⁴⁴ Wesley would agree with Ludovicus de Campeigne du Veil who wrote, “he that would know the Mishna, must learn Maimonides.”⁴⁵

These recommendations were considered unusual as there was a prevalent distrust of Jews. Wesley no doubt embraced Oxford’s and, specifically, Pococke’s respect for rabbinical scholarship and remained an advocate for the remainder of his life. Wesley’s scholarship reflected a mix of conservatism and progressivism in which he believed inspired scripture was inclusive of every syllable and iota as the word of God, but he also respected the ancient reasoning of rabbinic scholarship which was unpopular at this time.

Affirmation of Scripture in Wesley’s Sermons

By affirming the Bible as the literal word of God, Wesley could then affirm its use as authoritative for daily living. The eternal truths of God needed to be appropriated by people in their daily lives. Samuel encouraged the study of the Bible. “Let us study God’s word, and direct our lives thereby.”⁴⁶ By so doing “the word of God teaches us to avoid the extremes and observe the golden mean so as neither to presume upon his mercy, nor to despair of it.”⁴⁷ For Wesley, scripture was authoritative because it was the Word of God. “The word of God [was] all infallibly true, as being dictated by the Holy

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Dunton, *Young Students’ Library*, 244.

⁴⁶Ms sermon no. 11 June 11, 1727, Psalm 119:165, 194.

⁴⁷Ms sermon no. 12 June 18, 1727, second sermon on Psalm 119:165, 197.

spirit, given by the inspiration of God. That 'tis the only perfect rule to direct us both as tho our faith and life.”⁴⁸

In his sermonic material, his most complete thoughts on scriptural authority are probably found in a two-part sermon first preached September 24, 1721, “The Word of God is Quick,” based on Hebrews 4:12.⁴⁹ For Wesley the fullest understanding of God’s Word is first found in Christ, who is the “divine *logos*, the eternal, essential, substantial, coeternal, coessential, consubstantial word, and reason, and wisdom, and image, and son of the Father, a distinct person from him, and as such, subordinate to him, and sent by him, but the same in Godhead, essence, substance, power, and glory.”⁵⁰ He is “quick, that is, living; powerful-energetical, full of energy, efficacious, and sharper than any two-edged sword, that is, he executes judgement and vengeance.”⁵¹ Samuel went on and discussed the origins of the term *logos* or divine word. Some, he maintained, say it was borrowed from the schools of Plato and Pythagoras. He saw no problem with them having gained it from revelation, the sacred tradition, or sacred writings.⁵²

⁴⁸Ms sermon no. 12 June 18, 1727, 199.

⁴⁹Ms sermon no. 16 September 24, 1721; January 19, 1723/4 (Wroot); July 24, 1726; May 26, 1728 (Epworth), 238-245.

⁵⁰Ms sermon no. 16 September 24, 1721; January 19, 1723/4 (Wroot); July 24, 1726; May 26, 1728 (Epworth), 238.

⁵¹Ibid., 239.

⁵²Ibid., 243-4.

Besides the Divine *Logos*, Wesley, secondly recognized the written Word of God.

“It is the eternal revelation of [God’s] will and is also quick, vital, or living . . . ‘Tis not a dead <letter>⁵³ without any strength or spirit in it.”⁵⁴

Thirdly, the word of God is also preached. He believed the preached word was “powerful and efficacious to the casting down the strong holds of sin and Satan. Humbling the proud, raising the humble; bringing every high thought into subjection to Christ, for ‘tis the power of God to salvation, to every one that believes’ [Rom 1:16].” It is “sharper than any two-edged sword . . . The learned Jew says, ‘That the flaming sword which turned every way to guard the gates of paradise, is symbol[ic] of the word of God, which (he says) is quick and <fervent>’. The other Jews have a saying, that the prayers of Moses were equal to any two-edged sword and those of Elisha and Elijah.”⁵⁵ The word of God “judges the actions of people bringing them to recognize sin.”⁵⁶ God’s word also uncovered excuses, or in Wesley’s words, God’s word, “blows away all their figleave excuses.”⁵⁷ The word of God, according to Wesley, had the capacity to examine the person to the very core and substance of one’s being:

It dissects and divides the animal soul from the rational, the sensitive faculties from the intellectual. Turns us inside out, knows us better than we do ourselves, and describes us better. Shows us our natural face, both outward and inward, soul as well as body, thoughts as well as words and actions with all the moles and spots, the defects, and excuses, and deformities both of the one and the other. Show the

⁵³The bracketed <letter> indicates that Wesley has inserted this word between two lines and was not part of his original sentence.

⁵⁴Ms sermon no. 17 2nd on Hebrews 4:12, Epworth, June 2, 1728. 246.

⁵⁵Ibid., 247.

⁵⁶Ibid., 248.

⁵⁷Ibid., 249.

wrathful that he's mad, the drunkard, that he's a swine, the lewd and lustful, that he's a goat, the unjust that he's a robber, the malicious, that he's a murderer, the proud, that he's a devil.⁵⁸

A Moderate Application of Scripture

As high a regard Samuel had for the revelation and preaching from Scripture, his application of Scripture to daily living was more moderate. Its eternal origin gave it force for faithful living. Samuel wrote, "The word of God teaches us to avoid the extremes and observe the golden mean so as neither to presume upon his mercy, nor to despair of it."⁵⁹ His use of the term 'golden mean' reflects his adherence to a moderate rather than extremist position when it came to interpreting Scripture and applying it to daily living. Samuel with some behaviors held to an ethical *via media*. While he was very much against excessive drinking, he believed drinking in moderation was permissible. He reflected:

I am not, you all know, nor ever was, so morose and cynical, as to men, that is, to think, or say, or judge they will be damned for moderate refreshments of this nature with one another, if they go home sober, and in good time, ((are))⁶⁰ fit for prayer, fit for supper, fit for sober rest, rather more loving and cheerful to their families and wives than when they may not have thus a little unbent nature, instead of rending and cursing and damning whatever comes near them, after they have lavished in extravagant guzzling what their poor families dearly want, and which would make their lives comfortable unto them.⁶¹

Wesley also cited a favorite authority, *The Whole Duty of Man*, for Sunday, 8, 11, "That it is not only that huge degree of drunkenness which makes men able neither to go

⁵⁸Ibid., 249.

⁵⁹Ms sermon no. 12 2nd sermon On Psalm 119:165. Epworth Jun. 18, 1727. 197.

⁶⁰When a word is indecipherable in the manuscript a guess is indicated by (()). In this case, ((are)) is the educated guess.

⁶¹Ms sermon no. 27 3rd sermon on 1st Peter 4:3, 4, 5. 338.

nor speak, which is to be looked upon as a sin; but Nay, Further, the drinking beyond the natural ends of drinking; that is, beyond moderate refreshment, is a sin.”⁶²

Nor did Wesley disavow dancing. In the *Athenian Oracle* he responded to one with pious sensitivities concerning the dangers of dancing. “Q. I’m about 19 years old, and have been often desir’d by my friends, who I believe are pious persons, to learn to dance, which I’m sensible is needful to teach men how to behave themselves in company, but I somewhat question the lawfulness on’t, and before I learn, wou’d fain know your opinion, and desire you’d fully answer my following doubts.”⁶³ She wondered if it was pagan, if condemned by the Fathers as a breach of the seventh commandment and keeps one from practicing piety.

The answer began, “Tho’ we’d be very tender of advancing anything that shou’d have an ill influence on manners, which are already but too much corrupted, yet we must own, we think none of the reasons brought in the question conclusive against dancing.” Samuel argued that dancing is a natural way of expressing mirth, used in the festivals of the Jews very early (Ex. 15:20), and that the Hebrew word used for dancing comes from the same root word for “holy days.” As for the piety of the Fathers, he responded, “The Fathers we own, did sometime speak angrily against it, and so they did against usury, and other things; wherein, tho’ we have a great respect for their piety and judgment, they are yet generally thought to have been in an error, but by none ever though infallible. For the weakning Piety, it must be by occasioning ill thoughts, or wasting time, neither of which are necessary effects of it, any more that of courtship to one you intend to make your

⁶²Ibid., No. 27. 340.

⁶³*Athenian Oracle*, 1: 67-68.

wife.” Wesley even added, that “Dissenters even ministers themselves, have their children learnt to dance.”⁶⁴

Passions and Biblical Piety

Passions, such as desires for intimacy, were for Wesley part of being human and even useful, but needed to be governed so as not to be excessive. These passions included habits like smoking his pipe, much to the chagrin of his later more socially conservative biographers.⁶⁵ The Bible was God’s rule book on behavior, the guide to living, stemming from God’s revealed will to humanity.

There were theological limits to Samuel’s literalism. One was dictated by his premillennial perspective. He believed the miraculous had ceased just after the Apostles’ deaths. “There was indeed a famous miraculous gift among the first Christians, then necessary for the glory of God and the propagation of the gospel, which was called the discerning of spirits . . . And this same spirit of discerning seems to have lasted for some time after that age; for I think the blessed Ignatius had it and that he presses Polycarp to the exercising and quickening it, and to pray for the increase of it. But still what is this to us, now these miraculous gifts are long since ceased?” The miraculous gifts were replaced by the word of God. “The word of God still reaches and searches the heart, or else to what purpose are Christ’s ministers, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear to preach it unto you?”⁶⁶

⁶⁴*Athenian Oracle*, 1: 67-68.

⁶⁵Clark, Tyerman, and Stevenson were all disturbed by Samuel’s smoking. On some of his manuscript sermons, this writer saw evidence of burn marks, perhaps from a hot ash which had fallen from Samuel’s pipe.

⁶⁶Ms sermon no. 17. 2nd Sermon on Heb. 4:12; Epworth, June 2, 1728. 250.

The Word of God, then, for Wesley was principally and primarily to be understood as “Christ the word, the second person in the Trinity, the word eternal of God and son of God. And secondarily and instrumentally the word or will of God declared and given out by this son, by whom he has always transacted with his creatures, whether written or preached by his messengers or ministers, in all ages.”⁶⁷

Scripture Defended From Perceived Outside Threats: Catholics and Quakers

Wesley defended the Bible from other elements which he considered misusing or abusing the Bible. One questioner writing to the *Athenian Oracle* asked if one should use the Bible as a tool to decide if a person is a thief, to which Wesley answers in the negative.⁶⁸ Most of his defense was directed toward other religious groups with whom he disagreed on their interpretation of scripture.

Two contemporary groups that reflected a misuse of scripture were seen in Wesley’s opposition to Roman Catholics and Quakers. Of the former he criticized the Papists who have “set up their traditions and deceptions, and even their fabulous and legendary tales against it; for so they must.”⁶⁹ They must because they “broadly contradict . . . the law of God, his eternal law, the Ten commandments: “Thou shalt not

⁶⁷Ibid., 251-2.

⁶⁸*Athenian Oracle*, 2: 311-312. The method involved using a key on string held over the Bible to determine guilt or innocence. He wrote, “. . . leaving everybody’s belief as free as our own, in this matter, we cannot but disapprove the practice, whatever be the event; because we are not now to expect any thing of that nature; there being no reason assignable of such a strange effect, from repetition of the words, either from the nature of the thing, or Divine Institution and we may therefore justly suspect it as diabolical, which it may be, notwithstanding the goodness of the Words, as we have formerly shown in parallel instances.

⁶⁹Ms sermon no. 12 11d on Psalm 119:165 “Great Peace . . . ”195-204; Epworth, Jun 18, 1727, 202.

make unto myself any graven image that is, to their end that follows – “Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them. And yet the Romanists do most notoriously both make them, and bow down to them and worship them.”⁷⁰

Wesley believed Catholic doctrines and beliefs were contrary to the scriptures:

Now this, as well as many other of their opinions and practices being directly against the word of God, no wonder that they are against it like wise, and lock it up from their Laity, forbidding them to read it in their own language, lest they shou’d therein plainly see how contrary it is to their doctrines. For which reasons they have burnt the Bible itself, as did the old heathen persecutors, as well as burnt much better Christians than themselves for reading it. A sorry way of showing that they either love God, or love <less the word, or love> their Christian brethren.⁷¹

His disagreement with the Catholic Church was directed toward its hierarchy rather than blindly condemning all within the church. He had a high regard for some within the church who held to a piety he admired. He affirmed:

It must be owned there have been some devout persons among them, who by this very method of forming lesser religious societies in towns and villages, as well as the greater cities, have done great things towards the reformation of manners, and promoting piety and virtue. The noble and pious Monsieur de Renty, in France was of this number: He employed much of his time in this happy exercise, particularly at Caen, where he settled many societies of devout persons, to meet weekly, and consult about the relief of the poor, and preventing offences against God, which succeeded to admiration: He did the same among tradesmen, both at Paris and Tolose, whom he brought constantly to go to prayers, sing Psalms, read books of devotion and discourse of their spiritual concerns one with another; and used all his interest with gentlemen of his acquaintance to erect petty societies of the same nature, even in lesser villages where they had any influence over the inhabitants. And why should we not transplant any excellent ends which they propose in their stated meetings.⁷²

⁷⁰Ms sermon no. 12 2nd on Psalm 119:165 “Great Peace . . . ” 195-204; Epworth, Jun 18, 1727, 202.

⁷¹Ms sermon no. 12 2nd on Psalm 119:165 “Great Peace . . . ”195-204; Epworth, Jun 18, 1727, 202-3.

⁷²*Pious Communicant*, 109-110. This quote is from Wesley’s *A Letter Concerning the Religious Societies*. It is included in an appendix which followed the conclusion of the *Pious Communicant*.

Another group he mentioned was the Quakers. He criticized their disregard for scripture because they relied solely on the Spirit in living their lives. “We may also learn from “those people who are yet amongst us who obstinately deny the Bible to be the word of God, who never use it in their meetings, or take their text from it when they begin their sermons, as they know is the use in all Christian congregations; and deny it to be an adequate (which is perfect) rule of Faith and life.”⁷³

He concluded his critique of both Catholics and Quakers: “They set up a private Spirit, their own spirit which they blasphemously pretend to be the Spirit of God, against his Word, against his apostles, against his Church: against his ministers and make Ten-thousand little Infallibilities, oftentimes contradicting each other, instead of that one Great One which the Romanist claim for their Pope and wherein they do so fondly glory.”⁷⁴

For Samuel, the word of God made manifest God’s will for all people. God’s people then, in kind, must make God’s word manifest in their daily living. There must be evidence of demonstrated piety in all believers. This perspective is evident in much of Samuel’s reading and most of his writings as we will see below.

⁷³Ms sermon no. 12 11d on CXIX Ps 165 v “Great Peace . . . ”195-204 Epworth, Jun 18, 1727, 203-4.

⁷⁴Ms sermon no. 12 11d on CXIX Ps 165 v “Great Peace . . . ”195-204 Epworth, Jun 18, 1727, 204.

Athenian Mercury

Wesley's contribution to the *Athenian Mercury*⁷⁵ represented his earliest success in writing, albeit anonymous. It was a shared success with his brothers-in-law John Dunton⁷⁶ and Richard Sault who were publisher and co-contributor respectively and Wesley as clerk.⁷⁷

The *Athenian Gazette* represented the earliest venture in providing a popular informational periodical whose intent was to educate a broad public inexpensively. "It took all knowledge for its province, and within certain self-imposed moral limitations

⁷⁵There are some excellent recent studies on John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury*, also known as *Athenian Gazette* and *Athenian Oracle*. Gilbert D. McEwen, *The Oracle of the Coffee House: John Dunton's Athenian Mercury* (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1972). C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003). Urmi Bhowmik, "Facts and Norms in the Marketplace of Print: John Dunton's Athenian Mercury." *Eighteenth Century Studies*. 36:3. 354ff.

⁷⁶The *Athenian Gazette* was Dunton's brainchild; of its 'birth' he wrote, "I was one day walking over St. George's fields, and Mr. Larkin and Mr. Harris were along with me, and on a sudden I made a stop, and said, 'Well, Sirs, I have a thought I will not exchange for 50 guineas' . . . the first rude hint of it was no more than a confused idea, of concealing the Querist, and answering his Question. However, so soon as I came home, I managed it to some better purpose, brought it into form, and hammered out a Title for it." cf. Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England*, 18.

⁷⁷"An 'Article of Agreement' for writing the *Athenian Mercury* was signed by 'Samuel Wesley, Clerk, Richard Sault, Gentleman, and John Dunton, Stationer, of London', and stipulated that Sault and Wesley were to be paid ten shillings for their contributions to each issue of the periodical, with a forfeit of one shilling for late submission to the publisher . . . [they] also received five shillings apiece for compiling indexes and a preface to each volume of thirty issues." Berry, 19.

undertook to find the answer to any question that could be asked. In striving to fulfill this aim, the *Athenian Mercury* became an instrument of popular education and a worthy forerunner of the ‘improving’ works characteristic of the next century.”⁷⁸ It was one of the most successful ideas in English journalism up to that point in time.⁷⁹ During this period the populace was hungry for information on any number of subjects, including manners (morals), courtship, history, but especially in the areas of religion and science.⁸⁰ “For the disoriented population of a rapidly growing city, the Athenians knew the newest answers in medicine, law, religion, and etiquette.”⁸¹ Dunton’s stated purpose was:

to endeavour the Answering any reasonable Question which should be proposed, was a thing of such a Nature, as all the Ingenious appeared highly pleased with; nor has the Esteem and Success it has hitherto met with in the World, given us any reason to repent of our first undertaking. There’s nothing the nature of Man is more desirous of, than Knowledge; he pursues it to a fault, and will fly even to Hell itself to advance it . . . And the first and most natural way to obtain this knowledge, is by Questions and Answers, into which all Disputations, all Experiments, and every part of Philosophy are easily resolved.⁸²

Dunton was not qualified to provide expertise in answering the questions submitted to him. His qualifications lay in the printing and promotion of the *Gazette*. So he solicited the employ of his brothers-in-law Richard Sault and Samuel Wesley. The former was a mathematician by training who ran a small school in London. In 1694 he

⁷⁸Gilbert D. McEwen, *The Oracle of the Coffee House: John Dunton’s Athenian Mercury* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1972) 17.

⁷⁹C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 103.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 104.

⁸²Urmi Bhowmik, “Facts and Norms in the Marketplace of Print: John Dunton’s *Athenian Mercury*.” *Eighteenth Century Studies*. v. 36:3. 354.

would write “A Treatise of Algebra” and he ultimately taught mathematics at Cambridge University until his death in 1702.⁸³

Wesley had recently been graduated from Exeter College at Oxford University and ordained a priest in the Anglican Church. He brought expertise in the areas of religion, oriental languages, poetry, and history.⁸⁴ While Sault and Wesley were paid for their knowledge, others contributed, including Daniel Defoe and Dr. John Norris who refused payment for their services.⁸⁵ Dunton reserved for himself the job of arranging the questions while Wesley and Sault had the responsibilities for a preface and for compiling an index for thirty numbers which eventually would be published separately as one volume.⁸⁶ For these efforts they were paid ten shillings each for each edition and an additional ten for the preface and index.⁸⁷

Its authorship, initially presented as anonymous, was soon revealed as the work of Dunton, Sault and Wesley.⁸⁸ Dunton, of course, took credit throughout his life for the success of the *Athenian Gazette*. It was to remain his most successful endeavor. In response to this success, a history was written to explain its origins and purpose.⁸⁹

⁸³Bhowmik, 350.

⁸⁴Ibid. Reference to oriental languages included ancient Hebrew and Aramaic.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Bhowmik, 350.

⁸⁸*The History of the Athenian Society* would be included in volume four of the 1728 edition of the *Athenian Oracle*.

⁸⁹Bhowmik, 350. Charles Gildon, modeled his history of the Athenian Society after The Royal Society of London, incorporated in 1662. *History of the Royal Society* (1667) by Thomas Sprat. Gildon wrote his unauthorized history which would ultimately be included in the 1728 edition of the *Athenian Oracle*.

The *Gazette* offered a popular format to answer anonymously submitted questions. Confidentiality was guaranteed to protect the inquirer. The invitation for all to submit questions was inclusive of women who were given a rare opportunity for their voices to gain a hearing. “We have received this week a very ingenuous letter from a Lady in the Country, who desires to know whether her Sex might not send in Questions as well as men, to which we answer, Yes, they may, our design being to answer all manners of Questions sent to us by either Sex, that may be either useful to the public or to particular Persons.”⁹⁰ Granted, some questions were undoubtedly written by their husbands, but to have a forum which took women’s enquiries seriously was novel.

Of the various reasons for presenting this format, profit being one of them, was a desire on the part of Dunton to have a vehicle contributing to moral reform. Wesley and Sault sought to use it as a means which worked toward changing public morals through their writings. This motive was consistent with other societies which were being created, and the *Mercury* anticipated the subsequent creation of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG).

There was in the background of many of the questions a desire for moral change within society and Dunton believed women could play a part. “Women proved useful to Dunton and his successors when it came to justifying their reforming purpose. They often appealed to their ‘female readers’ as an excuse for raising the moral tone of popular literature.”⁹¹ Women were also active in the dissemination of the *Gazette*. Copies could

⁹⁰Sommerville, 105.

⁹¹Sommerville, 105.

be bought at Dunton's shop at the Black Raven or sold individually on the street by Dunton's 'Mercury Women'. "The publisher recalled the network of distributors by name in his autobiography: 'Mrs. Baldwin, Mrs. Nutt, Mrs. Curtis, Mrs. Mallett, Mrs. Croom, Mrs. Grover, Mrs. Barnes, Mrs. Winter, Mrs. Taylor', and dedicated one volume of the *Athenian Gazette* to them."⁹² This moral tone reflected an aspect of piety which was perceived by Dunton, Sault, and Wesley as having been lost and their desire to have it regained within both individuals and society.⁹³ Piety was related to the activities of the reformation of manners.⁹⁴ One reader asked if "infants imbibed their manners with their nurses' milk." Laying aside the reader's sense of biological determinism, it was the issue of manners (morals) which mattered to Wesley. The *Athenian Mercury* provided a forum by which aspects and dimensions of manners could be conveyed to the questioner specifically and the greater general public. The questions "provided a certain kind of specificity that anchored the universality of the moral principles under discussion."⁹⁵

⁹²Berry, 21.

⁹³John Dunton would later write his *The New Practice of Piety: Writ in Imitation of Dr. Browne's Religio Medici: or, the Christian Virtuoso: Discovering the Right Way to Heaven, Between all Extrems*. (London, 1704). It reflected his thoughts on piety which advocated a *via media* and was dedicated to John Locke.

⁹⁴*Athenian Oracle*. v. 3, 31.

⁹⁵Browmik. 357.

Wesley's Contribution to the Athenian Gazette

Wesley's specific contribution was his responses to the questions in the areas of history and religion.⁹⁶ Many of the answers reflected Wesley's style, order, and vocabulary. Based on Adam Clark's assumption, the answers reflect his dispensing of practical information to the readership who sought information or a judgment on a particular issue within each Athenian's expertise.

Of particular interest is the extent the *Athenian Gazette* reflected the perspectives of the writers Dunton, Sault, and Wesley and those who wrote in their questions. Helen Berry⁹⁷ at Newcastle University points out that Dunton's periodical has been "variously characterised as a scientific journal, an organ of moral reform, and a literary ancestor of both the eighteenth-century novel and the modern 'agony' column."⁹⁸ She adds that "Anthony Claydon has highlighted 'Whiggish (though low-key) politics' as reflecting attitudes sympathetic of King William."⁹⁹ Berry also notes that "Mark Goldie has drawn attention to the periodical's moderate religious views and John Dunton's

⁹⁶Clarke, *Memoirs*, "I cannot exactly tell what part Mr. Wesley had in this work (*Athenian Mercury*); but after carefully examining five of the original volumes, with their Supplements, I have been led to conclude that all the questions in divinity and ancient ecclesiastical history, most of those in poetry, with many of those in natural philosophy, were answered by him." 111. It is an assessment with which I concur.

⁹⁷Helen Berry's doctoral thesis, completed in 1998, was on the late seventeenth century coffee house periodical, the *Athenian Mercury*, (1691-97), the first question and answer periodical in history to solicit readers' letters. See also her "An Early Coffee House Periodical and its Readers: The *Athenian Mercury*, 1691-1697", *The London Journal*. 25:1 (2000): 14-33.

⁹⁸Berry, 26.

⁹⁹Berry, 27.

nonconformist connections.”¹⁰⁰ It has seldom been argued that Wesley ever expressed moderate religious views though he never saw himself as an extremist. Yet a case can be made for such moderation and moral interest upon an examination of some of the questions Wesley answered.

The question and answer format provides a glimpse into the thoughts and concerns of the late seventeenth-century inquirer and the questions reveal a strong desire to gain practical information on self improvement.¹⁰¹ Even if edited by Dunton, the questions Dunton chose reflected what he viewed as important. The responses were agreed upon after having met every Friday for consultation and received the new questions for the next edition.¹⁰² More importantly for this concern are the answers which reveal Wesley’s religious perspectives, identifying what he considered to be orthodox. They reflect his theology in general but specifically his sense of piety. While there was diminished evidence of piety in his time, he saw it as a universal practice throughout all time. “Indeed piety is still of the same nature, and as necessary as then, but the ways and forms of it are not essentially binding.”¹⁰³ The manifestations or ways in which piety were demonstrated might change. The essence of piety remained the same.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰Berry, 27.

¹⁰¹Helen Berry has written a commendable book on the *Athenian Mercury*. She includes a helpful index which breaks down into categories the nature and frequency of the questions asked.

¹⁰²Bhowmik, 350.

¹⁰³*Athenian Oracle*, 2: 410.

¹⁰⁴There are sixteen references to “piety” and eleven to “pious” in volume one of the *Athenian Oracle*. Volume two has twenty-six and twenty-nine to piety and pious respectively. Volume three has twenty-six references to piety and twenty-three to pious

Piety was a virtue to be admired, sought after, and worked toward. He conceived it as an either/or way of life: “The wicked shall have a tormenting, the pious a delightful remembrance of the principle passages of their lives.”¹⁰⁵ Piety was accomplished ‘by degrees’. “Habits are contracted by degrees, therefore to be broken by degrees . . . the best means [is] by prayer, and acts of piety.”¹⁰⁶ Habits were “either vice or vertue [and] caus’d by a repetition of acting vitiously [*sic*] or virtuously.”¹⁰⁷ He advised one questioner who desired to break a “restless habit” that in fact it could be broken, to flee its temptation, and “to fortify yourself by reason, prayer, and resolution not to comply.”¹⁰⁸ He further recommended a reading from Augustine’s *Confessions*.¹⁰⁹

One man who suffered a lost love sought direction and was encouraged to “imitate her piety and virtue.”¹¹⁰ In another case, this time a woman who desired “to get as good an husband as possible” was advised to “choose first one that has piety or at least moral honesty.”¹¹¹

for a total of sixty-eight and sixty-three references to each. In general, Wesley used piety to describe the moral attributes or characteristics of a person. Principally, most piety has a moral dimension. The questions and answers related to correct behavior in public and in private. Volume four has nine and four, but were primarily written by others and do not reflect Wesley’s perspective.

¹⁰⁵*Athenian Oracle*, 2, 79.

¹⁰⁶*Athenian Oracle*, 1, 106.

¹⁰⁷*Athenian Oracle*, 1, 385.

¹⁰⁸*Athenian Oracle*, 1, 386-7.

¹⁰⁹*Athenian Oracle*, 1, 386-7.

¹¹⁰*Athenian Oracle*, 1, 82.

¹¹¹*Athenian Oracle*, 2, 413.

The phrase, “piety and virtue” occurs three times, one time in each of the first three volumes: 1, 243; 2, 172, 291; and 3, 330. It was one of a number of occasions that illustrated that Wesley saw piety not in isolation by itself, but in conjunction with other moral characteristics. There was “heroic piety” (1, 122), “sincerity and piety” (1, 151), “justice, truth, and piety” (1, 342), “piety and care” (1, 377), “piety and judgment” (2, 68), “piety or (and) morality” (2, 71), “piety or merit” (2, 86), “the true spirit of piety and devotion” (2, 90), “piety and Godliness” (2, 110), “instructed in piety” (2, 149), “piety or (and) learning” (2, 151; 3, 384), “acts of piety” (2, 154), “true piety and religion” (2, 262-3), (3, 387), “piety of their conversations” (2, 357), “piety and goodness” (2, 448), “honesty and piety” (2, 462), “piety and innocence” (2, 497), “piety and happiness” (2, 524), “peace and piety” (3, 31), “the reputation of piety” (3, 61), “famous for piety” (3, 167), a “scheme of piety” (3, 275), “piety and religion” (3, 387), “proficient in piety” (3, 411), “strictest piety” (3, 529), “serious piety” (3, 546), “true piety” (3, 546), “piety and devotion” (3, 562).

Wesley used “pious” mostly as a complementary adjective to describe virtuous people. There was the “pious and learned Mr. Joseph Mede” (1, 100), “a gentle woman . . . being being pious” (1, 298), one, who was “virtuous and pious” (, 228), a “pious widow” (v. 1, 305), “a very pious and learned divine” (1, 506; 3, 59), “the learned and pious Dr. Hall” (1, 530), “a pious christian” (2, 30), “a young, beautiful, pious, discreet wife” (2,41), “pious men” (2, 56), “pious persons” (2, 67), “the pious” (2, 79), “pious zealots” (2, 139), “the body of Christians, wise, and pious, and learned” (2, 287), “all pious and devout christians” (2, 410), “Pious and well-disposed people” (2, 524), “the most learned and pious” (2, 525), of a woman who was “pious wise, prudent, pleasant, and very witty” (3, 180), “virtuous and pious persons.” (3, 270), “a pious and

ingenious person” (3, 385), “pious and ingenious author” (3, 488), “a pious and ingenious education” (3, 489), “our pious Queen” (3, 515), of Cominus: “He is a man really pious and one that truly fears God.” (3, 535).

The above examples begin to illustrate that piety and pious living were on the forefront of Wesley’s mind and also an interest of those writing to the *Athenian Gazette*. Wesley believed piety and pious living were to be a daily part of one’s life integrated into every aspect of one’s being. For Wesley, piety meant everything for it was the way for him to seek and glorify God. He as a priest in the Established Church believed that it was the way for others as well. The greater populace also shared in a desire to know more of piety and pious living by virtue of their questions addressed to the *Athenian Gazette*. If Wesley’s contributions to the *Athenian Gazette* showed his desire for piety in the greater society, then his *Pious Communicant* was written for the faithful of the Established Church. This interest in his local parish was demonstrated by his dedication of the *Pious Communicant* to his church in Epworth.

Piety in and through Worship: Pious Communicant Rightly Prepared. In the dedication of his *Pious Communicant*¹¹² Wesley stressed true piety through regular communion and significantly, he wrote it with his Epworth parish in mind.¹¹³ It is interesting that of the

¹¹²Samuel Wesley, *The Pious Communicant Rightly Prepar’d, or a discourse concerning the Blessed Sacrament wherein the nature of it is described, our obligation to frequent communion enforced, and directions given for due preparation for it, behaviour at, and after it, and profiting by it: with prayers and hymn, suited to the several parts of that holy office: to which is added, a short discourse of baptism* (London: Charles Harper, 1700).

¹¹³The comment is regularly made that Wesley preferred to be an absentee rector who would rather be in London than Epworth.

many writings of the late seventeenth century numerous writers addressed the “worthy communicant” but only Wesley chose to use the term, “pious communicant.”

The clearest example of his setting forth of personal piety was in his *Pious Communicant*. Of all Wesley’s writings, Adam Clarke was least impressed with the *Pious Communicant*. He dismissed it with, “I find very little to praise besides the pious intention. The arguments in this work are neither happily chosen, nor conclusive; and the objections not well answered. It is the most imperfect of all the literary works of the rector of Epworth which I have seen.”¹¹⁴ Clarke’s one concession was recognizing “the pious intention” which was Wesley’s precise purpose in writing. Wesley was not trying to write a great “literary work,” rather to produce a work which sought to edify. I believe it represented a piety which did not interest Clarke. Unfortunately, Clarke overlooked the fact that this work reflected the core of Samuel’s understanding of piety, not Clarke’s.

Another means Samuel used (besides the *Athenian Oracle*), of addressing and correcting this personal and societal flaw, was through participation in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Wesley’s *Pious Communicant* showed the broad sweep of his theology, though his purpose was to show the efficacious function of Holy Communion for the participant in the Holy Sacrament. The piece reflected his practical theology which he envisioned as both local and universal. His hope was that this “little book” would help “to promote: the Glory of God, or the piety and happiness of mankind, especially of that dear flock, over which it has pleased God to give me charge, I shall not much regret my composing, and adventuring it abroad into the world.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴Adam Clarke, *Memoirs*, 136.

¹¹⁵Samuel Wesley, *The Pious Communicant*, preface, no page.

Piety for Samuel, while it was personal, it was not exclusively private. Its origins were within the community of the Church and stemmed from the administration and receiving of the Holy Sacrament whose source was Jesus Christ.

Like many others during this period of time in England,¹¹⁶ Wesley shared a concern for the lack of piety and manners. Morals in his opinion were at a low ebb. One example where this was evident in Samuel's mind was the theater. In his sermon to the Society for the Reformation of Manners, he said, "There scarce seems any need to explain myself, that hereby I mean our *infamous theaters*, which seek to have done more mischief, than Hobes [*sic*] himself or our new atheistical clubs, to the faith and morals of the nation."¹¹⁷

His expressed purpose as stated in his introduction was "to give a rational and distinct view of [communion] in all the notions wherein learned and pious men have represented it: to press home the indispensable, tho' much neglected Duty of frequent Communion, which I am persuaded would highly conduce to a general Reformation of Manners, and to repair the Decays of Christian Piety amongst us. To lay down some plain rules for our Preparation, and Heads of Examination, in order to our worthy receiving."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶"When so many excellent treatises have already appear'd on this subject, it may be wonder'd why, after all, so mean a pen should attempt so weighty and argument;" He cited Josiah Woodward's (1660-1712) *History of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners*, (1698) the Lord Bishop of Bath, Richard Kidder's (1633-1703) *Life of Anthony Horneck*, and the right Reverend and pious Bishop of Ely, Simon Patrick's (1626-1707) *Aqua Genitalis* and *Mensa Mystica*.

¹¹⁷Sermon to the Society for the Reformation of Manners, 1698. 20.

¹¹⁸Wesley, Samuel. *The Pious Communicant Rightly Prepar'd*. 1700. Preface, no page.

Samuel thoroughly described the real merits of Holy Communion, both theological and ethical. The holy sacrament not only had salvific efficacy, but also practical ethical benefits. He was orderly in his presentation, discussing first the nature of the sacrament, second, the occasion and ends of its institution, and third the directions for our behavior in relation to the reception of it.¹¹⁹ Piety, however was not his ultimate end. The discipline of Piety served to benefit individual and society, but it was foremost the means to “promote the glory of God.”¹²⁰ Samuel’s conception of Communion represented what appears to be a sacramental piety which integrated elements of both the Established Church and the continental Piety introduced to England by Anthony Horneck. Through communion, piety was gained, maintained, and also reclaimed when lost.

Wesley’s *Pious Communicant* is divided into five chapters in which he discussed the nature of the sacrament, the obligation for frequent communion, self examination and preparation before communion, behavior as communion is to be received, and one’s response following communion. These were organized around the order of service for Holy Communion as prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer*. Specifically, he used the words of institution and expanded on their meaning for the reader.

