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THE ELEMENTS OF POWER IN THE SERMONS
OF
SAMUEL DAVIES

By

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Affectionately dedicated to my wife,

Ruth Jane

and

my daughter, Myrtle Jane

Whose prayers and encouragement
have helped so much in the completion of this work

Acknowledgement

to

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For supervision and encouragement

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INTRODUCTION

THE ELEMENTS OF POWER IN

THE SERMONS OF

SAMUEL DAVIES

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

1. The Subject Stated and Justified

The Colonial preachers exercised a tremendous influence in shaping the destiny of America.

"Even the reading of these practical, vigorous sermons stirs one; add to the thoughts the virile personality, the charm and winsomeness of the man, and it is easy to understand how Samuel Davies was the greatest American preacher of his day."¹

These words written by a modern historian suggest something of the position Samuel Davies occupied in the history of the church in America. The fact that he has been called the greatest preacher of his day would seem to justify this study. His claim to fame rests also upon his skill as the organizer and founder of the first presbytery in what is now the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. "Samuel Davies may be called the father of Hanover Presbytery, ... the mother of² Presbyteries in the South and West."

In the church history of Virginia the name of Davies stands

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1. Hansche, William Thompson: Forgotten Founding Fathers, p. 156.
2. Foote, William Henry: Sketches of Old Virginia, p. 40.

first among those who fought for and won religious toleration.¹ In his book, "Church and State in the United States," Stokes makes the following comment:

He was the forerunner of Thomas Jefferson in advocating the complete separation of church and state, and helped to lay the foundations for Jefferson's immortal work. ...is one of the little recognized heroes in securing American religious freedom.²

The revival which Samuel Davies led became a mass movement which a few years later merged into the struggle for political freedom for the colonies.³

The fact that his writings last, and that he is recognized by historians and church leaders as one of the greatest colonial preachers, is sufficient reason for this study of the elements of power in the sermons of Samuel Davies.

2. The Subject Delimited

To write an entire history of the life of Davies does not fall within the scope of this study. Nevertheless, in the words of George P. Fisher, "Whoever would explore the causes of history must look beneath the surface of events at the spiritual life of the men."⁴ It is pertinent to the purpose of this investigation, however, to make a brief study of the motives which led Samuel Davies to take up the

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1. Cf. Gewehr, Wesley M.: The Great Awakening in Virginia, p. 104.
2. Stokes, Anson Phelps: Church and State in the United States, p. 208.
3. Cf. Drummond, Andrew L.: The Story of American Protestantism, p. 131.
4. Fisher, George P.: History of the Reformation, p. 89.

work of the ministry. It is further believed that one who undertakes an analysis of the sermons, seeking the secret of their power, would find it beneficial to discover something of the social milieu in which his sermons wielded so great power. The religious conditions and political thoughts that were uppermost in the minds of men in that day also have a direct bearing upon the sermons of Davies. These, therefore, will be reviewed briefly.

It is neither possible nor advisable in a limited study such as this to examine, classify, and study all of his sermons. Since Samuel Davies is noted especially as a patriotic and soul-winning preacher, these two phases will be dealt with at length. Typical sermons will be analyzed to observe their structure, content and any other features which may have contributed to their power. This first-hand study will occupy the major portion of this investigation.

B. Procedure

In the realization of the purpose of this thesis, the following procedure is to be used: first, Davies' early life, education and work will be reviewed; second, a brief survey will be given of life in the Virginia colony during the early decades of the eighteenth century; finally, a first-hand examination will be made of the sermons of Samuel Davies.

In the examination of Davies' sermons attention is to be given to his methods in writing his introductions and the manner in which he dealt with the text and theme. It is necessary to give a

typical outline to show his logical method. The use of context, illustrations, length and method of concluding his sermons will also be studied. A more lengthy and detailed examination of his appeal will be made seeking to discover the elements of power.

Attention will be given to Davies' theological emphases. His use of the great doctrines of God, man and salvation will be carefully considered in attempting to find those things which gave power to his preaching. The total work will then be summarized and conclusions drawn from this study.

C. Primary Sources

The primary sources from which material will be used in this study are:

Davies, Samuel: Sermons on Important Subjects,
New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1867.

Foote, William Henry: Sketches of Virginia,
Historical and Biographical, Philadelphia, 1855.

Letters from the Rev. Samuel Davies and others,
Showing the State of Religion in Va., S. C., etc.
especially among the colored people,
London: J. and W. Oliver, 1761.

CHAPTER I
CONTRIBUTING INFLUENCES UPON SAMUEL DAVIES
AS A PREACHER

CHAPTER I

CONTRIBUTING INFLUENCES UPON SAMUEL DAVIES

AS A PREACHER

A. Introduction

In order to better understand the power and influence of Davies' sermons, it will be helpful first of all to direct attention to some of the earliest influences in his life, namely, his Christian home, his early education, his spiritual awakening and training, and finally, the influence of the times upon the man.

B. Ancestry and Home Influence

1. Ancestry

Samuel Davies was born November 3, 1723 in Newcastle County in what is now Delaware. His father, David Davies, was a pious and devout farmer of Welsh origin, probably not very prosperous, for Samuel received outside help in paying for his college expenses.

2. Mother's Influence

It was from his mother, who was accounted to be a very superior woman mentally, that Davies received many of the qualities and influences that predisposed him towards the ministry. He is quoted in a letter to Rev. Thomas Gibbons of London as follows:

That he was blessed with a mother whom he might account, without filial vanity or partiality, one of the ~~most~~ most eminent saints he ever knew upon earth; and here, says he, I cannot but mention to my friend an anecdote known

but to few, that is, that I am a son of prayer, like my name-sake Samuel, the prophet; and my mother called me Samuel, because she said, I have asked him of the Lord. I Samuel 1: 20. This early dedication to God has always been a strong inducement to me to devote myself to him by my own personal act; and the most important blessings of my life I have looked upon as immediate answers to the prayers of a pious mother.¹

Davies' mother outlived him, so that these words are not the mere expression of sentimentality over the memory of someone who has departed.

C. The Educational Influence

1. Early Education

For the first ten years of his life this only son was taught by his mother. He was then sent some distance away to a Mr. Morgan, who afterwards became a Baptist minister. Here he received his first classical training in preparation for college, but he also became somewhat careless of the things of God and began to separate himself from real spirituality.

2. Training the Colonial Minister

The exact range of Davies' formal training is not known, but there was little deviation in the first Presbyterian schools from the curriculum of Harvard. Dorchester, the church historian, quotes a Dr. Magoun in the New Englander as follows:

At Harvard, Hebrew, Chaldee and Syriac, as well as New Testament Greek and catechetical theology were taught.

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1. Letter quoted by Rev. Thomas Gibbons, London, 1761.
Preface to sermons: Boston, Lincoln and Edmands, 1811.

In Yale, from the first, the Hebrew of the Old Testament was translated into Greek, and the Latin New Testament into Greek at the beginning of every recitation. The Assembly's catechism in Latin was recited every Saturday evening; Ames' *Medulla Theologiae*, Saturday mornings, and his *Cases of Conscience*, Sunday mornings. . . Every student was required to study these things. There were also, from early days, college lectures in ecclesiastical history, and a professorship of Divinity. Harvard had the latter twenty-five years earlier.¹

One of the characteristics of the Presbyterians from the earliest days was their insistence upon an educated ministry. Gewehr says:

Preparatory to being admitted into the ministry, candidates for orders in the Presbyterian church were compelled to undergo various trials consisting of the preparation of an exegesis in Latin on some assigned subject, the delivery of trial sermons and lectures, examination in various branches of learning including, usually, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; some of the sciences, as physics and astronomy; rhetoric, logic, philosophy, and theology. This required preparatory education in the classics, sciences, and divinity.²

For more than a generation the Presbyterian church in America had been dependent upon the British Isles and New England for their ministerial candidates. But when the European schools began to deviate from strict orthodoxy, the American church began to establish schools for the training of its own candidates.³ Dorchester writes:

But there were no theological seminaries in those days, and the young men, after graduation, pursued the study of theology for several years in the families of the leading divines. Some of them were amply qualified as theological teachers and

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1. Dorchester, David: *Christianity in the United States*, p.465.
2. Gewehr, Wesley M.: *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790*, p. 220.
3. Cf. Sweet, William Warren: *Religion in Colonial America*, p. 268.

attracted many young men around them, training fifty and more each, for the ministry, in their long lives.¹

One of the most prominent men in this movement was William Tennent, an Irish minister, who came to America in 1716. He was called to Neshaminy, Pennsylvania, in 1726 to serve as pastor of the Presbyterian church.