In chapter one, Wesley described the nature of the sacrament as a commemorative memorial and representation of the sacrifice of the death of Christ. “We believe it an offering, or dedication of the bread and wine to the sacred use, as well as we therein offer

¹¹⁹Ibid. Preface, no page.

¹²⁰Ibid. Preface, no page.

ourselves anew to God.”¹²¹ The memorial was a mnemonic “of God’s Goodness and when God delivered Israel from their suffering in Egypt which typifies or shadow[s] forth Christ himself, our great Passover.”¹²² It was analogous to Passover because Jesus used the bread as representative of himself, the cup, and retained the hymn or great Hallel.¹²³ Wesley believed the Hallel to consist of six Psalms from the one hundred and thirteenth to the one hundred and eighteenth, inclusive, citing the rabbis as his authority. These Psalms taught according to Wesley, the Hebrew’s deliverance from Egypt, the division of the Red Sea, the giving of the Law, the resurrection from the dead and the sorrows of the Messiah.¹²⁴ He believed this notion of commemoration extended to the Christian through the life-giving atonement of Christ. “We commemorate God’s love in general to mankind, he wrote, “in giving his son, and our Saviour’s love, in giving himself a ransom for all men, to bring them into a capacity of salvations on their faith and obedience; but farther, the actual application of his meritorious sacrifice to ourselves.”¹²⁵

Communion was also a representation of what God has done through Christ’s death on the cross. The sacrifice of the death of Christ in the holy communion was to be declared universally to the whole world. “Declare it, proclaim it, tell the people what great things he has done . . . Preach the Gospel to every Creature.”¹²⁶ Communion

¹²¹Ibid. Preface, no page.

¹²²Ibid., 6.

¹²³Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 12.

¹²⁴Ibid., 13.

¹²⁵Ibid., 6-7.

¹²⁶Ibid., 8.

represented to the partaker the “lively action” of the demonstrated sufferings of Christ on the cross. He was the “True Bread of life that came down from Heaven: The Wine, his Blood: the Breaking of the Bread, the Torments he endur’d on the Cross, and the Wounding of his sacred Body; as the pouring out of the Wine is a most lively figure of the shedding of his most precious blood.”¹²⁷

The partaker also represented the Savior’s death to God, the Father in the Holy Communion by supplicating him and obtaining his favor. This was expressed in the Anglican ritual: “Heavenly Father, who of his tender mercy did give his only Son Jesus Christ to suffer Death upon the Cross for our Redemption, that we duly receiving the Holy Mysteries, according to our Lord Jesus Christ’s Holy Institution, in remembrance of his Death and Passion, maybe Partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood.”¹²⁸

Communion, Wesley thought, was instituted by Christ in the room of the Jewish Passover, which “gives great light into the nature of it.” Jews believed that the Messiah would come to redeem them the very same night in which God brought them out of Egypt, the night of the Passover.¹²⁹

The manner of celebrating the Passover had the similar qualities to the Sacrament: he “took bread, and brake it, and gave it to those about him, and said, ‘This is the Bread of affliction which our Father did eat in Egypt’. That is, the Memorial of the Bread, [was] in the same sense [as when] our Saviour said, ‘This is my Body; after he had taken

¹²⁷Ibid., 9.

¹²⁸Ibid., 9.

¹²⁹Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 11.

Bread, and blessed and brake it, and gave to his Disciples, as the Body of the Paschal Lamb.’ He took also the cup, the cup of blessing, after the supper and all drank of it.”¹³⁰

Wesley saw communion as analogous to Passover in the words, “This day shall be to you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a Feast to the Lord throughout all your Generations.” This analogy was also echoed by John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul. The Baptist “calls our Saviour, The Lamb of God,” St. Peter said, “That we were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb with out Blemish; and St. Paul, alludes as well, that “Christ is our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the Feast”¹³¹ Wesley concluded this section with the observation that such similarities between Passover and communion showed that “our Saviour retained many of the ceremonies” and showed that Holy communion was “a memorial and representation of our Saviour’s death of his body which was broken, and his Blood which was shed for us.”¹³²

Wesley next discussed his view of what was the nature of the bread and wine. He refuted the doctrine of transubstantiation as a superstition which cannot be proven by scripture. The elements of bread and wine “are not changed into the substance of the natural body of Christ.”¹³³ The symbols of the bread and wine are “in a figurative, typical, and sacramental sense, the body and blood of our Saviour . . . They represent and

¹³⁰Ibid., 11.

¹³¹Ibid., 16.

¹³²Ibid., 17.

¹³³Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 21.

exhibit Christ's death unto us.¹³⁴ Even more than this they are a "real spiritual presence of the Body and Blood of our Saviour, to every faithful Receiver."¹³⁵ The elements are but a token, as Christ is only partially present.

Wesley recognized that by denying the Catholic position on the real presence of Christ in the communion elements, there was then no mystery that remained in the communicant's participation. So he then asked where is the mystery in the sacrament? Wesley's answer was the mystery was in "how it becomes to us the body and blood of Christ: How the inestimable benefits of Christ's death are communicated to us by the reception of the humble signs; how we are thereby united to him and he to us."¹³⁶ The mystery that remained for Wesley was in the reception of the spiritual benefits by the communicant and not the elements themselves. The eating of the bread and drinking of the wine sacramentally "renews our Covenant with God." It represented the new covenant of Grace or second covenant. It contained "the most perfect revelation of the Divine Will, the Promises of God, and those conditions on which he accepts and forgives us."¹³⁷

On the early church's practice of Holy Communion, Wesley said it was a feast, "used among the Ancients at the Confirmation of Covenants, in token of Amity and Friendship between the guests; a solemn oath, similar to one taken by soldiers took to their general, to bear Faith and true Allegiance to him, to obey his commands . . . In the

¹³⁴Ibid., 22.

¹³⁵Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 23.

¹³⁶Ibid., 27.

¹³⁷Ibid., 29.

Lord's Supper we swear Fealty and Homage to the great King of Earth and Heaven; and a federal Rite or token, Pledge or instituted Sign of our being actually in covenant with God."¹³⁸

He concluded the first chapter of *The Pious Communicant* with his understanding of the benefits of holy communion. The first was the dimension of covenant renewal. This aspect was vital to Wesley since he saw communion as the means by which sins were forgiven after baptism and as an adult within the covenant community. It provided for pietistic continuity and served the symbolic means for maintaining unity within the community. "This was doubtless the one great end of its Institution that thereby all the followers of our Saviour might be united together in the most sacred and indissoluble bands."¹³⁹

Wesley added a thought on the relationship between communion and baptism. He saw them as "the twin seals of God's covenant with us." Wesley considered circumcision as a sign of the Evangelical Covenant¹⁴⁰ made with Abraham. Baptism was analogous to Old Testament circumcision as a mark of membership within the covenant community. Just as circumcision was the "sign of the Evangelical Covenant made with Abraham and all his faithful children . . . baptism was introduced by our Saviour as another seal of the same Covenant, and means our Initiation into it."¹⁴¹ Baptism was

¹³⁸Ibid., 30.

¹³⁹Ibid., 35.

¹⁴⁰Wesley's use of the term "evangelical" is scattered throughout his writings. He seemed to use evangelical in the sense of Old Testament figures living according to New Testament or Gospel precepts. They lived according to the faith expected in the Gospels. Further research is needed to examine the textual contexts Wesley used "evangelical."

¹⁴¹Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 36.

representative of God's justification or actual pardon of our sins, "the reinstating us in God's Favour, and assuring us that he is reconciled to us."¹⁴² Communion was the means by which sanctification is manifested in the believer. "Sanctification [is] actual Strength and Grace to conquer our Sins and to obey his commands."¹⁴³ "As we renew our Covenant with him, we receive new Strength to obey his commands . . . but also "the refreshing of our souls, as the Catechism expresses it . . . Divine consolation, and Joy in believing, and such peace as passes all understanding."¹⁴⁴

Communion for Wesley was a dynamic endeavor. He did not see the communicant as a passive participant who merely received elements, rather as one who co-participated with the ancient Passover celebrated by the Israelites. The bread and wine were literal reminders of the body and blood of Christ. The mystery was not in the change of the elements, but the pious change that occurred in the participant.

Chapter two of *Pious Communicant* introduced a long-standing issue of importance to Wesley: frequent communion. Wesley was a strong advocate of receiving frequent communion, in contrast to the practice of the majority of the Anglican Church of his day. The basis of his argument stemmed from those whom he considered authorities. First, it reflected the practice of the Savior. It was out of obligation to the Savior who established it by directing that "we 'Do this in remembrance of me.'"¹⁴⁵ To not to do so

¹⁴²Ibid., 37.

¹⁴³Ibid., 37.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 48.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 48.

meant to commit sin, “if we consider the great sin we are guilty of in neglecting it.”¹⁴⁶

Neglect meant one would “slight the Inviter and the invitation . . . separate from our Brethren, and are guilty of a partial Schism . . . disobedient to the just laws of our country, both civil and Ecclesiastical, and discourage our Pastors by the thinness of the Appearance on these occasions.”¹⁴⁷

These reasons aside, frequent communion was a means of maintaining piety. “We neglect the means [to] strengthen us in Virtue.”¹⁴⁸ He had historic grounds on which to base his belief. The obligation to partake was perpetual and universal. This is evident from Scripture (from Paul’s command and revealed mandate: “I received from the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, & c.”¹⁴⁹ Wesley conceded these words were not specific as to frequency, but “the very Words of Institution seem to require our presence frequently: ‘For as often as you eat of this Bread and drink of this cup, & c, [they] do at the least imply some frequency in the reception of the Holy Sacrament, both commanded by our Saviour and practised by his Apostles.’”¹⁵⁰

Frequent participation in communion was one of the main reasons for the piety of the primitive Christians of the early church in Wesley’s mind. He maintained some Primitive Christians “received twice a day, as the Mincha or Bread offering in the old Law was offered Morning and Evening. And if they met publickly twice a day, there’s

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 48.

¹⁴⁷Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 48.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 48.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 59.

¹⁵⁰Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 59.

no doubt but they received as often, because they had no religious Assemblies without the Communion.”¹⁵¹ It “’twas to this their frequent Communions, that we may in great measure attribute their exemplary Piety, and fervent Charity, and steadfastness in the faith, and ardor and zeal for Martyrdom.”¹⁵² The obligation extended from the example of the ancient Church, while some were “mistaken” that it was absolutely necessary to salvation, regularly, even daily received it.

In contrast to the early church, Wesley attributed the minimal participation in communion to the general decline of Christianity after the primitive church to his day. There followed the “great decay of Piety and degeneracy of Christianity, when the Love of many waxed cold,” and to the “great Apostacy” which “broke in upon the Western Patriarchate.”¹⁵³ Of contemporary significance was the “monstrous Doctrine of Transubstantiation . . . which the Romanist limited to the laity.”, though the priests does it everyday.”¹⁵⁴ If it were more frequent, Wesley maintained, the people would realize it was real bread and real wine and not the “natural flesh and blood of Christ.”¹⁵⁵

In an interesting acknowledgment, he expressed agreement with the “wisest and most learned among our dissenting Brethren that “the Covenant we all enter’d into at

¹⁵¹Ibid., 60.

¹⁵²Ibid., 61.

¹⁵³Ibid., 63.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 63.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 63.

Baptism must be renewed by us in the Lord's Supper."¹⁵⁶ Even "our Dissenting brethren have now, generally, monthly Communion."¹⁵⁷

Wesley believed the infrequency of taking communion was due to tender and guilty consciences among the people who believed they were receiving communion in an unworthy manner, and thus never receiving "in five, six or seven, nay, not in fourteen Years."¹⁵⁸ He expressed hope that the present Church practice would change with the pious example of King William. He called on the clergy to "administer the Holy Sacrament frequently" as was done in "in Cathedral and Collegiant Churches" where they received at least every Sunday. He added that there were "now monthly communions in many, and 'tis to be hoped, most of the considerable towns in England, and in London, in several Churches, every Lord's Day."¹⁵⁹

Wesley believed the advantages of frequent Communion would allow for renewal in the Church bonds, renewal of inner strength, and spiritual growth shown in one's zeal and piety. He expressed this in the following points. "1. The oftner the vows of God are renewed upon us, the stronger will the Cord be, and with more difficulty to be broken; 2. The more will our Souls be refresht by them; 3. The greater strength shall we receive in the inward Man, and higher Degrees of Grace and assistance in God's Service." And, 4. "as the great Zeal and Piety of the Primitive Christians already mention'd, was very much

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 63.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 66.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 64.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., 65.

owing to their daily Communion.”¹⁶⁰ He maintained those who were the “best of men” were those who “frequently communicate,” while “those who have no regard at all to this blessed Feast . . . are the most profligate wretches.”¹⁶¹

Wesley also addressed the reasons for not partaking. The excuses he gave involved sins of the past which resulted in unresolved guilt, discord with neighbors, a “multiplicity of business,” a “superstitious fear, and a mistaken reverence for this ordinance . . . grounded on misapplied texts of Scripture.”¹⁶² He also gave reasons which stemmed from failure to fulfill a duty, because “of some mistaken principles or the temptation of the Devil so that they directly question God’s mercy; or at least [to question] their own fitness for it. [the sacrament],”¹⁶³ and the “lack of preparation out of pious conscience.”¹⁶⁴

Frequent participation in communion was essential for the believer. Wesley believed vital piety was sustained and empowered by it. He attributed the moral courage of the early church to frequent communion and believed if believers in his day would return to a similar practice, they too could exemplify the similar attributes of the early church.

¹⁶⁰Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 66.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*

¹⁶²He cited I Cor. 11:29 and in Romans 14:21: “He that doubteth is damned if he eat.” Wesley explained that the passage related not to the Sacrament, but to sacrificed meats and to a doubting conscience stemming from “scruples and unreasonable unaccountable Fears.” 77.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁶⁴Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 83

Wesley's third chapter of *The Pious Communicant* gave guidance for a person's preparation before taking communion. The purpose of this preparation was renewal. The preparation should be habitual. Guidance could be gained through *The Whole Duty of Man*. First, one repents, "through change of heart and life . . . of the whole [person]: the principles, inclinations and desires, as well as outward actions"¹⁶⁵ Just as one is always prepared to die, so too, should one be prepared for sacrament.¹⁶⁶ Make repentance "habitual to reclaim the 'image of God lost by the fall.'"¹⁶⁷ One repents by using the Ten Commandments to evaluate one's life, which for Wesley was the basis for pious preparation of the communicant. Wesley provides a brief excursus on each commandment.

He first addressed atheism, polytheism, covetousness (which is idolatry), willful ignorance of God, presumption of God's mercy, worshiping angels or saints, witchcraft or homage to the Devil, unthankfulness, and "want of love to God, Faith in/to God, dependance, submission, resignation."¹⁶⁸ Second, he understood idolatry as an image of another representation of God. Sacrilege (robbing or profaning churches, detaining tithes dedicated to God), loathing manna, neglecting God's word and condemning abusing grieving God's ministers; ridiculing by adding to God's word; want of spiritual worship. Third, taking God's name in vain meant uttering a false or rash oath but also "making impossible vows, swearing by any creature, and having a lack of concern for God's

¹⁶⁵Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 103.

¹⁶⁶Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 95.

¹⁶⁷Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 104.

¹⁶⁸Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 106.

honour.”¹⁶⁹ The fourth was a moral and positive obligation which included no profaning by doing weekly workday labor, playing, or dancing on a Sunday. It also included taking a partial day of rest, making others work or servants or animals work, and the refusal to observe officially sanctioned holy days (fasts or feasts).

The second tablet laws related to duty to one’s neighbour. The fifth commandment was honor to father and mother inclusive of natural parents or civil: (magistrates, king, ecclesiastical: domestic masters or mistresses, those to “whom we are indebted for our birth and education.”¹⁷⁰ In the sixth, Samuel noted that there is a new and better translation, “murder rather than kill” as all killing is not murder such as just war. Murder included duels, the wounding or hurting of our neighbor, procuring abortion or Ananias sin, malice, or any or revenge against a neighbor. Violation included a rash implacable anger, murdering of any person, self murder, lack of meekness, forgiveness, charity, and compassion towards a neighbor.¹⁷¹

Breaking the seventh commandment of adultery meant fornication and all impurity, and those things which would incite these former sins inclusive of unchaste looks, dresses, books, plays, songs, poetry, pictures, conversation, idleness, pampering the body, and drunkenness.

The eighth commandment related to stealing and Wesley thought that it extended to extortion by unequal laying of taxes, cheating in trade, delaying the hire of a laborer, living extravagantly where one took on unnecessary debts without honest care; forgeries,

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 108.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 110.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 112.

refusing or delaying to make restitution without which there is no forgiveness.¹⁷² The ninth was a false witness by perjury, pleading against conscience; partial truth; slandering a neighbor; uncharitable censures; talebearing or whispers; flattery and lying; failure to defend neighbors's reputation. The tenth Wesley interpreted as desiring anything "that's my neighbor's without just compensation," discontentment at one's own condition; envy of a neighbor's possessions, and dwelling on past wicked delights. Wesley offered an additional five "holy resolutions" or motivators, but discussed them in chapter four.

Wesley could not see piety as separate from obedience to and living in accordance with the Ten Commandments. They were what God revealed as moral, that is, what pious behavior entailed. Piety, for Samuel, was in a very real sense was tied to the moral behavior of every individual. To be pious was to practice morality and the guide to moral behavior was the Ten Commandments. The orthodoxy of the commandments and the orthopraxy of the believer were inseparable. Piety was also made manifest through spiritual disciplines. One prepared oneself through self-examination using the Ten Commandments as the lens or guide to understanding them as an evaluative tool to assess where one was morally before God.

Chapter four of *Pious Communicant* discussed the behavior immediately before communion and when we receive it.¹⁷³ One must approach with care as a "steady intention of mind is highly necessary when we approach the Holy Table"¹⁷⁴ and to

¹⁷²Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 113.

¹⁷³Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 143-172.

¹⁷⁴Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 144.

remember “the Primitive simplicity, gravity, and piety through every part of it,”¹⁷⁵ using the directions taken from several parts of the Book of Common Prayer’s service for Holy Communion.

Besides the motivation which came from the law, Wesley understood there were five other graces which could come into play as one was approaching and receiving communion. One approached with the knowledge of faith, devotion, humility, thanksgiving, and charity.

He again reviewed tenets of repentance, saying “we must renew and exercise at the Table of the Lord; we renew the covenant; [We] acknowledge and bewail our sins and formally repent of them and beg mercy for Jesus’s sake and implore strength against them that God would grant us that we may ever hereafter serve and please him in newness of life.”¹⁷⁶ [so that] “God will give such Grace to those who worthily partake of this Sacrament, yet has he appointed prayer as the means to obtain it, and of our perseverance in well-doing, and daily encreasing [*sic*] in Goodness.”¹⁷⁷

Faith was the second grace “which we are to reduce into Act when the Minister declares in the Absolution, ‘That Almighty God has promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him’ . . . ‘that God would have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our Sins, confirm and strengthen us in all Goodness, and bring us to Everlasting Life.’ The faithful Receiver eats and drinks

¹⁷⁵Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 145.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 150.

Salvation.¹⁷⁸ Faith is exhibited in one's devotion which is "the intense abstraction, or withdrawing of the Mind from all worldly things, and mounts freely and vigorously towards heaven," inviting the primitive words, of the *sursum corda* or, 'Lift up your hearts! We lift them up to the Lord.'¹⁷⁹

Humility was a virtue included in repentance represented in the part where the priest kneeled at the Lord's Table and said, 'We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord! Trusting in our own righteousness, but only in thy manifold and great Mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the Crumbs under thy table.' This is a humble prostration of Soul, abasement and annihilation of our selves, disclaiming our own merits.'¹⁸⁰

Thanksgiving was the humiliation that leads one to "encrease our thankfulness . . . 'It is meet, right, and our bounden Duty, that we should al all time, and in all places give Thanks unto God.'"¹⁸¹ Thanksgiving was more than just an expression of a feeling for Wesley; it was one's duty and therefore not an option.

For Wesley, the last grace was charity, and this had two foci. "Love to God, the Soul of all Piety, which quickens and enlivens every Christian Duty. Remembering God's love to us, in sending his Son; our Saviour's Love, in giving himself to die for us."¹⁸² This is significant in Wesley's understanding of piety. For him, piety was not an

¹⁷⁸Ibid., 151.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., 153.

¹⁸⁰Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 156.

¹⁸¹Ibid., 158.

¹⁸²Ibid., 87.

end in itself, but the outcome of one's love for God and by extension, one's neighbor. He was not a moralist who encouraged one to be better by one's own strength or condemned another for their moral failings. Success and failure to do good or ill, reflected the status of one's relationship with God. In this, Wesley was thoroughly and consistently theocentric. Moral behavior was an act of the will made possible only within the context of the church.

Wesley believed charity [love] extended to the neighbor as well. "The love of Jesus . . . will mightily assist us in the exercise of . . . Love to our Neighbour, for this cannot but be easie to us when our Minds are raised to this happy Temper. The Love of Christ will subdue the Enmity of our Natures towards each other, that Pride which is the cause of almost all Quarrels, that bitterness of Spirit, and rancor, and malice, and revenge and anger."¹⁸³

The *Pious Communicant* was Wesley's moral mandate for people and reflected one aspect of his piety, gained as a result of frequent and worthy holy communion. He concluded:

I am confident, nothing could sooner heal the wide wounds of Christendom, as I believe the neglect of it has been the great original of them, as well as of all our own factions and divisions. All good men must love one another, if they often met at this Holy Table. They could not, they dared not there retain, or nourish any pique against each other. They would love much, both Christ and his members, because they so often considered that much was forgiven them. And tho' this may seem a digression, yet the Truth and Consequences thereof appear so plain, and so considerable, that I knew not how to omit it. Charity is here to be actually exercised towards all Christ's members, especially those with whom we communicate. We are to knit our hearts most closely and intimately to them, with the Bands of Holy Love. Poor and Rich, without exception, only loving those most that love God most. We are to pray for them all, and not only in the offertory, but on other occasions, to do them all the Good we can, by faithful counsel, by tender and prudent reproof, and by all lawful and possible means, promoting the welfare of their souls and bodies. And

¹⁸³Ibid., 162.

lastly, by devout prayer to God for them, as we are directed: ‘That all who are partakers of this Holy Communion, may be filled with his grace and heavenly benediction.’”¹⁸⁴

To summarize, in chapter four of *The Pious Communicant* Wesley presented the moral graces or attitudes with which one continued to prepare for communion. A person was duty bound to express the five graces of repentance, faith, humility, thanksgiving and charity. All of these were expressions of one’s piety.

Chapter five of *The Pious Communicant* concluded Wesley’s deliberations on the sacrament. He advised the communicant to conduct oneself with appropriate behavior after having received particularly between the times of celebrating communion. Proper behavior should be demonstrated during the whole course of one’s own life. Self examination should take place in the evening and morning following communion and between the sacraments.

First, “after receiving, withdraw from the world and pray, give thanks for God’s mercy and examine the “frame of our Minds at the past communion.”¹⁸⁵ Second, “reflect on those Holy Vows and Resolves which we have made at God’s Altar” be they against passion, impurity, intemperance, immoderate love to the world, neglect of Sacraments, or of family devotion.” Third, concerning the making of vows at sacrament, he cautioned the communicant:

And indeed, this is the main hinge of the whole matter; the grate means whereby we must gain advantage by the sacrament . . . to remember that all is not over as soon as we have received: no. . . . for the obligation is for ever. We engage our selves by this Oath . . . to be his faithful soldiers and Servants to our Lives end. The oath it self is [not] all but we “must also be put in Practice thro’ the whole course of our Lives, and ‘tis the reason of its Institution, that they may by degrees be

¹⁸⁴Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 89.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 178.

reduced into holy Habits. We must be inwardly better'd by the Sacrament, as well as by other Duties, or else, indeed, we are not better at all, for as one well observes, Religion is not a Road of Performances, but a New Nature, evidence by a New Life.¹⁸⁶

When communion was over, it continued to have residual effects on the communicant. This carryover was the communicant's own doing by offering thanks and reflecting on vows and commitments made during communion. Wesley maintained this was the case because what was spoken or vowed during communion must be demonstrated through changed behavior afterward. Change was not just inward, but also manifested in outward change in the individual, a basic tenet of pious living.

Wesley's discourse in the *Pious Communicant* clearly revealed his firm conviction that pious living was possible. It was made possible through the sacramental grace offered through holy communion. A person needed to know what was necessary to prepare before, during, and after the sacrament. Communion had historic roots and was the analog of the Jewish Passover passed on and given by Christ to the disciples and all future believers as a means to keep the body of Christ empowered to live out vital piety in the world.

Practical Piety in a Letter of Personal Correspondence

There are two significant pieces of correspondence which reveal aspects of Wesley's practical Piety. The first was his letter to a Mr. Smith which reflected a helpful, even pastoral interest in his success while pursuing his call at Cambridge University. In the letter he recommended the disciplines of piety and offered other

¹⁸⁶Wesley, *Pious Communicant*, 179.

practical advice. The second source is his personal letters to his eldest son, Samuel, Jr.

which began when he was sixteen.¹⁸⁷

Letter to Mr. Smith, student at Cambridge

Horncastle
July 6. 96

Mr. Smith.

I'm not a little pleased to hear so good an account of you from Cambridge, and that you hitherto so well answer the expectation of your friends, and your father's charge, who I may tell you, is much better pleased with you than perhaps you think him. I hope you give God the Glory, and will endeavor still to increase in learning and all virtue—especially humility, which, pray believe a friend, you can't but have need of when all speak so well of you—For, be as angry at it as you will, more than ordinary things are expected from you, having begun on so good a foundation. If you please to regard what a stranger advises you, I'd earnestly desire you to mind a few things. I shall now recommend time, which if you observ[e], I'm confident you'll never require it. I'll begin with Heaven. Make it your fast Friend and you can ne'er be unhappy. Be constant in Reading, meditation, private and chappel. Prayers. <Sacraments.> Avoid ill company, especially if you rise In your college, when the temptation to it will be stronger. Flee youthfull lusts, for surly_you have a divine Director. Read at least every Sunday one chapter in the Whole Duty of Man, over and over, as long as you stay in your College: till you make it as much as possible your own, the great advantage whereof you'll find hereafter by having an almost an entire body of practicall Divinity ready upon your mind.

2.] In your public exercises, be sure you always do your best, which will be equally advantagious and honourable.

3] Study most good sence, and clear handsome English. Tho you ought (modestly) to values, and consequently preserve and improve other languages, yet you are still to remember you are an Englishman, and are to preach and write in that full and noble language, not in the Greek or Roman, tho' of these two I'd rather strive to excell in the former, becaus[e] less common, and , I think more usefull.

Lastly—Disoblig[e] name's if you can oblige 'em without injuring your own Conscience and offending God. Be charitable to your power, if no other way yet in forgiving injurys, and praying for, and visiting the afflicted. I say nothing of Philosophy, wherein your tutor is so much a better Director—to him] Pray give my service.

I wish I could express my kindness to you more effectually than by a little good advice, that costs nothing. In earnest of what I would do, I send you according to my promise, the works of the author the *Whole Duty of man*, which comes by this <weeks> carier from London—the cariage I have ordered my Bookseller to pay, yet I mayn't <put You to any> inconvenience where I intend to oblige you. And at page100 of the book you'll find another small present, four new half-crowns, which

¹⁸⁷Discussion of Samuel's letters to Samuel, Jr. will be in chapter four.

I remember wou'd have been valuable/usable to me when a student– But let not your father know of this last, because it may be t'will hinder him from sending you what he otherways may intend. Bless God for all, and if you please to take my advice, give something of it to the poor, (as little as it is) which is your surest way never to want. I sent not Polyanthea, and I'll tell you my reasons: Those heavy Systematicall [Dutch] are all good for nothing but to damp [confuse] and pawl [or] [clamp and pawl] a good fancy. . . .] as/and is vigorous giving: What you take from a collector is dead and vapid, and, as the good-fellows talk, like ale over [the] thresholds. The more you draw from your own [deal]-ing, and judgment (rather most from the latter) the more you'll still have. I think I should never be ever done writing were not my paper done. I ex[pect] on the [rest] of this^ and this book ^to hear from you. If you have time to send me a paper of verses on the author of the Book (but no thanks nor compliments)^ included in and to your Father^ you'll much oblig. Your humble friend and servant, S Wesley.¹⁸⁸

If Samuel was your friend, he was a great friend and he viewed Mr. Smith as such. In the letter he touched on a number of his favorite themes: the glory of God, heaven, virtue gained through devotional reading, meditation, both private and public, worship, and *The Whole Duty of Man*. These were all recommended and offered as the means for maintaining true piety.

Included with the letter was a *gratis* copy of *The Whole Duty of Man*. Ever wanting to be of help, Samuel included an additional gift of money on page 100 of the book, no doubt remembering his own impecunious days at Oxford. Some rather obscure works were also mentioned: a *Systematic Dutch* work and *Polyanthea*.

Wesley recommended a general course of study in English, Greek, Latin and other books he considered worth studying, but deferred philosophy to Mr. Smith's Director. He appealed to him to follow his conscience, sense of generosity, and good

¹⁸⁸This letter was found in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and apparently has been left unnoticed and unpublished. Beecham noted Samuel's other letters, but left this one unacknowledged, so it seems appropriate to bring it to light. The transcription is not perfect as to some of the letters were illegible (underlined), but the sense of the letter clearly comes across. Rawlinson Collection. ms Letters 45, orig. misc. Letters II.

judgment. As he would with his sons later on, Samuel invited Mr. Smith to send him some verses composed from the complementary copy of *The Whole Duty of Man*.

The initiative to reach out and encourage Mr. Smith was all on the part of Samuel who desired nothing in return (save a letter in response and some verses). He gave Smith everything he could at that moment in time: his best advice on books, study, morality, theology, money, and encouragement. His only regret was running out of space to write more. The letter serves to offer a glimpse into the kind of piety Samuel lived out when at his best. One wonders if he was generous to a fault and that quality compounded his financial woes, to the detriment of his family who did without. Yet Samuel always held to the belief that he was rich in all the things that ultimately counted. As he related to Mr. Smith, “give something of it [the money] to the poor, (as little as it is) which is your surest way never to want.”

*Piety in Sermonic Material*¹⁸⁹

Of all of the writings of Samuel, his sermons are the least accessible and examined. This is partly due to the assumption that they were burned in the great fire in the rectory in 1709. While much was lost, Samuel did not stop preaching but continued to write out his sermons in complete manuscript form. The lack of accessibility to these sermons present challenges to the person who wants to read and transcribe them. These which are made available reveal that Wesley wrote quickly and often illegibly. His intent was that his sermons were for his eyes only. He tried to squeeze as many words as

¹⁸⁹A corpus of thirty sermons dating from May 16, 1714 through June 2, 1734. Microfiche of Methodist Archives: Lamplough Collection 598. It is also at Duke and Baylor University libraries having been microfilmed. A second book of sermons is at Wesley College Library at Bristol, England. A third set of individual manuscript sermons are at the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester.

possible on to every page and to make matters worse, he would later add words or sentences between the lines which are entirely undecipherable. Hence, they have not been published in any form or fashion. His writing as judged by John Dunton's critique of his poetry, was rushed, resulting in what amounted to scribbling. Wesley wrote all of his sermons until he was unable due to his "palsy," and then the task was given over to a daughter or another amanuensis.

The sermons are important for a variety of reasons. First, they have never been brought to public light nor examined for the theological and pragmatic content they contain. They reflect the local context of Wesley's parishes of Epworth and Wroote. Also, they often presuppose his previous writing, applying or illustrating his theology for his church. Of particular interest is discovering the extent which the sermons reflect elements of piety in the thinking and practice of ministry of Samuel.

Each sermon in this corpus was usually ten or eleven pages in length. They were designed to be read and preached more than once. He would write above the heading or on the opposite page the liturgical day of the church season, the place preached, and dates he gave the sermon. For example, the first sermon is listed as: Ist Sermon. On Whitsunday. May 16. 1714. He included the text for the day: xxiv St. Luk[e]. 49 v. Additional dates where this sermon was given include, Jun[e] 9. [1]717, May 17. [1]719, and [May] 25. [1]721, and Wroot. [1]723.

Wesley followed an organized and consistent format, writing out his sermons in narrative. After he listed the scripture, he wrote the relevant verse completely. He summarized its content and gave the outline of points he planned to address.

The first sermon illustrates this format:

xxiv. St. Luk[e]. 49 v.

And behold I send the Promise of my Father upon you. But tary yet in the City of Jerusalem until ye be endow'd with Power from on High.

From these words, which appear very proper for our meditations on this days solemnity, when we celebrate the great Blessing of God to his Church in his sending his H[oly] Spirit on the Disciples, it may be useful to enquire what is meant by this "Promise" "of" the Father, here mentioned, and that "Power from" on High, which seems to be either the same [illegible] (as) it, or the completion of it?

2. *Who it was that was to send it?*

3. *On whom it was to be sent?*

4. *To describe the fulfilling of this most true Promise at the time appointed, the Feast of Pentecost.*

5. *To draw som[e] Inferences from the whole in order for the strengthening our Faith and Regulating our lives.*

I. What is meant by the Promise of the Father, which our Saviour says shou'd soon after be sent?. . .

These first three points were addressed in the first sermon and the fourth and fifth in the second and third sermons on Whitsunday.

References to Pietist themes are scattered, but are consistently mentioned in his sermons. Also, his theological framework assumes a moral piety as an essential part of what it means to be a Christian. Wesley believed Piety was always yoked to a person's moral behavior and not as a means to God, but as the fruit or evidence of seeking out God.

“Therefore the Holy Spirit is not only a virtue or a power or a grace of God as is the impious dream of some heretics; but he is a Divine Person, Distinct from the Father and the Son as Proceeding from them, the author and worker of that virtue, with Power, and Grace in the Hearts of Believers.”¹⁹⁰

For Wesley the ability to live a pious life included both a Divine and human effort. There was the initiating work of God followed by the obedient response of the person. “But if we diligently hearken to his gentle motions, and obey his voice, he will perfect the new man which was begun in us, and renew us day by day.”¹⁹¹ Empowerment came from scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the passions inherent in a person. A person was enabled by God’s word which would:

strengthen our Faith of things future and Invisible, and give us a clear and a lively sense of the torments of Hell and Joys of Heaven: of the excellency of Piety and virtue, the Deformity of vice and sin, and the naturall and necessary connexion that there is between Happiness and goodness, Disobedience and misery. Will persuade us of the Reasonableness of God’s ways, and wisdom and necessity of those methods which he has appointed to work and preserve and increase Grace in us; such as Prayer, the Holy Communion and the like. Will give us courage and constancy to visit and to conquer all our spiritual enemies, and though we yet fall, to rise again <by repentance> and run the way of God’s commands. Will work in us and together with our own honest endeavors the genuine trust of the spirit, by which we may as surely know whether he dwells in us as the Tree is known by his fruit; and that those are, the apostle tells us in 5 Galat: 22.3,4 –namely Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, Faith, meekness, Temperance and crucifying the Flesh, with its affections and lusts—not giving way to the Irregular motions of the animal Life, but mortifying and subduing all our criminal appetites, and passions.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰Ms sermon no. 1, May 16, 1714, Luke 24:49; Southern Methodist University, Bridwell Library, Lamplough, 2-3.

¹⁹¹Ms sermon no. 1 May 16, 1714, Luke 24:49 Southern Methodist University, Bridwell Library, Lamplough, 3.