3. Influence of the Log College

In addition to his pastoral duties William Tennent built a log school at Neshaminy, twenty miles north of Philadelphia, where he taught his own sons and others who came to him. This school was called in derision the "Log College", yet it exercised a tremendous influence upon education in America. Dr. Sweet says:

William Tennent's Log College was not only the mother of Princeton, but it was also the precursor of a succession of Log Colleges conducted by the Presbyterian preachers along the line of the advancing American frontier.²

The quality of the training given in the Log Colleges may be judged by the fact that Gilbert Tennent, the first one who was privately trained by his father, was received into the Presbytery and his education was highly approved by that august body. The standards that the ministerial candidate had to meet were very rigid, and the fact that Tennent's students were able to pass speaks very well for the school. L. J. Trinterud says that the graduates of the Log Colleges set the

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1. Dorchester, David; *Op. Cit.*, p. 251.

2. Sweet, William Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

pattern for American Presbyterianism for the next one hundred years.¹

The distinguishing characteristic of the school was the flaming zeal of German Pietism which it instilled in the students.

"The Log College men stood with classical Protestantism in making the efficacy of a minister's labors depend, not upon his personal holiness, but upon his 'calling'."² It is not known whether Davies ever attended the original Log College, but he did attend another conducted by Samuel Blair, one of the most distinguished graduates of William Tennent.

4. At Fagg's Manor under Blair

In 1739 Blair was called to Londonderry, Chester County, Pennsylvania. While there a revival broke out, which was part of the Great Awakening in America. This revival continued throughout one summer. The emphasis of Blair's preaching was the awful condition of those without Christ. He pointed them to the way of salvation and recovery through faith in Christ. Richard Webster writes:

After the excitement of the revival had died down, Samuel Blair opened a school similar to that of William Tennent's at Neshaminy, which he continued to conduct until his death in 1751 at the early age of thirty-nine. Among those who were educated at his school was John Rodgers, the first Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in America and one of the outstanding ministerial leaders in Revolutionary America. Another graduate was Samuel Davies, fourth president of the College of New Jersey.³

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1. Cf. Maxson, Charles H.: The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies, p. 27.
2. Ibid.
3. Webster, Richard: History of the Presbyterian Church in America, p. 549.

At Fagg's Manor, amid the scenes of revivalism, Samuel received his theological training.

D. Spiritual Turning Points

1. Spiritual Awakening

The only indication of his interest in divine things during his early years was the thought of the nearness of death. There was really no conversion experience. He does speak of Gilbert Tennent as his spiritual father as follows:

"About sixteen years ago," he said in 1757, "in the northern colonies, when all religious concern was much out of fashion, and the generality lay in a dead sleep of sin, having at best the form of Godliness and nothing of the power,...when the country was in peace and prosperity, free from the calamities of war and epidemic sickness,...when, in short, there were no external calls to repentance,...suddenly a deep general concern about eternal things spread through the country; sinners started from their slumbers, broke off from their sins, began to inquire the way of salvation and made it the great business of their life to prepare for the world to come. Then the gospel seemed almighty, and carried all before it. It pierced the very hearts of men; I have seen thousands at once melted down under it, all eager to hear as for life, and scarcely a dry eye among them. Thousands still remain as shining monuments of the power of divine grace in that glorious day."¹

Samuel Davies was one of those who was swept along by the great revival movement and on into service as a revival preacher himself. God had already placed his hand upon Davies and now he fully yielded to God's call.

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1. Webster, Richard: History of the Presbyterian Church in America, p. 549.

2. Death of Wife and Child

Davies married Sarah Kirkpatrick in October, 1746. The next September she and her infant son died. This loss together with his own sickness left him in a state of near despair for almost another year.

3. Nearness to Death

At the time of his licensure he was thought to be suffering from a tendency to consumption. Believing that his days were near an end, he went to the eastern shore of Maryland where he really expected to spend the few remaining years of his life in furious activity for God. There among the Maryland churches a revival commenced, and it seemed as if by divine intervention he was restored to health. Out of the experience he emerged with a deepened religious life which he described as follows:

In my sickness I found the unspeakable importance of a mediator in a religion for sinners. O! I could have given you the word of a dying man for it, that, that Jesus whom you preach is indeed a necessary, and an all-sufficient Saviour. Indeed he is the only support for a departing soul. None but Christ, none but Christ. Had I as many good works as Abraham or Paul, I would not have dared build my hopes upon such a quicksand, but only on this firm eternal Rock.

E. The Virginia Years

1. Sent by Presbytery as Evangelist

The Presbyteries had steadfastly refused to send out unqualified men to pastor the churches even though many remained for

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1. Letter to Rev. Gibbons in London, op. cit., p.40.

years without a pastor. This situation was remedied in part by sending out men as evangelists who would preach for several weeks in the areas where there were no pastors. Davies was ordained as an evangelist on February 19, 1747. That same spring he was sent to Virginia to serve the small and scattered congregations as an evangelist. Here he really began his great life work. He qualified himself according to the law of Virginia and obtained permission for four meeting houses. He was welcomed by the people of the congregations as having been sent from God. They pleaded with him to settle among them as their pastor, but he returned home to his native Pennsylvania, where he spent several months in sadness and in the toils of disease. During this time he visited various churches in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and other northern colonies.

2. The Call to Virginia

In the spring of 1748 he began to recover from his illness, but did not hope for anything more than a temporary recovery, for he believed that death was upon him. Dr. Albert Barnes writes:

But upon the arrival of a messenger from Hanover, I put my life in my hand, and determined to accept their call, hoping I might live to prepare the way for some more useful successor, and willing to expire under the fatigues of duty, rather than involuntary negligence.¹

One is able to see the humility and the deep sense of his call to the Virginia Dissenters as one hears him tell his story to the

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1. Barnes, Albert: Introductory Essay on the Life and Times of the Author, Preface to Davies' Sermons, Vol. 1, p. xvi.

Bishop of London:

For, sundry congregations in Pennsylvania, my native country, and in other northern colonies, most earnestly importuned me to settle among them; where I should have had at least a temporal maintenance, in comparably more ease, leisure and peace, and the happiness of the frequent society of my own Brethern; and where I should never have made a great noise or bustle in the world, but concealed myself in the crowd of my superior brethern, and spent my life in some little service for God and his church, in some peaceful corner, which would have been most becoming so insignificant a creature, and more agreeable to my recluse natural temper. But all these strong inducements were overweighed by a sense of the more urgent necessity of the Dissenters here; as they lay two or three hundred miles distant from the nearest ministers of their own denomination, and labored under peculiar embarrassments for the want of a settled minister.¹

3. Opposition from the Established Clergy

Accompanying him to Virginia, where he planned to be Davies assistant, was a John Rodgers, who had recently been licensed by the Newcastle Presbytery. They travelled by way of Williamsburg, Virginia, where they waited on the General Court to give Mr. Rodgers permission to qualify under the Toleration Act. Permission was not granted so that Mr. Rodgers was compelled to return to Pennsylvania. William Warren Sweet gives the following picture of the state of affairs in Virginia at the time of Davies' arrival:

When Samuel Davies arrived in Hanover, Virginia, in 1748, a young man of twenty-four, the state of the Dissenters was, to say the least, uncertain. He was the only New Side or revivalistic Presbyterian minister in the colony, though there were several Old Side ministers in the western counties. He was anxious to avoid friction with the Established Church clergy and one of his first achievements was to secure the applica-

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1. Ibid. p. xvii.

tion of the English Toleration Act of 1689 to Virginia. Under his preaching the revival, which was already under way before his arrival, continued. While his work was centered at Hanover, he made preaching excursions into the counties, and his fame as a preacher spread abroad.¹

Paradoxical as it may seem, after refusing to allow Rodgers to qualify as a minister, that same fall three other meeting houses were licensed. This now made seven in all which were twelve or fifteen miles apart. When Davies arrived in Virginia there was not an organized Presbyterian church in the eastern section of the colony; the established clergy had only ridiculed him upon his arrival. But as his following rapidly increased, they began to realize that something more drastic must be done to halt the spread of his influence. On April 12, 1750 the General Court revoked the license that had been granted for the three meeting houses. Davies believed that a part of the trouble was due to misinterpretation of the law, and he welcomed this opportunity to appear in court as his own lawyer and test the legality of the law. In court he was opposed by the famous lawyer, Peyton Randolph, who claimed that the right to license belonged to the Courts and not to the Justices of the Peace as in England.

Davies claimed that the Act of Toleration extended to Virginia as well as the Act of Uniformity, since both laws had been incorporated into Virginia law. He further pointed out that laws regulating the Dissenters and based upon these acts had already been passed.² His knowledge of English law not only enabled him to win his case but also

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1. Sweet, William Warren: Revivalism in America, p. 65.
2. Cf. Gewehr, op. cit., p. 76.

the friendship of Peyton Randolph.¹ The war for the Dissenters had been won, but there were still skirmishes to follow.