¹⁹²Ms sermon no. 1 May 16, 1714, Luke 24:49, 10.

Secondly, the Word of God was not in and of itself sufficient but needful of the Holy Spirit. “God grant that we may so <harken> to the <divine> teacher, speaking to us from heaven, with whose Spirit, his eternal word will have no efficacy upon us, that we may give the more earnest heed to those things which we have heard with our outward ears, as this ordinary means of salvation would at any time we should let them slip.”¹⁹³ On the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit, Wesley wrote, “this Blessed Comforter will assist us by degrees, to surmount all worldly troubles, and even all the Difficultys of a Religious Life, especially at our Entrance into it, til we arrive at last to Evangelical Perfection, which consists in a sincere, cheerfull and Impartial obedience to God’s commands, especially to the Precepts of the gospel; til we come to be strong men in Christ Jesus.”¹⁹⁴

One could receive the Holy Spirit by preparing oneself. In his second sermon on Whitsunday, one of his main points examined “the ends and purposes of an Holy Life.” He believed that those who received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost did so because of their pious preparation. Proper preparation is a consistent theme of Samuel. “The second thing is- the preparations for this great and memorable event, [] on the Churches part, and then on Gods part . . .”¹⁹⁵ And he added, “They [The Apostles and Disciples] continued waiting 50 days.– Their unity and unanimity, their Piety and Devotion all which were Doubtless the most proper preparations, ([] I call them, or Invitations?) For the Holy Spirit to Descend upon them. And if we have now prepared our Hearts in like

¹⁹³Ms sermon no. 17 June 2, 1728, Hebrews 4:12, 252.

¹⁹⁴Ms sermon no. 17 June 2, 1728, Hebrews 4:12, 252.

¹⁹⁵Ms sermon no. 2 May 24, 1724, Luke 24:49, 15.

manner may we not likewise humbly and faithfully expect the presence of the same Blessed Comforter?”¹⁹⁶

Thirdly, a person is assisted by one’s passions. Passions, for Wesley, were not negative assets because they were created by God for people. “For God did not make our passions in vain, though indeed he made them to be steered and regulated by our reason.”¹⁹⁷ It was when passions were out of control that he issued caution. But even so, they could be brought under control through the combined efforts of God’s law, religion, and reason. The Gentiles did not make use of them as he noted, “The will of the Gentiles is therefore the same with the will of the flesh, and the will of man, in his now natural and fallen and corrupt estate, utterly perverse and avers to God and goodness, and stubbornly bent and set upon sin and wickedness and the gratifying the inclinations and cravings of the flesh, and all carnal and criminal pleasures and desires; whatsoever the groveling and animalized soul lusteth after, without any manner of regard to the laws of God, and the wise and wholesome restraints of religion and reason.”¹⁹⁸

Wesley believed reason helped regulate passion. “Reason is our true and proper self, the superior part, the queen of the soul, and of the whole man; which he has placed in the throne, to keep the mutinous passions in order, which are good servants, which are kept under due discipline; but if the reins are once let loose will prove intolerable masters.”¹⁹⁹ Piety was possible, then, for Wesley through the mutual efforts of God and

¹⁹⁶Ms sermon no. 2 on Luke 24:49, May 24, 1724, 15.

¹⁹⁷Ms sermon no. 20 on Luke 24:32, 269.

¹⁹⁸Ms sermon no. 25, pt. 1 Pet. 4:3, 4, 5, 50-1.

¹⁹⁹Ms sermon no. 6, on St. Luke 13:23-24, initial date, July 24, 1715, 83.

the person who through the scriptures, the empowering of the Holy Spirit, and the harnessing of one's passions by reason could choose to live.

Summary

Piety was an integrated part of Samuel's life and work. It was revealed in his value and understanding of scripture as the word of God. He saw God's Word, first, as Christocentric, revealed through the person and work of Jesus Christ. He also understood God's word as preached and written. Through the written word a person was empowered through the agency of the Holy Spirit who enabled one to choose to live according to God's will and glory. He also believed in the capacity to exert one's own will to accomplish what God had directed. Wesley rejected the Calvinist premise that salvation was all God's doing and that no response was necessary but gratitude on the part of the redeemed. This belief in God's Word, Wesley preached and advocated in his writings. He expected that the listener and reader would likewise embrace his thinking.

This emphasis on piety was also reflected in Wesley's advice in the *Athenian Oracle* that the Bible enabled a person to live a virtuous and pious life. It is clear from the *Pious Communicant* he further believed piety could be maintained through the observance of Holy Communion if one was properly prepared, received it with the right attitude, and had the resolve to change. Piety within the communicant was internal but also had an external expression. These writings reveal only a few glimpses of the outward expressions of Samuel's piety toward others. He was not one to pronounce his pious works to draw attention to himself. As his letter to Mr. Smith demonstrated, his counsel was between the two and not even Mr. Smith's father was to be notified. For God to know and be glorified was sufficient, for that was the essence of personal piety

for Samuel. In this regard, Samuel was a primary exemplar of the Pietist tradition in England, as we shall see.

CHAPTER FOUR

Wesley's Experiential Piety

Late Seventeenth Century English Piety

Introduction

As F. Ernest Stoeffler has noted, Pietism is not so easily defined. It is understood from two differing perspectives: as a historical movement and as a religious orientation within Christianity.¹ The latter was practiced using an early Christian model based on the primitive Church community. As understood in seventeenth-century Germany, the hope was for a completion of the Reformation that Martin Luther had begun. He had recovered a biblical justification by faith. Pietism sought to recover biblical sanctification. Piety was rooted in Luther's writings as well as those of John Calvin and Caspar Schwenckfeld. It embraced a mystical spirituality which was found in the writings of Johann Arndt's *Wahres Christentum* (1606) and Philipp Jacob Spener's *Pia Desideria* (1675).

As a historical movement, Pietism became the avenue of reform in Germany, reacting from the strict orthodoxy which followed the end of the Thirty Year's War in 1648. The Pietistic spirit also sought to reform the low moral state of the church and society. Those who embraced Piety believed reform could occur through individual

¹F. Ernest Stoeffler, "Pietism" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. v. 11 Mircea Eliade, ed. (N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 324. Stoeffler was considered dean of Pietist Studies.

transformation. It was understood that the doctrines of Lutheranism had become a static and dry orthodoxy. Continental Piety, while not dismissing doctrine considered it secondary to that of emphasizing an experiential sanctification rather than salvation being only a matter of forensic justification.

The long decades of warfare, famine, and pestilence of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had produced a yearning for the kind of religion that warmed the heart and set the soul on fire with assurance and certainty. The movement that came to be defined as Pietism met that need. Advocates of Piety were far more concerned with a faith that could be lived with zeal and certainty than with a doctrinal system. Pietists hoped for a Piety that would produce in both the Lutheran and Reformed churches an attitude and disposition which minimized the doctrinal differences between the two groups and stressed instead an underlying unity rooted in personal religious experience.¹

The main characteristics of Pietism consisted of an emphasis on sanctification, practical Christianity, and a person's subjective faith (*fides quae creditur*) over against an objective faith (*fides quae creditur*).² This epistemological shift, or ability to know gave "primacy to the authority of the individual's perceptions and intuitions."³ According to Bengt Hägglund, Spener believed that "the personal experience of the pious is the ground

¹Ronald Feuerhahn, "The Roots and Fruits of Pietism" Pieper Lectures, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. September 17-18, 1998. www.issuesetc.org/resources/archives/Feuerhahn.htm. Accessed April 5, 2006.

²Feuerhahn, "Pietism."

³Feuerhahn, "Pietism."

of certainty for theological knowledge. Only the regenerate Christian can be a true theologian and possess real knowledge of revealed truth.”⁴

F. Ernest Stoeffler at Temple University understood Pietism as “an historical movement within Protestantism which had its major roots in the Zwingli-Bücher-Calvin axis of the Reformation which began to show its first characteristic evidences within English Puritanism and the Reformed churches of the seventeenth century. They influenced Lutheranism through Arndt, Spener, Francke, Bengel, and their followers. Pietism was radicalized by men like Gottfried Arnold and Konrad Dippel, romanticized by Johann Caspar Lavater, Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling, and others, and perpetuated within and without the major communions of Continental Protestantism for an indefinite period of time.”⁵

Pietism did not emerge from a single person or one specific geographical region. While the tradition has been identified as emerging from the thought of Johann Arndt, (1555-1621) Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), and August Franke (1663-1727), many others embraced Piety in various regions of Europe. Ideas were shared and exchanged between people and countries. There were intellectual ties between England and the Continent, most of which have become self-evident. There were philosophical ties represented by Spinoza’s influential writings, John Locke’s writings and residence both in England and the Netherlands, and the religious ties that were cultivated between the

⁴Feuerhahn, “Pietism.”

⁵Stoeffler, *Pietism*, 9.

Puritans and Netherlands. Piety as well had made its way into the fabric of English society and religious thought.

The foundational elements of Piety that were manifested in seventeenth century England emerged from both the Dissenting movement and the direct influence of the emigrant continental Pietists from the Netherlands and Germany. Pietism was a sweeping movement which crossed geographical, cultural and religious lines making inroads with English Puritanism, German Lutheranism, Reformed Churches, Anabaptist and the Roman Catholic Church.⁶

Some scholars have further suggested that aside from these Pietistic fountainheads or emissaries, there were parallel beginnings in regions besides Germany.⁷ Pietism seemed to have had multiple, simultaneous areas of provenance. Besides the Lutheran territories in Germany which were influenced by Spener and Francke (with his institutions at Halle), there was in Switzerland a Pietist movement which revolved around Jean F. Ostervald (1663-1747), a Reformed pastor at Neuchatel and leader of the liberal Swiss divines. In New England, Pietism centered around the Puritan minister Cotton Mather (1663-1728). Piety was also present in England through the influence of the Puritans.⁸

⁶William Brackney, *Christian Voluntarism in Britain and North America. A Bibliography and Critical Assessment*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 9.

⁷Thomas Scott Kisker, "Anthony Horneck (1641-1697) and the Rise of Anglican Pietism." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 2003.

⁸See Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999). Frank A. Baker, "Wesley's Puritan Ancestry," *London Quarterly and Holburn Review* (July, 1962): 180-186 and "Susanna Wesley: Puritan,

This pre-existing form of Pietism had already influenced England through the efforts and convictions of the Puritans. However, the last thirty years of the seventeenth century saw a diminishing of the Puritan's political influence on English life and order. Many influential figures redirected their energies to the American Colonies. Also, with the Act of Uniformity in 1662, Puritanism as a movement virtually ended.⁹ But the influence of Pietism remained and continued to have impact in England and within the church. This ongoing effect was in part due to those who became a part of the larger Dissenting movement in England. While the hoped for political reform of the church did not take place, there was, however within the recently Restored Church a desire for moral reform of both church and society. The Piety which was embraced by the Puritans was greater than their desires to effect political ideological changes. In other words, the spirit of Piety superceded political desires.

By its very nature Pietism did not and could not remain in isolation, but in fact was philosophically evangelical in expanding to other areas both within and outside of Germany. There was ongoing scholarly interest in establishing ties between the continent and Britain. Pietism particularly affected English culture and the Anglican

Parent, Pastor, Protagonist, Pattern.” In vol. 2 of *Women in New Worlds: Historical Perspectives on the Wesleyan Tradition*, edited by Rosemary Skinner Keller, 112-31, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1982). Also contained in *Dig or Die: Papers given at the World Methodist Historical Society Wesley Heritage Conference at Wesley College within the University of Sydney, 10-15 August 1980*, Sydney: World Methodist Historical Society, Australasian Section (1981): 77-88. J. P. Newman, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*, London: (Epworth Press, 1968). James A. Rigg, “The Puritan Ancestors and High-Church Parents of the Wesley: A Sketch and Study, 1630-1750.” In *Essays for the Times: On Ecclesiastical and Social Subjects*, 106-69. (London: E. Stock, 1866).

⁹Scott Kisker, *Anthony Horneck*, 13.

Church.¹⁰ Within the context of England, Scott Kisker, at Wesley Theological Seminary, has made a case for Pietism's influence being infused into Anglicanism through the direct influence of Anthony Horneck.¹¹ Kisker considers him "key for Pietism's migration into Restoration Anglicanism."¹²

Anthony Horneck

Anthony Horneck (1641-1697) was born at Bacharach in the Lower Palatinate and educated for the reformed ministry at Heidelberg.¹³ He like many other Lutheran and Reformed continentals, came to England to continue their studies.¹⁴ Three years later, when he became an Anglican priest, he made a home not just within the borders of English soil, but in the heart of its religious life as it was manifested in the Anglican Church. In his capacity as an Anglican priest, Horneck was influential in incorporating Pietism into the fabric of the Established Church. He helped to popularize characteristics of Continental Pietism among the populace in the eastern part of London¹⁵ through his very popular preaching, his societies, his writings. He recognized that the people were ready to receive what Piety offered. The desire for reform was just as pronounced in

¹⁰See Daniel L. Brunner, *Halle Pietists in England: Anthony William Boehm and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993 and Scott Thomas Kisker, "Anthony Horneck (1641-1697) and the Rise of Anglican Pietism." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 2003.

¹¹Kisker, *Anthony Horneck*, 13.

¹²Kisker, *Anthony Horneck*, 13.

¹³W. R. Ward, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. "Horneck, Anthony" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁴*DNB*, 155

¹⁵Kisker, *Anthony Horneck*, 13.

England as it was on the Continent. The English Civil War created similar dynamics on the continent which brought on the desire for reformation and renewal. Growing up during the last vestiges and devastation of the Thirty Year's War throughout Germany and Central Europe, Horneck probably recognized England's similar needs following its Civil War.

Horneck's efforts to infuse Piety into the life of the Church of England were largely successful. His methods "involved recovery of membership in the church through consistent attendance at worship, Bible study, group encouragement in practical holiness and acts of charity. Each band or society was structured by rules, a leader, and election to membership by the body politic."¹⁶ These societies were unique in that they differed with their emphasis on worship within the established church, their supervision under its clergy, and devotion to public worship, particularly its sacramental life."¹⁷ These groups did not go by the name "Pietist" as that term had barely entered the English vocabulary and was associated with Quakers and Philadelphians.¹⁸

Horneck modified aspects of continental Pietism to fit the Anglican context, needs and polity. Scott Kisker sees a distinct form of Anglican Pietism separate from the Puritan Pietism which was attributable to Anthony Horneck. As an Anglican, he modified the various practical tenets of German piety. The four major characteristics found in all Pietist circles include; first, a personally meaningful relationship of an individual with God; second, a religious idealism, or a call to a higher, holier Christian

¹⁶Brackney, 21.

¹⁷Kisker, *Anthony Horneck*, 14.

¹⁸Kisker, *Anthony Horneck*, 14.

life; third, a commitment to biblical authority for life and conduct; and fourth, application of the faith in concrete acts of charity.¹⁹ Horneck's preaching stressed Pietist themes, emphasizing 'new birth', and his theology was both practically and soteriologically oriented. The most important contribution was his formation of religious societies which bore many of the marks of Pietism and laid the groundwork for later philanthropic and revivalist movements.²⁰ Kisker has also suggested that this additional stream influenced Anglican faith. The influence of Horneck helped shape the Anglican Church, and embraced a distinctive form of Anglican piety, one of his own making.²¹

Because the response was enthusiastically populist, Horneck had to guard against the charge of encouraging enthusiasm and being seen as a Romanist—two extremes which were feared. His early biographer, Bishop Richard Kidder (1633-1703) believed he struck a balance between the two: He was "a true son of the Church of England equidistant from the innovating of Rome and from Enthusiasm."²² This balance was evidenced through the growth of reforming societies, in particular, the Society for the Reformation of Manners. The latter's impetus would help lead to the establishment of the voluntary societies which included the Society for the Reformation of Manners (SRM), the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG).²³ His influence helped capture the

¹⁹William Brackney, *Christian Voluntarism in Britain and North America: A Bibliography and Critical Assessment*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996. 9.

²⁰Kisker, *Anthony Horneck*, 14.

²¹Kisker, *Anthony Horneck*, 14.

²²*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB), 155 citing Kidder, xxvi.

²³Daniel L. Brunner, *Halle Pietists in England: Anthony William Boehm and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,

imagination and energies of many, including Samuel Wesley. It is my contention that Samuel embraced the Pietism that Horneck brought to England and the Church augmenting the piety from his Dissenting background. Wesley would leave Dissent because of some within Dissent who were growing increasingly immoral and schismatic but retain the Piety that had nurtured him. Horneck, as a German Pietist who converted to the Established Church, provided an avenue which Wesley could embrace. Wesley was one Churchman who welcomed this opportunity to reform the Church for the better. Brunner has noted, “the devotion and piety of the Restoration churchman were, for a long time largely ignored,”²⁴ and Samuel Wesley is one case in point.

Anthony Horneck and Samuel Wesley

The reason for Samuel Wesley’s embrace of Anthony Horneck was that Wesley also was drawn to the common themes of Continental Pietism. Wesley certainly knew of Horneck’s work as he mentioned him in his *Pious Communicant*.²⁵ It seems also to be the case that he adopted sum of the practical measures of Horneck introduced because the latter had already done the work of incorporating continental Piety into the framework of Anglican polity.

Horneck’s societies were some of the earliest to be established in England, the first beginning in 1678. The practical concept of Societies would proliferate dramatically throughout the next twenty-five years. Wesley would have been keenly aware of their

1993) 11.

²⁴Brunner, *Halle Pietists*, 16.

²⁵Wesley, *The Pious Communicant Rightly Prepared*, 12.

effectiveness in London²⁶ and would likewise become a member of various societies including the Athenian Society, the SRM and the SPCK. He would ultimately organize a local society at his parish in Epworth. As an early proponent of the SRM, Wesley preached before the Society in 1698 on his efforts and the progress of the society in Epworth.

Speaking from the modern sense, Samuel met the measure of what can be defined as a Pietist. In general, he exemplified Stoeffler's understanding of piety as a religious orientation. In particular, as an Anglican priest, he was a Pietist following the tradition established through Anthony Horneck. One can make a case that he stood in a direct line from Spener-Horneck-Wesley. This is clear to the extent that Wesley desired reform within the Anglican Church, emphasized the Bible, advocated reformation of life, appealed to the transforming experience of God, and not only hoped, but worked for a changed world, or a love for the world expressed through works of mercy accomplished by God's work in changing human lives.²⁷ He also favored the writings of the early church fathers, was familiar with the Roman Catholic *de Renta*,²⁸ and was influenced by the dissenting tradition in Piety. Similarities to classic Pietism can be demonstrated by comparing Wesley's writings to Stoeffler's four principles of Pietism as an evaluative lens. When seen in the light of these principles, it becomes clear that Samuel held to the greater part these foundational tenets of continental Pietism. Stoeffler's seminal study on

²⁶At the time of Horneck's death there were at least fifteen societies meeting weekly in London and Westminster. See Kisker, 253.

²⁷See Kisker, p. 7-8 on Dale Brown's *Understanding Piety*, 27-28.

²⁸Samuel was probably was the source who passed this interest in *de Renta* on to John.

evangelical Pietism presented four aspects which he believed constituted pietism.²⁹ They are in fact, very similar to the four Kisker sees in Horneck. These aspects include, first, a Pietism which is truly pietistic must embrace the experiential. Second, it must have perfectionistic tendencies. Third, a person's beliefs must be grounded in the Bible. Fourth, the person who practices piety must demonstrate an outward expression, in other words it must be opposite (or prophetic) within the culture it is present.

Experiential Piety

The experiential points to and emphasizes the personal assurance of salvation and a personal relationship with God rather than upon doctrine.³⁰ There is a distinct moment of existential crisis in which a person acknowledges an inward response to God and the awareness of one's assurance of God's salvation. This evangelical experience is understood as a moment of truth where one's God relationship is uniquely re-enforced. It is a definite point of demarcation where a person's life is never the same from that moment forward.

Crisis and Assurance

Wesley mentioned one such struggle and experience following his first visit to Oxford. When he was deciding on whether to separate himself from the Dissenters and to conform to the Established Church, he wrote:

I earnestly implored the Divine direction in a business of so weighty a concern, and on which so much of my whole life depended. I examined things over as calmly and impassionately as possible, and, the further I looked, still the more the mist cleared up, and things appeared in another sort of light than I had seen them in all my life before. So far were the sufferings of the Dissenters at that time from influencing my

²⁹F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 13-23.

³⁰Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 14-15.

resolution to leave them, that I profess it was a thing which retarded me most of any. I began to have inclinations to the University, if I knew how to get thither, or to live there when I came. I was not then acquainted with one soul of the Church of England to whom I might address myself for assistance or advice.³¹

Wesley also wrote of such a moment during his Oxford days when he experienced a crisis of assurance during his first year at Oxford (1684-85).³² The January and February, 1684/5 winter was particularly severe³³ and Wesley was not financially prepared to weather it. He also struggled with the adversarial views of other students who denigrated his Dissenter education. Wesley told when he found himself nearly penniless, with no food, reeling from the repeated taunts of fellow classmates. “the quarter being up, I was stopp’d in the Butlers book, not having any more money to discharge my battles (as they there call it)³⁴ and thereby reduced to those extremitys which are now so pleasant to reflect upon, tho then so uneasy to bear,”³⁵ and “The odium which the name of dissenter brought my Fellow Collegiates having heard of my education, frightening me beyond the rules of temperance and virtue, to avoid which I was

³¹Wesley, *Letter from a Country Divine*, p. 11; See also, George J. Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, 57 and H. A. Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior: New biographical Evidence” *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, V. VII (1963): 86.

³²Ms Ormsby letter, 101; Beecham, 102-108.

³³Anthony á Wood, *Life and Times*. He wrote of the winter, “Jan. 3, S[unday], fl[annel] sh[irt].” and “Jan. 3, 4, 5, ‘as cold as any day last yeare viz. in Dec. or Jan. 1683.’” Also, “Jan. 30, ‘Colds and feavers are very frequent in Oxon this month.’”; “Feb. 10, fl[annel] sh[irt].”

³⁴www.Dictionary.oed.com. ‘Battles’ a. “College accounts for board and provisions supplied from the kitchen and buttery.” b. In looser use: The whole college accounts for board and lodgings, rates, tuition, and contribution to various funds, as ‘My last term’s battels came to £40.’” Accessed April 4, 2006.

³⁵Ms Bibl. Bodl. Rawl. C. 406,101; Ms Ormsby letter, Beecham, 104.

so foolish and cowardly to incline rather to the contrary extreme, and was indeed almost in all evil, nay must with shame acknowledge . . . ”³⁶

He also acknowledged being reduced to begging from friends and fellow students. “I had writt to my friends . . . entreating them to relieve me in my extremity, but could have no reply besides reproaches, I went to visit my little acquaintance in other college; till I was weary of that and they of me.”³⁷

In wandering the streets of the university city, he wondered what recourse he had, even contemplating withdrawal from the university. He came across a young lad, clothes in tatters, cold and in great need, who asked him for assistance. Wesley recounted that he gave the boy his last two coins:

When I was in the midst of these extremitys, which were rendered sharper by the season of the year, it being the height of winter and a very sever one, I walked out in the morning alone, behind the new parks, and as I went musing along in an unfrequented path near the rivers side I saw a little boy about some seven or 8 years old, lying under a hedge and crying bitterly I went up to him and asked him the reason, he told me the two days before his father died, his mother having bin dead several years, and left none in the house but himself and a little sister about ten years old, without any victuals or money that they had stayed at home all the next day but none took care of them nor brought them any relief that they resolv’d in the morning, she should go a begging in their own parish, about a mile or two from Oxford and he would go to the city and try what they could get to keep themselves alive . . . I confess I was toucht with the poor boys story . . . then I pulled out my 2d, all the stock I had in the world, and gave it him, seeing him in greater extremity that I was myself.³⁸

The act, Wesley believed, was blessed by God, whereupon when he returned to his room he received an unexpected monetary gift as well as a cheese from his mother.

“God did not forget me, but accepted my mite and bountifully rewarded it, for I no

³⁶Ms Bibl. Bodl. Rawl. C.406, 101; Ms Ormsby letter, Beecham, 104.

³⁷Ms Bibl. Bodl. Rawl. C.406, 101; Ms Ormsby letter, Beecham, 104.

³⁸Ms Ormsby letter, Beecham, 104; Bibl. Bodl. MS. Rawl. C.406, 101.

sooner gott home, but I found a scholar of another Colleg inquiring for me, newly com out of the country, who brought me a crown for a token from one of my relations with which I bought bread and the same day I think or the next, my Mother sent me a cheese from London.”³⁹

These gifts carried Wesley from Christmas to 14 February when he again faced having to pay his battles, the failure of which meant being dismissed from the college. “I confess I began to be melancholy when I found I must leave Oxford.” He borrowed a half a crown to get him to some relatives and considered selling his “little library” to finance another half year or year at Oxford. Upon returning a borrowed book, a melancholy poem he wrote revealing his sorrow at leaving Oxford was discovered by the book’s owner (a Mr. Colmer) who “generously offer’d to pay my battles for me that I might not leave the colleg: and helped get Wesley “so many masters that by the next quarter I had more then money sufficient to pay the burser and besides purchase what other necessaryes.”⁴⁰

Wesley interpreted these experiences as God’s beneficent providence. “. . . had not Gods providence recall’d me to myself by those kind afflictions, I beleeeve I had grown as ill a man as most in the university.”⁴¹ He also acknowledged (on Feb. 14. 1694/5) not only God using the human benefactor, but also God as, “the first Giver” with a journal entry: “Glory to God on high, who in my deepest distress, and hopeless misery when I must have unavoidably have left the university and gon into the wide world in a

³⁹Ms Ormsby letter, Beecham, 104; Bibl. Bodl. MS. Rawl. C.406, 101.

⁴⁰Ms Ormsby letter, Beecham, 104; Bibl. Bodl. MS. Rawl. C.406, 101.

⁴¹Ms Ormsby letter, Beecham, 104; Bibl. Bodl. MS. Rawl. C.406, 101.

day or two hence, has in the very instant provided for me and made me live again, therefore you angells and archangells, and blessed spirits before the throne, together with you will I praise him while I live, and for the future ever trust in his goodness, in whatever circumstances he shall think fit to cast me.”⁴²

Other expressions of experiential piety were also present in his sermons. Two will illustrate Wesley’s view that included both inward and outward expressions of experiential piety. One example is from a sermon, dated 1722 and July 10, 1726. He wrote, “O Pious man, this Blessed temper . . . shalt thou feel in thy own breast. Thou shalt say, and say the Truth, for thou shalt experience it within, that then is a lifting up that God will raise thee, and who can cast thee down, calm thee, and who can disturb thee.”⁴³ This quote expressed Wesley’s understanding that piety was an internally felt experience within oneself.

A second sermon,⁴⁴ expressed more extensively both the inward and outward experiences of the believer. The very first line began, “There is nothing like experience, for the knowledge of anything.”⁴⁵ In the same sermon he discussed the five senses, “I believe this [God’s graciousness] may be shown in all the five senses,”⁴⁶ all of which

⁴²Ms Ormsby letter, Beecham, 104; Bibl. Bodl. MS. Rawl. C.406, 101.

⁴³Wesley College Methodist Archives, Bristol, England, D2/2 Notebook: Poems and Meditations by Rev. Samuel Wesley, 65.

⁴⁴Ms sermon no. 13 “O Taste and See that the Lord is good;” Part 1. Psalm 34:8. May, 1721; March 1, 1723/4; July 7, 1734.

⁴⁵Ms sermon no. 13, 206.

⁴⁶Ms sermon no. 13, 210.

combined help one to “taste and see that the Lord is good.”⁴⁷ He cited the “fatal experiment” of our “first parents” that is, Adam and Eve, who tasted the fruit, and thus were examples to avoid. Even so, “we may yet chuse life” and named the experience of the Psalmist as one to emulate. “Why will we not now make the experiment of good, where there can not be any suspicion [*sic*] of evil? namely, in loving God, in obedience to his commands, and in the <steadfast>⁴⁸ exercise of piety and virtue, which are perfect freedom and perfect happiness? To this, the Psalmist exhorts us in these words of the text, from his own happy experience, as they had been his gratest [*sic*] support and comfort in all his straits and troubles.”⁴⁹

Wesley named the Jews and nations as some who used the outward senses. “The Jews, and I believe most of all other nations, do by a common figure describe or express their inward experience of things, by their perceptions of their outward sence, as well as sometimes that of one sence by another.”⁵⁰ Wesley also noted there was evidence of the “experience of God’s kindness and goodness,” that these examples showed that God was good and just. If one will “make but trial of his love [then one’s] “experience will decide how blessed they are and only they who in his truth consider[s].”⁵¹ The Psalmist

⁴⁷Ms sermon no. 13 206.

⁴⁸Wesley’s insertion.

⁴⁹Ms sermon no. 13 “O Taste and See that the Lord is good;” Part 1. Psalm 34:8. May, 1721; March 1, 1723/4; July 7, 1734. 206.

⁵⁰Ms sermon no. 13, 209.

⁵¹Ms sermon no. 13, 211.

expressed that “tasting and understanding or wisdom . . . is gained by experience and consideration.”⁵²

Wesley then asked what were the means “to attain to this true taste and relish and experience of holy things and of God’s goodness?”⁵³ Samuel saw the answer coming from the Psalmist’s experience. The Psalmist “advises all men, from his own happy experience and example, to make a thorough experiment of God’s goodness. To consider it in their heart; to try it, to weigh it, ((ruminate))⁵⁴ and reflect upon it with delight and satisfaction, with faith and love. Not lightly to taste of it and no more; but to palate it, to ruminate upon it, as the Epicure, who hides the sweet morsel under his tongue: To dwell upon it, exactly to distinguish it and fully to perceive all the sweetness of it.”⁵⁵

There were some, said Wesley, citing I Peter, who have “indeed thoroughly tasted that the Lord is gracious and [have been] convinced and persuaded by infallible experience of his favour and goodness towards them.” But also, during times of “temporal danger” previous “tasting and experiencing the goodness and promises of God” helped comfort and relieve them when there was “no human hope or promise of comfort.”⁵⁶

Wesley saw that there was an even deeper internal experience than what the Psalmist expressed and one which he confessed he also lacked somewhat:

⁵²Ms sermon no. 13, 211.

⁵³Ms sermon no. 13, 211.

⁵⁴Wesley crossed out ‘ruminate’ here and used it a few lines further down.

⁵⁵Ms sermon no. 13, 211.

⁵⁶Ms sermon no. 13, 213.

And yet there is still, I think, something more, in this tasting of God's goodness, thou' alas, I can say too little of it from my own experience . . . I mean, which very good men and saints upon earth do and must enjoy. Those who live exactly holy, pious, temp[er]ate, and mortified lives: who are meek and patient, entirely resigned to Gods will, and zealous for his glory, who set him always before their eyes, and have their conversation on heaven." They "excell in virtue" and "These do hunger and thirst after righteousness, their experimental knowledge of God's law and our Lord has pronounced 'em blessed and promised 'em that they shall be filled."⁵⁷

Stoeffler characterized Piety as the renewal of the individual which involved a conscious change of one's relationship to God so as to bring certainty and recognition of God's forgiveness, acceptance, and continuing concern (for the individual).⁵⁸ Wesley's dark winter experience and his ultimate acknowledgment of God's providence fit this aspect of Pietism. This divine and human intervention gave him the assurance he needed and reaffirmed his decision to conform. He henceforth never articulated any doubt of God's assurance from that day forward.

Perfectionism

The second characteristic trait of piety is perfectionism. The practicing Pietist rejected that a believer can remain in the *status quo* with respect to moral and spiritual growth. The individual must have a total break with the old life for a total commitment to the new life in Christ as well as a "total acceptance of all of the implications of this new life as they saw them."⁵⁹ Pietistic preaching emphasized that "without conversion and sanctification the individual's Christianity is hollow and his religious profession

⁵⁷Ms sermon no. 13, 214.

⁵⁸Stoeffler, "Pietism" *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Mircea Eliade, ed. (NY: Macmillan, 1987), 11: 324.

⁵⁹Stoeffler, 17.

mere sham.”⁶⁰ Vital Christianity was a life well lived rather than just correct doctrine in isolation from the world.⁶¹

This dimension of Piety corresponded to what Wesley believed Piety to be: not just an attitude, but actively lived out. His refusal to accommodate may have had roots in his Dissenting upbringing which adhered to a moral Calvinistic tradition. Stoeffler saw pietism drawing from this tradition a “radical distaste for religious complacency and [a] preoccupation with religious ideals.”⁶² Pietists “opposed all institutional accommodation” and there was “insistent pressure toward the religious ideal.”⁶³ Samuel, likewise, expected the faithful, whether it was himself, his family, his parish or the greater church to exhibit outward piety. Sanctification was to be lived out. A person had to demonstrate piety through pious actions whether it was the regular observance of Communion or living out piety in life. Because of this stringency, his pietistic ideal of moral behavior has been viewed as his greatest failing. The perfectionistic demands he made on himself and others have been the source of much criticism. He expected the highest standard of himself and others in striving for the ideal of piety with little regard to the feelings or deep-seated reasons for a person’s behavior.

Wesley’s moralistic perspective has faced modern criticism. Unfairly it has judged his actions retroactively by imposing contemporary moral and theological

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹M. Schmidt, *John Wesley, A Theological Biography*, Schmidt said that “Samuel, since his student days had been attached to John Norris (1657-1712), and he drew John’s attention to Norris’s counsels.” 53.

⁶²Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 16.

⁶³Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 17.

templates when assessing his virtues and values. Samuel has been on the receiving end of harsh criticism more than what he received in his own day. Even his harshest contemporaries acknowledged his piety.⁶⁴ John Dunton criticized Wesley and clearly conveyed that Wesley wrote his *Defense* to curry royal favor in the hope of gaining a bishopric.⁶⁵ Clark stated, “Dunton frequently adverts to this controversy [generated by Wesley’s *Dissenting Letter* and subsequent letters], and intimates that it was undertaken by Mr. Wesley ‘in hopes of a bishopric.’”⁶⁶ Dunton also saw him as a fair weather friend remarking, “Mr. W. has read much, and is well skilled in the languages; he is generous and good-humoured, and caresses his friend with a great deal of passion, so long as his circumstances are anything in order, and then he drops him.”⁶⁷ But of particular interest, Dunton affirmed Wesley’s piety. “I bid him farewell till we meet in heaven; and there I hope we shall renew our friendship, for, human⁶⁸ frailties excepted, I believe Sam. Wesley a pious man.”

⁶⁴John Dunton, for instance. Even after their falling out, he recognized the piety of Samuel.

⁶⁵This was not Wesley’s ambition. As early as in the Ormsby letter 1692, Wesley acknowledged that a lucrative preferment was not likely to be in his future. From Ormsby he wrote, “I have now buried all my foolish hope of making any large figure or being of any generall use to the world, yet I hope with Gods blessing to maintain my Family honestly tho not splendidly & if I can leave my children nothing besides my Blessing & their Education I know No remedy but they must even shift it in the world as their Father has don before them.” ms Ormsby, Bibl. Body. MS. Rawl. C.406, 103; Beecham, 108.

⁶⁶Clark, *Memoirs*, 151.

⁶⁷Clark, 151. This is no doubt Dunton’s allusion to Wesley’s subtle criticism of Dunton’s quick remarriage following the death of Elisabeth Annesley Dunton. This was the start of their Wesley’s and Dunton’s estrangement as friends and brother -in-law.

⁶⁸Clark, *Memoirs*, 151.

Wesley did leave room for some moral leeway. A person could fail, but had to at least be “steadfast in the exercise of piety and virtue.”⁶⁹ Wesley believed it was a person’s unwillingness to make no effort that was the greatest failing, because God through Jesus Christ had made the total and complete effort to save humanity. To not respond to God’s efficacious effort was to slight God. The lengths a person went to strive for piety (not as an end, but as a result of seeking out God) have been already illustrated in his *Pious Communicant*.⁷⁰

Two examples further demonstrate the seriousness with which he took the practice of pietistic perfectionism bordering on moral legalism. This perspective could be seen in his response to the thief who stole the Lord’s tithe from his crop of corn and the extent to which he held his daughter Hetty morally culpable for her liaison with her suitor.

Theft of Wesley’s Corn. Once, Wesley caught a local man stealing corn from his field. Edwards recounted the occasion. “The Rector marched the farmer back into the Epworth market place and, turning out the contents of the bag before the astonished people, he told them of the farmer’s petty pilfering. Then he left the discomforted man to the judgement of his neighbors and with the most complete sangfroid went back to the rectory. It was characteristically brave, but was it wise?”⁷¹

Edwards expressed his reservation on Wesley’s lack of tact toward the thief, but for Samuel it was a clear-cut act of thievery. All who practiced piety were to obey the

⁶⁹Ms sermon no. 13, 206.

⁷⁰See Chapter Three above.

⁷¹Edwards, *Family Circle*, 14.

Ten Commandments. In this particular incident, the man not only stole from Samuel, he stole from God by virtue of his taking from the “Lord’s Tithe.’ Samuel would not equivocate when it came to clear-cut violations of the commandments. What is interesting is that in the retelling of this anecdote, Samuel was not described as passionately out of control, but to use Edwards’s word, ‘sangfroid.’ He was able to coolly objectify the offence from the offender. This ability to distance himself emotionally was not possible when the offence involved family. He never could find a way to reconcile himself to his daughter, Hetty, for her offence.

Hetty’s Moral Fall or Disobedience? Hetty (Mehetabel) was probably the most gifted of all the Wesley children and at one time, Samuel’s favorite. Her keen and creative mind must have been attractive to Samuel. It is likely he taught her Greek and Latin and she also helped Samuel in his work.⁷² Samuel gave Hetty her “extra attention in her studies because he recognized the early signs of mental power.”⁷³ She was talented and gifted but was trapped in the patriarchal system of her day and had no satisfactory outlet for her talents. “She had initiative and independence of mind but could only survey her world from the window of a country rectory.”⁷⁴

The estrangement was precipitated by a lawyer who desired to court Hetty. But Samuel for perhaps legitimate reasons objected. “Samuel disliked lawyers in general, and this suitor, in particular.”⁷⁵ He may have detected a flaw in his character. At any

⁷²While her mother, Susanna taught her the educational basics, she did not know the classical languages which meant that Samuel would have taught her these.

⁷³Edwards, *Family Circle*, 154.

⁷⁴Edwards, *Family Circle*, 154.

⁷⁵Edwards, *Family Circle*, 155.

rate, he forbade Hetty to see him. “The young man, denied access to the house and knowing was impossible to gain the Rector’s favour, urged Hetty to elope with him. Hetty consented to go with him believing that he intended marriage. The next day she was sadly undeceived and despite his entreaties, she resolved to return home and face the consequences of her folly.”⁷⁶

The members of the Wesley family would be initially shocked, but in the course of time, all reestablished a relationship with Hetty—except for Samuel. Edwards believed that Samuel was disturbed mostly by the immoral aspect of Hetty’s offense. “If he [Samuel] regarded her misadventure with horror, it was because such a sin seemed heinous in an age that lacked our easier judgments and our larger tolerance.”⁷⁷ Her offense was magnified by her status in the Epworth community being the Rector’s daughter with higher expectations of his family. In this respect, Samuel was not unlike other parents who are more gracious and forgiving of other’s failings than those of their own children. Parents usually expect their own to be better. Samuel certainly had that expectation of his children.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Edwards, *Family Circle*, 155.

⁷⁷Edwards, *Family Circle*, 155.

⁷⁸However Samuel was not an intolerant moralist. It is clear that Wesley could be moderate in his understanding in some areas of moral behavior. On the issue of drinking, Wesley would preach on the subject of temperance in a three sermon series on I Peter 4:3-5 when he preached variously on Feb. 26, 1720, 1723, June 25, 1727, and December 8, 1728. In the third sermon Samuel cited Dr. Henry Hammond’s (1605-1660) *Practical Catechism*, Book 3 paragraph 3. “Sobriety is strictly commanded to Christians in the New Testament and that under the threat of damnation, to him that frequently, or willingly and indulgently offendeth herein.” He secondly cited the “unknown author of the *Whole Duty of Man*, “That it is not only that huge degree of drunkenness which makes men able neither to go nor speak, which is to be looked upon as a sin; but all lower degrees which do at all work upon the understanding; whether by dulling it, and making it less fit for any employment, or by making it too light and airy, apt to apish and ridiculous mirth,” and “ the drinking beyond the natural ends of drinking, that is beyond

Full of remorse, Hetty, made a vow to marry the first man her father deemed suitable and when the mismatch William Wright presented himself, she found herself trapped in a marriage which possessed no joy. Besides Wright's lack of skill and culture, they were unable to have any children who lived much past their births. Hetty saw this as a judgment from God which would remain in place until she was able to receive forgiveness from her father.⁷⁹ But forgiveness from Samuel was not forthcoming. Of greater import, Samuel had a higher expectation which superceded other values, even moral issues. It also was more important to Samuel than the immoral action committed by Hetty.

There was another issue even more disturbing to Samuel. Samuel was particularly close to Hetty. She was his intellectual favorite whom he had nurtured because of her lively mind and exceptional promise. Because of this special relationship, he was more hurt, not just because of her perceived immodest liaison, but of what he perceived as her betrayal or disobedience of his wishes. It was true that Samuel's family and specifically Hetty were extensions of the piety Samuel espoused from the pulpit and lived by. "It seemed to prejudice his work so faithfully performed over the long years."⁸⁰ Even more critical to Samuel was that he viewed her actions as a violation of his and societies' structure and order. He viewed this act by Hetty as willful disobedience, she having "trusted a man against whom she had been repeatedly warned."⁸¹ Hetty's actions questioned Samuel's place as the head of his home and his authority in the church as

moderate refreshment, is a sin." Ms *Sermons*, SMU Bridwell, 340-1.

⁷⁹Edwards, *Family Circle*, 161.

⁸⁰Edwards, *Family Circle*, 155.

⁸¹Edwards, *Family Circle*, 156.

priest. The issue of duty and obedience to authority was a constant with Samuel throughout his whole life superceding all else. Examples are numerous. He left Dissent partly because he saw Dissenters challenging the monarchy; Susanna's failure to affirm his prayer for King William doubly crossed the line of questioning his authority as husband and the authority of the king; John's defense of Hetty in a sermon which was not so subtly directed at Samuel illustrated a disregard for one of the Articles which forbade criticizing another priest from the pulpit. It was both a challenge of Samuel and also the Church. Samuel's history of intolerance was not toward sins of the flesh, but the willful disobedience of God-given authorities.

Wesley did not see his treatment of Hetty as a failing on his part but hers. While he disapproved of what he saw as an immoral action, the severity of the breach in his eyes was due to her willful disobedience. That is what constituted her greater failure. What he did not see, and perhaps could not understand, was a way to receive her back into the community which was his heart. She did return home and to church and undoubtedly received communion. But by all appearances, she was a part of the church, though Samuel could never see her in the same light as before her betrayal of him when she chose to follow another man she had been forbidden to see. She went against not just the morals of her father, but the patriarchal system of that day. It was a time when hierarchy was the structural template and obedience was expected within the system whether it was the government, the church, or the family. To disobey meant to be a force against all order which had the potential to return to the chaos of the recent past. Few were willing to dare or permit that to happen—Samuel most certainly would not. The standard to which he held Hetty (and all the family) was a sad consequence of Hetty being a Wesley. She had the misfortune of being Samuel's daughter, for he believed duty

to parents, church, and government, were ultimately extensions of a person's obligation to God. Had she been another's daughter, she more likely would have received a measure of grace and forgiveness. Sadly, Samuel died four years later, unreconciled to his daughter, Hetty.

The Bible, first, last and always. Stoeffler's third basic tenet of Pietism was its biblicism.⁸² The English Puritans applied this principle in their efforts to find the answer to the question of "how are the insights of the Bible to be applied to the problems of daily life?"⁸³ The answer was that ethical conduct was to be lived out based on following the moral dictates of the New Testament to abstain from "immoderate drinking, immodest dress, excessive ornamentation of the body, feasting, dancing, etc."⁸⁴ As a corrective to excessive moral behavior, this Pietist view would be deemed as overly strict and austere. However, the Pietists viewed their position as a "reasonable interpretation of Scripture, definitely made reason subservient to what was considered to be the objectively discernible authority of the Word."⁸⁵ Pietists expected a moral transformation, but often Pietist interpretations of scripture were seen as legalistic and austere. This view was due to behavior being based on adherence to biblical commands, from both Testaments. Pietism "emphasized the revealed law of God not merely as a 'tutor' who leads the sinner to Christ, but as the authoritative disclosure of God's design for man's life. A joyful,

⁸²Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 20.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid. 21.

⁸⁵Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 21.

filial obedience to this law under the guidance and by the help of the Spirit was regarded the highest moral obligation.”⁸⁶

As previously discussed, Samuel was a thorough going biblicist whose perspective mirrored very closely these Pietist views.⁸⁷ His participation in SRM and *The Athenian Oracle* showed his intense interest in the morals of his day. His writings were all derived from a biblically based answer to the problems of daily life. His responses to drinking, dress, and dancing were moderate as he did not forbid the actions only excess. Because of his measured opinion, he saw his response as moderate and biblically based and therefore a reasonable interpretation. Reason was an invaluable tool, but for Samuel it was the servant of scripture and not its master. A person had the added resource of the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately a person’s behavior was based on adherence to biblical norms, not out of fear, but stemming from joyful, filial obedience which for Wesley was a person’s highest moral obligation.

The opposite nature of Pietism

Stoeffler understood the opposite nature of Pietism as acting “against a dominant pattern.”⁸⁸ In a broad stroke, Pietism could judge with equanimity German Lutheranism, Dutch Calvinism, or English Anglicanism. Specifically, “it stands over against prevailing norms of faith and life which are different in nature.” Pietism for the seventeenth-century Puritans advocated the type of piety “which stood in opposition to

⁸⁶Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 22.

⁸⁷See Chapter Three, 49-72.

⁸⁸Stoeffler, *Evangelical Pietism*, 22.

the conception of Christian belief and practice which generally prevailed within the Establishment.”⁸⁹

Wesley has often been charged with being overly strict in his convictions. Yet it is in the nature of the practicing Pietist to be strict. Stoeffler noted that the Pietistic tradition is reform minded. It is part of its opposite nature. “The reformer is not usually welcome to the representatives of the *status quo*”⁹⁰ and whether it came to reforming his society, the church or the people of Epworth he was diligent in his efforts. Stoeffler added, “The leading Pietists were sober men who were considerably more concerned about cross bearing and the moral reformation of the person than about pleasurable feeling states, though it is highly questionable whether or not the latter can or should be completely eliminated from a personally meaningful religious faith.”⁹¹ While frugal, Wesley did not lead an ascetic life. As Stoeffler again pointed out, “Their [Pietists] aim was to show the Church and the world a way of life which takes seriously the Christian ethic as they understood it and which takes seriously the development of Christian character.”⁹² Many of the actions and emphases of Wesley fit in the overall characteristics Stoeffler presented when it comes to Piety. He noted, “As Pietism and the revival of dynamic preaching go hand in hand so do Pietism and the revival of pastoral work, such as catechization, home visitation, and the deep concern of the pastor for the spiritual and moral problems of the people. This was the common source of motivation

⁸⁹Stoeffler, 22.

⁹⁰Ibid. 3.

⁹¹Ibid. 10-11.

⁹²Ibid. 12.

for Samuel. Second, Piety had an interest in “edificatory literature” and so did Samuel. He read it, wrote it, and recommended it to all who would listen. He maintained a life-long interest in missions, volunteering himself early and later in life, ruling the fact he was too old to go as a missionary. His age did not prevent him from recommending his sons. He also involved himself in social outreach involving the poor, those in jail, and slavery. Again Stoeffler has added, “The beginnings of the social outreach of the Church are in no small part the result of the Pietistic impact, especially as that impact made itself felt in the evangelical movement in Britain.”⁹³ These efforts included positions against slavery, prison reform, work with the poor, and mass education through literature.⁹⁴ Samuel was invested in all of these efforts. What is most significant is that Wesley’s interest preceded the efforts of those who would follow him. As already noted, he encouraged John and Charles in their prison visitation while at Oxford as he had done when he, too, had been a student. He volunteered himself for missionary service on two different occasions. Most remarkable, however, was his view of slavery. He laid it out in detail when he answered a question on the merits of slavery in the *Athenian Oracle*.

*Wesley’s Position on Slavery. Question: Whether trading for negroes [Negroes], i.e. carrying them out of their own country into perpetual slavery, be in it self unlawful, and especially contrary to the great law of christianity?*⁹⁵

⁹³Stoeffler, 4.

⁹⁴Ibid. 4-5.

⁹⁵This final question in volume one is misnumbered, following page 544. It must have been added at the end since there already were pages 529-532.

His answer to this question was a most remarkable response concerning the enslavement of African people. His position regarding the legitimacy and morality of slavery was enlightened in his day. “After a mature and serious consideration of the question propos’d I . . . cannot see how such a trade (tho’ much us’d by christians) can be any way justified, and fairly reconciled to the christian-law.”⁹⁶ He first argued against it and then dealt with five common contemporary defenses of the slave trade made by advocates of slavery. In sum, he argued: It is contrary to “the great law of nature of doing unto all men as we would they should do unto us, and which as our Saviour tells us, (Mat vii. 22.) is the sum of the law and the prophets:”⁹⁷ It is “contrary to the word of God, and forbidden both in the Old Testament, and in the New: See Exod. xxi. 16. ‘He that steal a man, and selleth him or if he be found in his hands, he shall surely be put to death.’”⁹⁸ “Liberty is as dear as life it self; yea, he that intends to sell a man into some kind of bondage, would do him a greater kindness to free him from a miserable life.”⁹⁹ He cited Paul in the New Testament (I Tim. 1.10), where a “man-stealer” is joined “with the most horrid and unnatural sinners. Murderers of father, and murderers of mother and defilers of themselves with ma(n)kind.”¹⁰⁰ Third, “Its practice is a disgrace to christianity, and makes the name of Christ to be blasphem’d among the Gentiles,” and

⁹⁶Dunton. *Athenian Oracle*, 1:529.

⁹⁷Ibid. In 1688, the “Golden Rule” was also used by four Germantown, Pennsylvania Quakers to substantiate their protest of slavery. (from chronology).

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid. Wesley’s sense throughout his defense was that individuals have distinct rights whose source is the Creator. This principle was consistent with John Locke’s thinking at that time.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

“hinders the propagation of the christian faith in the world.”¹⁰¹ He maintained that if “fair trade” had been offered to them in Africa as it had to “the poor infidels of New England . . . they might have been in a great forwardness to receive that holy doctrine, which now they hate and abominate for the sake of this practice of christians amongst them – and wee be to that person, that shall by any means hinder that blessed design for which Christ came from heaven.”¹⁰²

Wesley then responded to six pleas by those who would justify slavery. First, that “we do not steal them, but make a Lawful purchase of them.”¹⁰³ His answer, “Purchase them (for toys and baubles) perhaps you may, but lawfull I am sure you cannot: For they which fell them do steal them, or take them away by violence . . . We are they that call our selves christians, that encourage them in such evil practices, our law (in many cases looks upon the accessory as bad as the thief; I am sure the law of God does, *Prov. xxix. 24. whoso is partner with a thief, hateth his own soul.*”¹⁰⁴ “The Psalmist sees it as a great crime, *Psal. 50:18*”; and the “learned Bishop [Joseph] Hall [1574-1656], in his *Decade of Cases of Conscience* Decade I. Case 10. Page 66 [1654], resolves this case, that to buy those goods which we know or have just cause to suspect are stolen or plundered, is no better than to make our selves accessory to the theft.” Wesley

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Dunton, 1:529-530.

¹⁰³Ibid., 1:530.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

maintained that a person was equally culpable if one participated “with that thief which stole them, and encourage[d] him in his lewd practices.”¹⁰⁵

The second plea was that “most of them are taken prisoners of war by one petty prince from another, and sold by the conqueror.” He asked, who is the cause of the war? and answered, it was the traders who, “send presents to some petty prince . . . to make war with his neighbouring prince.”¹⁰⁶

The third plea defending slavery addressed the character of the slaves. He thought those men [slaves] to be more heathens than pagans. Samuel asked in response, do the slaves not have “a common right to those temporal blessings which an indulgent creator has given them as well as we? Is dominion founded in grace? May a man that is pleased to call himself a christian, under that notion, wrong or molest such as had not the happiness to be born in a christian country? Did our Lord and master . . . give us any such example when in the world?” Did not “the apostle bid us do good unto all men, and especially unto the household of faith . . . or at least to do no wrong to meer pagans and infidels?”¹⁰⁷

The fourth plea asked, “Did not the Jew by [buy] slaves . . . and may we not do what God’s own people did?” First Wesley responded, “That the judicial law of Moses is made void, and no rule for christians to walk by, who (as says the apostle) are not under the law, but under grace.”¹⁰⁸ And second, even if one held slaves one should treat them

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., *Athenian Oracle*, 1: 530-531.

¹⁰⁸Dunton, *Athenian Oracle*, 1: 531.

as the Jews themselves were commanded. “They were obliged to bring them up in the true religion . . . and be kind and loving towards them.”¹⁰⁹

The fifth plea was that “the law of our land allows it.”¹¹⁰ Wesley flat out disagreed. “The law of our land is so far from allowing it, that if an infidel be brought into this kingdom, as soon as he can give an account of the christian faith, and desires to be baptized, any charitable, lawful minister may do it, and then he is under the same law with other christians.”¹¹¹ With regard to England’s colonies, “‘Tis their great *Diana*,¹¹² by this craft they have their gain, and therefore we can never expect that they should make any private or by-laws ever so much silent in this case, he that will do any thing that the law, (which can never provide in all cases) does not plainly forbid, *would be but a bad subject, and I’m sure a worse christian*.”¹¹³

Sixth, he responded to the argument “that slavery makes of them, better . . . helping those useless creatures to become greatly advantageous to mankind, bringing them into a happier condition, and many of them become good christians.”¹¹⁴ Wesley’s impatience came through this response, “How dare we pretend to order things better than an All-wise law-giver has plainly commanded us, or think to put those poor wretches to

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Acts 19:23-41. Using this story from Acts, Wesley compares the slavers with those whom made idols of Diana to sell to whomever would buy them. He used this passage to critique the practice of slave trade.

¹¹³Dunton, *Athenian Oracle*, 1: 531. (My emphasis).

¹¹⁴Ibid.

better use than an all-wise Providence seems as yet to have design'd them for? If they came freely, what need a cargo be carried to purchase 'em? What need of chains and bolts and fetter? And why do many of those poor wretches endeavour to starve or destroy themselves, or leap over-board, if so mighty glad of being carried into perpetual slavery?" "If they are so happy with their bondage than in their own country, then why when one of their fellows dies, they "sing and rejoice, and dance about him, as foolishly concluding he is happily return'd to his own country?"¹¹⁵ Some may become Christians, but it is "more than the seller knows or any way obliges the purchaser to, neither can that atone for the rest."¹¹⁶

He concluded, with what he says should either convince or at least to "render the case extraordinary dubious, and then the safer part is to be chosen, especially in this case, where if (we are afterward convinced we have done those poor wretches any wrong) *we can never make them restitution.*"¹¹⁷

Wesley embraced the orthopraxy more than the orthodoxy of pietism. His orthopraxy is evident in his oppositive position to slavery. His statement reflected a remarkable viewpoint in light of how early it was presented. His answer to the question of slavery showed that was an early abolitionist and anticipated a similar stance of his sons, Samuel, Jr. and John forty and one hundred years later, respectively.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵Ibid. 532.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Dunton, *Athenian Oracle*, 1: 532. (My emphasis)

¹¹⁸John's writings and position on slavery are well known being presented in his pamphlet, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774) and his final letter to encourage William Wilberforce in the struggle against slavery. Samuel, Jr.'s position was expressed in an accolade to James Oglethorpe's work, sometimes (inaccurately) attributed to his father, "To break their Chains, see Oglethorpe was born!" quoted in Amos Ettinger's

Practical Piety for Samuel

Letters from Samuel Wesley to his son, Samuel. Samuel's expressions of practical piety are seen in his intimate correspondence with his son, Samuel, Jr. These letters stand in stark contrasts to the accounts of Samuel's dealings with Hetty and reveal Samuel at his best in relationship with a family member. He began these occasional letters in order to facilitate and guide the thinking his oldest son, Samuel, Jr. It should be of no surprise Samuel began the first letter emphasizing personal piety. Wesley defined piety as person's "duty towards God." It is not apparent in his writings that he saw Pietism as a greater movement which was influencing the world, (unless it was the impact of Pious actions manifesting itself within the confines of a local society or church). He most definitely did see Piety as a religious orientation within Christianity, and practiced in the early church and by the early church fathers. He also noted others, such as the Catholic de Rente as living a pious life. An interesting element of practicing piety was Samuel's understanding that there were levels or steps toward piety which can be taken and reached. He did not believe a person could "arrive" and reach a state of perfect piety. Rather, he articulated this understanding by using the term 'degrees,' a word which occurred frequently in his writings and one which he probably borrowed from *The Whole Duty of Man* where it was also used.¹¹⁹

Oglethorpe: a Brief Biography (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 96. See also *Eighteenth Century Life*, 24.1: 88-102 in particular, 95.

¹¹⁹For example, in one of Samuel's last letters, November 20, 1734 he wrote attempting to persuade John to take the Epworth Parish after his death, "It is not dear self but the glory of God, and the *different degrees* of promoting it which should be our main consideration in the choice of any course of life." Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 422.

All his efforts espoused the practice of Piety to the faithful within the Church. An example of his efforts is seen in his first letter to his eldest son who upon reaching age sixteen wrote what his father hoped would be monthly letters. Samuel, Sr. began with piety as the foundation for which everything is established. He wrote out of his own experience and passed it on to Samuel, Jr. in the hope that he would likewise embrace what his father was offering him by way of advice:

Dear Child,

January 14, 1706

Most of what I write to you will be the result of my own dear-bought experience, on such heads as I think will be most proper and useful for you in your present circumstances . . . and I shall begin, as I ought, with piety, strictly so called, or your *duty towards God*, which is the foundation of all happiness; I mean your immediate duty to Him, both in public and private: as for your morals, I shall send my thoughts hereafter.” It is one’s duty to serve God. “This service must begin at the heart by fearing and loving Him; the way to attain this happy temper is, often to contemplate deeply and seriously His attributes and perfections, especially His omniscience, omnipresence, and justice for the former, and His generous beneficence and love to mankind to excite the latter, especially that amazing instance of it, His sending His Son to die for us, which that excellently pious youth Charles Goodall . . . could never reflect upon without rapture and admiration, as I find by his papers now in my hands, and which perhaps you and the public may some time have a sight of.”¹²⁰

Samuel introduced the discipline of piety to his son with stringent terms of striving in prayer out of duty. The discipline of prayer was essential to remaining constant, lest a person allows love of God to diminish. “Another way to preserve and increase piety is to exercise it in constant and fervent devotion” practiced in “constant secret prayer, as I know not how any can be wicked while he conscientiously discharges that duty.” Neglect of this kind of prayer led people to “find our piety sensibly abate, our love wax cold, and all that is good ready to run to ruin.”¹²¹

¹²⁰Stevenson, *Memorials*, 96-97.

¹²¹Stevenson, *Memorials*, 97.

Second, Samuel reminded his son of the necessity of daily reading of the Bible.

“With these are to be enjoined the daily reading of God’s Word, on no occasion to be omitted, and that with care and observation, especially a particular regard to such passages as more immediately concern your own case, and the state of your soul.”¹²² For Samuel, the daily reading of the word of God nourished the soul.

Third, was a practice that we know for certain that John and Charles would practice: keeping a journal. Samuel recommended it first to Samuel, Jr. “Next to this, I can scarce recommend anything that would more conduce to the advancement of true piety than your Christian diary, as you will find if you reflect, as I have often desired you, on the true reasons why you have so often intermitted it, and the effects of your doing so.”¹²³

Summarizing, Samuel’s understanding of piety, duty, and practicing devotion stemmed from the influence of *The Whole Duty of Man*, in which he was thoroughly steeped. Piety was not something which a person stumbled across, but an attribute that could be gained through faithful exertion by the person who sought God. Piety was gained through both public and private devotion. It was corporate, within the church, and private, from solitary reflection. The former was gained through worship in the church, reading the Bible, hearing the sermon, reciting the liturgy (which included the newer cathedral music), and participation in the Sacrament. These all taught the essence of true devotion. While they shaped the devotee’s life, it was always with an eye on the ultimate prize of heaven.

¹²²Stevenson, *Memorials*, 97.

¹²³Stevenson, *Memorials*, 97.

The next letter expounded on the pious experience one gained from participation in public or corporate worship. A person was to remain focused on the prayer book, the Bible, and the priest as he read them so that one's mind did not wander. Samuel praised the value of music, particularly the newer strains of Tate and Brady rather than the stodgy, old Sternhold-psalms.¹²⁴ In this area of music, Samuel was more progressive than most. He believed music could raise the spirit of the worshiper.

The purpose of the sermon had a particular pietistic strain for Samuel. It served as God's means for the conversion of humanity. Stoeffler has affirmed this aspect of pietistic preaching, "It was the Pietistic Puritans in Great Britain and the Pietists on the Continent, who, impelled by a great religious ideal, focused their preaching and writing upon a moral reformation in church and State through individual regeneration."¹²⁵

Wesley considered the Sabbath Day as holy, that is especially set aside as "the most precious thing in the world," to focus on one's soul, and acts of piety such as communion with God in prayer and praise.¹²⁶ He does not address the "blessed sacrament" in order to address it at another time.

Epworth, August 15th, 1706

¹²⁴Stevenson noted, "Mr. Wesley, sen., appears to have had a mean opinion of 'Sternhold-psalms,' as he calls them. In his "Advice to a Young Clergyman," he says: "But we must be content with it, where we cannot reach anthems and cathedral music; and so we must b, for aught I can see, with grandsire Sternhold, since there may be more than is generally believed in that observation of good Bishop Beveridge, that 'our common people can understand those psalms better than those of Tate and Brady;' for I must own they have a strange genius at understanding nonsense." 99.

¹²⁵Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 20.

¹²⁶Stevenson, *Memorials*, 99.

Dear Child, My last related to that part of piety which is to be exercised between God and your own soul; this will refer to public devotion, which, you know, is our due homage to Almighty God, as we are sociable creatures, and never ought to be neglected, unless in cases of unavoidable necessities, as sickness and the like . . . keep your eye on the prayer book or Bible, and let your eye go along with the priest, which will keep your thoughts from wandering.

We shall find church music a great help to our devotion, as it notably raises our affections towards heaven.

This has been “the experience of all good men, unless they have been dunces or fanatics; nay, even the latter confess the same of their own sorry Sternhold-psalms, which is infinitely inferior to our cathedral music. [as opposed to Tate and Brady, see footnote 124]

Be very attentive to the sermon . . . this being God’s ordinance for the conversion of mankind, and the Church’s edification, or [and the] increase in charity and knowledge.

Remember the Sabbath. Have a particular respect to the religion of the Sabbath . . . value highly that time.

I shall not write anything to you concerning receiving the blessed Sacrament, till towards spring.¹²⁷

A third letter emphasized that the practice of Piety included more than one’s relationship or duty to God. It also encompassed a second obligation to humanity which began with duty to a person’s parents. He believed that disobedience to one’s parents was the “mother of all other vices.”¹²⁸

Epworth, September, 1706

“Dear Child, The second part of piety regards your duty towards your parents.”¹²⁹

This obligation was based on Scripture and reason; even if parents neglected and abandoned their child, the older child [even as an adult] was still obligated honor them. Samuel pointed out to his son that this was not the case with Susanna; he had the best of

¹²⁷Stevenson, *Memorials*, 98-99.

¹²⁸Stevenson, *Memorials*, 100.

¹²⁹Stevenson, *Memorials*, 100.

mothers in her. “You will endeavour to repay her prayers for you by doubling yours for her, as well as your fervency in them.”¹³⁰

A fourth letter expanded the practice of piety to moral behavior and the governance of a person’s passions in relating to neighbors:

Epworth, November, 8th, 1706

“Dear Child, After piety to God and your parents, your morals will fall next under consideration; or, your duty toward yourself and your neighbour, as to the governing of your passions and your appetites, wherein consists the wisdom and happiness of man, as a reasonable and sociable creature, and at least two-thirds of your religion; namely, what relates to a righteous and sober life.”¹³¹

“Justice can never subsist where there is not true piety as the bottom, or a belief and a fear of God as the Witness and Judge of all our actions.”

“The general rules of justice are short and easy—“Doing as you would be done by, and loving your neighbour as yourself.”

“As the regiment of your passions, all the rest depend, in a great measure, on these two—love and hatred, or rather anger. Indeed there is but one object of our love, where we cannot transgress in loving too much; and that is God, who is ‘love.’”¹³²

“As for hatred; I interpret those Scriptures which speak of hating the wicked, etc., as relating chiefly to their vices, for which we ought always to have a just abhorrence. If it be true, it is not easy to separate the person from the crime.”

¹³⁰Stevenson, *Memorials*, 102.

¹³¹Stevenson, *Memorials*, 102.

¹³²Stevenson, *Memorials*, 103.

This letter illustrated the moral aspect of piety. He believed devotion to God and lived out piety (moral behavior) toward a neighbor were yoked together. A person could not claim to be pious (attend church, etc.) and not be upstanding morally before one's neighbors and in personal conduct. Piety had a social or societal dimension which could not be avoided or neglected. If it was neglected, then a person's actions did not demonstrate true piety. True piety had an essential element of virtue and justice. Samuel summed up this Christian obligation as "Doing as you would be done by, and loving your neighbour as yourself."¹³³

The second part of the letter included Wesley's strategy on how he dealt with his passions. He gave his son the specifics of loving one's neighbor while managing one's passions towards them. First, Samuel tried to divert his hatred toward the devil rather than the person, but acknowledged that it was "not easy to separate the person from the crime."¹³⁴ Second, he appealed to a gradual process of making progress or degrees. "I do not know whether I have not already told you that there never was a truly great man who could not bridle his passions. As for the tongue, it is easier; but it is possible to go to the very root, and, by degrees, and time, and application, to subdue or chastise even the inward motion of our blood and spirits, so far, at least, as if they do stir a little on the sudden apprehension of an affront or injury"¹³⁵ This strategy did not condone hypocritical thinking where a person justified behavior because one was not yet perfect. Samuel was emphasizing piety that progressed by degrees. It was rather continuous striving by

¹³³Stevenson, *Memorials*, 102.

¹³⁴Stevenson, *Memorials*, 103.

¹³⁵Stevenson, *Memorials*, 103.

degrees to develop a “Christian temper” which kept a person from “inviting injuries” and over the course of time allowed insults to not affect one’s negative behavior, leaving “little or no impression.”¹³⁶

Epworth, December 20th, 1707

“All I shall write will be in prosecution of my former letters, particularly that relation to your morals. I there gave you some hints, learned from my own dear experience, which may not be unuseful as to the government of the passions.”¹³⁷

These letters of Samuel to his son show him at his unguarded best. He wrote these letters reflecting the best hopes and desires of a father toward a favored son. Unlike his other writings to a wide audience which would be examined, dissected, and challenged, these show the open heart and mind of Samuel, one which advocated fervent piety.

Poetry: Tributes to Pious People. A final area where Samuel identified piety was in the lives of those whom he believed lived piously. He expressed his recognition through poetry. The poetry which Samuel wrote has been harshly critiqued. Dunton would dismiss it as “too much by two-thirds,” namely too rushed.¹³⁸ Others, for example, Palmer, would say Samuel wrote and dedicated it, to enhance his chances at better preferments. To the former, Samuel admitted as much. He was always in a rush to write as much as possible and never seemed to have enough paper. [See his closing to his letter

¹³⁶Stevenson, *Memorials*, 103.

¹³⁷Stevenson, *Memorials*, 104.

¹³⁸Adam Clarke’s assessment as well. *Memoirs*. 113.

to Mr. Smith.] As for the latter, this he denied. As early as 1692, in his Ormsby letter, he acknowledges that rising very high would not be in his future. “Haveing the curacy of another place about a mile or two from my won not long since added to my fortunes: with which tho’ I have now buried all my foolish hopes of makeing any large figure or being of any generall use to the world . . .”¹³⁹ Those to whom he dedicated his writings, he wrote out of regard for their upstanding piety whether they were regal or relatives. Samuel wrote out of the pleasure it gave him and he hoped the same for others. His goal was not to produce technically perfect poetry, but to offer perfect expressions of his affection to the recipients he intended the piece. This intention was recognized by Samuel, Jr. as he noted the pietist basis of his father’s poetry. In Samuel, Jr.’s elegy to his Samuel, he wrote:

He sung how God the Saviour deign’d to expire,
 With Vida’s piety though not his fire;
 Deduced his Maker’s praise from age to age,
 Through the long annal of the sacred page;
 And not inglorious was the poet’s fate,
 Liked and rewarded by the good and great;
 For gracious smiles not pious Anne denied,
 And beauteous Mary bless’d him when she died.¹⁴⁰

Samuel must have been successful in conveying this latter desire as he received requests to write both tributes and eulogies.

Adam Clarke noted the moral tone of Wesley’s poetry which were “always employed in the cause of truth and moral purity.”¹⁴¹ Samuel acknowledged this purpose

¹³⁹Beecham, “Samuel Wesley Senior: New Biographical Evidence” *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, v. VII (1963), 108.

¹⁴⁰Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 449.

¹⁴¹Clarke, *Memoirs*, 103.

in his *The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: a Heroic Poem, in Ten Books*. Dedicated to her most Sacred Majesty, Queen Mary. 1693. He wrote, “In forming an Heroic-poem, the first thing they tell us we ought to do, is to pitch on some moral truth, which we desire to enforce on our reader, as the foundation of the whole work.”¹⁴² “The last thing in our definition, is, the end of epic, indeed the first and principal which ought to be intended, and that’s instruction, not only, as [Nicolas] Rapin [1535-1608] thinks, of great men, but of all. As in *Virgil’s* Scheme, which we have already described; and this either by the principal moral aim’e at in the whole, or the manners of particular persons.”¹⁴³

The following titles illustrate some of the notable people Samuel wished to honor with heroic poetry for their pious living: *Elegies on Queen Mary, and on Archbishop Tillotson*. 1695. This writing was criticized as overdrawn by Samuel’s contemporary, Samuel Palmer and later by Adam Clarke. Wesley represented Queen Mary as being received by “the martyr Charles stooping from heaven to receive her.”¹⁴⁴ Palmer wrote of this depiction, “he could do no less than pay this piece of ceremony, and regale her in the highest manner for taking possession of her father’s throne, and filling it better than he did himself.”¹⁴⁵ Clarke commented, “Great and good as both the queen and the archbishop were, both the characters are sadly overdrawn, and their praise are extended

¹⁴²Wesley, *The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ*, (An Essay on Heroic Poetry), 1693. Preface.