F. Contemporary Religious, Political and Social Conditions

1. Religion under the Establishment

In order to fully appreciate the power of this man's preaching and influence, it is necessary to remember that Virginia was mainly settled by Cavaliers and their sympathizers. These built up a plantation aristocracy which controlled the church life of the colony in the tidewater section. Since there was never a bishop nor an ecclesiastical court in any of the English colonies the affairs of the local churches were in the hands of the vestries whose members were of the aristocracy. From this it is quite easy to understand that the priests would be tools of the local leaders.

Davies was always very tactful and gentlemanly in his dealings with the leaders of the Establishment in Virginia. But in a letter dated June 28, 1751, he states:

My design, Sir, is not to boast of proselytes, or to asperse the Church of England here established; but I hope I may observe, without the umbrage of calumny, what glares with irresistible evidence, that religion has been, and in most parts of the colony still is, in a very low state; various vices are triumphant, and even a form of godliness is not common.²

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1. Cf. Webster, op. cit., p. 552.
2. Letters from the Rev. Samuel Davies and others, showing the state of religion in Va., S. C., etc.

Reverend Devereux Jarrat, one of the few ministers who was deeply concerned over the state of religion, is quoted to have said that the parish ministers preached little but "morality and smooth harangues, in no wise calculated to disturb the carnal repose of the people."¹ Out of his own experience before entering the ministry he said that "the Sabbath was usually spent in sporting."²

Many of the planters, who controlled the churches through local vestries, were men of piety and real religious concern. The libraries of many were made up of one-third religious books. However, one must exercise some caution not to be led astray by mere statistics. Dr. Sweet observes:

The Marquis de Castellux, who traveled extensively in America from 1780 to 1782, noted the indolence and dissipation common among the middle and lower classes of Virginia. They were much given to gambling and had an intense passion for cock-fighting and horse-racing, and it was not uncommon for great crowds to gather from a distance of thirty to forty miles to witness these spectacles. Frequently they engaged in brutal fights in which the "gouging" out of each other's eyes was considered allowable according to the rules governing such matches. Another traveler observed that "Indians and Negroes they scarcely consider as human species," and acts of violence upon them even to murder were scarcely ever punished.³

The church of that day concerned itself very little with religious and moral conditions. This was partly due to the condition that existed within the Episcopal Church of the time. Sweet says:

No one will dispute the fact that the Episcopal Church was greatly handicapped in performing its work in the colonies by the absence of bishops. Since the bishop was the only

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1. Dorchester, Daniel: Christianity in the United States, p. 149.
2. Ibid., p. 148.
3. Sweet, William Warren, op. cit., p. 4.

ordaining authority, young colonials who desired to enter the church, were compelled to journey to England. That this involved grave risk the long list of those who died on the way of smallpox alone is ample proof. Any church without an effective means of administering effective discipline, especially on a crude and rough frontier, is bound to acquire an unsavory reputation. This was the situation which the Church of England faced in the American colonies, deprived of the supervisory and disciplinary authority of bishops.¹

Much that is derogatory might be said about the individuals making up the clergy. Few could go to England for ordination, and many of those who came over from England took the positions only as sinecures from the government. In some cases those who came were actually sent away for the good of their own country. Dorchester concludes:

To say that the clergy were worldly and formal, comes short of the truth. Many of them were not only irreligious, but also immoral, . . . In the pulpit natural religion and essays on morality were substituted for the gospel.²

Since the vestries were self-perpetuating bodies made up of the tobacco gentry, one can easily see that Church control and government were in the same hands. Consequently, churches were managed for the benefit of their own class. Most of the clergy were called for only one year at a time, in order that they might not recover control from the vestrymen. Any religion that was vital was completely foreign to the everyday lives of the people. The great mass of the people had little concern and less part in the affairs of the church.

Dr. Albert Barnes, who lived mid-way between our own time and that of Samuel Davies, gives the following picture of the religious

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1. Sweet, Religion in Colonial America, op. cit, p. 65.
2. Dorchester, op. cit., pp. 147-148.

conditions of the time and the relevancy to the work of Samuel

Davies:

The Episcopal Church of England had been established by law in Virginia, from its first settlement; the ministers, generally speaking were men sent from Great Britain to seek their fortunes, or to recover broken ones in America. Although nominally belonging to the see of the Bishop of London, yet, in fact they were subject to no supervision, amenable for misconduct to no human authority; and it was not wonderful that the most of them were addicted to horseracing, cock-fighting, card-playing, and drinking, and in fact were the mere parasites of the rich and great. This being generally their character, with here and there rare exceptions, religion was and had long been at a very low ebb. The common people had lost all confidence in their clergy, and were generally ready to hear any pious minister gladly, and would easily have been led off to another church, had they not been restrained by high-handed civil authority. There perhaps could no other people be found where the great mass of the community were more open to conviction and accessible by the gospel, whenever and wherever it was faithfully preached.¹

The evidence is overwhelming that such conditions really existed in the church. There was almost no evangelical preaching, or interest on the part of the clergy in the souls of men. The upper classes were indifferent and skeptical; the middle and lower classes irreligious.

2. The Tidewater Aristocracy

The Virginia of the early colonial days was the tidewater section. Here privilege dominated, and the aristocracy "dominated in society, politics, and the Church."² This section had the advantage over the upcountry in wealth, education, and political power. The economy was built upon the use of slaves in tobacco culture. These plantation owners generally wielded power according to the amount of

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1. Barnes, op. cit., p. xxii.

2. Gewehr, op. cit., p. 19.

property which they held. This meant that there existed a class society with these planters at the top of the scale.

The manner of living was patterned after that of England, but was often in a more luxurious manner. Their sons were sent to England to be educated. The planters spent their time in sporting events and social balls and in reading. It is quite remarkable that so many fine libraries were built up. The winters were spent in revelry and entertainment, and the grand scale of living created quite a gulf between them and the lower classes. This planter class often took to politics and by unequal representation they were able to control the majority of the upcountry.

The aristocracy not only controlled politics but also the Established Church, for they were the vestrymen. The society of the church was patterned after the easy-going, pleasure-loving aristocracy. Philip Fithian, who went from Princeton to tutor in one of the Virginia homes, noted that the time spent at church might easily be divided into three parts. There was the time before the service which was spent in receiving and giving letters of business, reading advertisements, learning the price of tobacco, grain, etc., and settling the lineage, age, or qualities of a favorite race horse. Next was the time in church, when prayers were read through^hurriedly, a sermon delivered never over and often under twenty minutes, but always made up of sound morality, or deep-studied metaphysics. Then after the service the congregation lingered for nearly an hour, not to discuss the sermon, predestination, or transsubstantiation but to gossip with the neighbors and extend invitations to ~~Sunday~~ ^{Sunday} dinners.¹

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1. Cf. Wertenbaker, T. J: The Old South, p. 63.

3. The Political Situation

It has already been seen that the planter aristocracy dominated in politics, even though they were in the minority. Almost every free man had the vote. Suffrage among the men was universal. As the population in the tidewater section increased and began to move westward, it came into contact with other settlers who were pushing down into the mountain and upland regions from the northern colonies. Most of these were Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, who were democratic in spirit and opposed the rule of the minority and against slavery. It was several years later that the strength of these independent people was marshalled under the leadership of Patrick Henry and overcame the domination of the tidewater planters. It is interesting to note that as a boy, Patrick Henry was a regular listener to Samuel Davies, and we find that the principles used by Davies in the fight for religious toleration merged with the rising tides of frontier independence and brought on the American Revolution.

From the standpoint of the Presbyterians in Virginia the French and Indian War was probably a help. Any attack from the Indians would strike first along the western front where the Scotch-Irish had settled. The ruling class in the tidewater section, sensible of the protection afforded them by the frontiersmen were willing to make con-
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cession to them. Davies was keenly aware of all the issues of the

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1. Cf. Gewehr, op. cit., p. 41.

day and never missed an opportunity to use the spirit of the times to move the people.

It is significant to note too that the vestrymen in the established church were moved by a spirit of independence. They were not ready to give over their control of the church, poor as it may have been, to an ecclesiastical hierarchy. When the war of independence came, these same aristocratic leaders, almost without exception, became the leaders in the fight for independence from English rule.

G. Summary of Contributing Influences upon Samuel Davies as a Preacher

This chapter has been a consideration of those influences that contributed to Samuel Davies' preaching. The following main divisions have been considered: his ancestry and home influence, his education, his spiritual experience, and the influence of religion, society and politics upon him. It has been shown that he came from a very devout Christian home where his mother had told him many times that he had been dedicated to the Lord as was Samuel of old, and that through her prayers he was guided in making some of the great decisions of his life. It has further been seen that his early religious experience was an awareness of the nearness of death. It was seen that this consciousness was heightened by the death of his wife and child and his own nearness to death.