¹⁴³Wesley, *The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ*, Preface.

¹⁴⁴Clarke, *Memoirs*, 122-123.

¹⁴⁵Clarke, *Memoirs*, 123.

even beyond poetic license.”¹⁴⁶ Samuel, was in a no win situation. Had he been less effusive, he also would have been criticized, particularly by Palmer who at that time looked for any way to make Wesley look bad.

A second example was Wesley’s *The History of the Old and New Testament, attempted inverse, and adorned with three hundred and thirty sculptures, engraved by J. Sturt*. 1704 Dedicated to ‘Our late Queen, of blessed memory.’ The queen of whom he spoke was again Mary, but also acknowledged the marchioness of Normanby who was still alive at the time. Clarke, considered it “mere pap, or milk and water, and could not expect ‘the estimation of the learned’”¹⁴⁷ Wesley’s intent was not to write to impress the learned, but to express his appreciation for those who lived pious lives.

Marlborough, or the Fate of Europe, 1705, was dedicated to the Right Honorable Master [Sidney] Godolphin [1645-1712]. Godolphin was a shrewd Tory financier and Lord High Treasurer of England from 1702-1710. Clarke’s opinion was mixed, the poem having both ‘merits and defects’. “It has many verses which contain beauties of the very first order; and it has others which are both lame and tame, and even worse than prose.”¹⁴⁸ Despite its defects, Clarke, feared the loss of the copy before him and had it printed in full in the appendix of the *Memoirs*, 611-624. Again, in this example, Samuel waxed eloquently and gave tribute to the Lord Marlborough’s victory and to ‘Master Godolphin’ who helped make victory possible for England in 1705.

¹⁴⁶Clarke, *Memoirs*, 123.

¹⁴⁷Clarke, *Memoirs*, 143.

¹⁴⁸Clarke, *Memoirs*, 184-5.

One of the most personal tributes was Samuel's eulogy for Elizabeth Annesley

Dunton, his sister-in-law on the occasion of her death.

Sacred urn! With whom we trust
 This dear pile of buried dust,
 Know thy charge, and safely guard,
 Till death's brazen gate's unbarred;
 Till the angel bids it rise,
 And removes to Paradise
 A wife obliging, tender, wise;
 A friend to comfort and advise;
 Virtue mild as Zephyr's breath;
 Piety, which smiled in death;
 Such a wife and such a friend
 All lament and ask comment.
 Most, with eating cares opprest,
 He who knew, and loved her best;
 Who her loyal heart did share,
 He who reigned unrivalled there,
 And no truce to sighs will give
 Till he die, with her to live.
 Or, if more he would compromise,
 Here interred Eliza lies.¹⁴⁹

Summary

Samuel exhibited multifaceted manifestations of Pietist emphases. He could not conceive of another way to live a fulfilled Christian life. Stoeffler's four templates of orthodox piety are evident in the life and thought of Wesley. It is clear that Samuel had distinct expressions of experiential piety, was a thorough going biblicist, had perfectionistic tendencies, especially when it came to judging the actions of others and his family, and believed that there must be an outward expression of pietist convictions. The illustrations from his life and writings clearly show that Samuel heaped praise on those who exemplified piety. In contrast, for

¹⁴⁹Stevenson, *Memorials*, 73.

those who did not, even if they were a part of his own family, were viewed otherwise in a more severe light. While the following quote expressed Wesley's satisfaction with his labors on his *Dissertations in Jobi*, his words equally reflect his passion for piety in people and in his writing, "On the whole, if aught that's here may be useful to any good Christian, and tend to promote piety, I shall be better pleased than if I could have composed a book on any other subject, worthy to be dedicated in the Vatican."¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰Clarke. 145.

CHAPTER FIVE

Religious and Intellectual Ties that Bind

Samuel's Impact on His Sons

One conclusion is universally agreed upon: Samuel Wesley was the father of John and Charles and that was and remains his greatest contribution. What is less clear is to what extent Samuel influenced all of his sons.¹ Encomiums are absent, but Samuel did not go unmentioned by John. Scattered among his writings, John made reference to his father as did Charles, though they are fewer in number.² Interestingly, the eldest son, Samuel, Jr., was the recipient of letters of encouragement beginning when he was sixteen. But it was John who has received the most attention from his father and to whom John turned to for advice and counsel in a number of areas.³

¹It is acknowledged that Samuel also had daughters, each of whom he had a unique relationship. While it is not my purpose to ignore them, their relationship has been discussed by Maldwyn Edwards in his *Family Circle* and fall beyond the scope of this paper.

²Charles left the Wesley household at the tender age of eight for his education at the Westminster School where his oldest brother, Samuel, Jr. was an usher. "At 8 years old, in 1716, I was sent by my father, Rector of Epworth, to Westminster school and placed under the care of my eldest brother, Samuel, a strict Churchman, who brought me up in his own principles." Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Sermons of Charles Wesley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13n45.

³This is not to dismiss the correspondence between John and his mother, Susanna as unimportant.

While John Wesley was insightful in some ways identifying ties with his father, he may have had some blind spots with regards to how his father influenced him. One of the ways he valued his father was his request for advice. This trust of his father's advice is evident in the correspondence between John and Samuel. This advice to John was not exceptional as Samuel also wrote to both Samuel, Jr. and Charles.

Relationship with John

Kenneth Collins at Asbury Theological Seminary, has written an informative piece on the correspondence between father and son.⁴ In it he points out that this correspondence amounted to about 120 letters written from 1724 to 1735, and of these only 32 survive.⁵ They are never-the-less substantial in content. From this small sampling, Collins presents a variety of topics discussed between Samuel and John. They included money issues,⁶ John's ordination,⁷ the prospect of John's

⁴Kenneth Collins, "John Wesley's Correspondence With His Father," *Methodist History* 26:1 (October 1987): 15.

⁵Ibid. 16, 24. There is an inconsistency in the number of letters. On page 24 he states, "Of the more than 160 letters which passed between John and Samuel, only 32 survive." On page 16 he said that 160 was the number of letters which passed between John and his mother, Susanna, not Samuel. I presume it should be 120 letters passed between John and Samuel.

⁶Ibid. 16.

⁷Ibid. 17.

gaining a fellowship at Lincoln College,⁸ doctrinal and ecclesiastical issues,⁹ and as one would expect, family matters.¹⁰

On money matters, while at Oxford, the son had the same monetary deficiencies his father had and continued to endure throughout his lifetime. Collins notes that during John's years as a fellow at Oxford he was frequently in debt. It would seem however, that aside from Samuel's first year (1684-1685),¹¹ while living frugally, he did not have money problems. He in fact left Oxford with more than what he came.¹²

When John asked for advice on preparing for his ordination, he solicited and received opinions from both Samuel and Susanna. Initially, Samuel expressed reluctance at the prospect of John seeking orders. "By all this you see I'm not for your going over hastily into Orders. When I'm for your taking 'em, you shall know it."¹³ Some have seen in this statement hesitation on Samuel's part. It is important to consider the larger context behind Samuel's advice which preceded this oft quoted text. He wrote, "As for what you mention of entering into holy orders, it is indeed a

⁸Ibid. 17-18.

⁹Ibid. 18.

¹⁰Ibid. 19.

¹¹I view this period as Wesley's true first year since the August 1683 was to assess the level of immorality at Oxford and he subsequently returned to London to further consider his decision to return or not.

¹²Wesley's defense of his poverty to his brother, Matthew, is printed in Tyerman, *Life and Times*, "When he [Samuel] first walked to Oxford he had in cash, £5, 5 sterling" and when he left Oxford, "By God's blessing on his own industry he brought to London, £10, 15 sterling." 440.

¹³Frank Baker, *Works of Wesley*, 25: 158.

great work; and I am pleased to find you think it so, as well as that you do not admire a callow clergyman any more than I do.¹⁴

John evidently had been questioning his own motives of first, money, second, ascetic discipline, third, discerning the true direction of the Holy Spirit, fourth, what should be the ultimate motive for entering orders, and fifth, adequate preparation. Samuel responded:

First, it is no harm to desire getting into that office, even as Eli's sons, "to eat a piece of bread," for "the labourer is worthy of his hire." Though, secondly, a desire and intention to lead a stricter life, and a belief one should do so, is a better reason; though this should by all means be begun before, or else, ten to one, it will deceive us afterwards. Third if a man be unwilling and undesirous to enter into orders, it is easy to guess whether he can say, so much as with common honesty, "that he believes he is moved by the Holy Spirit to do it." But, fourthly, the principal spring and motive to which all the former should be only secondary, must certainly be the glory of God, and the service of His Church, in the edification and salvation of our neighbour . . . For which, fifthly, he should take all the care he possibly can, with the advice of wiser and elder men . . . to qualify and prepare himself for it.¹⁵

Samuel continued, recommending facility in the scriptural languages, endorsement of Grotius's commentaries and his own designed "edition of the Holy Bible, in octavo, in the Hebrew, Chaldee, Seventy, and Vulgar Latin," and how to best use it for his study.¹⁶

Samuel had laid out a rigorous course of study which if completed would have necessitated structure, deliberation and time. He wanted John to be prepared. He stated, "By all this," meaning that Samuel knew there was much for John to do to prepare himself for orders. It is also as valid to see Samuel wanting John to take it slow, to be

¹⁴Stevenson, *Memorials*, 120. Letter, Wroote, January 26, 1724-5.

¹⁵Stevenson, *Memorials*, 120.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

prepared for this holy task, and not rush into it “hastily.” Samuel would soon encourage John in this endeavor. In a letter dated March 17, 1725, he wrote John, “I’ve changed my mind since my last, and now incline to your going this summer into orders . . .”¹⁷ Samuel then went on to recommend numerous books for his preparation for his orders.¹⁸ The extent of Samuel’s suggestions for readings in just the area of divinity can be assessed if one refers to his recommendations listed in John Dunton’s *The Young-students-library*.¹⁹

Samuel took seriously the invoking of vows and he no doubt would have vividly remembered both the seriousness of the times as well as the nature of his own ordination vows. He knew well the admonition from his *Book of Common Prayer* that “No man

¹⁷*Works*, 3rd ed. 1: 99.

¹⁸Frank Baker wrote of these recommendations, “Samuel Wesley’s commendations are so numerous that his son could hardly have been expected to encompass more than a fraction of the works listed during the eight months before his ordination . . . his diary proves, however, that he was indeed reading vigorously and methodically from April onwards, and reading works recommended by his father.” See Frank Baker, *John Wesley*, 16. The sheer number of books may partly explain Samuel’s initial advice not to pursue ordination hastily, knowing the time needed for preparation.

¹⁹John Dunton, *The Young Students library containing extracts and abridgments of the most valuable books printed in England, and in the foreign journals, from the year sixty five, to this time: to which is added a new essay upon all sorts of learning...by the Athenian Society*. London: John Dunton, 1692, iv. In this listing are included, Pool’s *Synopsis Criticorum*, and his other works; Dr. Hammond on the *New Testament*, with all his other works; H. Grotius’s *Commentary on the Old and New Testament*, and the rest of his works; Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History*; *T. vet. Biblia Sacra*; Bishop Andrews *Sermons*; *The Whole Duty of Man*; Dr. Hooker’s *Ecclesiastical Policy*; Dr. Comber *Upon Liturgies*; Bishop Burnet’s *Works*; Bishop Stillingfleet’s *Works*; All the [Church] Fathers, as St. Ambrose, &c.; Mr. Leigh’s *Critica Sacra*; Dr. Lightfoot’s *Works*; Dr. Preston’s *Works*; *Riveti controversia de Religione contra Papistas*; *The History of the General Councils*; Dr. Sherlock’s *Works*; Dr. Jeremy Taylor’s *Works*; Bishop Usher’s *Works*; Jurieu’s *Accomplishment of Prophecies*; Dr. Barrow’s *Works*; Dupin’s *Bibliothèque*; Altings’s *Works*; Episcopius his *Works*; Bishop Bramhalls’s *Works in four Tomes*, fol.; Hales’s *Remains*, in fol.; Bishop Hall’s *Contemplations upon the Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Holy Jesus*, fol. and eleven other works in Latin. Luke Tyerman lists a total of 89 books condensed from all disciplines in the *Young Student’s Library* in Appendix C, page 465 in *The Life and Times*.

shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon in the Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the said functions, except he be Called, Tried, Examined and Admitted thereunto, according to the Form hereafter following, or hath had formerly Episcopal Consecration or Ordination.”²⁰ One would assume that Wesley upon receiving his deacon’s orders would have sworn the oath of his allegiance to King James II. This oath would have remained binding on Samuel when he would subsequently take the vows for the priesthood the following February. The difference was, it was right after William and Mary’s coronation as the new king and queen of England. One wonders how Samuel came to terms with this apparent dual allegiance.²¹

The influence of Samuel was significantly profound in that John’s recollection of this period thirteen years later was different from what actually happened. When he wrote in his journal on May 24, 1738, he remembered nothing of his mother’s encouragement to use “this season of Lent . . . for your preparation for Orders, and I think the sooner you are a deacon the better.”²² Rather, he wrote, “When I was about twenty-two, my *father* [emphasis mine] pressed me to enter into holy orders.”²³

²⁰*Book of Common Prayer*, 1687. Preface of the “form and Manner of Making of Deacons.”

²¹Susanna Wesley, as a non-juror never affirmed the legitimacy of William II. This issue was the source of the great separation over Susanna’s refusal to say ‘Amen’ to Samuel’s prayer for King William.

²²Baker, *Works of Wesley*, 25: 160.

²³John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 1:99. John must have been twenty-three as *The Book of Common Prayer* required a candidate for deacon be “Twenty three years of age, unless he have a Faculty.” 1687 *Book of Common Prayer*, Preface to Deacon’s orders. Perhaps Samuel’s initial reluctance was John’s age disqualification.

John was cognizant of the importance his father placed on his ordination and came to appreciate the clerical heritage of his family. There were ministers on both Samuel's and Susanna's sides of the family. In John's later years, he would marvel that the Wesley family had multiple generations of clergy serving as the providence of God saw fit.²⁴

While Samuel gave no in-depth reference to his reasons for his own ordination, he in a number of places marked the dates of his ordination as deacon and priest in the Church. The most dependable account is in the Ormsby Letter. Just before Samuel graduated from Oxford, he wrote, "I continued in plenty and prosperity after this rub [the harsh winter of 1684] was over, till ready for my degree, about which time I was employed to transcribe some manuscripts in the Bodley, by which I gott [*sic*] money enough to take my degree."²⁵ In his *Dissenting Letter*, he corroborated this account with:

Here [at Oxford] I tarry'd, tho I met with some hardships I had before been unacquainted with, till I was standing sufficient, and then took my Batchellours Degree, and not being able to subsist there afterwards, came to London, during the time of my Lord Bishop of London's Suspension by the high Commission, and was Initiated in Deacon's Orders by my Lord Bishop of R.[ochester] at his Palace at B.[romley] Aug. 7th 1688; and on the 24th of February following, in St. Andrew's Church Holborn, was Ordained by the Lord Bishop of L.[ondon] a Priest of the Church of England; In whose Communion as I have lived now Comfortably and Happily these six Years past; so I hope to continue in it all my Life, and by the Grace of God to die in the same.²⁶

As Samuel alluded, it was an exciting time in London upon his arrival. The trial of the seven bishops had just ended with them being declared innocent of the charges

²⁴Kenneth Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 22.

²⁵Ms Ormsby Letter, 101. Beecham, "Samuel Wesley, Senior," 106.

²⁶Wesley, *Dissenting Letter*, 13.

made on them by King James II. So loathed was the king by the non-Catholic populace, they found themselves actually cheering for these Roman Catholic bishops who refused to support the king's Declaration of Indulgence.²⁷ It was the celebration of the bishops's acquittal, Samuel mentioned in his letter.

The aftermath of this power struggle between king and bishops had an effect on Samuel's ordination as a deacon. He normally would have been ordained by the Lord Bishop of London, Henry Compton, but Compton had been dismissed by the king. Compton, who was generally opposed to King James II Catholic reforms, refused to suspend John Sharp as rector at St. Giles's-in-the-Fields for the latter's anti-papal writings.²⁸ His suspension meant Wesley had to seek deacon's orders from Dr. Thomas Sprat, Bishop of Rochester who was more sympathetic to James (he had been the chaplain to Charles II).²⁹

With the ascension to the throne of William and Mary following the flight of James II to France, Bishop Compton was restored to his position as Bishop of London.

²⁷“James, liked to pose as the champion of toleration . . . he issued Declarations of Indulgences largely for the sake of trade and encouraging immigrants [and] declared his protection for the established Church but at the same time suspended all penal law against nonconformists, Roman Catholic and otherwise. This struck such a blow at the legislation of the previous reign that Sancroft and six other bishops, including Thomas Ken, petitioned the king to withdraw it, and, upon his declining to do so, refused to read it. As a result of this refusal the seven bishops were committed to the Tower and duly brought to trial.” J. R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England*, 3rd ed., (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1980), 262-263.

²⁸Tyerman, 115.

²⁹Sprat evidently had some political savvy (Tyerman called Sprat ‘Chameleon-like,’ 115), as he was able to keep his position through the reigns of both James II and William and Mary. Despite his unpopularity, (Sprat read James's Declaration of Indulgence to an empty Westminster Abbey), he participated in the coronation of William and Mary.

Within a month of William and Mary's coronation, Samuel was ordained a priest by Compton on February 24 1688/9. As his comments indicated, he embraced the change fully in the 'hope to continue in it all my Life.'

Through their letters we can gain glimpses of Samuel's intentional interventions on behalf of John. Collins sums up Samuel's activities to procure the Lincoln fellowship opening for John quite succinctly: "At Lincoln College during this time, there were three fellowships, one of which was vacated by John Thorold, on May 3, 1725. Upon learning this, Samuel Wesley immediately 'set about pressing his son's claims.' In a letter dated 2 August 1725, Samuel wrote to John, 'I was at Gainsboro' last week to wait on Sir John Thorold, [the father of one who had resigned] and shall again, by God's leave, tomorrow, to endeavor to make way for you from that quarter'"³⁰ In addition, Samuel Wesley related to John that he would make inquiries on his behalf to Mr. Morley, the Rector of Lincoln, to Richard Reynolds, the bishop of Lincoln, and lastly, to his son Samuel who had some influence as an usher at Westminster School.³¹

This advocacy for John on the part of Samuel was not an isolated instance but extended beyond family. Samuel also endorsed his son-in-law, John Whitelamb, (following John's wife, Mary Wesley's death) to James Oglethorpe for a part in the latter's Georgia debtor's colony. He lamented that if only he were younger, he, too, would also be a willing participant. He wrote to Oglethorpe, ". . . my heart has been working hard for Georgia . . . I had always so dear a love for your colony that if it had

³⁰Collins, 17.

³¹Collins, 17.

been but ten years ago, I would gladly have devoted the remainder of my life and labours to that place”³²

In a later letter to Oglethorpe, he wrote, “I cannot express how much I am obliged by your last kind and instructive letter concerning the affairs of Georgia. I could not read it over without sighing, when I again reflected on my own age and infirmities, which made such an expedition utterly impracticable for me.”³³ These were interventions which would prepare the way for John and Charles to accompany Oglethorpe to Georgia six months after Samuel’s death.

They corresponded on doctrinal issues. Samuel weighed the pros and cons of Thomas á Kempis on the mortification of the flesh with Samuel taking a moderate position between two extremes. “As for T. Kempis, all the world are apt to strain o’ one side or t’other. And ‘tis no wonder if contemplative men . . . when they observed how mad the bulk of the world was for sensual pleasures, should run the matter too far o’ the contrary extreme, and attempt to persuade us to have no senses at all . . . But for all that, mortification is still an indispensable Christian duty.”³⁴ John, in his later years, would continue to hold á Kempis in high regard, recommending him to Sammie Wesley, Charles’s son, for his edification and hoped for evangelical conversion.³⁵

³²Tyerman, 428. Epworth, Nov. 7, 1734.

³³Tyerman, 430. Epworth, Dec. 7, 1734.

³⁴Collins, 18. Cf. Baker, *Works of Wesley*, 25: 171.

³⁵Rack, *DNB*, “Samuel Wesley, son of Charles”.

In one letter, they discussed Mr. Ditton's *Discourse on the Resurrection of Christ* and his understanding of the origin of evil.³⁶ Doctrinally they were close. John printed Samuel's *Discourse on Baptism* word for word in 1758.³⁷ According to Edwards, this indicated John shared his father's views. "In his sermon on 'The New Birth' John Wesley allowed that a man may be 'born of water' and yet not 'born of the Spirit'. Samuel affirmed that in baptism, we are 'so far regenerate as to be grafted into the body of Christ's Church'. It was not that regeneration is completed, but only begun, in baptism; a 'principle of grace is infused, which we lost by the fall, which shall never wholly be withdrawn, unless we quench God's Holy Spirit by obstinate habits of wickedness.'"³⁸

Maldwyn Edwards maintained that both John and Charles followed their father's plea to "communicate frequently." "[John] Wesley communicated every four or five days and also conducted communion services constantly at which hundreds of Methodist communicants were present."³⁹ While this frequency was more often than what Samuel appealed for in his *Pious Communicant*, it was consistent with his desire that the faithful observe communion more regularly.

John would fully embrace Samuel's view of grace and affirm human freedom to repent and gain salvation offered by God. "For Samuel repudiated the doctrines of election and reprobation. He would not believe that there was an election of a

³⁶Edwards, 20-21.

³⁷Samuel's discourse on baptism is found in his *Pious Communicant*, 1700.

³⁸Maldwyn Edwards, *Family Circle* (New York: The Epworth Press, 1949), 41.

³⁹Edwards, 43.

determinate number such as ‘puts a force on their natures and irresistibly saves them, or absolutely excludes all the rest of mankind from salvation.’ He argued that only those would be condemned who remained impenitent.⁴⁰ “‘God,’ he said, ‘has offered the pardon of all sin, and the right to life in Christ, to all men without exception, on condition of believing and acceptance. God will save me, if I depend on Him and obey His commands.’”⁴¹ John also addressed this issue in his “The Case of Reason impartially considered”⁴²

On practical matters it has been frequently stated that Samuel did not deal with practical divinity, but that John preferred to consult with Susanna. This thinking is oversimplified as John did seek out his father’s opinion in practical ministry. One instance was when he wrote to his father soliciting his advice on the wisdom of continuing the then struggling Holy Club at Oxford.

The “Holy Club” as it was latter called⁴³ had its origin with Charles. Kenneth Newport at the University of Liverpool quotes Charles’s account:

In 1727 I was elected student of Christ-church. My brother John was then fellow of Lincoln. My first year at College I lost in diversions. The next I set myself to study. Diligence led me into serious thinking. I went to the weekly sacrament, and persuaded 2 or three young scholars to accompany me, and to observe the method of study prescribed by the statutes of the University. This gained me the harmless nickname of Methodist. In half a year my brother left his

⁴⁰Edwards, 44.

⁴¹Edwards, 44.

⁴²See *Works*, vol. vi, 350ff as cited in Edwards, 45.

⁴³See Richard Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodist History* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1989), 65.

curacy at Epworth, and came to our assistance. We then proceeded regularly in our studies, and in doing what good we could to the bodies and souls of men.⁴⁴

John, who would later become a part of the group and assume its leadership by virtue of his age and status as a priest, was beginning to question whether it was of practical use.

He described his thoughts, “In November, 1729, at which time I came to reside at Oxford, your son, my brother, myself, and one more, agreed to spend three or four evenings in a week together. Our design was to read over the classics, which we had before read in private, on common nights, and on Sunday some book in divinity.”⁴⁵

The group developed to include outreach which involved jail ministry at the encouragement of one member of the group, William Morgan.⁴⁶ John and Charles accompanied a man condemned “to the castle” and subsequently thought it good to continue this work. “In this employment to, when we came to reflect upon it, we believed it would be worthwhile to spend an hour or two in a week; provided the Minister of the parish, in which any such person was, were not against it.”⁴⁷

This approach was what Samuel suggested in his September 21, 1730 letter. “Go on, then, in God’s name, in the path to which your Saviour has directed you, and that track wherein your father has gone before you. For when I was an undergraduate at

⁴⁴Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Sermons of Charles Wesley*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14. Ms John Rylands, MARC DDWES 1/38.

⁴⁵John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., v. 1, 6.

⁴⁶Martin Schmidt, *A Theological Biography*, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 104.

⁴⁷John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 1:6.

Oxford, I visited those in the castle there, and reflect on it with great satisfaction to this day. Your first regular step is to consult with him who has a jurisdiction over the prisoners, and the next is to obtain the direction and approbation of your bishop.”⁴⁸

What is additionally revealing was John’s interest in seeking out his father’s opinion of this work already in place. His question seemed to seek approval as much as advice. “But that we might not depend wholly on our own judgments, I wrote to my father of our whole design; withal begging that he, who had lived seventy years in the world, and seen as much of it as most private men have ever done, *would advise us* whether we had yet gone too far, and whether we should now stand still, or go forward.”⁴⁹ Samuel thought not. His response was a wholehearted endorsement, encouraging them to continue in this work. Had John not valued his father’s insight into a particularly practical area, he would not have inquired. One wonders if Samuel had disapproved would John have discontinued or disbanded the group. Such, however, was not the case as Samuel’s response was an enthusiastic, *Valde probo*.⁵⁰

This paternal support was ongoing as correspondence and encouragement continued right up to Samuel’s death: “Be never weary of well-doing: Never look back; for you know the prize and the crown are before you . . . the less you value yourselves for these unfashionable duties, (as there is no such thing as works of supererogation), the more all good and wise men will value you.”⁵¹

⁴⁸Stevenson, *Memorials*, 131. Letter, Epworth, September 21, 1730.

⁴⁹Ibid. (My emphasis).

⁵⁰“I greatly approve.”

⁵¹John Wesley, *Works*, 1:9.

Years after Samuel's death, in a letter dated Newcastle, November 16, 1742, a gentleman wrote to John asking for his father's method in pastoral ministry. John's response was revealing, "My father's method was to visit all his parishioners, sick or well, from house to house, to talk with each of them on the things of God, and observe severally the state of their souls. What he then observed he minuted down in a book kept for that purpose. In this manner he went through his parish three times. He was visiting it the fourth time round, when he fell into his last sickness."⁵²

Relationship with Charles

It is generally agreed that Charles Wesley (1707-1788) was born in December 18, 1707, the fifteenth or sixteenth child of Samuel and Susanna Wesley.⁵³ He was initially taught by his mother, Susanna. It is difficult to attribute direct influence of Samuel on Charles. For one, the time of his living within the rectory was much more brief than any other member of the family. In 1716, when Charles was about eight or nine, he was sent away to the Westminster school in London by Samuel. His oldest brother, Samuel, Jr. would become in essence, his surrogate father for the next five years.⁵⁴ In 1721 he became a King's Scholar at Westminster and on June 13, 1726 matriculated at Christ

⁵²Stevenson, *Memorials*, 154.

⁵³Kenneth Newport writes, "The precise date of Charles's birth is not altogether clear, though it was in 1707, almost certainly in December, and in all probability on the 18th day of that month." Charles wrote in his journal on 18 December, 1749, 'Mon. Dec. 18. My birthday. Forty years long have I now grieved and tempted God, proved him, and seen his works.' He was actually 42. *The Sermons of Charles Wesley*, 11 and 11n34. See also Frederick C. Gill, *Charles Wesley: The First Methodist* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), 17.

⁵⁴Tabraham, 10.

Church, Oxford which was followed with a Westminster scholarship in 1727.⁵⁵ He graduated B.A. in 1730 and earned his M.A. in March 1733.⁵⁶ He would never live in Epworth again.

It was Charles who organized what would become the ‘Holy Club’ in his effort to reform his previous diversionary behavior during his first year at Oxford. In a letter to John he wrote, “My first year in college I lost in diversion. The next I set myself to study. Diligence led me into serious thinking. I went to the weekly sacrament and persuaded two or three young scholars to accompany me and to resume the method of study prescribed by the statutes of the university. This gained me the harmless nickname of Methodist.”⁵⁷ There is little doubt that Charles would have known of John’s correspondence concerning the ‘holy club’ and its continuance. John surely would have shared his father’s “I greatly approve” encouragement as well as his claim as the ‘grandfather’ of the group with the others. Samuel, wrote, “I hear my son has the honour of being styled the Father of the Holy Club. If it be so, I must be the grandfather of it; and I need not say that I had rather any of my sons should be so dignified and distinguished than to have the title of ‘His Holiness.’”⁵⁸

⁵⁵Henry D. Rack, “Charles Wesley” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 58 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 175. Letter to Dr. Chanler, 29 April 1785, MARC, DDWES/1/38.

⁵⁶Rack, 176.

⁵⁷Rack, 175.

⁵⁸Stevenson, *Memorials*. 132.

Of additional significance was the way Charles initially set up this gathering.⁵⁹

He did not have the organizational skills of John. He did follow a pattern which he was familiar, one he learned from Samuel and Susanna. “The pattern of devotion, study and fellowship that Charles had experienced at his home in Epworth was simply being repeated in Oxford.”⁶⁰ John Tyson of Houghton College sees piety first made manifest in Charles’s starting the “Holy Club.” It was there where “Methodist piety started to take shape.”⁶¹ This observation is true to the extent the ‘Holy Club’ marked the beginning of organized Methodist piety. But Samuel was also correct in granting himself a part in the establishment of piety as the ‘grandfather’ of the group. His past history at Oxford preceded their efforts and he was more than willing to fan the small flame of Methodist piety.

Secondly, there was not the same degree of correspondence between Samuel and Charles. According to Frank Baker, the earliest extant letter to his father was written between 1731 and 1735 and most were to his brother, Samuel.⁶² This first letter was during the last, difficult years of Samuel’s life and describes Charles’s feelings as the time of his father’s life draws to an end. “This spring we hope to have followed our inclinations to Tiverton, (where Samuel, Jr. lived) but are more loudly called another way. My father declines so fast, that before next year he will in all probability be at his

⁵⁹Barrie W. Tabraham’s chronology gives its beginning as March, 1729. *Brother Charles* (Peterborough, England: Epworth Press, 2003), 19.

⁶⁰Tabraham, *Brother Charles*, 16.

⁶¹John Tyson, *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 5.

⁶²Frank Baker, “Charles Wesley’s Letters” in *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 74.

journey's end; so that I must see him now, or never more with my bodily eyes."⁶³ There are glimpses which reflected affection toward his father as pointed out by Baker. Charles related his witness of the last moments of Samuel's life to Samuel Jr. "You have every reason to envy us, who could attend him [Samuel] in the last stage of his illness. The few words he could utter I saved, and hope never to forget . . . The fear of death he had entirely conquered, and at last gave up his latest human desires of finishing *Job*, paying his debts, and seeing you. He often laid his hand upon my head, and said, 'Be steady. The Christian faith will surely survive in this kingdom; you shall see it, though I shall not.'"⁶⁴

Another element of interest in these words is Samuel's insight into Charles' basic personality when he offered the admonition, "Be steady." It is readily acknowledged that Charles possessed a volatile personality and might need that word of grace. Barrie W. Tabraham, a British Methodist author observes, "From Samuel, Charles inherited his high-churchmanship, strict doctrinal orthodoxy and a deep reverence for the sacraments – all of which he retained throughout his life. He also shared his father's volatile, emotional nature. It was true that at times he could be as obstinate and as wrong-headed as his father, yet he surpassed both his brothers, Samuel and John in sociability, warmth and compassion."⁶⁵

There are elements in Charles' eucharistic theology which would also be in accord with his father, and the means by which Charles arrived at it. One manuscript

⁶³Tabraham, *Brother Charles*, 18.

⁶⁴Frank Baker, *Charles Wesley as Revealed by His Letters*, (Epworth Press, 1948), 19.

⁶⁵Tabraham, *Brother Charles*, 9.

treatise was “On the Weekly Sacrament” which advocated frequent and regular communion. His defense was derived from “the testimony of St. Luke in several passages of his Acts of the Apostles, of St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians,” and early church fathers, including “Tertullian, St. Justin the Martyr, the Apostolic Constitutions and lastly of the Roman, Pliny, to prove that the Holy Eucharist is to be celebrated every Lord’s Day at the least.”⁶⁶ Samuel would have been pleased with Charles’s methods of using both scripture and the tradition of the Church Fathers to arrive at this position. Wrote Charles, “I undertook, namely, that both Scripture and tradition do give plain evidence for the necessity of making at least a weekly oblation of the Christian sacrifice and of honouring every Lord’s Day with a solemn public celebration of the Lord’s Supper.”⁶⁷

Charles also reflected his father’s perspective with respect to their similarly shared views on biblical interpretation. First and foremost, Charles held to the primacy of scripture, over doctrines and experiences. He held to a literal sense, a spiritual sense and an experiential sense to gain a literal meaning from scripture.⁶⁸ With his father, Charles took liberties with his interpretation of scripture through the vehicle of poetry but stood firmly in the classical tradition they both shared.

Samuel’s Oxford education has been an often overlooked aspect of his life. It was formative in shaping Wesley’s lifelong interest in Oriental or Semitic languages. At the

⁶⁶Thomas R. Albin, “Charles Wesley’s Other Prose Writings” *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*. S.T. Kimbrough, Jr., ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 93.

⁶⁷Albin, 93.

⁶⁸Kimbrough, 109.

time of his matriculation in 1684, it was the foremost institution for teaching the Semitic languages. Edward Pococke had taught there for nearly fifty years and his reputation had spread to the extent that many came from the continent to study under his tutelage.

“During Pococke’s long reign as Laudian professor of Arabic (1636-1691) and regius professor of Hebrew (1648-1691), both the quality and level of teaching improved. He offered a comprehensive and distinct course of study, comprised of a balanced diet of scripture, Talmud, and, to break the monotony of biblical and legalistic instruction, a diversion to more pleasing literary works.”⁶⁹ His personality was one of gentle tolerance, who appreciated the scholarship of Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides).⁷⁰ Pococke also made use of Maimonides in his commentaries on Hosea, Joel, Micah, and Malachi.⁷¹ “The study of Maimonides had become seminal for advanced students of Hebrew in the Oxford of Pococke.”⁷² Pococke’s method of study was considered progressive in that he valued the contributions of Jewish scholars.

In addition, Pococke insured that the Bodleian Library would become the outstanding repository for the most extensive collection of Hebrew and Arabic manuscripts inclusive of all Europe. From 1670 to the end of the century, the library laid out considerable sums of money for the procurement of oriental manuscripts so that it became a Mecca to orientalists, surpassing the holdings of the French Royal Library.⁷³

⁶⁹Mordechai Feingold, *History of Oxford*, “Oriental Studies,” (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 463-4.

⁷⁰Feingold, *History of Oxford*, “Oriental Studies,” 465.

⁷¹Feingold, *History of Oxford*, “Oriental Studies,” 466.

⁷²Feingold, *History of Oxford*, “Oriental Studies,” 466.

⁷³Feingold, *History of Oxford*, “Oriental Studies,” 479.

Wesley's interest in the Semitic languages likely originated from this time. These studies at Oxford reflected Wesley's high regard for the Bible. His scholarship would be manifested in his contributions to the *Athenian Gazette* and *Young Student's Library*. His work was especially evident in his article on the Hebrew vowel pointings but also used in his sermons. His use of the ancient languages would ultimately culminate in his posthumously published *Dissertationes im Jobi*, written in Latin, but with extensive inclusions of Hebrew and Greek.

From the preceding it can be affirmed that Charles, "largely inherited from his father, an astute classical scholar, and from the rich classical education of the Westminster School in London and Oxford University.⁷⁴ He inherited a classical tradition which came to view biblical interpretation as having integrity when it was grounded securely in a mastery of biblical languages and saw the scriptures as being intelligible."⁷⁵ Charles "also stood outside that tradition, (like his father) for he interpreted Scripture with and through poetry."⁷⁶ Samuel was always encouraging his sons to express scripture through composing free verse of passages.⁷⁷

⁷⁴Samuel's interest in languages also showed itself in his encouragement of John to master the ancient languages.

⁷⁵Kimbrough, 110.

⁷⁶Kimbrough, 110.

⁷⁷Letter to Samuel, Jr. dated August 15, 1706, Samuel wrote, "Rob not yourself of so much pleasure and profit as you will find in your translations of the Bible into verse . . ." and Stevenson, noted, Samuel, Jr. did not "appear to have acted on this suggestion, but his younger brother Charles did, when he wrote his "Short Hymns on Select Passages of Holy Scripture. In two volumes 1762." *Memorials*, 99. To John, Samuel wrote, "I like your verses on Psalm lxxxv., and would not have you to bury your talent." Stevenson, 121. Samuel also encouraged Mr. Smith, the young man attending Cambridge in his writing verses, "If you have time to send me a paper of verses on the Author of the Book (but no thanks nor compliments)." Ms letter, Horncastle, July 6, 1696.

But also like his conservative father, Charles, having the tools of historical criticism, did not use them and “were not a force in his biblical interpretation.”⁷⁸ Though, unlike his father, he did not appropriate the rich resources of the rabbinic literature which Samuel had come to value in his understanding of difficult passages and explained cultural nuances.⁷⁹ Charles went beyond Samuel as he came to appreciate a more mystic view of scripture. “The study of scripture for him was an unending discovery of the spontaneous, the sacred, and the mysterious.”⁸⁰ He expressed this appreciation and had an outlet through his poetry.

Another pronounced way Charles resembled Samuel’s beliefs were in his steadfastness to the polity and order of the Church of England. Charles borrowed considerably from the Prayer Book as he did with scripture.⁸¹ This more likely stemmed from Charles’s tutelage under his brother Samuel, Jr. than from his father. Yet it was his father who initially reared Samuel in the traditions of the Church and indirectly influenced Charles. This support became more manifest with the increasing tension and disagreement between John and Charles over the role of Methodist lay preachers and

⁷⁸Kimbrough, 111.

⁷⁹Kimbrough, 112.

⁸⁰Kimbrough, 113. Charles may have been influenced by William Law in this regard. Cf. Kenneth Newport, *The Sermons of Charles Wesley*. 17-18. Rylands, MARC DDCW 5/1.

⁸¹Robin Leaver, “Charles Wesley and Anglicanism” *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992) 166. Leaver attests that Wesley’s “many allusions to the Book of Common Prayer are not mere quotation but rather sophisticated recreations of Prayer Book imagery, theologically understood and poetically expressed.” 167. Samuel quoted extensively from the *Book of Common Prayer* throughout his *Pious Communicant*.

whether they should administer the sacraments. The final point of contention was John's 1784 ordination of Thomas Coke which Charles could not bear. He could not compromise his Anglican principles even for his strong-willed, but in Charles's mind, erroneous brother, John. In two caustic poems, Charles wrote:

W[esley] himself and friends betrays,
By his good sense forsook,
While suddenly his hands he lays
On the hot head of C[oke].⁸²

and when Thomas Coke subsequently ordained Asbury (already a priest) Charles wrote, drawing on the story of Caligula's reported appointment of his horse to the Roman Senate:

A Roman emperor 'tis said
His favorite horse a consul made
But Coke brings other things to pass,
He makes a bishop of an ass.⁸³

His father Samuel was always set on reforming the flaws of the Church. Division from the Established Church remained consistently the point of departure for him and Dissenters. As long as the emphasis was reform, Samuel embraced it, but when talk moved to separation, that crossed the line and that view was shared by Charles as well. A splintering off of Methodism from the Established Church was anathema to Charles. He went "from being one of the most radical clergymen in England, whose irregular activities such as preaching in other ministers' parishes had led to a threat of excommunication . . . to an Anglican loyalist."⁸⁴ "He was and remained always firmly

⁸²Rack, "Wesley, Charles" *DNB*, 178.

⁸³Kenneth Newport, *The Sermons of Charles Wesley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 25.

⁸⁴Gareth Lloyd, "Charles Wesley and His Biographers" *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 82:1 (Spring 2000), 84.

opposed to any moves towards separation from the established Church.”⁸⁵ Samuel would never consider nor condone dissenting from the Church, only its reformation. Charles possessed the same conviction.

Relationship With Samuel, Jr.

One leaves the third son, Samuel (1690-1739) for last, yet, in many respects he should be addressed first. He was the first child of Samuel and Susanna, born February 10, 1690. He did not speak until he was five years old, perhaps a sign of his gifted intelligence. His mother taught him the alphabet in a few hours, Genesis 1:1 in a few days, and 1:1-10 in a few weeks.”⁸⁶ Susanna said of his precocity, “He read continually, and had such a prodigious memory I cannot remember ever to have told him the same word twice. What was yet stranger, any word he learned in his lesson he knew wherever he saw it, either in his Bible or any other book, by which means he learned very soon to read an English author well.”⁸⁷ His delay in speaking represents all the drama or worry Samuel gave to his parents. He very well may have been the favorite of both his father and mother. This status also was partly due to the prominence afforded the first born which held a special place within family in seventeenth century Britain.

Samuel’s native intelligence helped gain him entry into the classical school in Dean’s Yard, Westminster in 1704 which led to his being nominated as a King’s Scholar

⁸⁵Newport, *The Sermons of Charles Wesley*, 24.

⁸⁶Allan Longworth, *Samuel Wesley Jr.* (Peterborough, UK: Foundry Press, 1991), 3.

⁸⁷Longworth, 4.

in 1707 and would nearly guarantee admittance into Oxford. Such was the case. Samuel attended Christ Church, Oxford from 1711 through 1718 receiving his B.A. in 1715 and M.A. in 1718.⁸⁸ He would become head usher at the Westminster School in 1713 until 1733. He then accepted the headmaster position of Blundell's school at Tiverton, Devonshire which he led until his death in 1739.⁸⁹

His father may have been equally attracted to his son's dutiful nature. Duty was a watch word by which Samuel, Sr. lived by, and Samuel, Jr, embraced duty as well, signing his letters to his father with "your dutiful son." Samuel, Sr. made an intentional decision to cultivate a more in depth relationship with Samuel, Jr. when he was about the age of fifteen. Stevenson believed that this time reflected a relatively peaceful time for the family. "Early in the year 1706, the rector being at home, with his debts mostly paid and his mind more at ease, commenced writing a series of useful letters to his son Samuel."⁹⁰ Thus began a regular, and hoped for monthly correspondence between the two which commenced on January 14, 1706. His initial letter began, "Dear Child, I now call you so, more on account of your relation than your age; for you are past childhood, and I shall hereafter use you with more freedom, and communicate my thoughts to you as a friend as well as a father; which way of treatment I shall never alter, if you do not cease to deserve it, as I hope you never will."⁹¹

⁸⁸Henry Rack, "Eldest child Samuel Wesley the younger (1690/1-1739), *DNB*, 197.

⁸⁹Samuel J. Rogal, "Wesley, Samuel (1691-1739)" *A Biographical Dictionary of Eighteenth Century Methodism*. vol. 9. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), 227.

⁹⁰Stevenson, 96.

⁹¹Stevenson, 96.

This affection was mutually shared by both father and son. Samuel, Jr. wrote to John after his father's death in 1735, of the just published work on *Job*, "I think *Job* is now published, but without an index. I should I believe have attempted the making one my self, for I look upon that book as the most sacred legacy, next my Mother, that my Father left me."⁹² This mutual affection was present throughout both their lives. They were usually of the same mind when it came to the concerns of the family. In a letter to John, he wrote presupposing duty as a foundation. "Duty apart, I think him as ridiculous who weeps not at a tragedy, as he who does not laugh at a comedy."⁹³

In another letter by Samuel, Jr. to his father, he wrote of his intended efforts to gain a scholarship and place in Oxford for Charles. He indicated that scholarships were difficult to come by, but, "he [Charles] may as well go to Christ Church where there may be more hope of a studentship. . . or to Brasen-nose, where it may be Leyborn may be a good friend to him. I intend to write to Oxford either this post or the next to enquire more fully about it. The Canons of Christ Church, or the Bishop of Bristol, or the Vice Ch:[ancellor], Dr. Shipper can but refuse, if the worst should come to the worst; but I shall not take the least step or give the least hint of any thing without your order."⁹⁴

In the few other letters that are available, Samuel echoed some theological themes expressed by his father. In one letter of Samuel, Jr. to Susanna, his language and interest were not all that different from that of his father. "I heartily rejoyce Jacky Ellison is so

⁹²Ms letter, dated, Salisbury, April 29, 1736; Rylands DDWF 5/12.

⁹³Ms letter, dated, February 7, 1733; Rylands, DDWF 5/10.

⁹⁴Ms letter, dated, Saturday August 29, 1719; Rylands, DDWF 5/4.

well disposed, the promoting his learning and piety is a noble charity.”⁹⁵ Like his father, Samuel, Jr. did not see piety as a singular virtue, but yoked with another positive attribute, in this instance, learning.

In a letter to Charles, Samuel Jr. again spoke of piety: “By being renewed after the image of God if you mean growing still better, tis sense and piety; but if you hint at your not being now in a state of salvation, I should fear you are distracted.”⁹⁶ Samuel, Jr. saw personal piety as one’s striving for renewal or growing closer to God. In this letter, Charles understood his lack of piety as an indication he had not experienced God’s salvation. Samuel, Jr. saw this false belief as a “distraction” in Charles.

Samuel Jr. would be the son of last resort when his father asked if he would intercede to persuade John to accept the Epworth living. John believed at the time he could best serve God by caring for himself at Oxford and not accepting Samuel, Sr.’s overture to accept the Epworth living. John defended his decision to his father who then passed his apology to Samuel, Jr. in the hope of persuading John to change his mind of the following position. “It is now my unalterable resolution not to accept of Epworth living, if I could have it . . . the question is now [not?] whether I could do more good to others there or here, but whether I could do *more good to myself*; seeing wherever I can be most holy myself, there, I am assured, I can most promote holiness in others. But I am equally assured there is no place under heaven so fit for *my improvement* as Oxford.”⁹⁷

⁹⁵Ms letter, dated, July 3, 1731; Rylands, DDWF 5/8.

⁹⁶Ms letter, dated, October 11, 1735, Rylands, DDWF 5/11.

⁹⁷Collins, *Methodist History*, 26:1 (October, 1987): 22. (My emphasis).

Samuel, Jr. questioned the motives of John's argument from a sense of false piety, "I see your love to yourself but your love to your neighbour I do not see."⁹⁸ Like his father, Samuel, Jr. could not separate personal piety in relationship with God and its extension to one's neighbor.

This correspondence was significant because the letters demonstrate that Samuel, Jr. embraced numerous themes espoused by his father. They reflected that various theological themes, particularly piety had been instilled into Samuel, Jr. They would also in turn be later passed on to Charles who would live with his older brother and come to view him as a surrogate father.

Epilogue: The Lengthening Shadow of Samuel Wesley

Samuel's interest in the practical and pragmatic ministry was a very clear and lifelong preoccupation. The evidence of this interest is clear, demonstrated in his literary interest which was reflected in his role as one of the key responders to questioners who wrote to the *Athenian Gazette*. His interest in and answers to the myriad questions submitted to Dunton's *Athenian Gazette* revealed both theoretical and practical answers to questions. His area of "expertise" was divinity but he probably also contributed answers to questions relating to history as well.⁹⁹ Specifically the questions included all areas of both practical and theoretical religious interests including from Arminianism; baptism; catechizing children; divinity of the savior; Easter and why it moves on the

⁹⁸*Works of John Wesley*, 25, 411; *DNB*, 197.

⁹⁹Clarke wrote, "I cannot exactly tell what part Wesley had in this work; but after carefully examining five of the original volumes, with their supplements, I have been led to conclude that all the questions in divinity and ancient ecclesiastical history, most of those in poetry, with many of those in natural philosophy, were answered by him." *Memoirs*, 111.

calendar; fasting during lent; evidences of a good man; heaven and election of a few or more; infants stillborn, if they have souls; justification and forgiveness of sin; Kings having the title, defenders of the faith; love which is true between a man and a woman; man, can he do evil that good may come from it; Noah, from which son did Europeans come from; oaths, taken and broken; epic poems; Quakers and oaths; Remonstrants; Spinoza's opinion of God; The *Talmud* on the number of angels; if usury is a damning sin; perpetual virginity of Mary; if a woman who has vowed to marry a man, but he has disoblged her is bound by her vow; to whether Zera and his Ethiopians were inhabitants of Prestor John's country. His interests were encyclopedic and ran from "A to Z."

Besides his involvement in John Dunton's *Athenian Gazette*, (which can be considered a literary/religious society), there was his participation in the increasingly popular coffee houses. These reflected informal societies where people gathered to get information and debate issues. Samuel often frequented there. But if there is any question as to Samuel's interest in the practical application or demonstration of theoretical faith, there is abundant evidence which can be gleaned from his involvement in the various societies burgeoning within England during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Some of these included, the Society for the Reformation of Manners (SRM), the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG).

The rise in these societies partly arose from the general sense by the clergy that the country was in a state of moral crisis and "that a tide of profaneness and immorality was sweeping the nation."¹⁰⁰ Anthony Horneck, a founder of the first reforming society

¹⁰⁰John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, "The Church and Anglicanism in the 'long' Eighteenth Century" *The Church of England: c. 1689-c.1833* (New York: Cambridge

(SRM) in London in 1678, preached at Gilbert Burnet's consecration as bishop of Salisbury and called for "episcopal help in the work of reformation."¹⁰¹ Burnet must have heard this plea, because he subsequently wrote his *Discourse of the Pastoral Care*, which became a clarion call for the clergy to vigorously work to visit and catechize their members. The great enemy of all was "immorality and irreligion."¹⁰² William Smithies,¹⁰³ who worked with Horneck, articulated early in the 1680s, "I have always set myself against the two great evils of the age, Divisions and Debauchery"; in the pulpit, 'the subjects of charity, the sacraments, and instruction of youth, are those which I have chiefly insisted upon.'¹⁰⁴

The methodology used to accomplish reform was through societies. The early religious societies formed in London around 1678 were more passive and "aimed to stimulate reformation from within by providing voluntaristic models of piety and virtue

University Press, 1993), 17.

¹⁰¹Spurr, John, "The Church, the Societies and the Moral Revolution of 1688." *The Church of England: c. 1689-c.1833*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 132.

¹⁰²Walsh, 17.

¹⁰³William Smythies was curate to Edward Fowler at St. Giles Cripplegate. The son of an Essex vicar, he entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge in July, 1651. He had differences with the Puritans and disappeared until reentering at the university and taking his BA in 1660. He arrived at St. Giles as curate in 1673 where he remained until his death in 1704. See John Spurr, "The Church, the Societies and the Moral Revolution of 1688." *The Church of England: c. 1689-c.1833*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 132-133.

¹⁰⁴John Spurr, "The Church, the Societies and the Moral Revolution of 1688." *The Church of England: c. 1689-c.1833*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 133.

for others to emulate.”¹⁰⁵ The later ones such as the SRM, (1691) were more actively aggressive. They combated “the rising tide of vice and immorality directly, through a vigorous campaign of private (legal) prosecution against prostitution, profane swearing and cursing, and Sabbath-day trading.”¹⁰⁶ The SRM tried to reform people’s behavior while the SPCK, founded in 1699 worked through education.¹⁰⁷ The latter society was unabashedly evangelistic and emphasized distribution of religious tracts, encouragement of catechism, and the promotion of charity schools.¹⁰⁸

Wesley was deeply involved and committed to both the SRM and the SPCK. His participation in the SRM reflected his desire to work toward the greater piety of the country in an active and practical way. The impact of the reformation of manners was widespread throughout Britain and Wesley was at the forefront of this movement which eventually gave way to the SPCK. In 1698, Wesley preached a sermon because of his interest and involvement. His *A Sermon concerning reformation of manners preach’d at St. Jame’s Church, Westminster Feb. 13, and afterwards at St. Brides, to one of the*

¹⁰⁵Walsh and Taylor, 18.

¹⁰⁶Walsh and Taylor, 18.

¹⁰⁷Walsh and Taylor, 18.

¹⁰⁸Walsh and Taylor, 18.

religious societies was indicative of his involvement and status within the greater movement.

In the sermon Samuel Wesley attempted to rally the listener out of Christian duty to God to be “faithful servant and soldiers to their lives end,” and to oppose vice and wickedness.¹⁰⁹ Second, they should do this with united councils and endeavors. Third, it should be done with “utmost zeal and prudence that a matter of so high an importance needs and deserves.”¹¹⁰ He maintained that it was the immoral practices which are the primary cause of the decline of morals in his day. “Our infamous theatres . . . have done more mischief, than Hobes [*sic*] himself or our new atheistical clubs, to the faith and moral of the nation.”¹¹¹ Wesley’s sermon to the society echoed the themes preached by others involved in the movement.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹Samuel Wesley, *A Sermon concerning reformation of manners preach’d at St. Jame’s Church, Westminster Feb. 13, and afterwards at St. Brides, to one of the religious societies* (London: Charles Harper, 1698), 6.

¹¹⁰Wesley, *A Sermon Concerning the Reformation of Manners*, 6.

¹¹¹Wesley, *A Sermon Concerning the Reformation of Manners*, 20.

¹¹²“We may begin to be seasoned with better principles from an imitation of our present King’ [William] whose personal example and ‘resolutions likewise to countenance piety and vertue, and discourage wickedness and vice’” See Archbishop John Tillotson, *Sermons*, III, 185-6; Charles Lidgould, *A Sermon Preach’d . . . July the 24th, 1698* (1699), 19.

This was a courageous act at a time when there was a “genuine fear that the association of Anglicans and Dissenters in the SRM would harm the Church.”¹¹³ Thomas Caryl, the vicar of St Mary’s, Nottingham, believed that his local society was honest and well meaning, but nevertheless he feared ‘it will not easily do so much good in this town, as those of the like nature may do in London; especially when I consider in what danger those churchmen (whom I believe to be the minority) among ‘em will be in, of being first work’d into an indifferency and afterwards quite drawn off from the Establishment.’”¹¹⁴

What is more remarkable is that Wesley’s sermon may have drawn the consternation of his archbishop, John Sharp of York. Sharp “refused to license any of his diocesan clergy to preach to the societies for fear that they might be persuaded to preach to the society in a Nonconformist meeting.”¹¹⁵

Wesley was also involved in the SPCK. In 1701, Wesley would correspond with the SPCK about his beginning a society in Epworth inspired by Josiah Woodward’s history of the society.¹¹⁶ Though not listed, he was probably a ‘corresponding’ member, meaning that because of distance and difficulty in travel, one could be a long distance

¹¹³Spurr, “The Church, the Societies and the Moral Revolution of 1688,” 131.

¹¹⁴Spurr, “The Church, the Societies and the Moral Revolution of 1688,” 131.

¹¹⁵Spurr, 131.

¹¹⁶*DNB*, 196.

member.¹¹⁷ This relationship served the purposes of Bray and the early founders.

“Resolv’d that the Society will establish a correspondence with one or more of the Clergy in each county, and with one Clergyman in each great Town and City of England, in order to erect Societies of the same nature with this throughout the kingdom.”¹¹⁸ Wesley gave a written report about the society in Epworth in his *An Account of the Religious Society begun in Epworth, in the Isle of Axholme Lincolnshire, Feb: 1, An: Dom: 1701-2* [Dec. 23].¹¹⁹

These examples illustrate that Wesley’s behavior reflect a man who was not merely interested in belief as theoretical composing doctrinal truths to an academic reader. His hope was that whatever he wrote or whenever he preached there would

¹¹⁷W. O. B. Allen and Edmund McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for the Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898* (NY: Burt Franklin, 1898 (1970 reprint), 41-42. “Mr. Frank’s suggestion, as recorded in his proposals (p. 60, 1) for keeping in a book abstracts of letters received from correspondents, was at once adopted, and the following excerpts from the earliest collection will give a better idea of the state of religion throughout the country, and of the society’s efforts to improve it, than could be readily gleaned elsewhere.” Samuel Wesley’s correspondence is included in these early letters.

¹¹⁸W. O. B. Allen and Edmund McClure, *Two Hundred Years*, 41-42.

¹¹⁹Allen and McClure also list three letters written by Wesley written on July 10, 1700, June 10, 1701, and June 16, 1701. *Two Hundred Years*, 89-93.

follow change in attitude and behavior. His actions would be manifest in his parish at Epworth.¹²⁰

Following the 1709 fire there seemed to be a shift in Samuel's interests and energies. It is difficult to conclude from Samuel's writings that there was a similar shift in his thinking, rather, there was a change in his application of his practice of ministry. His focus now turned to his local parish.

It is hard to determine if he was shaken by the loss of his entire family. The now famous 'brand plucked from the burning' was a reference from Zechariah 3:2.¹²¹ Samuel, no doubt knew of the warning of swearing falsely in God's name in Zechariah 5:3-4.¹²² This passage may have been part of the impetus for reuniting him with Susanna in 1702 following the earlier rectory fire. The Wesley family took seriously the Bible in general and particularly these passages from Zechariah. It took a full year before the new

¹²⁰This is evidence that Wesley concerned himself with the daily morals of the nation. This concern carried over into his service at Ormsby and at Epworth, (even as it would later affect his own family in the case of his daughter, Hetty. Because his response was less than what might be considered sensitive does not mean one must dismiss his interest in pragmatic moral reform).

¹²¹"Is not this man a brand plucked from the fire?" *New Revised Standard Version*.

¹²²"This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land; for everyone who steals shall be cut off according to the writing on one side. I have sent it out, says the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and *the house of anyone who swears falsely by my name*; and it shall abide in that house and consume it, both timber and stones." *New Revised Standard Version*. (My emphasis).

rectory was built before the whole family could be reunited under a single roof.

Samuel's labors to get a new rectory built required much effort and capital which he could not afford.

But besides this effort, the nature of his work changed. With a few exceptions, he no longer published.¹²³ That which was published were later editions of earlier works.¹²⁴ He seemed to concentrate and be content to direct his ambition toward three areas: the work of his parish, getting sons Samuel, John and Charles in and through Oxford, and (probably later) the compilation and completion of his dissertation on Job.

The ultimate demise of Samuel began on that fateful day when he fell off of a horse-driven wagon and was seriously injured.¹²⁵ From that day his health was never the same and the exercise of his ministries required assistance from the family and John

¹²³*An hymn on peace: to the Prince of Peace*, (London: J. Leake, 1713).

¹²⁴*The History of the Old and New Testament attempted in verse: and adorn'd with three hundred and thirty sculptures*. (London: Printed for John Hooke, 1716); *The holy communicant rightly prepar'd, or, A discourse concerning the Blessed Sacrament: wherein the nature of it is describ'd, our obligation to frequent communion enforc'd, and directions given for due preparation for it, behaviour at, and after it, and profiting by it: with prayers and hymns, suited to the several parts of that holy office: to which is added, a discourse on baptism*, (London: Printed for G. Davis, 1716); and *The history of the New Testament: representing the actions and miracles of our blessed Saviour and his apostles: attempted in verse, and adorn'd with CLII sculptures*, (London: Printed by R. B. for Thomas Ward in the Inner Temple Lane, 1717).

¹²⁵Clarke, *Memoirs*, 250-251.

Whitelamb, his curate.¹²⁶ Clarke quoted John and Charles's accounts of the last days of their father's life which reflected his exhibiting the pietistic trait of assurance. John's account was his recollection nearly fifteen years later on March 22, 1747:

My father, during his last illness, which continued eight month[s], enjoyed a clear sense of his acceptance with God. I heard him express it more than once, 'The inward witness, son, the inward witness,' said he to me, 'that is the proof, the strongest proof of Christianity.' And when I asked him, (the time of his change drawing nigh,) 'Sir, are you in much pain?' he answered aloud, with a smile, 'God does chasten me with pain; yea, all my bones with strong pain. But I thank him for all; I bless him for all; I love him for all.' I think the last words he spoke, when I had just commended his soul to god, were, 'Now you have done all.' And with the same cheerful countenance he fell asleep, without one struggle, or sigh, or groan.¹²⁷

Charles wrote his brother, Samuel a few days later on April 30, 1735:

The few words he uttered I have saved. Some of them were, 'Nothing too much to suffer for heaven. The weaker I am in body, the stronger and more sensible support I feel from God. There is but a step between me and death. To-morrow I would see you all with me round this table, that we may once more drink the cup of blessing, before we drink of it new in the kingdom of God. With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I die.' The morning he was to communicate, he was so exceeding weak and full of pain, that he could not, without the utmost difficulty, receive the elements, often repeating, 'Thou shakest me! Thou shakest me!' But immediately after receiving, there followed the most visible alteration. He appeared full of faith and peace, which extended even to his body; for he was so much better, that we almost hoped he would have recovered. The fear of death he had entirely conquered; and at last gave up his latest human desires, of finishing Job, paying his debts, and seeing you. He often laid his hands upon my head, and said, 'Be steady. The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you shall see it, though I shall not.' When we were met about him, his usual express was, 'Now let me hear you

¹²⁶Clarke, *Memoirs*, 254. Tyerman noted that both Whitelamb and John Romley were employed as curates. *Life and Times*, 373.

¹²⁷Clarke, *Memoirs*, 276. See also, Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 444.

talk about heaven.’ On my asking him whether he did not find himself worse, he replied, ‘O, my Charles, I feel a great deal. God chastens me with strong pain; but I praise him for it; I thank him for it; I love him for it.’ On the 25th his voice failed him, and nature seemed entirely spent; when on my brother’s asking, ‘whether he was not hear heaven?’ he answered distinctly, and with the most of hope and triumph that could be expressed in sounds, ‘Yes, I am.’ He spoke once more, just after my brother had used the commendatory prayer. His last words were, ‘Now you have done all.’¹²⁸

Samuel was remembered variously, but consistently as a man of piety. Tyerman recorded the obituary in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* for 1735, “Died, April 25, at Epworth, in Lincolnshire, the Rev. Mr Samuel Wesley, M.A., rector of that parish, a person of singular parts, piety, and learning; author of poetical and controversial pieces. He had for some years been composing a critical ‘Dissertation on the Book of Job,’ which he has left unfinished, and almost printed. He proved, ever since his minority, a most zealous asserter of the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England.”¹²⁹

Summary

What can one say today of Samuel Wesley’s legacy that has not already been addressed? Some have acknowledged some influence by Samuel on his sons, but it has been in a negative vein. What has been left unsaid was the direct and intentional contributions reflected in their lives. They would not have been as effective in their work had it not been for the encouragement and positive influence of their father. Though,

¹²⁸Clarke, *Memoirs*, 277-278. See also, Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 444-445.

¹²⁹Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 447n.

mostly unacknowledged by them, Samuel's impact on John and Charles was of high significance and needs to be factored into future investigations of the two brothers.

What has also been left unsaid in the existing scholarship is the extent Samuel was aware of the dynamic changes in the church and culture of his day. He was involved in numerous progressive reform groups which were to influence life and thought of England for successive generations. To say that Samuel was progressive might be somewhat of an overstatement, though in some areas a case can be made when looking at the forward-looking ventures of the *Athenian Gazette*, the Reformation of Manners, the SPCK, and the SPG. Additionally, Wesley's late in life correspondence with James Oglethorpe showed that Wesley retained his keen interest in prison reform. But most prescient was Wesley's scathing position on slavery, the likes of which would not be seen until years later when abolition was taken up by others including his son, John, and William Wilberforce.

The most severe critiques of Samuel seem to reflect the later judgment of another day, imposing its cultural morals on him. If that method of criticism is to be used universally, then all within an earlier culture are doomed to fall short. The result of course will be that the successive generation will duly condemn the previous generation for its perceived short-comings. What is ironic is the extent that Samuel refused to judge the past based on the cultural standards of his day. He chose to harvest from the past examples of virtue, gleaned especially from scripture and the early church that which would best serve his day to bring about a general reform to the church and his society. For all the criticism directed toward Samuel for his harshness, it seems he has become the target of an even greater judgmentalism. He never made claim to being perfect, he only held to the convictions acquired through his understanding of scripture, tradition, reason,

and experiences. This is the fruit which has grown from a re-examination of his life and his writings.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion: Toward a Fuller Understanding of Samuel Wesley

Samuel Wesley was a man whom in the 1680's and 1690's rode the crest of some remarkable reforms. England was experiencing dynamic changes which affected all strata of society. While not necessarily a protagonist of numerous movements, Wesley was very much an activist in his efforts to support and sustain them. When he gained the Epworth Church, he arrived a man ahead of his time, in a place where there was no interest in the cutting edge social changes occurring in far off London or in the academics of a Oxford bred education. So Wesley's desire and efforts to bring reform to the local parish was met with resistance. He also faced opposition because he did not possess the inter-personal skills needed to convince the people. He knew only one way to succeed and that was through the authority granted him by the Church. Additionally, compromise was not a practice he favored, especially when it came to modifying his values.

Samuel has been previously defined mostly by some of his expressed attitudes. The very moralism by which he lived has been criticized or praised by those who retroactively have judged him according to their own standards. It is this evaluative template which has limited any change in these subsequent assessments of Samuel. This template has made it nearly impossible to move beyond the superficial. Perhaps there was a time and a place to evaluate Samuel in such a vein, but as his brother-in-law and publisher, John Dunton once wrote, that "vein is spent" and Wesley needed to be reexamine from a different point of view.

From the start, I have argued that Wesley exhibited thoughtful and carefully reasoned positions that integrated his understanding of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Here he was clearly indebted to the Pietist tradition in ways that were remarkably similar to Anthony Horneck's influential reforms. In chapter two we have seen that he made a gradual, but intentional move to embrace the tradition and polity of the Church of England. Samuel's change did not involve a sudden "Aldersgate-like" experience which would come into vogue years later during John and Charles's ministries. Samuel sought assurance from God, but not of the kind his sons would seek. Samuel's movement from Dissent itself was fueled by the gradual disintegration within Dissent and the concurrent, proactive movements by the Church in its effort to reform itself and England. These efforts at general moral reform were reflected in the various efforts to change church and society for the better. Moral reform was at the forefront of Samuel Wesley's efforts, not as an end in itself, but the natural result of the pursuit of a deeper relationship with God for himself and society. In these efforts, he was a religious social activist, in that he advocated social change through religious means. He channeled his energies through well-known organizations such as The Society for the Reformation of Manners, The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. But he also participated in lesser-known organizations like the newly popular coffee houses and John Dunton's Athenian Society. He was a

member of the Royal Society established by Royal charter in 1662 which sought to integrate religion and science.¹

These traditions all affected Samuel's perspective and whether he embraced or rejected them, he addressed them in such a way that he cannot be viewed one dimensionally. His insights and perspectives were drawn from a myriad of resources, both contemporary and ancient in an effort to gain God's truth for his day and time. He was a man both steeped in his culture but also willing to glean from the rich traditions of the past in order to make his contribution to God and society what he deemed as God's truth.

In Chapter Three we examined the foundational beliefs of the Pietist tradition which informed Samuel's quest for God's truth. Scripture was the cornerstone on which all other systems must follow. Scripture provided the leading truths that tradition, reason, and experience followed. Samuel gained his biblical expertise at Oxford under the leading Hebraist of the seventeenth century, Edward Pococke. This training reinforced his conservative approach to scripture by maintaining the purity of the Hebrew text including the Masoretic vowel pointings.² This perspective supported his literalist interpretive leanings. Any other interpretation, he considered suspect in violation of inerrancy.

¹J. R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England*, 3rd ed., 254.

²Samuel, of course maintained they were work of Ezra, the Old Testament priest.

Where Wesley again stepped outside of his conservatism was his endorsement of the medieval Rabbis on whom he depended for clarifying difficult *hapex legomena* and ancient cultural traditions whose meanings were lost to history. He was willing to move from his convictions if it could be shown through scripture he was in error. One of the marks of contemporary Pietism was advanced critical scholarship applied to the scriptures.

It was on the strength of his biblical convictions he withstood attacks from those who opposed him or his positions. The Bible was the medium from which he evaluated himself, people, and society. On the basis of the Bible, he exhorted people to pursue pious living. This emphasis was clearly evident in all of his writings throughout his life. Samuel's understanding of the Bible presupposed all of his answers to a general audience in the *Athenian Oracle*, and in his *Pious Communicant* which pronounced to his Epworth church what it meant to live pious lives. His sermons revealed both direct and indirect Pietist leanings always to the end of gaining a closer access to God and experiencing God's pleasure. He revealed himself clearly, as an Arminian. The initiating work was God's, but an obedient response was also expected. The power of the Holy Spirit was presumed to enable the person to accomplish what God desired. Samuel, as a strict interpreter of scripture was not Puritanical with respect to human passions. He was no ascetic, who denounced passions, nor one who considered them a hindrance to pious living. Rather, he affirmed the usefulness of human passion if they were properly harnessed by the law of God and the dual restraints offered by religion and reason.

To practice piety was for Wesley, to experience God. In Chapter Four I demonstrated the complexity of Piety as Ernest Stoeffler has understood it. Piety manifests itself experientially, in perfectionism, in its biblicism, and as an oppositive or

prophetic force in society. These aspects of piety were evident in the life of Samuel as he experienced God in diverse ways and places. He experienced hardship brought on through want of basic necessities at Oxford which helped him find God's provision in the midst of his need. The blessing for Samuel upon his reflection was not merely receiving needed sustenance, but the accompanying assurance that he also experienced.

It was this Pietistic desire which fed his lifetime wish to make himself available as a missionary. He visited people in prisons, (and was himself incarcerated), served as a chaplain on a man-o-war ship, and was generous to a fault to the poor. He understood that piety did not remain hidden or private but was by its very nature evangelistic. The emigrant Anthony Horneck exemplified that perspective. Horneck's integration of continental piety into the fabric of Anglicanism not only changed the lives of those in eastern London, but prepared England for the future renewal efforts of John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield.

Of all the attributes of piety, that of perfectionism has been most conveniently pinned on Samuel, but only in the narrowest sense: his moral strictness on himself and others. However, he did not see the practice of piety as a burden to be carried, but as an obligation from duty and a mark of obedience to God and this was learned from God's Word. One cannot come to understand Wesley if one does not know the Bible. Not only must a person know its contents, but one must also try to understand what Samuel thought the Bible meant for everyday life. The Bible was God's actual words to guide and direct both believer and nonbeliever. Any deviation from that fundamental truth and Samuel rejected it. He viewed most harshly those who disregarded the Bible not just because it was a moral guide, but because it was God's moral guide. Most importantly it was God's soteriological revelation to humanity.