It was shown that his college days were spent in the atmosphere of the revival spirit in the Great Awakening. Some of the leaders of the colonial revival were seen to be his teachers: the two Tennents,

Samuel Blair and the evangelist, George Whitfield, who, though not his teacher, yet had a great influence upon Davies.

Davies was then seen as the evangelist from Newcastle Presbytery. There in the Virginia colony amid the intolerance of the Establishment he was challenged to begin the struggle that ended years later with religious toleration for the colony. He was seen there looking upon the social life which dominated the church to such an extent that the priests were the tools of the aristocracy. It was seen that this same spirit of dominance served later to make the vestrymen the leaders in the political revolution. Davies took advantage of these conditions to wield influence over the two extremes of society, the planter and the slaves, while yet influencing all those in between. He was seen to be the man of the hour condemning the sins and offering Christ as the Saviour. The keenness of Davies' mind enabled him to sense the first flexing of the muscles of freedom. He used this to win religious toleration, and it later emerged into the movement for political freedom.

CHAPTER II

SAMUEL DAVIES' SERMON METHOD

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A. Introduction

When one seeks to know the secret of the power of Samuel Davies' sermons, it is necessary to look at the form as well as the content. H. Shelton Smith says, "His published sermons are as excellent in form ... as can be found in the Colonies at this time."¹ Here will be found the work of a logical mind and an active imagination which compels the attention of the reader. One is carried backward to the beginning and forward to the infinitude of eternity, when suddenly the listener is made aware of his sinful condition and of his slight chance of redemption before the righteous judge of the universe. Judged by modern standards his sermons were long, from one to two hours in length, but the arguments are so skillfully constructed and tied together that listening to them could not have been tedious. Conviction was then brought upon the sinner by a vivid contrast of the two ways of life.

Many things, seemingly extravagant, have been said of his eloquence, until one begins to turn the pages of his printed sermons. Even today they possess persuasiveness, solid content, logical development and beauty of style.²

It is now the purpose of this thesis to examine Samuel Davies'

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1. Smith, H. Shelton: Changing Conceptions of Original Sin, p. 8.
2. Sweet, William W.: Religion in Colonial America, p. 297.

sermon method in closer detail. The text, the introduction, the theme, the body of the sermon with its outline and illustrations, and the appeal will be studied.

B. Text and Theme

In every one of Davies' sermons he used a text from the Bible. At times a very short one was used, for example, "This year thou shalt die ..." Jeremiah 28: 16, where only a part of one verse was taken. His shortest text was only three words, "God is love." (I John:4: 18) The longest text contained seven verses, Isaiah 32: 13-19. The eighty-two sermons which form the basis for this study have texts well-distributed throughout the Bible from Exodus to Revelation. The New Testament furnished about twice as many as the Old Testament. The chart on the next page shows this distribution. When one considers the shortness of his ministry,¹ it can be seen that quite a wide range of books of the Bible was used.

The text or its implications can be found in every paragraph of the sermon. Sometimes there is an exposition of the text, an analysis of it, and then an expounding of it part by part. At other times he accommodated the text to his own purpose in the construction of a topical sermon. His stated purpose is never lost sight of throughout the discourse.

The theme is worked out of the text itself. With the text, "So

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1. Davies was born November 3, 1723, died February 4, 1761.

Davies' Distribution of
Old Testament Texts

Matt.	5	
Mark	1	
Luke	5	
John	10	
Acts	4	
Rom.	4	
I Cor.	5	
II Cor.	4	
Gal.	4	
Eph.	2	
I Thess.	1	
I Tim.	2	
II Tim.	1	
Heb.	1	
James	1	
II Peter	2	
I John	1	
Rev.	1	

= 56

New Testament Texts

Exodus	1	
Joshua	1	
II Samuel	2	
II Chron.	1	
Psalms	2	
Prov.	2	
Isaiah	2	
Jeremiah	4	
Ezekiel	2	
Daniel	1	
Jonah	1	
Zeph.	1	

= 26

then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God gives the increase," (I. Cor. 3: 7) he developed the theme that the success of the gospel depends upon a divine influence.¹

In 1761 he preached a New Year sermon from the text, "This year thou shalt die." (Jeremiah 28: 16). In some way the hearers were reminded in every paragraph of the uncertainty of life. Out of this text he developed the theme: that since you do not know (1) if you are lost, your hopes will vanish forever, or, (2) if saved, your hope is sure; therefore, yield to God without delay.²

On another occasion Davies used a text from 1 Timothy 5: 8, "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." He then stated:

You see that though this text does not immediately refer to family religion, yet it will admit of a very natural accommodation to that purpose; and in this view I intend to handle it.³

Having made that statement he then proceeded to enlarge on the theme of the necessity and excellence of family religion.

In another sermon he stated his plan thus: "To illustrate and improve the sundry parts of my text, as they lie in order."⁴ This sermon was preached to a company of militiamen in Hanover County, Virginia, August, 1755. The text used was from 2 Samuel 10: 12, "Be of good courage, and play the men for your people, and for the cities

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1. Davies, Samuel: Sermons on Important Subjects, Vol. 11, p. 522.
2. Ibid., p. 139.
3. Ibid., p. 44.
4. Davies, Vol. III, p. 44.

of your God; and the Lord do what seemeth him good." He then proceeded to develop the theme that religion and patriotism are the necessary requirements of a good soldier.

These examples are sufficient to show the method Davies used to work out his themes from the text. A reading of his sermons reveals that he never went far afield from the text itself, but developed the sermon in an orderly and simple manner around the text so that all classes, from slaves to aristocrats, were challenged by it.

C. Introduction of Sermon

The introductions to Davies' sermons are always in the same clear, logical style as the main body of the sermon. Every sermon had as its chief aim the conversion of sinners, and as a good general, Davies directed every part of the sermon towards the objective. The introduction was sometimes used as an explanation of the context; at another time it might be a description taken from the natural world which would be analogous to something in the moral sphere and about which he wished to speak. The introduction was sometimes a breaking apart of the text and a working out of several propositions which would be illustrated in the remainder of the sermon. In some sermons the introduction was half the entire sermon, while in others it was only a paragraph in length. A few examples will serve to illustrate this.

When using the text, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," (Acts 9: 5), Davies first dealt with the popular idea that the way of sin is the easy way by saying that it is easy only in the

sense that it is easy for a dead body to decay. He next explained that the text is a proverb which is used by all nations and added the significant use of the ox goad. This was followed by a recital of Paul's experience on the Damascus road. Davies next asked his hearers a question designed to enable them to see the folly of resistance when the one who resists is hurt by his own resistance. He next explained that the text also points up the significance of the fact that Christ is being persecuted by this opposition. The listeners were put in the place of Paul, and Davies was ready to launch into his argument.

A favorite means of introducing his sermons was the use of some analogy. In preaching on the subject of the Holy Spirit, he first pointed out that God made use of "secondary causes as the instruments of his operations." The farmer plows, sows the seed, and cultivates the soil, but it is the providence of God which causes the growth and increase. He then explained that in the realm of grace the indispensable agent is the Holy Spirit.

Davies' plain and pungent introductions immediately caught the attention of the ignorant as well as the learned, and the hearer was compelled to listen further.

D. Body of the Sermon

1. Method of Outline

One of the most effective means used by Davies in winning

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1. Davies, op. cit., p. 414.

2. Ibid., p. 523.

the lost to Christ was by logic. He was able to use this method to great advantage against the rationalism and Deism that was beginning to spread out from Europe. He is said to have spent four days in the careful preparation of his sermons before he considered them worthy of the name. He was not an extemporaneous speaker and very seldom consented to that manner of speaking. His logical mind not only formed an outline, but his meticulous preparation put it into the sermon by means of such devices as would enable the hearer to follow more easily. A good example of his method is found in a sermon on salvation.¹ The outline, with possible inconsequential changes by the publisher, may have been as follows:

The Theme: The Method of Salvation through Jesus Christ.

The Text: John 3: 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Proposition: I can think of no subject I can more properly choose than to recommend the Lord Jesus to your acceptance and to explain and inculcate the method of salvation through his mediation.

Introduction:

In the introduction Davies referred to his oft-repeated assumption that he was speaking to an assembly of sinners who were guilty and depraved and in need of salvation. He then made the proposal that he should speak to them of Christ as the means of this salvation. He quoted several verses of the context and stated that it was the gospel in miniature. The sermon was then developed and divided

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1. Davies, op. cit., Vol 1, p. 31.

into five divisions.

Working out of Theme:

First: That without Christ you are all in a perishing condition.

Second: That through Jesus Christ a way is opened for your salvation.

Third: That the grand pre-requisite to your being saved in this way is faith in Jesus Christ.

Fourth: That everyone, without exception, whatever his former character has been, that is enabled to comply with this pre-requisite, shall certainly be saved.

Fifth: That the constitution of this method of salvation, or the mission of Christ into our world as the Saviour of sinners, is a most striking and astonishing instance and display of the love of God.