By disposition, Samuel was drawn naturally to the opposite nature of Pietism. He had characteristically a prophetic inclination. He developed a fearlessness when he believed he was in the right. Any apprehensions were left behind at Oxford. His assurance stemmed from a complete dependence on God's providence. This assurance allowed him to face down any adversary. He spoke and acted prophetically to whatever ills he saw in others or his society so that he invested himself in a variety of concerns like assisting the poor and those in jail, or addressing the ills of slavery. In addition, he could express his convictions in gentler tones. This approach was evident in the tone of his letters to his son, Samuel, Jr. on Piety. In them, Samuel revealed that Piety was not all joy, but the source of one's motivation was 'duty towards God.'

The final question I have addressed is that of influence. To what extent did Samuel influence his family and for that matter, others? It is a question that has been connected to the role of Susanna through her influential teaching and correspondence with her family. In the past most biographers spoke of Samuel's influence, viewed his contribution as purely a detriment in the Wesley family. To say that Samuel was domineering, dogmatic, overbearing, etc., characterizes him as one-dimensional. If that had been the case, he would not have had any kind of relationship with anyone. No wife would have tolerated, nor would a son have continued to associate with him, nor would there have been anyone to bother even to argue with a person having such a monolithic personality.

The truth is that Samuel was a key element in the character of his family and his circle of influence. Samuel was unusually duty-bound. To do one's duty to God was what was expected of a pious Christian. Samuel's efforts to help his sons and others were accomplished in response to the prevenient grace of God. One could see this in his

letter to Mr. Smith, to whom he gave a copy of *The Whole Duty of Man*, accompanied with a gift of money: “If you have time to send me a paper of verses on the author of the Book (but no thanks nor compliments [for the gifts]).” The watchword that Samuel repeatedly used in his correspondence and sermons was ‘oblig’d’. He was the one who felt obliged to others and to God. For him one was obliged because the great law of God was to love God and one’s neighbor as oneself. To be obliged ultimately represented for Samuel the great measure of grace God had given him and all of humanity in Jesus Christ.

In this research, I have presented Samuel from a different perspective, not so much based on his obvious behavior, both criticized and blessed, but an assessment based on his writings which bring forth his ideals as reflected in the context from which they were developed and practiced. There is still more to investigate. The five manuscript sermons represent only a sample of his work and others need to be transcribed and published in order to gain a fuller understanding of Samuel’s theology³. It is hoped that this investigation will renew interest in him as not only the father of John and Charles, but as a significant contributor in his own right. Finally, it is my hope that the moral lens by which Samuel has been viewed may be set aside and replaced by a portrait of a man who sought to obligingly please God first, and humanity second, with the expectation that others would earnestly be duty bound to follow suit.

³Duke University Professor Richard Heitzenrater has transcribed twelve of thirty sermons in the Lamplough collection at SMU.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Five Representative Sermons
[No. 6, p. 71]

XIII St Luke [[23-]]24

Then said one unto him, Lord are there few that be saved?
And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many,
I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

In these words we find 1. A question proposed to our Saviour. Lord, are there few that be saved? 2. His answer. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. To which he adds a reason. For many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.

1. For the question which seems to be one of those that people are wont to ask rather for gratifying their curiosity than informing their judgments or directing their practice, 'One said unto him,' [[p. 72]] probably one of their curious Scribes or captious Pharisees, who were wont to question with him about many things, 'Lord, are there few that shall be saved?' No so proper an enquiry as the jailor's, Acts 16:30, 'What must I do to be saved?' Or the young man's (though he like not the answer), 'What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' The occasion of this question in the text seems to have been a vain opinion of the Jews, yet seen in their writings, that all Israelites should go to heaven, as on the contrary that none of the Gentiles should be saved, but should be the food of hell-fire. Not unlike a later doctrine of absolute predestination and reprobation. To which proud and uncharitable opinion our Saviour seems to have a regard in his answer, because as we shall see, he fully confutes it therein.

II. In which answer (the main thing to be considered) we may observe our Saviour neither replies [[p. 73]] directly to the person, nor to the thing. 'One said unto him, Lord are there few that shall be saved? And he said unto them', that is, to his disciples and hearers, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many will seek to enter in and shall not be able.' He takes occasion from a question asked by one to instruct many. He gave not a direct answer, nor therefore are we bound to do so in all cases <and> to such curious and ensnaring questions; but his reply here, as in many other instances, was fitted to instruct and benefit, as well as tacitly to reprove him and others.

Thus he answered St Peter, when he enquired about the beloved disciple, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me' [[John 21:22-23]]. And thus so his other apostles, when they asked whether he would at that time restore again the kingdom to Israel? It is not for you, etc. So here, he both answered and silenced this querist by a positive command, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate!' [[p. 74]] That gate of the Lord whereof 'tis said the righteous shall enter into it.

'Tis common in <sacred> and vulgar speech to find a man's course or manner of life resembled to a path or a way, and his continuing in it to his walking in it. As likewise

to a gate or a door by which we are admitted to the beginning and end of that way. + Thus one of the ancient moral heathens (<Livy's Fable, xx>), 'The way of virtue', says he, 'has a little gate at the entrance. It has a very strait ascent, and few walk up it because it appears rough and stony. But after temperance and patience have brought us to the top of the hill, the way grows smooth and easy, and leads to the regions of felicity'. + This was a matter of such vast importance that our Lord was pleased to direct it twice to his followers under the same similitude. The first time in his Sermon on the Mount [[p. 75]], recorded by St Matthew in his 5, 6, and 7 chapters, and more briefly by St Luke in his 6 chapter, who indeed there omits this passage but introduces it at large in the chapter of my text, with many additions, on another occasion. In St Matthew the opposite parts are added, chapter 7, verse 13, 14, 'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for ((strait)) wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there be which go in thereat. But strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to life, and few there be that find it.' 'Enter ye in', that is, 'strive to enter; strive lawfully, and then you will not lose your labour. . Strive to an agony with all your strength and power, with the utmost force and strength of body and mind, as those who contend for the prize or mastery. Strive earnestly, effectually, constantly. Never give over till you obtain [[p. 76]] your desire, till you have surmounted the difficulties of a religious life, till you have entered the strait gate, that narrow, rugged and unfrequented way which leads to the city of your God [[see Rev. 3:12]], to bliss everlasting; opposed to that broad gate, that wide and flowry, and crowded road which leads down to the city of destruction [[see Isa. 19:18]], the chambers of death eternal [[see Prov. 7:27]]. And then our Lord adds the reason why we must thus strive, 'Because many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able'. There's a natural desire in all men after felicity. Few but would go to heaven if 'twou'd cost them nothing; if they could attain the end without the means, and were not too delicate to undergo so much fatigue and labour. They may make some faint steps towards faith and repentance, and holiness, but all seeking is not striving. They'll not take [[p. 77]] due pains to overcome difficulties, are discouraged and look back, and are weary and faint in their minds. They shall not be able, as they are not thoroughly willing to enter into the kingdom of God. They show themselves as unfit for it, as uncapable [[sic]] of it. That kingdom which is begun in habits of grace, and perfected in glory.

But our Lord proceeds to other reasons why many should so unsuccessfully seek to enter. In the verses after the text, from the 25 to 30, 'When once the master of house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know not whence ye are. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I know ye not whence ye are; depart from me ye workers of iniquity. [[p. 78]] There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out, and they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.'

The Jews, we know, rejected, and despised the feast of the gospel, and the Gentiles were called, out of the hedges and highways in their room. Those who were first invited, the children of the kingdom, did not enter in because they did not strive; because they did not heartily endeavour it while their day of grace lasted; because of their

unbelief, and because they were workers of iniquity. Now although the texts we have quoted had a particular respect to the Jews, yet in these as well as other cases, they were our ensamples; these things were written for our instruction and warning; they are of the [[p. 79]] last concern and importance to us. We also must strive to enter in at the strait gate; because many that are called Christians and succeed to the Jews in their titles and privileges, will likewise fall short of entering into God's rest, by succeeding them likewise in their unbelief and disobedience. Though they also say to Christ, 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence and thou hast taught in our streets. We have been partakers of thy table, and been instructed by thy ministers'. Though they cry never so loud when 'tis too late, 'Lord, Lord, open to us', he will profess unto them, 'I never knew you, depart from me ye workers of iniquity'.

Having thus explained the words, we may learn these important truths from them.

1. That we must expect to meet with difficulties in a religious life; in the way to heaven. [[p. 80]]

2. Secondly, that how many or great soever those difficulties are, they are no more than may by God's grace, and our own hearty endeavours, be conquered; we may still be in the number of those few that find the narrow way which leads to life everlasting.

First, that we must expect, etc. For 'tis a strait gate, 'tis a narrow and a rugged way, especially at our first entrance. We must prepare for many rocks and thorns and stumbling-blocks in it. Our Saviour does not conceal this from us, when he lists us for his soldiers to fight under his banner. He bids us count the cost, and assures us we must take up our cross daily and follow him, if we would be his disciples.

Some of which difficulties are from within, and some from without. Some from ourselves, and those the most dangerous, and the rest from other enemies. [[p. 81]] First those that are from within, and from ourselves, namely the unruly passions, and disorderly appetites, our perverted wills, and our darkened understandings. Man is born as the Scripture tells us, like a wild ass's colt, untamed, unbroken, unwonted to check or rein [[see Job 11:12]]; and would fain continue so, would admit of no restraint from the laws of religion or reason; but say with those in the Psalmist, 'Let us break their bonds in sunder, and cast away their cords from us' [[cf. Ps. 2:3, BCP; in AV it is 'bands']]. Man is in his natural corrupted estate the most irregular thing in the whole creation. The sun knows his walk, the moon her changes, the stars their rise and setting, the rivers their course, and the sea its shore. The stork knows its appointed season, and the swallow and the crane [[see Jer. 8:7]], and other birds come and go at certain periods, and wander not out of their way, though they fly when they have no bounds or landmarks, through the vast and trackless paths of heaven. Nay, even the dull ox is not so [[p. 82]] stupid, but it knows its owners and the ass his master's crib; but man will not know, neither will the son of man consider. He only would live without yoke, without rule. Would still be as God, not in goodness, but in power, uncontrollable, unaccountable to any. He can't bear one tree to be forbidden; to be restrained from one pleasing object; but would range unlimited over the whole creation. Now he who has made us, and knows our frame, has thought it best and knows 'tis best for us, to hedge up our way, and to confine us within certain bounds and rules, which at our peril we transgress; some whereof he has indeed stamped on our minds, but has generally left them more fully and more clearly revealed

in his holy word, especially in the gospel; assuring us he will not suffer us to walk in our own ways, to indulge and gratify our brutal and irregular desires, but requires us to mortify and subdue them. Quite to [[p. 83]] destroy and root out whatever of them is sinful and a transgression of his laws; and to regulate the remainder, so as to bring them into a due subjection to religion and reason. Nor is this envious, or unjust, or unreasonable in ((them)) him, because it conduces to our true happiness, and he forbids us nothing that does so; nay nothing but what really contradicts and destroys it. For reason is our true and proper self, the superior part, the queen of the soul, and of the whole man; which he has placed in the throne, to keep the mutinous passions in order, which are good servants, while they are kept under due discipline; but if the reins are once let loose will prove intolerable masters. Now in this struggle between the flesh and the spirit, the appetites and sanctified reason, consists the very stress of our Christian warfare. For these unruly servants are always crying out for more liberty, though 'twould prove both [[p. 84]] their own and their master's ruin. For as licentious servants, when broke away from their masters grow worse and worse, run into all bad courses, and oftentimes turn robbers and murders; so every desire, every passion, when it has shook off the curb and reins, grows still more exorbitant; commences a vice instead of an infirmity; and hurries the soul into destruction. For example. The way of purity is narrow. God has restrained our desires even from the creation, and limited them in both sexes to one person only; for in the beginning he made them male and female; Adam and Eve, and no more, and joined them together in holy matrimony. Now when that desire, which God implanted in man for wise and known ends, keeps within these bounds, all is regular and well. But the difficulty is to keep it there. Too many are for indulging [[p. 85]] and pampering this appetite, and suffering it to transgress those barriers and boundaries which the all wise God has fixed for it; first, in impure thoughts, then perhaps in as foul words or meanings; and lastly in gross actions. And when once the lines of virtue are broke through, destruction speedily enters. When lust has conceived it brings forth sin, and sin when 'tis finished brings forth death.

To give one instance more, at least as common as the former. The way of temperance is strait and narrow. The bounds which God has set to our appetite of drinking are necessary support, and moderate refreshment. This appetite, the more we humour it, the more it will spread and widen, and by insensible degrees still grow upon us, till at length we get to an habitual, or constant thirst, the infallible mark and token of an hopeless and incorrigible drunkard. Now how can such a person, without the greatest difficulty imaginable, recall himself from the unreasonable [[p. 86]] liberties he has taken in the abuse of God's creatures, to the narrow bounds of sobriety and virtue, anymore than a churl can become courteous, a miser liberal, or a proud man truly humble?

[No. 16, p. 238]
In Nomine Domini

For the Word of God is quick, and powerful,
and sharper than any two-edged sword,
piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit,
and of the joints, and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts
and intents of the heart. Heb. 4:12.

The holy apostle is in this chapter cautioning all Christians, by the terrible example of the ancient Jews, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and they never entered into the promised Canaan, by reason of their disobedience and unbelief; that they should take care lest on the same account and in the same manner they should fall short of the blessed rest of heaven. 'Let us therefore fear', says he in the first verse, 'lest a promise being left us, of entering into his rest any of you should seem to come short of it'. And again, verse 11, 'Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, that everlasting rest, which remains for the people of God' [[i.e. vss 11 and 9]], whereas that of Canaan was a type or figure: 'Lest any man fall, after the same example of unbelief' [[vs 11]] as did those wicked, carnal, hardened Jews who despised God's < > patience and defied his judgments, <and vengeance> and to whom he therefore swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. On which follows the text, as a further argument why we should thus fear, and thus labour 'For the word of God . . . '

Divines are divided as to the sense of these words and there are two different opinions concerning them, particularly concerning the word of God here mentioned which is the key of the whole; whereby some understand, our Lord Christ < >, the eternal essential word of God, the Father. Others, the word of the gospel which is preached unto us.

First, many do, with great probability, understand principally and primarily by the word of God here, the second person of the ever-blessed and undivided Trinity, the divine logos, the eternal, essential, substantial, coeternal, coessential, consubstantial word, and reason, and wisdom, and image, and son of the Father, a distinct person from him, and as such, subordinate to him, and sent by him, but the same in Godhead, essence, substance, power, and glory. As indeed, there is not one of the characters here added, but do exactly and without any manner of force, agree to him. That it should be [[p. 239]] spoken of him, is very consonant to the apostle's main argument, whereon he is here insisting, both before the text, and after it, as well as to his reasonings in his other writings; and to other scriptures, and to the phrase and expressions and <notions> of the Jewish writers: whereof in their order and <sense> all these characters do exactly agree to the divine word, the eternal son of God, as

1. That he is quick. 2. That he's powerful. 3. Sharper than any two-edged sword. 4. That he pierces even to the dividing asunder, . . . and is a discerner; . . . both to know and to punish as likewise appears from the following verse [[13]]: 'Neither is there [[any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do]].

First, then, this word of God is quick; that is, living; whence in the same sense that we profess to believe in our creed, that he shall come at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead. Although in a much nobler. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given also to the Son, by the communication of his nature and being from all eternity, to have life in himself, who therefore is as well as the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of it. In him saith St John, is life, and the life was the light of men. He himself tells Martha, 'I am the resurrection and the life'. And St Thomas, 'I am the way, the truth and the life'. And St John almost closes his first epistle with those words concerning our Saviour, 'This is the true God, and eternal life' [[1 John 5:20]]. For the Lord is a true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king. All which likewise belongs to our Saviour. For if he is not the true God, he must be a false God. If he is not the living God, he is a dead God, no better than an idol. But though he was once dead, in his humane nature, which could only die, he was immortal in the divine, and in both he now liveth for evermore. And I see no reason but he is intended in the 12 verse of the chapter, before that of the text [[i.e. Heb 3:12]], 'Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God'. And thus much of the first character, which we see does exactly agree to our Saviour, the word of God, that he's quick, or living, <this> second character of this word of God, is that he is powerful, <

>, energetical, full of energy. A word which I know not how to express fully in our language. Others render it, 'strong, and operative, or efficacious', which comes nearest our own word 'powerful'. Sometimes 'tis translated 'effectual working', and sometimes we find the word joined with others which make the sense yet stronger, particularly in 1 Eph. 19, 20, 'according to the working of his mighty power which he [[p. 240]] wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead'. In the original, the energy of the might of his strength. The word I think always signifies in Scripture a supernatural power, and generally, that which is divine and miraculous as where 'tis applied in the 3 Philippians, ult, to our Saviour's changing these our vile bodies at the resurrection and making them like unto his own glorious body; which is ascribed unto 'that mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself'. Thus our Lord Christ is styled 'The power of God', as well as the wisdom of God. (+) And he 'upheld all things by the word of his power, even before he had by himself purged our sins, and was sat down at the right hand [[of the Majesty on high]]. He is 'The mighty God' in Isaiah, and in the Revelations [[sic]], 'The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending', the first and the last. 'The Almighty'. This he has by inheritance, and by nature, as he is the <eternal> son of God. As by adoption and grace he has in his humane nature, or as God-man, all power given or delegated unto him in heaven and earth which never could be executed by any created being; by any but him who is God over all, blessed forever whose Father works hitherto, and he works. **I believe in the creation of souls, as well as in their redemption, and in <his> sustaining, upholding, or conserving, that world which he had made as a <concause> or joint-agent with the Father, and Holy Spirit.** How firmly then may the good depend on his power, for his blessing and protecting them? How justly may the wicked dread his power in punishing them and rewarding them according to their works. For in the

Third place, this word of God is 'sharper than any two-edged sword'. When Christ girds his sword upon his thigh, as 'tis in the 45 Psalm, when he arises to execute

judgment and vengeance in the ungodly, his right hand shall teach him terrible things, and his arrows shall be very sharp, in the heart of the king's enemies. For he shall fight against them with the sword of his mouth; with the sharpness, and keenness of his most righteous vengeance. They shall be punished with everlasting destruction. And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. For thus saith he who hath the sharp sword with two edges [[p. 241]] 'and whose eyes are as a flaming fire' who rides on conquering, and to conquer, whom all the armies of heaven follow. 'Who is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and whose name is called The Word of God' [[Rev. 19:13]]. As you may find it more at large in the 19 Revelation from the 11 to 15 verse. The fourth character, which contains several particulars, but being much of the same nature, I have thrown them together, is that this word of God, which is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, is further described as 'piercing, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit', wherein, as in what went before, there seems to be a plain allusion to the custom in sacrifices, wherein with a very sharp <kugle> [[? i.e. cudgel]] or short sword, the priests did first slay, and then lay open, dissect and divide the offerings, the beasts standing in the room of those that brought them. X

I shall not here insist on an interpretation I've met with in some of the Fathers of those words, 'piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit'. That is, as they were of opinion separating God's ((Holy)) Spirit of [[sic]] from the soul of man; taking his Holy Spirit from them, as he did from the old world and from the Jews, because they had corrupted their ways and their hearts were only evil; they had hardened themselves <on> disobedience and unbelief, and therefore God said his Spirit, whom they had so long provoked, should strive no longer with them. For though <this> was too certainly the case of those sinners of whom the apostle is here speaking, and pray God it be not so of many others at this day, whose hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, whereby they have so grieved God's holy Spirit that he has forsaken them which is the most fearful and tremendous judgment that can befall any on this side of hell, because what place is there then left for repentance? Yet I think this is not the immediate sense of the text before us, 'piercing unto the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit', because the apostle goes on in a continued metaphor, taken from the manner of sacrificing and of the joints and marrow and so on; whereof no account is given by this interpretation. Those are therefore, I think, in the right who by the soul here, do understand the animal soul with all its passions and operations; as our love, and hatred, and hope and fear, and desire and anger. By the Spirit, the higher and nobler part of the soul and of the whole <mind>, the reason, the understanding, which does or should, or might govern the rest. Therefore Christ, the divine word [[p. 242]], reaches and pierces, to the 'dividing of the soul and spirit', while he discerns, he tries, he discovers, he directs, he judges, both the animal, and spiritual operations. Every motion of the heart, the soul, and the mind. It signifies Christ's omniscience. His penetrating all things, knowing all things and that not with a simple, or speculative knowledge, only but with that of a judge, by which he knows the most secret sins, he strictly examines them, he will most fervently punish them. He does not know secret things confusedly, and obscurely, but distinctly and clearly knows what the soul, what the spirit, think, or will, though we ourselves mayn't perhaps always be able to make an exact distinction between them. He divides in sunder the soul and spirit, subdues and destroys the flesh, or carnal mind, and quickens and renews the spirit, or new man,

by his Holy Spirit that dwells in us. And much the same is meant by his dividing between the joints and marrow; whatsoever is most hidden and secret in body or mind. The joints are outward, the marrow inward. Perhaps these may represent our thoughts and our actions. Or (if that be not too nice), the joints may <augure> out unto us, the chain or connexion of thoughts, the marrow, the very first motions of our minds, as in what follows. 'Is a discernor, or distinguisher, of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' For he knows what is in man, all that's in man, notwithstanding his depth and impenetrability to his brother mortals. He knows all the wickedness that our hearts are privy to, how fair soever we may appear to the world; the sense of which is that inward sting which does and will ever torment the guilty sinner; that worm that never dies, which will be gnawing at his heart to all eternity. Nay, he is greater than our hearts; he knows what we will, or would do though we ourselves may not know it, or like <Hanael>, at present pretend to abhor it. He knoweth our thoughts, long before we think them, as well as long after we have forgotten them. For if he were ignorant of any thing, how should he judge the world?

And this argument is further prosecuted in the verse following the text. 'Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight', for--he knows--in heaven what highest angels do. He knows the utmost malice of the [[p. 243]] fellest devils in hell, and of incarnate devils on earth. He fixed their chain, sets bounds to their rage, as he does to that of the sea, and says, 'Hitherto shalt thou go and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed' [[cf. Job 38:11].

'For all things are naked, and open, before the eyes of him, with whom we have to do' [[Heb. 4:13]]. These words close the metaphor already mentioned, taken from the old sacrifices, and are much more emphatical in the original than in our own, or, I believe, in any other language, especially the latter word, which we render 'open' though 'laid open' would be nearer the Greek, and yet be far from reaching it. It alludes to the manner of the priest's dissecting the beast that was sacrificed, which was, by chining it down the backbone, whereby all the inward parts were laid open to view. So are all our most secret thoughts, bare to Christ, the great searcher of hearts, who will one day bring to light the hidden works of darkness. And that he is still here intended seems very evident by what follows--all things are thus naked and open before the eyes of him--with whom we have to do, < > or < >, that is, say almost all commentators, 'To whom we are to give an account', for so the word < > here signifies. For judgment is committed to the son. We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and must give an account for whatsoever we have done in the flesh, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

And thus much for the first argument that ((these wi)) all this is spoken immediately and principally of Christ himself, the eternal word and son of God, taken from the words themselves, and those characters which do so fitly agree to him and, originally and primarily, to him only.

I ((should)) now proceed to the remaining second proofs thereof, namely, that this is well consistent with the apostle's main argument, whereon he's here insisting, both before the text and after it, as well as to his reasonings in his other writings, and to other scriptures, and lastly, to the < > and expressions of the Hebrew writers, whether in the Chaldee, or other languages.

I'll begin with the latter of these, and close my <present> discourse with the consideration, and application of the former.

Those are but short scholars as well as arguers who would persuade the world, that St John and others of the inspired writers borrow the term logos or divine word from the schools of Plato when 'tis much more probable, and I think certain, that both they and Pythagoras, had it from revelation, and either from [[p. 244]] the sacred tradition, or sacred writings, whence we learn that God by his word, made the world, that he said, that is by the same uncreated word and son, by whom he has always declared his will, 'Let there be light, and there was light' [[Gen. 1:3]]. We find him mentioned, Ezek 1:24, where the noise made by the wings of the seraphs, is likened to 'the noise of great waters, the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, in the Greek, the voice of the WORD. What is this plainly, but the same with that in the Revelation, where 'tis said of him, out of whose mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, who is the Alpha and Omega. The Almighty, that his voice was as the sound of many waters. Hence the <Chaldee> translate Jehovah, by the word of Jehovah, in almost innumerable places. And St John learnt from hence, as well as from inspiration, that sublime lesson which he has taught us, 'In the beginning was the Word . . .'. And Philo, the learned Jew, who as I remember, has writ a treatise concerning the divine word, asserts and owns him to be God, the < >, the builder and maker of all things, as St Paul styles him in this epistle, wherein he keeps to the style and notion both of the Greek, Chaldee and Hebrews, and both of the Old Testament and the New.

But the main thing is, that 'tis exactly consistent with the whole scope of the apostle's arguing here, that by the word of God here mentioned is meant Christ the word; as well as to his reasoning in other places. For these [[?thus]] he argues, in the chapter of the text, and before, and after it. The old Jews were destroyed for their disobedience and unbelief, and never entered into the promised Canaan. Take care that ye Christians, having a promise, by Christ, of a better rest, in heaven, should fall short of it, as the Jews did of theirs, and that for the same reason. For if he that despised Moses's law, the presumptuous sinner, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who despises Christ's, those who turn away or <apostaties> from him who yet speaks from heaven? Which he further proves in the text from Christ's knowledge, to discern our unbelief and all our secret sins, and his power to punish them, since we must infallibly given an account unto him at the last day, for all our thoughts, words and ((actions)) deeds. That great high priest of whom he still speaks in the 14 verse who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the son of God, as before, the word of God. For which reason he <presses> us to hold fast our profession; and (in his name, and [[p. 245]] trusting in his merits and intercession) to go boldly to the throne of grace. . . .

And this is exactly conformable to the apostle's way of arguing in other places, as well as to the whole scope of his argument in the case before us. I shall need to give but one instance hereof, taken from the 1 Cor 10 chapter from the first verse and onwards, 'Moreover, brethren, I would not have you to be ignorant, that all our fathers (the old Jews) were under the cloud, and did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and did all drink of the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were

overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the 'intents [[of the heart']]. 'Neither let us tempt Christ . . . upon whom the ends of the world [[are come']].

We see he argues here directly in the same manner as in the ((wo)) chapter of the text, and uses the same examples, and the same cautions, against infidelity and apostacy, and tempting of Christ. Therefore, I think it's evident that by the word of God in the text is meant, primarily, and originally, Christ the word, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and by whom we must all be judged, and who by his Holy Spirit within, and the word preached without yet speaketh to us from heaven. What remaineth then, but that we should take his advice here given unto us by the great apostle of the Gentiles, that we should labor to enter into his rest, and fear lest we should come short of it, having always in mind those awful words of God to his ancient people, the Jews, when he promised to send Christ, the angel of his presence, his face, or <covenant>, to go before them in the wilderness and conduct them into Canaan; as you will find in the 23 Exodus, 20 verse and onward, with which I shall conclude, 'Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon the transgressions (their wilful and impertinent) for my name is in him. What name but the incommunicable name, Jehovah, who is a consuming fire, and will by no means clear the guilty impenitent sinner.

Consider . . .

[Epworth
May 26, 1728]

[No. 17, p. 246]

In Nomine Domini

IId Sermon on IV Heb. 12, 'For the word . . .'

Epworth, June 2, 1728

You heard the last Lord's day that divines were of different opinions concerning the meaning of the expression, 'The word of God,' here in my text. The first, that it signified Christ, the eternal ((W)) substantial word, and wisdom of the Father. And I think I proved pretty clearly that it did so, by explaining and applying several scriptures relating to that head. +

The second opinion, which I am now to consider, is that thereby is intended or <therein> included the external, written word of God, the Holy Scriptures read, and especially preached unto us. The gospel, or glad tidings of salvation, preaching peace by Jesus Christ. The word preached, or the preaching of the word, more darkly and obscurely in the Old Testament, more clearly and distinctly in the New, when Christ brought life and immortality to light, . . . but still the same sacred word of God, in all dispensations and all ages; as Christ 'twas the same that spoke it, who is the same yesterday, today and for ever. And this they prove 1. By the several characters or properties here ascribed unto it. 2. By the scope of the apostle's argument. 3. By comparing it with other scriptures which we shall find will give great light unto the other.

1. They say this appears, as indeed I think it does, from the several properties and characters ascribed to the word of God, as 1. That 'tis quick. 2. Powerful. 3. Sharper than any two-edged sword. 4. (As under the former head) piercing to the dividing . . .

I. The word of God, or eternal revelation of his will, is quick, vital, or living. 'Tis not a dead <letter> without any strength or spirit in it. 'The words which I speak unto you', saith our Lord, 'they are spirit, and they are life' [[John 6:63]]. And the Scriptures ((are called)) called the word of life or the lively or living oracles delivered unto us. For by these things < > and in this < > is the life of his soul. They have a quickening and enlivening virtue. By every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God doth man live. What gave life at first, does still ((pre))serve it, works and preserves and perfects spiritual life in us. For the life of the soul is its union with God, as the death of it, its separation from him. This word of God is that incorruptible seed, whereby we are born again, through the Holy Spirit, who becomes a principle of new life in us, whereby we are made new creatures, the new man is renewed in us day by day, and we are quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, and begotten again to a lively hope, through the resurrection of Christ from the dead, that our faith and hope might be in him. It promises life to the obedient, and threatens certain death to those who disobey or disbelieve it, setting before us life and death, as it does good and evil. And that therefore we would

choose life that both we and our spirit live! For neither Moses nor Christ knew any other way for us to enter into life but by keeping the commandments [[p. 247]] and of those that were moral or that till heaven and earth pass away, one jot, or one tittle of that law, should not pass, till all were fulfilled. To the same purpose with that in another place, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away' [[cf. Mark 13:31]]. And with these frequent declarations of the Psalmist, in the 119 Psalm, and other places, 'For ever O Lord, thy word endureth in heaven' [[cf. vs 89; AV: 'settled'; BCP: 'endureth']] . 'The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting' [[v. 144]]. 'As concerning thy testimonies, I have known long since that thou hast grounded them for ever' [[Ps. 119, Clamavi in toto corde meo, vs 8, BCP; vs. 152 in AV has 'founded']]. For as of Christ's kingdom there shall ((ha)) be no end [[cf. Luke 1:33]]; so the laws of that kingdom shall endure for evermore. And so

2. The word of God, as 'tis preached unto us, is powerful and efficacious to the casting down the strong holds of sin and satan. Humbling the proud, raising the humble; bringing every high thought into subjection to Christ, for 'tis 'the power of God to salvation, to every one that believes' [cf. Rom 1:16]; that receives the truth in the love of it. Action follows life, and that energy, which is vigorous action; productive of effect. And such is that of God's word, for to will, to speak, and to act or do, is the same with God. For 'as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh is bring forth and bud, that it may give seed. . . . So, saith he, shall my word be; ((it shall not re)) that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing whereto I have sent it'. 55 Is. 10, 11 verse. Now the power of God's word, is seen in the effects of it. In converting the soul, in comforting the good, in thunderstriking the wicked. For 'tis in the

Third place, sharper than any two-edged sword. 'Tis the Saviour of death unto death, in them that perish by their gainsaying and unbelief. The learned Jew says, 'That the flaming sword which turned every way to guard the gates of paradise, is a symbol of the word of God, which ((he says)) is quick and <fervent>'. The other Jews have a saying, that the prayers of Moses were equal to any two-edged sword and those of Elisha and Elijah. The wisest of men, and the best of preachers but one fitly compares the words of the wise, of those prophets and wisemen, who were full instructed to instruct others and to make them wise unto salvation, to goads and to nails, fastened, by a skillful hand; because of their piercing to the quick and stirring up the most dull and heavy, and keeping their hold, <whereof> they were once fastened. 'I have hewed them', saith God, 'by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth' [[cf. Hos. 6:5]]. For, 'Is not my word as a fire, and like an hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?' 23 Jer. 29 verse. ((In this sense too, there is that)) And if the sinner will not hereby be converted, he must be confounded; for though hand join in hand the wicked shall not be unpunished. God is angry with him every day, and 'If he will not turn, he will whet his sword, he hath (((already))) bent his bow (that is his vengeance is prepared for him) and made it ready, he hath prepared for him the instruments of death'; the 7th Psalm, 11th to 13 verse [[AV]]. And woe be to those who run that hazard, and < > venture to stand it out so long against the Almighty! For he says, by Moses, 'If I whet my glittering sword [[p. 248]], and mine hand take hold of judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies,

and I will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood and my sword shall devour flesh, and that with the blood of the slain, and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges on the enemy'. 32 Deut. 41, 42 verse. The prophet speaks of himself in the 49 Is. 2 verse, 'The Lord hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and like a polished shaft, in his quiver hath he hid me'. In this sense too, 'There is that speaketh like the piercing of a sword'; as was the preaching of the apostles, when they warned men to repent and flee from the wrath to come, the impending vengeance. When they told them plainly of their sins, especially their crucifying Christ, and as St Stephen the stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, 'Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did, so do ye' [[cf. Acts 7:51]]. By which all they were so far from heeding that though they were cut to the heart, they gnashed upon them with their teeth, 'and took counsel to slay them' [[Acts 5:33]]. And yet still God's word ran and was glorified, for in the

Fourth place, it pierces, to the dividing asunder. . . . The word of God is sharper than any sacrificial instrument which the Levites used in the slaying and dissecting their offerings. More poignant, more piercing, more terrible. By this they rightly divided the victims, and separated God's part and man's from each other. By which dissection, as well as by the fire of Ariel, the altar of burnt sacrifices, the lion of the Lord, the wisdom of the ancients did understand the knowledge and the power of God, ((penetr)) discerning and adjudging all things. And this power is exemplified in his word, which reaches all cases and circumstances, on which account the Jews say that the words of the law are compared to a sword, because nothing can resist them; nor be concealed from them; which is yet more applicable to the gospel, the preachers whereof must separate the precious from the vile, if they would rightly divide the word of truth, must say to the righteous it shall be well with them, to the wicked it shall be ill with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings [[cf. Isa. 3:10, 11]], that there will be a great gulf for ever fixed between them [[cf. Luke 16:26]], and that, as the Lord has told us, shall go away. . . . This sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, when it comes with power and demonstration, will not let the sinner alone in his false peace, but fills him with compunction and conviction, as it did those in the Acts, who < > were pricked in their hearts when they heard the word preached unto them, and cried out to God's ministers, 'What shall we do to be saved?' [[cf. Acts 16:30]]. It pierces even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit and of [[p. 249]] the joints and marrow. First pierces and then divides, shows and lays open all our thoughts, words and actions. So that I believe there is no sin which any man or woman can be guilty of, but what God's word has at some time or other, reached and discovered unto them. This blows away all their figleave-excuses, batters down and removes all their thin blinds and pretences, saying plainly to the sinner, as Nathan did to David, 'Thou art the man' [[2 Sam. 12:7]]; so that it leaves him self-condemned, nor is he able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which it comes, though it comes not with the words of man's wisdom, but in the plainness and simplicity of the gospel. It dissects and divides the animal soul from the rational, the sensitive faculties from the intellectual. Turns us inside out, knows us better than we do ourselves, and describes us better. Shows us our natural face, both outward and inward, soul as well as body, thoughts as well as words and actions with all the moles and spots, the defects, and excuses, and deformities both of the one and the other. Shows the

wrathful, that he's mad, the drunkard, that he's a swine, the lewd and lustful, that he's a goat, the unjust that he's a robber, the malicious, that he's a murderer, the proud, that he's a devil. At first indeed it wounds that it may heal, by these wholesome severities to cut off the mortified part yet may save the ((whole)) sound. <It takes and It flatters none, it dissembles with none. And woe to those who handle the word of God deceitfully, who < > hurt of God's people falsely ((and deceitfully)), and say 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace' [[Jer. 6:14; 8:11]]. The gospel life promises through Christ, but 'tis only to those who believe and repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, who live a sober and righteous and godly life, adorning the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour, who mortify their members which are upon earth and whose conversation is in heaven. What good would it do us or you, if we should deceive you, and tell you the way to heaven is not so narrow as Christ has told us? No, we must assure you, as we find it written in his Holy Word, that except a man be [[born again]], we are converted, and become as little children we can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Except the great and thorough change be made, the whole ((M)) body, soul and spirit sanctified, the whole man renewed, and thereby Jesus Christ formed in us. Except we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind or understanding, and all our strength. . . . For he demands nothing less from us, he will accept nothing less of us. And if we will not do this, if we will not submit to the terms of Christ's gospel, we plainly declare that we will not have him to reign over us; and his word has already pronounced our doom, 'Bring those mine enemies and stay them before me'. And as for 'that evil servant who says <though> but in his heart my Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin [[to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken . . . and shall]] cut him in sunder, and divide [[his portion with the hypocrites; see Matt 24:48:51]]. ((And)) For this word of God is, lastly, a discernor, a critical judge, and tryer, and weigher, of the most inward and secret thoughts and intentions of the heart. It sifts the wheat from the ((br)) chaff, the [[p. 250]], false from the true, appearances from realities, and tells every man the naughtiness and deceitfulness, and the plague of his own heart. +There was indeed a famous miraculous gift among the first Christians, then necessary for the glory of God and the propagation of the gospel, which was called discerning of spirits. To whom that belonged, in the 1 Cor. 14: 24, 25, 'That if one came in (to their congregations) that believed not, or was unlearned, he was convinced of all, he was judged of all, first by those prophetic teachers as were Ananias and Sapphira, and then by the whole congregation that heard them. As how? Why as follows, 'The secrets of his heart are made manifest' (by the prophet's revelation of them, his most private and occult sins and wickedness) 'and so falling down upon his face he will worship God and report', as from his own experience, 'that God is in you of a truth' [[see 1 Cor. 14:25]].