Conclusion:

He then concluded with an appeal to their reason to consider that life and salvation have been offered to them. If they do not accept, they were reminded that millions of years hence they will remember the opportunity they once had with painful reflections, "O, that you would believe and prevent this dreadful effect."¹

2. Use of Context and Illustrations

a. Context

From a study of his sermons it is possible to bring to light many elements of power. One of these elements is his regard for and his use of Scripture. He regarded the Bible as a sufficient revelation from God of His will to man, as regards to both doctrine and practice. He was so completely steeped in the Scriptures that

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1. Davies, op. cit.

when his sermons were not filled with references and quotations, the Bible as a whole formed the context for the entire message.

In a sermon on holiness he used thirty quotations and references in addition to the text and context. When reflecting upon wars as a result of ~~de~~generated human nature, he used thirty-nine references. With such a knowledge of the Bible and the wide use of it in his sermons, ~~one~~ can say that no text was ever used apart from its relation to the context unless some explanation was made. This was done in one sermon on family religion,¹ where he explained that the passage did not refer primarily to family religion and then cited the fact that the text ~~lent~~ **lent itself** so well to his purpose that he is using it to speak on family religion.

In introducing a text from the twenty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, he stated that the words of the prophet had a double meaning in the context.² The **primary** meaning was intended for the people of that day, but Davies stated that his purpose was to show that Christ is found in the passage in an ultimate sense.

During the French and Indian Wars he preached a sermon on the sovereignty of God.³ The text was from Daniel 4: 25, "The Most High ruleth the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." In the opening words of the sermon he placed the entire thought of the sovereignty over nations in the vastly greater context of the whole created world and all its established laws rather than over one of the

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1. Davies, op. cit. Vol. 1, p. 159.
2. Ibid., vol. II, p. 23.
3. Ibid., vol. III, p. 232.

kingdoms of the world. This thought immediately lifted the context of the verse used as the text to a universal significance.

In another sermon on the primitive and present state of man he used Romans 5: 17 as a text but in his own words, "The ruin and recovery of mankind, by the first and second Adam, is the subject of the apostle in the context."¹ To Davies the entire Bible was too much a complete unit to confine himself to any one particular passage exclusively. Any text or passage he chose was always treated against a background of the entire revelation of God to man.

b. Illustrations

Samuel Davies never used anecdotes or anything that was suggestive of triviality. His mission was to speak to dying men and warn them, not to entertain or amuse them. He made use, at times, of the classical authors, Cicero, Plato, Socrates, Juvenal, and others, but he quotes them rather infrequently and then only to illustrate some point. Very little use was made of the poets of his day. He was so steeped in the Scriptures that he fell into a pattern such as that used by Christ. His favorite method of making clear a point was to draw a comparison or contrast. For example, he told how Troy was besieged many years before it fell. He then reminded the listeners that he had laid seige to their hearts for ten years with the gospel, and the time had now come for them to surrender to the love of Christ.

The soul was likened to a bird in a cage. When the cage had been destroyed, the bird was set free. In the same likeness when

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1. Ibid, p. 376.

the body is destroyed, the soul is set free but must then appear before God. He was very explicit in his teaching that death does not mean annihilation.

From what previously has been said one might correctly infer that many illustrations from the Scriptures would be used in his sermons. The rainbow, the tree of life, circumcision, and the pass-over were all employed to illustrate the full symbolism of the sacraments.¹

When speaking of the necessity of the use of the Holy Spirit in turning to Christ, examples were drawn from the Bible showing that Moses, Jeremiah and others were unable to turn the people to righteousness, even after great and astonishing wonders were performed before their eyes. His explanation was, "The Lord had not given them a² heart to understand."

In a sermon on the nature of regeneration or the New Birth, there is copious presentation of Scripture passages to illustrate its meaning. More than thirty passages are quoted or referred to in illustrating the characteristics of one who has been regenerated.³ These random selections will show Davies' use of the Bible illustrations.

Another way of illustration employed by Davies was the use of some historical event to show the working of Providence. Thus, the destruction of the Spanish Armada by a severe storm saved England and Protestantism from the domination of the Catholic power of Spain. The Gunpowder plot and the coming of Protestant King William also show

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1. Davies, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 97.
2. Ibid., p. 535, 536.
3. Ibid., p. 376.

how God, through Providential means, was working to save England and Protestantism. Davies often referred to the French as a scourge being prepared of God, just as the Assyrians and Babylonians in ancient times were the means God used to punish His own people. This picture he used as the basis for a strong appeal to the people to repent. In the drought and the storms he saw the alarms of God being sounded. Such devices were not impersonal, detached means used by Davies for effect but were rather characteristic of all his sermons. It was Davies himself speaking.

E. Conclusion of Sermon

In the conclusion of his sermons Davies always asked for some definite action. At times it was a set of specific steps that should be taken. Again it consisted of a set of questions which he prepared in an endeavour to lead the sinner to make a decision. Quite frequently there was a summary of the main points of the sermon, but with a definite slant towards bringing a decision. Some of his conclusions were very short, while others were several pages long. Regardless of the length there was always one central aim; the conversion of sinners and the salvation of the lost.

One sermon was concluded with but a single paragraph. Here he adjured the people never to indulge for a single moment in gaiety and mirth until they had some assurance that their names were written in heaven.

In concluding a sermon on the new birth he gave explicit directions for experiencing it, as follows:

Endeavor to be thoroughly acquainted with the corruption of your nature; it is from this that the necessity of a new birth proceeds.

Be fully convinced of the indispensable necessity of this change to your salvation.

Break off from and forsake whatever tends to obstruct the new birth; as excessive worldly cares, bad company, and in short, all sin.

Seriously, use all the means of grace; as, earnest prayer, attentive hearing of the word, etc.

Persevere in so doing until your endeavors are crowned with success; and particularly, do not grow impatient of those anxieties and fears that will at first attend your pursuit.¹

After giving such careful instruction, there remained only the presentation of the choice to the sinner as to which way he would decide.

In another sermon preached on the gospel invitation, the conclusion contained nothing but closing denunciation of the text, "... none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." (Luke 14:24).

The following list of questions serves to show the effective use he made of this method of ending his sermons:

Do you not think that by thus neglecting the Lord Jesus, you contract the most aggravated guilt? ... and must not the Father resent it? Do you not touch his honor in a very tender point?

Must not your punishment be peculiarly aggravated, since it will be proportioned to your guilt?

How do you expect to escape this signal vengeance, if you still continue to neglect the Lord Jesus? ... and if he refuse, to whom will you turn? ...What angel or saint can save whom he is determined to destroy? If he be against you, who can be for you?

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1. Ibid., p. 385.

If your guilt and danger be so great, and if in your present condition you are ready every moment to be engulfed in everlasting destruction, does it become you to be so easy and careless, so gay and merry? ... Can you be easy under such a load of guilt? Careless under a sentence of condemnation? And negligent, when the possibility of deliverance is set before you? ... Can you return home this evening as thoughtless and merry as usual?¹

After such a series of thought-provoking questions had been given with the design of arousing the conscience, it then remained to follow it up with another series to bring the sinners to final decision. Such questions as the following would close the interrogation:

Therefore, what would you now think of making one honest trial before it be too late to obtain an interest in that Saviour whom you have hitherto neglected? O! will you not make trial, whether the disaffection of your hearts towards him, inveterate as it is, may yet be subdued by divine grace? Whether he, who prayed with his dying breath, even for his murderers, will not have mercy upon you? Whether the virtue of his blood is not still sufficient to cleanse you from all sin? O! Will you give up the matter as desperate before you make a thorough trial?²

Once, while speaking on the hope of righteous men, he concluded with what he called a "melancholy contrast."³ Four and one half pages of the printed sermon are taken to describe what he believed to be the awful state of the wicked in the hour of death. From these examples it may easily be seen that Davies always had a definite aim in his conclusion. This is one of the secrets of his great success in soul winning.

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1. Ibid., pp. 233-235.
2. Ibid., pp. 234-235.
3. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 363.

F. Samuel Davies' Appeal

1. Negative and Positive Appeals

a. Negative

Much of the preaching of Samuel Davies was done to people who, if not engulfed in the sins of the day, were indifferent towards the Church and the Christian religion. He called sin by its name and sternly denounced those who took part in it. However, there was another side to his religion besides the denunciations. There was always an appeal to turn away from evil and then one turned away to keep oneself free by the help of the Holy Spirit.

Once, after preaching on the joy of having one's name enrolled in heaven, he concluded with a stirring appeal that the pupil should return home in a thoughtful and penitent mood.¹

Another time, the vanity and wickedness of a lukewarm religion had been pictured, prayers offered in this condition he labeled insults, and the hearers were told that if they continued in such ways, they would be doomed for all eternity as was Judas. His congregation was composed of church members and professing Christians, but he saw their need of a vital religious experience, and therefore pleaded with them to give up their lukewarmness.²

Davies saw so much at stake in the everlasting future, that he was constantly at pains to let eternal things make a suitable

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1. Ibid., p. 163.

2. Davies, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 281.

impression on his people as against the influence of the temporal. He then urgently appealed to his listeners to turn away from the temptations of temporal pleasures.¹ His favorite method was to picture, in vivid contrast, two different states such as the visible world against the spiritual and then ask the audience to make a choice. His vivid powers of imagination in using this method gave it great influence over the sinners of the day.

In Davies' mind the first essential in becoming a Christian was to turn away from the sins of the world. A negative appeal then was his first recourse. With great clarity he enabled sinners to feel the need of turning from wickedness. He said, the love of God "turns us all from our evil ways."²

b. Positive

Two necessary parts of salvation are: turning away from sin, and turning to God through Christ which to Davies was the only way of salvation. A positive attitude must now be taken towards God and righteousness. His next step would be to ask a question similar to the following:

Are you willing to turn to God with all your hearts, in the manner I have explained to you? This is the grand question; and what do your heart's answer to it?³

Here lies the heart and soul of Davies' preaching, a call to repentance. He had previously stated, in this same sermon, that his main business was with the unconverted. It must be constantly

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1. Ibid., p. 210.

2. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 272.

3. Ibid., p. 176.

kept in mind that he was doing a pioneering work. He was building a church out of new converts. He had no nucleus of pious members with the powerful influence of tradition. He was building a tradition into the young church, and his everpresent aim was to work for a heart-felt religious experience. His basis of judgement was by the Bible, since it was to be on Bible standards they would be tried in the last day. He appealed to them to try themselves by it now.¹

There is a constantly recurring appeal in many sermons to prayer as a means of grace. He viewed the final grand conflict as being near at hand, and the people were called upon to pray that it might be hastened. In the conflict with France he saw that God was displeased with them. Prayer was recommended as a means of obtaining God's favor and protection.² He asked the people how they hoped to obtain the help of God, and this example of a closing appeal not only answered the question but also showed the place of prayer in his system of belief.

The answer is pray for them; pray frequently, pray fervently. . . . pray in your retirement; pray in your families; pray in societies appointed for that purpose; pray in warm ejaculations; pray without ceasing; pray for this grand fundamental blessing.³

2. For Experimental Christianity,

There was formal religion in the Virginia Colony, but to Davies it did not satisfy the demand for Scriptural religion. To him that was something that must be lived and experienced. He said, "We

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1. Ibid., p. 318.
2. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 81.
3. Ibid., p. 83.

frequent the house of God time after time and yet see but little appearance of His being at work among us."¹

When speaking on regeneration the congregation was told that the most important question was whether they had experienced the change of the new birth. The distinguishing marks that were to be looked for were changes in their "views, disposition and conduct."² Experience, he told them, must be consulted as well as reason. He congratulated those who were already feeling the influence of heaven in their lives.

On one occasion Davies made a most impassioned plea for complete dedication to God using the figure of an indentured servant, which he applied to mankind because everyone belongs to God. He himself posed as the one who helped to draw up the papers. Here the appeal was for them to make use of the Holy Spirit in making a complete resignation, an habitual attachment to God, and a determined effort to share in all the experiences of the Lord, no matter what they might be.³

When preaching a funeral sermon Davies never eulogized the dead but made his appeals to the living to prepare to meet their God. One funeral sermon was concluded with the following six-point appeal to the living:

If you would escape death in its most dreadful form, enter into life, then:

First, betake yourselves immediately to serious thoughtfulness. No more of your levity and froth; ...

Secondly, break off from those things that hinder your conversion.

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1. Ibid., p. 123.
2. Davies, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 382.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 92, 93.

No more mingle in the company of sinners. No more of your drunkenness, swearing and other vices; ...

Thirdly, diligently use all means that may instruct you in the nature of true religion, and teach you what you should do to be saved; particularly, read the Scriptures; ...

Fourthly, earnestly pray to God. If you have hitherto had prayerless families or prayerless closets, let them be so no longer; ...

Fifthly, endeavor to receive and submit to the Lord Jesus as your only Saviour. It is through him alone you can be saved; ...

Finally, do not delay to follow these directions. ... If you put it off, ...there is very little hope.¹

These examples are typical of the emphasis in all his sermons on the matter of personal experimental religion.

3. Patriotic Burden

From 1755 on during the years of the war with France, Davies' sermons contain some of the most eloquent patriotic oratory of the pre-Revolutionary period. In these sermons he sounds a note like an Old Testament prophet. Who could fail to be moved by a plea such as the following:

And, O Virginia! O my country! shall I not lament for thee? Thou art a valley of vision favored with the light of revelation and the gospel of Jesus; thou hast long been the region of peace and tranquility; the land of ease, plenty and liberty. But what do I now see? What do I now hear? I see thy brazen skies, thy parched soil, thy withering fields, thy hopeless springs, and thy scanty harvests. Methinks I also hear the sound of the trumpet, and see garments rolled in blood; thy frontiers ravaged by revengeful savages; the territories invaded by

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1. Cf. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 331.
2. Ibid., pp. 215, 216.

French perfidy and violence. Methinks I see slaughtered families, the hairy scalps clotted with gore; the horrid arts of Indian and popish torture.¹

Davies read the signs of the times and interpreted them to mean that God was about to punish the land because of the sins of the people. He says:

I need not tell you that we are a guilty, obnoxious people; ... The lives of the generality proclaim it aloud; the terrors of war that now surround us proclaim it; and do not your consciences whisper the same thing?²

Employing a paraphrase of one of the biblical prophets, Davies again mourned over Virginia and made his plea as follows:

How shall I give up thee, Virginia? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Cities that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. . . . Oh! must not such moving language melt us down at His feet, in the most ingenuous repentance, and engage us to his service for the future?³

By his practice of seeing the alarms of God in all the crises of history and the phenomena of nature, Davies must not be classified as a mere religious fanatic. He was as practical as any reformer urging the people to awake from their stupor and take up arms so that they might be prepared for any eventuality. Such urgings on his part bore fruit some years later when the Presbyterians carried a great part of the burden of the struggle for independence.

He was also greatly concerned over the possible victory of the French Catholics. In appealing to his hearers he pictured the horrors of life under the rule of the popish leaders. Running through all his sermons and pleas to the people, there is the teaching of overruling Providence in the affairs of men. This belief colors

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1. Ibid., pp. 215, 216.

2. Ibid., p. 186.

3. Ibid.

his pleas for repentance, that God might then be able to save the country from all enemies. One further example will show the double nature of his appeal. In it he says:

Our frontiers ravaged by the merciless savages, and our fellow subjects there murdered with all the horrid arts of Indian and popish torture; our general, unfortunately brave, has fallen.¹

Shall Virginia incur the guilt, and the everlasting shame, of tamely exchanging her liberty, her religion, and her all for arbitrary Gallic power and for popish slavery, tyranny and massacre?²

If you would preserve yourselves, your families, your posterity, from poverty, from slavery, ignorance, idolatry, torture, and death; if you would save yourselves and them from all the infernal horrors of popery and the savage tyranny of a mongrel race of French and Indian conquerors; in short, if you would avoid all that is terrible and enjoy everything that is dear and valuable, repent and turn to the Lord.³

It is conceivable to imagine that one can hear echoes of these stirring appeals in the great Patriot, Patrick Henry, who as a boy sat under Davies' preaching. It is also significant that Virginia furnished a great percentage of the leadership and fighting spirit during the struggle for independence. Davies preached patriotic and soul-stirring sermons on many occasions such as the death of King George II, the Lisbon earthquake, the threat of war with France, and the storms and drought which the country had suffered.

G. Summary

In summarizing the elements of power mentioned in this chapter, it may be said that Samuel Davies always used a Scripture

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1. i.e., General Braddock.
2. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 43.
3. Ibid., p. 60.

text weaving it in through the sermon so that it was always in sight. The orderly and logical arrangement of his sermons as he worked them out of the text made it easy for even the most unlearned slave to grasp the significance of what he said, yet it was profound enough to engage the attention of the most learned.

When introducing a sermon he always launched his attack against sin in the opening words. The introduction was always in the same clear, logical manner as the rest of the sermon; thus, he captured the attention of the listener from the very start. It was sometimes an explanation of the context, a statement of the contents or implications of the text itself, or it might be some historical event or phenomenon of history which he saw to be analogous to something in the moral sphere or a warning from God in view of their sinful condition, but it always was an intrinsic, interesting part of the sermon.

Davies' introductions varied greatly in length. Some would be only a paragraph in length while other were several pages long and contained the complete argument which he then proceeded to illustrate.