And this same spirit of discerning seems to have lasted for some time after that age; for I think the blessed Ignatius had it and that he presses Polycarp to the exercising and quickening it, and to pray for the increase of it. But still what is this to us, now these miraculous gifts are long since ceased? ((Th)) In answer, the word of God still reaches and searches the heart, or else to what purpose are Christ's ministers, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear to preach it unto you? Or has Christ promised to be with the officers of his church in teaching and baptizing, in the ministering of his word and sacraments, to the end of the world? Nor can we doubt but that he directs them to

speak a word in due season, what may reach and touch the conscience, and what is most proper and < > to the case of those that hear them, though perhaps neither the one nor the other may be aware of it. In promising mercy to the penitent and obedient insisting on such and such subjects, rebuking such and such sins, and denouncing God's heavy wrath on the obstinate unrepenting sinner.

2. The favourers of this opinion, prove that by the word here, is meant the word preached, more especially the gospel; from the whole scope of the apostle's argument, and indeed from his express words, they say that the chief thing immediately intended by the word of God here is, his terrible word of threatening, denounced against the old unbelievers unto whom the apostle tells us, twice in the foregoing chapter and as good as twice in this, out of the 95 Psalm, 'That God sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest' [[cf. v. 11]]. Which rest he explains by Canaan and heaven. Because they believed not his word, but were disobedient to his commands, and in their hearts (which God knew) turned back again into Egypt. Now what could be more proper than these threatenings, and the fate of their forefathers, to deter the [[p. 251]] converted Jews, from falling after the same example of <unbelief>? This is very plain in the second verse of the chapter of the (a)text, 'Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them' (therefore to them as well as unto us, in what sense we shall anon see). But (observe), the WORD PREACHED did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. Which argument he follows without interruption to the text, wherein he again mentions, the word of God, what but the word preached, which he had been twice before mentioning?

And this they likewise prove, in the

Third and last place, from other places of Scripture, I shall instance only in two, for weight is, in this case, better than number. The first is in the 1 St Peter, 1 Chapter, 23 verse, to the end. 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever'. ((For all)) As in 1st St James 18, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of ((the)) truth'. 'Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only' [[vs 22]]--which must relate to the word preached. As does undoubtedly that in St Peter, where it follows, 'All flesh is grass' [[1 Pet. 1:24]], and so on. But the word of the Lord endureth forever, and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. You see here, as in ((St P)) the chapter of my text, 'tis the word preached', which is styled, 'the living word, the everlasting gospel'. But there is a

Second place, not unlike to this, with which I shall close their argument. 'Tis in the 10 Rom. 8 verse, 'What saith', the righteousness which is of faith? It saith, 'The WORD is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the WORD of faith which we preach'. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead (the main articles of the Christian faith) 'thou shalt be saved'.

From all which I confess I know not how to avoid the consequence, that the external word of God, the word preached unto us, is that word of God, quick and powerful and stronger than any two-edged sword, which is mentioned here in the text, as many divines are of opinion, for which you have heard their arguments.

But how then can it be the ((eternal)) essential word of God, Christ, the eternal word, who was in the beginning and was with God and was God? As I think I have proved, if not demonstrated, in my former discourse on this subject.

I hope some of you may remember, for a week, some words which I inserted in that discourse, and which were not words of course only. And those were, that by the WORD OF GOD here, was PRINCIPALLY and PRIMARILY, to be understood [[p. 252]] Christ the word, the second person in the Trinity, the word eternal of God and son of God. And < > secondarily and instrumentally the word or will of God declared and given out by this son, by whom he has always transacted with his creatures, whether written or preached by his messengers or ministers, in all ages. This I think is cleared even from that difficult place just quoted from 10 Romans, which St Paul had from Moses in 30 Deuteronomy. 'Moses', saith St Paul, 'describeth the righteousness of the law, that the man which doeth these things shall live by them'; which is taken from Leviticus, 'But the righteousness which is of the faith' (that in the more evangelical book of Deuteronomy) 'speaketh on this wise, Say not who shall ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down from above' (which all the old fathers expected) 'or who shall descend into the deep, that is to bring up Christ again from the dead' (from whose death all their legal sacrifices received their virtue, and of whom Jonas was a figure; to whose history the <Targums here> refer). 'But what saith it' (as before) 'the word is nigh thee, even the word of faith, which we preach, that if you all confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus', and so on, which I look on as the key of the whole matter. The gospel was preached, though imperfectly, unto Abraham. 'In thy seed shall all the men of the earth be blessed'. Moses knew Christ and thought his reproach bitter; and prophesied of him, 'A prophet shall the Lord your God. . .'. And the soul that will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among his people. What should he hear, The word of God, the commandments of God, spoken by him. For God's laws and testimony, and word, and commandments are the same, and <in> St Paul < > word, is in Deuteronomy. Commandment, as they are < > in < > many other places. What can be more evangelical, or better gospel, that which our Lord himself quotes from Moses, as the great commandment of the Law < >, 'Thou shalt love th Lord thy God . . .', which he that does, 'tis impossible but he must be accepted of him, and (()) to teach us to do this and assist us in doing it, < > Christ came into the world. These things therefore, that God's Word is quick and powerful, and so on, cannot agree to the word written or preached, absolutely, and originally; but rather <ar> in respect of Christ as he gives this power to that word; for they are all his effects and operations, by his word and spirit, in the hearts and consciences of men. Whence it appears that these two different interpretations are so far from being contradictory to each other, that they ((do)) are in effect the same, and do fall in with one another. And thus much of this difficult and noble question. And now God grant that we may so <harken> to the <divine> teacher, speaking to us from heaven, without whose Spirit, his eternal word will have no efficacy upon us, that we may give the more earnest heed to those things which we have heard with our outward ears, as this ordinary means of salvation would at any time we should let them slip. 'For if the word spoken by angels', as the same apostle argues in 2 Heb 2, 3 verses, 'was stedfast [[and every transgression

and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"]]

Consider . . .

[Epworth, June 2, 1728]

[No. 25, pt. 1, p. 311]

In Nomine Domini

1 St Pet. IV cap: 3, 4, 5 v.

The time passed of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquettings, and abominable idolatries. Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you. Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

In these words the holy apostle is describing in a most lively manner the most forlorn estate, and vile conversation of the unconverted and unregenerate. And that not only of professed heathens, but even of those Jews that lived amongst them, who it seems were so poisoned with their infectious example that there had been but little or no difference between them, before God had made them to differ, by calling them to the grace of his gospel. To preserve them stedfast wherein, he sets before them on the contrary the most instructive example of our blessed Lord our master who vouchsafed to die for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity as he had loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. 'Forasmuch', says he, 'as Christ hath suffered for us [[p. 312]] in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind' [[1 Pet 4:1]]; that is, as one paraphrases it, the same resolution, be conformed to him in his sufferings, as ye are buried with him in baptism and have been planted together in the likeness of his death, the old man being crucified with him, that the body of sin might be abolished, that henceforth we might not serve sin [[cf. Rom 6:5-6]]. [For he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin. The same with that in the Romans..FS2_____

/FS1_____

/].FN1Closing bracket added by ed./ He that is dead (to sin) is freed from sin, from its power and dominion over him [[cf. Rom. 6:7-9]]. As it follows here, 'That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God' [[1 Pet 4:2]], since he has now both strength and obligation to do so, being dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness. On which follows the text, as a consequence of the former, or a

further reason why the convert should not serve sin any longer because he had done it too long already. 'For the time passed of our' (or--as 'tis in some copies, 'of your') lives. . . '.

Wherein I'll consider

.RM79/.TS6/.LS1/.RM80/.TS7,9/.LS1.50/

1. What is meant by the will of the Gentiles, and by working of it, which will more distinctly appear in the second place, by the particular instances here given of it.

'Walking in lasciviousness. . . ' 3. Why the wicked think it strange that good men, and they who are converted from a vain and sinful life, don't do as they do. That they do not still run with them into the same excess of riot. 4. Why they speak evil of them on that account [[p. 313]], and what evil it is which they generally and most commonly speak of them--which, as bold and free as they are [over their cups, and among their drunken companions, prating against them whom they know, or do but so much as suspect to be truly sober and godly, with insolent and malicious words], yet they must not think to do all this with impunity. They must not expect to escape unpunished, if there be a righteous judge, a God in heaven, whom they often talk of, and whose name they profane, but neither regard, nor fear, nor serve, nor love him. For in the

Fifth and last place, they must certainly give an account for all these things, as I doubt not but their own guilty consciences do now tell them. For all their ungodly deeds, and even their hard speeches, unto that great God who shall judge both the quick and the dead, at his last glorious, but dreadful and impartial tribunal.

The first thing is what we are to understand in the text, by the will of the Gentiles, and by working of it. The Gentiles, as I suppose all or most of us know, were then the same with what we now call heathens, that is, except the Jews, all the nations upon earth who were aliens [['from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world'; Eph. 2:12]], among whom were, at the time the apostle wrote this, we of this island who were, with the rest of the world, poor sinners of the Gentiles, vile idolaters, and as ill livers, as to the latter of which, pray God [[p. 314]], we are yet much mended. The will of the Gentiles is therefore the same with the will of the flesh, and the will of man, in his now natural and fallen and corrupt estate, utterly perverse and averse to God and goodness, and stubbornly bent and set upon sin and wickedness and the gratifying the inclinations and cravings of the flesh, and all carnal and criminal pleasures and desires; whatsoever the groveling and animalized soul lusteth after, without any manner of regard to the laws of God, and the wise and wholesome restraints of religion and reason. The heathen were so notorious for the lewd and wicked lives of the generality of them, that they are described in gross by that character, 'The sinners of the

.SF2,a/Gentiles'..FN2 2 Gal. 15 [[i.e. Sam's note]]./ That is, great and habitual sinners.

And when Christ is said in ((the)) two of the gospels, 'to be delivered to the Gentiles,' it is, in the other two, 'To be delivered into the hand of sinners'..FN2 Actually, 'Gentiles' in Matt 20:19; Mark 10:33; Luke 18:32. 'Sinners' in Matt 26:45 and Mark 14:41. But check on this./ They have indeed a dreadful and yet too just a character given of them by St Paul, who was best acquainted with them, and did not spare them, though he was their peculiar apostle, in several places of his writings, exactly agreeable with that which St Peter gives them here in the text. So, in the 2 Ephesians 1st verse, 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Wherein in time past ye walked

according to the course of this world, according to the [suggestions of] the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we had our conversation in times passed, in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the [[p. 315]] desires of the flesh and of the mind' (that is the carnal mind) 'and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others' [[Eph 2:1-3]]. And, again, cap. 4, v. 17 and onward, 'This I say therefore and testify in the Lord' (by express inspiration and revelation) 'that ye walk not henceforth as other Gentiles, in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God', from all holiness and goodness, whereby we are to imitate and resemble our maker, 'through the ignorance', the willful and affected ignorance, 'that is in them, because of the blindness of the heart'. Their dreadful and judicial blindness and hardness. 'Who being passed feeling' or any conscience or grace, or goodness 'have given themselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness' [[vss. 17-19]]. And he further advises them, verse 22, 'To put off, as concerning their former conversation the old man, which is corrupt, ((with)) according to the deceitful lusts'. Their former abominable heathenish way of living. This therefore is, in general, the will of the Gentiles, and working it, is living after it, minding nothing else; sinning with both hands, with all their might. Living like downright heathens.

Whose particular vices are thereafter mentioned, as 1. Walking in lasciviousness, and lusts. The former whereof notes unnatural lewdness. [The filthy stinking, accursed, worse than diabolical sin of Sodom, men with men, burning in lust one towards another. Which had not only over-run the most famous heathen nations, the Persians, Greeks and Romans, but was the darling vice of their philosophers, who were every where infamous for their corrupting of youth; nay, that vile practice was rather encouraged then, <represented> by two of their greatest legislators, Solon of Athens [[p. 316]], and Lycurgus of Lacedemon [[Sparta]]. Though a greater than both, for we know that God spoke by Moses, nor did he as others, only pretend to, and counterfeit the divine oracles, justly awarded death without mercy to all who were guilty of so horrible a wickedness.] And such wretches as these I doubt the apostle modestly and tacitly notes, when he charges his Ephesians to have no fellowship with the .MDUL/unfruitful.MDNM/ works of darkness. In the 5 Ephesians, 11 verse. As with the same he charges the Romans, or rather the whole body of the heathens, under the name of those vile affections unto which God had justly given them up, because they liked not to retain him in their knowledge, neither were they thankful for all his benefits.

The other part of this black pair is lusts. Which though it may indeed include the former, yet commentators have understood and explained it, of those desires which though criminal and irregular, and as such highly deserving the wrath of God, and accordingly punished with his vengeance, are yet not so directly against nature, and so shocking unto it as was the sin of those who going after strange flesh [[see Jude 7]] were set forth as a fearful example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Neither must they who are guilty of the hainous [[sic]] sin of adultery, or indulge themselves in fornication, in solitary wickedness, or in any other lusts of uncleanness, expect to escape the righteous judgment of that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, but the((ir)) fire of their lust must be punished with everlasting burnings [[? see Isa. 33:14]]. And whoever is ((guilty)) [[p. 317]] enslaved by any of these shameful and hurtful lusts,

which drown men in destruction and perdition, he in vain pretends to be a disciple of our Saviour, who forbids us so much as to look on a woman with any impure and criminal designs or desires; but he is indeed whatever he calls himself, no better than a heathen. For almost all the heathens were notoriously and shamefully polluted with these vices. Indeed I'm ashamed to repeat what such grave men as Tully, Epictetus and even Plato himself, have thought and writ of these matters, especially if the person were a common woman or a servant; for then they thought they might make as free with them as ((some)) too many do now with their housekeepers; and that heaven would either wink or laugh at so small a sin, if it were a sin at all; for there have been in all ages such as have been good Catholics at least in that one point of their faith, that fornication is a venial sin only. Though they who do such things, much more who defend them and have pleasure in them, must willingly forget that holy commandment which the apostle gave by the Lord Jesus, his express direction and inspiration, to the Thessalonians, who were some of the lewdest, and most luxurious people in the world; and in them to all mankind, especially to us Christians. 1 Ep. to Thessalonians, 4 cap, 3 verse and onwards, 'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel' (to preserve his body, which is the cabinet of the soul, and much more, the temple of the Holy Ghost) 'in sanctification and honour. Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God. That no man go beyond' (the [[p. 318]] bounds of matrimony) or 'defraud his brother' (by the worst sort of theft, adultery) 'because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we have also forewarned you, and' (do still) testify. 'For God hath not called us to uncleanness' (as did the heathens in their devilish sacrifices and mysteries) 'but unto holiness'.

These were the instances of the heathen intemperance of one kind, for which they were fitted and disposed by that of the other, in riotous eating and drinking, making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. Denoted as here following, 'Excess of wine, revellings, banquettings', which accompanied their truly 'abominable idolatries'.

The word which we render 'excess of wine' signifies, ingurgitating, pouring down that or any strong liquors, as we say, without fear or wit, without measure or modesty. Like Leviathan, that trusted he could draw up Jordan; or one particular sort of whale, I think they call it a whirlpool, whose common diversion or employment it is to suck in the whole seas of water only to spout them out again. This is the property and character of a seasoned drunkard, who +shames not to own that he neither can nor will live without it,+ has a sort of a canine appetite for drinking, is mad for it. Has a perpetual feverish thirst upon him, contracted and so rivetted by this swinish sort of life, that he can no more be satisfied by pouring in the vastest quantities of liquor, than he will be when he is roaring and blaspheming in the [[p. 319]] flames of hell, if he could there procure one drop of water to cool his tongue. This relates to the drunkard's greediness as to these things and swallowing liquor, whatever he pretends, for the dear love of it, drinking for drinking's sake, because he doats upon it, wishes as did a brother of his of old that his neck were as long as a crane's, that he might the longer solace himself with the dear delicious relish; makes his gullet his god, and glories in his shame, as did the worst of the old abominable heathens.

The next pair are what < calls> good company, and good fellowship. < >, here rendered revellings and banquettings. In the 13 Romans 13, 'riotings and drunkenness'.

Comus was the god of revelling, of good fellowship, of mirth, of drunkenness, of games, of pleasures, whence some think the word comedy is derived. Revellings therefore, which take their name from him, <in > Greek, are riotous and undecent [[sic]] feasts and merry meetings; < > at which no grave or sober man would be willingly, or can be delightfully present, much less would he be pleased that any other sober man should see him in such company. It signifies night-revels, and the singing and roaring of drunken companions, with all the bald [[?bold]] and impudent Jews and loud fools laughter wherein they fancy they are so witty [and so parlous] one among another. And after that, reeling and staggering from house to house and from company to company, and if possible, to worse company than their own, if they can find it. To that deep and miry ditch which the abhorred of the Lord shall fall into [[see Prov. 22:14]], but he that is beloved [[p. 320]] of him shall escape her [[? see 2 Thess 2:12-13]].

One considerable part of the heathenish revels were their sports and games and plays, which were likewise a part of their religion, and vowed and <practiced> as acts of devotion. ((Some)) For the most part in the theatres, sometimes on their stages, with all manner of licentiousness, scurrility, cruelty, buffoonery and lewdness. And these were those very pomps and vanities of this wicked world which the first Christians so solemnly renounced at their baptism; and yet it seems they were so tempting, and the people so set upon them, and so much for running [a madding] after them, that they were forced to make strict and severe canons, that none should come to the holy communion who were present at them, and if they persisted in it they were to be cast quite out of the church.

The last common exercise of the heathens, wherein they placed their supreme happiness, was what we here render banquettings; but it signifies properly drinkings [merry-meals] <appointed> as trials of skill, and who was the best proficient in that art [the stoutest sponge [[i.e. an immoderate drinker; see OED]] in the company], drinking matches, where they met for that very end and purpose. Resolved to have more than enough, challenging one another, who should be the first and the last brute amongst them. But all this to the honour of their gods, whence our people have learnt to be drunk at good times, and on such particular holy days. And one ((can scarce tell whether)) would think they thought it then a sin not to be so, as the heathens did at the feasts of Ceres and Bacchus, when whole towns and cities were [[p. 321]] poured out together in lewdness and jollity, men and children, like those of Sodom (as you have heard this day) but a few hours before their destruction.

Thus have you seen the true face of the Gentile world, who knew not God. The very picture of a very heathen. The more heathen he, you may say. But what was this to God's own people, to the Jews, who knew better, and 'tis to be presumed lived better than these wretched creatures wherein you have been describing; no, not a whit better than the generality of them when the apostle wrote this to them, and they were full ripe for ruin, as we shall see hereafter. Are there then any Christians, or such as fancy themselves Christians, who can possibly be guilty of the like enormities? Speak conscience, with whom I at present leave it; and let every one that is concerned, himself make the

application. But in the meantime, think not O wicked man that thou shalt escape 'the righteous judgment of God, but for all these things God will certainly bring thee into judgment' [[? see Rom. 2:3-5]].

Consider . . .

[Feb. 26, 1720 Wroot
8, 1723
1728

June 25, 1727 Epworth

[No. 25, pt. 1, p. 333]
In Nomine Domini

IIIId Sermon on 1st St Peter, IV cap. 3, 4, 5 verse
'The time passed of our life may suffice . . .'

We are now come, by God's help, to the third thing proposed to be discoursed of from these words, namely, why the wicked (that is heathenish livers, hard-drinkers, and whoremasters, and the like) think it strange that good men who are converted from a vain and a sinful life, have seen the folly and madness of it, and have entirely forsaken it, don't do as they do, don't run with them into the same excess of riot. And they think this very strange first because their notion of happiness is in their own way of life, and they have no other notion of it.

2. They have a great many of their side, a great deal of company, while there are but few comparatively that walk in the narrow way; that are sincerely sober and virtuous, pious and religious.

1. Their notion of happiness. . . . For this way they have been bred and born in, and walked in it all their lives, and use has made it a second nature. Their spots are not the spots of God's children, sins of sudden surreption and surprise; for which they are afterwards deeply grieved and humbled because they have offended God, and watchful against ((st)) falling into the like for the future, and careful against the very temptations to it. Whereas the wicked man tempts the tempter, and greedily embraces every occasion of gratifying his unsatiable appetites, and criminal [[p. 334]] desires. And were it not that the ungodly knows no shame, one would think should be ashamed of that impudent excuse. That 'tis surprised into the beastly sin of drunkenness, if not every night, yet be sure at the least, every Thursday as if he were afraid he should lose his charter without it? And the longer he continues ((in)) it, the more he is daily rooted and rivetted in it. For I have known, I think, even some whose masters repent, but never an old hardened

seasoned drunkard. Especially if he received it <~> traduce; if it has run in the blood from generation to generation.

But must the good-fellow be condemned unheard? The preachers may rail at him as long as they please, when they are got into the pulpit, when they have the privilege of talking without being contradicted (unless perhaps now and then by a wry mouth, or couching down the head, or a cruel scornful smile). But were the drunkard at liberty to speak for himself, and make his own defence (as he can do fast enough, when he is in his own chapel, and his father's), you should see how easily he would run down the priest, especially if he had but some that he would choose, to take his part against him. Well then. For once he shall have fair play. I have often heard Baal plead for himself when any have been but endeavouring to cast down his altars. I think I have heard all the drunkard's excuses, and shall fairly propose them. And if I happen to forget any of them [[p. 335]], if he will at any time hereafter be so kind as to remind me of them, I promise to take some fitting occasion to do them justice. Nor, will you find me herein much out of my way, in the first reason why they think it so strange that others run not with them into the same excess of riot; which was, because their notion of happiness is in it. They have no notion of any such thing without it. [Not grave enough; all omitted within the brackets.]

[And yet I must own, that though I would make their plea as strong as I can, yet I am ashamed to suppose it spoken originally by the mouth of a man from the reverence which I bear to humane nature. But there is a familiar domestic animal very useful in its time and way, whose mouth it will, if I mistake not, very well become and therefore I shall put it into it. Especially since God's Holy Spirit has thought fit to choose him out as a proper emblem and representative of the drunkard which it well compared to a swine that is wallowing in the mire.

And thus one may suppose, if it could speak, would become that polite orator. "Tis a hard thing, neighbours, that one can't lie quiet in one's own sty, and one's own <side>, without being disturbed by them that have nothing to do with it, and were better be minding their own business. For my part I'm for the good of the country, and will stand up for the good of the parish, as long as I have two pair of legs under me. How shall we pay our rents, if we don't sell barley? How should barley sell if we don't make malt, or sell that; if ((my master)) neighbours been't pretty often drunk with ale; and how many delicious a malt feast of grains must a poor freeborn servant lose without it? There's nothing that [[p. 336]] cheers the spirits more or eases the <mind or passes time better>. The sober sots reproach our herd that there is no four-legged creature that will be drunk besides us. But the swine take it as an honour, since there is none else that dare aspire to the diversion of their masters. You see what altered creatures we are, with one moderate tub-full of ale or liquor; for we scorn sipping, we are for no less than a belly-full at once, or else 'twill do us no kindness. Not for the sake of drinking, you may believe us (as well as many others that say the same). But merely for the love of good company. For it makes us the prettiest company! You would think it almost transformed us into men; as to our very posture, as well as our deportment and actions. For we sometimes aim at standing on our hinder legs, as they resemble us in making use of all four when they are in the same condition. And though we can't indeed articulately curse and swear as they do, yet we come as near it as we can in our language, and in churning

the foam, and throwing it round about us. And then, so civilly merry! So many ((antic)) pretty and surprising tricks and gambols, that you would wonder. 'Tis true we may sometimes run it a little too far. High terms may arise, and such provocations as no swinish flesh and blood can bear. And then we whet our tusshes, and woe to him, that stands next. But there's no manner of malice all the while. 'Tis pure ale, that's the truth on't. 'Tis only to try our manhood. We are all as good friends as ever next morning, and we don't remember one word on't. For that's not like a good companion, and would cast a reflection on our whole legion. But by this time 'tis time to [[p. 337] retire, which we do to the next friendly pond or spot of mud or <gentle> sty that is prepared to receive us; where we lie as quietly, and snore as ((soundly)) sweetly, or wallow as happily, as our masters when they are dead-drunk in their own houses. And who can blame us for all this; or what manner of harm is there in it? For we have been doing business all this while. We have been doing our own, and our master's business. There's no living, there's no trading without it. We have done according to our nature, according to our education, according to our <inclination>. We have been making ourselves fat, and fitting ourselves for the slaughter. What would you have us be angels? We have no taste of any other felicity, we envy no other, we desire no other. Give us mud enough and swill enough, and we scorn to exchange with any. But one and all and a swine's life for ever!'

And now what think you of the cause, which you have heard summed up fairly? Only the landladies have been forgotten; but shall shortly be remembered.] What has the drunkard more to say than that he is not drunk for love of the drink (no, he scorns it, as much as his apologist who has defended his cause before him) but for the love of company; for the love of mirth, a little innocent refreshment, or to make barley sell; or to make bargains, to do business, and get an honest livelihood, by cheating his neighbours, in a loving friendly manner, while the weakest goes to the wall, and the thickest skull who has the strongest and the <largest> stowage, imposes on all the rest and brags of it after he has done it [as a hogshead [[p. 338]] or tun would do, if they were able to hold forth on the same occasions. And]

Lastly (((which I promised to remember) if honest landladies must live, and))) it drowns our cares, it passes away time; and how should the honest landladies ((they)) live without it? Let us see now whether all this strength of argument can be answered; and I'm sure it may be in a very few words; which are only that sobriety and moderation would fully answer all the forementioned ends that are honest. ((except)) All but <those> base ((one)) and vile designs of over-reaching and cheating our neighbours, of stupefying our consciences, of wasting our time which ought to be employed <

>. Though if none of them could thereby be answered, they are all but worldly ends, and they had better all be sunk, and the world together with them, than that we should dishonour God, abuse ourselves and his other creatures, ((mat)) degrade ourselves into brutes, ruin our own souls, and with so much difficulty and pains, and expence and labour, work out our own damnation. I am not, you all know, nor ever was, so morose and cynical, as to damn men, that is, to think, or say, or judge they will be damned for moderate refreshments of this nature with one another, if they go home sober, and in good time, ((are)) fit for prayer, fit for supper, fit for sober rest, rather more loving and cheerful to their families and wives than when they may not have thus a little unbent nature, instead of rending and cursing and damning whatever comes near them, after they

have lavished in extravagant guzzling what their poor families dearly want, and which would [[p. 339]] make their lives comfortable unto them. But this I do say unto you, and say it by the word of the Lord, that is, from the express words of Scripture, that no drunkard, any more than any whoremonger, Sodomite, or robber [[or]] murderer, shall ever inherit the kingdom of God. I know you will ask what a drunkard is? And fancy ((you are not so)) none is such unless ((you)) he once or twice or oftener in a week reel or drop down in the street, or under the table. But I must set you right in this matter, and then I think ((you)) the sinner will be speechless, and not have one word more to say in the defence of so bad a cause and lest you should think I am too strict herein (would to God I had always been strict enough!), I shall give you the opinions of two famous divines of our church, which come up fully to this matter. The first is that of the reverend and learned Dr Hammond, who in his .MDUL/Practical Catechism.MDNM/, Book 3, 3, has these very words, 'Sobriety is strictly commanded to Christians in the New Testament and that under threat of damnation, to him that frequently, or willingly and indulgently offendeth herein'. Thus 1 Cor. 6.10, it is said of drunkards that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Where (observe this) the word 'drunkards' is not to be restrained to those that drink to bestiality, to the depriving themselves of the use of their reason, that drink [themselves] drunk, as we say; but belongs to all that drink wine or strong drink intemperately, though through their strength of brain they be not at present intoxicated by it. [[p. 340]] Revellings, surfeittings, excess of drinking, are here and in many other places forbidden [under express pain of damnation].

The second proof of this matter shall be from the excellent, though unknown author of the .MDUL/Whole Duty of Man.MDNM/, in his discourse of temperance in drinking, Sund: 8, 11, where he says, 'That it is not only that huge degree of drunkenness which makes men able neither to go nor speak, which is to be looked upon as a sin; but all lower degrees which do at all work upon the understanding; whether by dulling it, and making it less fit for any employment, or by making it too light and airy, apt to apish and ridiculous mirth; < >; ((by)) what is worse by enflaming men into rage and fury. These or whatever else make any [such] change in the man are to be reckoned into this sin of drunkenness.'

To which he very well adds, 'That further, the drinking beyond the natural ends of drinking, that is beyond moderate refreshment, is a sin, though by the strength of a man's brain it makes not the least change in him. And therefore those that are not actually drunk, yet can spend whole days, or any considerable part of them, in drinking are so far from being innocent, that greater woe belongs to them which is pronounced, Isaiah 5.22, against those "that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink". For such a one', he observes, 'is guilty of the abuse of God's creatures, of wasting his time, and of all the drunkenness that any of his company fall under, by his encouragement and [[p. 341]] and example', or which is worst of all, setting 'himself purposely to make others drunk', which he justly styles, 'a most horrible wickedness, and making ourselves the devil's factors, to draw our poor brethren into eternal misery'. And in the heads of examination before the sacrament, under the 'Sins against temperance', he reckons, 'Drinking more than is useful to our bodies; wasting the time or estate in good fellowship and abusing our strength of brain to the making others drunk'.

And ((but)) now can any man who has not perfectly drowned and extinguished those noble faculties which difference us from brutes and transformed himself into the near shape and resemblance of that not very elegant creature whose supreme delight and satisfaction it is to wallow in the mire, can he reflect with any pleasure, with any real satisfaction or approbation on a life hitherto spent or indeed wasted in the forementioned manner? Was it for this end we were born? Was it for this end our blessed Lord came into the world to die for us? O, why will we not rouse up the spark of reason which God once placed in us? Which yet remains unquenched in us? I would hope, by all I've said, I had almost persuaded some of you (I wish I could say ALL of you)), to be Christians, which I'm sure we cannot be, unless we live a sober, as well as a righteous and godly life. To shake off the shameful as well as burdensome weight of intemperance and sensuality, which has so long pressed down their souls, and yet to aspire towards heaven. Are not the [[p. 342]] pure joys of health and sobriety, of virtue and religion, infinitely preferable to the sickly and muddy satisfactions of vice and wickedness, of intemperance and lewdness, more suitable to our natures, more conducive to our happiness?

And yet, notwithstanding all these weighty considerations, I'm sensible that the second reason why ill men think it strange that those who are better don't run with them into the same excess of riot, and wicked and retchless [[OED: var. reckless]] living, has too great an influence on the bulk of mankind, and that is, because the bad have so many on their side, so great a number of loose and disorderly livers, while there are I doubt, but a few comparatively who walk in the narrow way, who are sincerely and steadily sober and virtuous, pious and religious. Though many are called, invited to the marriage supper, by the preaching of the gospel; yet few are chosen, approved of God, for coming into the terms of the gospel, and heartily adhering to it. The reproach of preciseness and singularity is what the greatest part of mankind have not strength to bear and therefore are apt to follow and ((w)) run with a multitude to do evil, and to wonder what ails such as will not, as dare not take the same course with them. ## They dare not be saved alone, or with the lesser company. If they had been in that case of Lot, they would have gone back again into Sodom. If they had been with Noah in the Ark, they would have gone out of it, to perish with their friends and relations and companions and the world of the ungodly. To <prevent> this therefore our Lord forewarned his little flock that they ##.FN2Material between ##'s is an insertion which Sam indicated for this place in the manuscript but which he wrote at the bottom of p. 343./ ((Therefore our Lord forewarned his disciples [[that they]])) should be 'hated of all men for his name's sake' [[cf. Matt 10:22]] gave < > and this advice that in patience they should possess their souls [[see Luke 21:19]]. And this noble encouragement, 'That he that endures to the [[p. 343]] end, the same shall be saved' [[cf. Matt 10:22]]. And 'whosoever shall confess me before men; him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven' [[cf. Matt 10:32]].

To conclude my discourse at this present, is not this reason? Is it not ((this)) truth? ((Is there)) Can you now say there is any harshness, or bitterness mingled with it? Are you able to answer it? Has there not been, and is there not still too much occasion for it? Why then will you not hear it? Why will you not be reformed by it? I wish with all my soul that you were all as good as some may fancy themselves. That there were none amongst you who cry, 'Peace! Peace! (though, alas, 'tis a false, a dangerous peace) while they walk on in the imagination of their own hearts. And add drunkenness to thirst,

till the anger of the Lord and his fury smoke against them, and there be no remedy. I wish there were not so much as one intemperate man or woman amongst ((you)) us. Or if we were so happy that there were but one, that 'the time passed of their lives might suffice', and that now they might be converted, that now they would turn and live. On which condition, I would promise you never to disturb or grieve you more on this subject, and that this should be the last sermon I ((you)) would ever preach against drunkenness from this pulpit.

Consider what has been said, and the Lord give us all grace to lay it to heart, and to practice accordingly.

Now to God. . . .

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