It can be further seen that Davies added to the power elements in the sermons by arranging them in logical manner. Attention was called to the various parts by the use of ordinal numbers or by particularly calling attention to the next part to be discussed. The divisions of the sermons were a part of the whole manuscript. Today the reading of his sermons is facilitated by this manner of writing. No one was allowed to become lost in the argument.

It can be seen that he always placed the text in its proper setting or called attention to the setting. He even set the text in its place in the entire Bible. Many of his illustrations were taken from the Bible, others from events in history and nature. At other times he quoted from the classical writers, but he never used anecdotes. His favorite method was comparison or contrast.

In the conclusions of his sermons Davies always made a very moving appeal for repentance from sin and turning to God through the Lord, Jesus Christ. This appeal was emphasized by listing specific steps to be taken, by a series of questions leading up to a climactic ending or by a description of the torments of the wicked.

In funeral sermons he spoke to the living and urged them to repent. In a Christmas sermon he urged the people against making Christmas a bacchanalian revelry. In his patriotic sermons the basic appeal was to turn away from sin and implore God's favor. Basic to every appeal was the thought of the sinfulness of man and the necessity for his repentance.

CHAPTER III

SAMUEL DAVIES AS A THEOLOGIAN

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SAMUEL DAVIES AS A THEOLOGIAN

A. Introduction

Samuel Davies is known as a revivalistic and patriotic preacher who wielded great influence in the Middle Atlantic Colonies during the quarter century preceding the Revolutionary War. It is now the purpose of this paper to examine some of the doctrinal concepts which are found in his sermons. This doctrinal elements is a prominent feature, and the stirring appeals which he made were possible only because of his concepts of God, man, sin and salvation. His preparation was very thorough, and we have his sermons verbatim. Samuel Davies never prepared a systematic theology and to discover his theological beliefs, one must search his sermons and ferret out from them his theology.

B. Predominant Theological Emphases

Davies did not leave a systematic treatise setting forth his theological ideas, but a fairly complete picture of his beliefs may be obtained from his sermons. Certain predominant emphases run throughout most of his discourses. First of all, one finds his belief in the Bible as the revealed word of God. From the Bible whose truth he never questioned he found that God was the creator of all things and continues to manifest himself as the great Magistrate, who works

in Providential ways. He considered all men to be sinners, but not hopelessly lost, for God had provided a way of salvation through Christ. Man must repent and turn to God. Man's thinking was affected by original sin so that God through his Holy Spirit must rescue him from the clutches of Satan. Man is then justified by his faith in Christ and is sanctified when he uses prayer as one means of grace. Some of these ideas must now be illustrated from his sermons.

C. The Doctrine of God

I. Divine Omnipotence

a. Creation and omnipresence

As a premise upon which to build his teaching of man's infinite indebtedness to God, God is presented without argument as the Creator of the universe.¹ In a day when deism and rationalism were making such a sweep of the minds of men in the western world, this served to give some horizon to their thinking. He also taught that man came into being, "at the creative fiat of the Almighty."² It does not seem that evolution had yet appeared as a theory for he does not reckon with it. Back beyond six thousand years there was only a blank in regard to time and material things.

Davies used as a powerful weapon the fact that God is present everywhere at all times. God was viewed as "sitting at the helm of the universe with the supreme management of all things in his hands."³ He

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1. Davies, Samuel: Sermons on Important Subjects, Vol. I, p. 7.
2. Davies, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 9.
3. Davies, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 255.

believed that after the creation of the world God did not toss it out into space without taking further interest in it, for he says:

Did He cast it off his hand, as an orphan world, deprived of his paternal care, and left to shift for itself? No; as we were at first the creatures of his power, we are still the subjects of his government... he still supports and rules the world which he made.¹

As he believed God to be in the world of nature acting upon it through the natural laws, so also he thought of Him as acting in the affairs of men in their daily lives. He asked that the people pray "that He would direct our rulers to proper measures, inspire our soldiers with courage."² The people were advised, "let us look upon ourselves as in the hands of God, and all the blessings and afflictions of life as coming from him."³ Just as he taught that God was the powerful and moving force present in individual lives so also he taught that God was present in the affairs of nations. In a time of thanksgiving over some significant military victories, the people were called upon to give thanks to the Almighty God for turning these victories in their favor.⁴

One of the names given by the Hebrews to God is Jehovah. This name Jehovah implies: "God is self-existent and independent."⁵ "It is impossible for him not to be."⁶ "He always was, is, and ever will be."⁷ "God is unchangeable, or always the same."⁸

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1. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 232.
2. Ibid., p. 250.
3. Ibid., p. 247.
4. Cf. Ibid., p. 232.
5. Davies, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 308.
6. Ibid., p. 309.
7. Ibid., p. 311.
8. Ibid., p. 313.

God is also the very essence of love. Davies understood all goodness, divine wisdom, divine power, holiness, and justice to be nothing more than the divine perfection of love. "God is love; not only lovely and loving, but love itself; pure, unmixed love, nothing but love; love in his nature and in his operations; the object, source and quintessence of all love."¹ Because He is a God of love, He is also ready to make reconciliation with sinful creatures when they are truly penitent, but paradoxical as it may sound to human ears, that same love also punishes in order to uphold and support the dignity of the divine government.²

"God is the most excellent of beings and therefore worthy of homage in every capacity from his reasonable creatures. It is the supreme excellency of the Deity that renders him the object of personal devotion, ... for such is his excellency, that he is entitled to all the worship which we can give him."³

b. Sovereignty

In the opening words of a sermon on the sovereignty of God

Davies wrote:

That this world owes its existence to the creating power of God and that he established its laws and put its every wheel in motion, is a truth, so evident, that it has extorted the consent of all mankind.⁴

The question that was of fundamental concern was, whether that creator had exhausted his omnipotence in creation or whether he still governed natural and human affairs. Viewed by the deists the world is an orphan, God taking no part in its governance. Davies reminded

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1. Ibid., p. 316.

2. Ibid., p. 37.

3. Davies, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 48.

4. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 232.

the people that if such were true, it would be useless to implore God's blessing and protection.

Taking the view that God still continues active over the ~~kingdoms~~ of the world, he used as a text Daniel 4: 25, "The Most High ruleth in the Kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will." Nebuchadnezzar, according to Davies, had been raised up and was being used by God to be a scourge of the Jews. Declaring that the Bible represents God as the sole disposer of nations, he supports his contention with many Scripture passages such as:

Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatever he pleaseth. The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.¹

Davies was never picturing God as being all powerful without personal interest in his own work. Turning to the teachings of Christ² he pointed out that God is also concerned with the beast, the bird, the grass and certainly with individual men. He expressed the belief that God often works through individual men to complete his own purposes. Joseph and Christ were used by Davies as examples. To make the matter more real, he stated that God had been the special protector of Britain bringing victory to her in times of war and furthering her interests in times of peace. Then he appealed to his own hearers to implore the help of God once more.

c. Providence

At the time Davies lives deism was being accepted by many people both in the colonies and in Europe. It was due to this fact

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1. Psalms 103: 19.
2. Matthew 6: 26-30.

that he suffused into almost every sermon and into even every paragraph in his sermons the doctrine of divine Providence. Instead of a God who created the world, set it in motion and then sat back to watch it run without taking any personal interest in it, he saw his God in all the crises of history, the wars, the epidemics, tyrannical governments, storms, earthquakes and all the phenomena of nature whether good or bad. Sometimes God used these forces and events to warn and to punish his people, but in all of them Davies was able to see the purpose of God being worked out. It is well to examine in more detail some of these things, for in so doing it will be easier to see the force of his argument in his sermons.

He relates that an epidemic swept through the Indian tribes of New England only three years before the arrival of the first settlers. In some tribes all were killed, in others so many died that there were scarcely enough left to bury the dead. Davies interpreted this seemingly tragic event as God's method of removing the natives to make way for the Puritans.¹ God does not throw the whole world into confusion when he brings these warnings and punishments upon mankind, but he uses these secondary causes in such a way as to make them appear to be the only cause.² Davies does not claim that every event is the effect of immediate Providence but makes the claim for the critical events only. He gave as examples of these critical events the following: the destruction of the Spanish Armada under Queen Elizabeth, "Did he not make the winds, in their courses, fight

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1. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 110
2. Ibid., p. 246.

for England?"¹ Again, in the gunpowder plot of November 5, 1605 God acted to save the king.² In both these cases the intervention of God in what seemed the inevitable course of history was necessary to save the country and the Protestant cause from popery. In 1688 when it seemed that the Protestant cause was lost, a calm favored the landing of King William, but violent winds then arose to destroy his enemies.³

Many of the sermons of Davies were written during the period of the French and Indian Wars. These sermons are filled with reference to the "idolatry, superstition, and debaucheries of the church of Rome,"⁴ which through France God intends to use as a scourge because of their own sins.⁵ The worldly might may seem to be on one side in war, but Providence disposes the victory as He pleases.⁶ There may seem to be a coincidence of circumstances that decide the fate of kingdoms but, "the Most High is the sole disposer of the fates of kingdoms and particularly the events of war."⁷

In June, 1756 following the great Lisbon earthquake, Davies preached a sermon in which he expounded his doctrine of Providence in relation to the events of nature.

This world is a little territory of Jehovah's government; under the management of his providence; and particularly that all the blessings of life are the gifts of his bounty; and all its calamities, the chastisements or judgments of His hand. This I would have you to apply to the event now under consideration. It is the Providence of God that has impregnated the bowels

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1. Ibid., p. 241.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 244.
4. Ibid., p. 284.
5. Ibid., p. 70.
6. Ibid., p. 250.
7. Ibid., p. 235, Vol. II, p. 175 et al.

of the earth with these dreadful materials, that tear and shatter its frame. It is his Providence that strikes the spark, which sets this dreadful train in a fall, and causes the terrible explosion. ... I grant, that natural causes concur towards the production of earthquakes; but what are these natural causes? ... they were first formed and are still directed by the divine hand. ... When God formed this globe, he saw what would be the conduct of its inhabitants in all the periods of time; and particularly, he knew at what particular time a kingdom or city would be ripe for his judgments; and he adjusted matters accordingly. He set the train ... suits himself to particular cases, without a miracle --he may sometimes think it necessary to work with his own immediate hand, ... that his interference may be more conspicuous. ... earthquakes are the effects of divine Providence.¹

Davies always ended every sermon with a very stirring appeal to sinners. It is only to the obstinate that he can offer no hope. The vivid imagery he used in describing such calamities as the judgments of God were designed to turn the sinners from their wicked ways to repentance, seeking the mercy of God.

2. Predestination and Foreknowledge.

It has been said of Calvin that his "entire system is built upon his doctrine of God and was, if not a God-intoxicated, at least a God-possessed, man."² The same would apply equally as well to Davies. He did not give an exposition of every point of doctrine, but one can not read through his sermons without sensing that his mind is completely filled with the thought of a sovereign God.

It is in the area of the work of the ministry and soul winning that we are able to get a fairly complete view of Davies' idea of the extent to which God has predetermined the affairs of men.

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1. Ibid., p. 179, 180.

2. Hunter, A. Mitchell: The Teaching of Calvin, p. 49.

Several illustrations are given from the Scriptures and experience to explain his viewpoint: Moses could do no great work among the Israelites because God had not given them eyes to see nor ears to hear.¹ Paul is quoted in Romans 9: 18, "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will be hardeneth. So then it is not on him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." These will suffice to show that he followed Calvin very closely up to the point where the success of the ministry and evangelism is made dependent upon the grace of God.

Davies saw that the effectiveness of his appeal to sinners would be weakened if some were arbitrarily chosen to salvation, while others were damned. For the benefit of even the simplest of his listeners, he explained:

"We must be cautious that we do not infer from these Scriptures any such horrid doctrine as this, that men are compelled to sin, and pushed on to ruin, by a necessitating decree or the resistless impulse of Providence; or that, though they were disposed to turn to God, they are judicially kept back and hindered by the divine hand. This would be contrary to the whole current of Scripture, which charges the sin and ruin of sinners upon themselves; but these passages mean, that God denies to obstinate sinners those influences of his grace which are necessary to convert them and which, if communicated, would have subdued their utmost obstinacy."²

From this the writer feels that a correct interpretation of Davies on this matter would be that God has extended the influence of his saving grace to all men everywhere. Some men accept the divine favor and then further influences can be extended to them. On the

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1. Davies, op. cit., p. 534.

2. Ibid., p. 534.

other hand those who obstinately refuse to accept the offered grace have it withdrawn from them that it may not be further abused. Davies last thought is to teach anything that would cast any reflection upon the character of God. He illustrated this by showing that a father would withdraw any further material blessings from a child who abused them. This, he said, is what God is doing in the spiritual realm. He may punish with privative as well as positive punishment.¹ When dealing with such sayings as the hardening of the heart, the blinding of the eyes, etc., Davies was quite reluctant to let go of what he called the dangerous weapons. He struggled on taking refuge in the fact that they are from the Bible. However, one gets the feeling that he was not entirely satisfied with the effect that such words might have on the hearers. He gave as a final explanation the following:

(The hard sayings) ... signify his withdrawing of the influences of grace which they have abused, his withholding those additional influences which might irresistibly subdue their obstinacy and his suffering them to fall into circumstances of temptation.²

Davies used the doctrine of predestination as an arguing point for the necessity of the help of God in the work of the church. He pointed out that the grieving spirit is withdrawn only in the case of an obstinate refusal of his ministrations.³

Foreknowledge did not occupy a category apart from the omniscience of God. To Davies the proof that God knows all that shall ever be lies in the prophetic utterances of the Bible. Those

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1. Cf. Ibid., pp. 534, 535.

2. Ibid., p. 535.

3. Cf. Ibid., p. 542.

events which were foretold ages before the existence of the causes which brought them to pass were sufficient evidence of the foreknowledge of God to him. As instances of such events Davies referred to the following: Cyrus was foretold by name as the one who was to restore the Jews from Babylon; the destruction of various cities and kingdoms was foretold with a precision that baffles the knowledge of man; Christ foretold his own death and the prophets foretold his lineage and birthplace.¹ Davies asserted that these, and many other predictions throughout the Scriptures, prove the omniscience of God.

3. Law and Righteousness

Since all men are sinners and none are righteous, all men offend against the righteousness of God. There is a law of righteousness which demands that the offender be punished. Therefore, nothing can prevent the punishment of the sinner, and in the words of Samuel Davies, "the law scattering misery and ruin wherever its infection reaches."² In order for God to remain God he must support the dignity of his government and guard it from contempt.³ This means that private favors cannot be bestowed upon any criminal without endangering the public good.⁴ It was seen that the law has concluded all men to be sinners and therefore subject to its penalty. Neither men nor angels were ever found who were able to provide any relief.

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1. Davies, op. cit., p. 12.
2. Ibid., p. 35.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 37.
4. Cf. Ibid.

A way, however, was found in Jesus, whose life was altogether righteous, and who was free to dispose of his life as he wished. Christ chose to suffer and since his righteousness was infinite he could satisfy the demands of the law and also share his righteousness with all who were penitent. Davies explained as follows:

Thus it appears, in general, that the ends of Government are as effectually answered by the suffering of Christ in the room of sinners, as they could be by the everlasting punishment of the sinners themselves; nay, ... they are answered in a more striking and illustrious manner.¹

4. Love and Redemption

The biblical statement, "God is love," forms the basis for Daviss' teaching concerning love. All the goodness of God may be summed up in love. It was seen in creation, in sustenance and in keeping such a huge and unwieldy world in order in every age. Even punitive justice was regarded as a modification of love,² since a penalty was attached to the law only to prevent the necessity for the punishment. Anything, therefore, that attempts to prevent evil is love.

Davies was constantly under fire from his critics who asked why it was necessary to inflict eternal punishment on people. He answered that the measure of love is the ardor of the threatenings. The terrors of the law were not to be viewed as ends in themselves, but were to serve the law in bringing about good.

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1. Davies, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 39.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 322.

The love of God was further seen in providing a Saviour to redeem mankind. This redemption was free, rich, and unmerited. When Christ took upon himself the sins of all mankind, God did not spare him but made him the victim of justice to show His love to the world.¹ By creation, by Providence, and now by purchase man belonged to God. This doctrine Davies found to be Scriptural and based on the following:

Not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.²

D. Doctrine of Man

1. Man's Nature and Problem

a. Image of God in Man

Davies regarded man as an immortal spirit who was made for immortality and should give due thought to making his immortal life a happy one. He made no distinction between slave and owner in this respect. His hearers were asked:

Are you not fully convinced that your domestics were made for eternity, endowed with immortal souls, and have the greatest concern for the eternal world?³

The primitive condition of man he described as follows:

But as to man, it has been proved, that in his original state he was not liable to death, nor any of its antecedent or concomitant calamities, but that his gracious Maker intended he should live and be happy forever, if he continued forever obedient. That the state of innocence was a state of ease and

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1. Davies, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 337.
2. I Peter 1: 18, 19.
3. Davies, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 44.

spontaneous plenty ...¹

Although he did not mention the image of God in man, yet it is quite evident from the above quotations that Davies believed man once lived in a state of innocence and was endowed with certain qualities which placed him next to the angels in the order of creation. There was something of the divine nature in him.

b. The Fall of Man

Man did not remain in that original state, but in exercising the power of choice, he took the way which degraded his nature. Davies said, "But the whole human race was permitted to fall, and not one of them continued in the original state of integrity."² He further understood that the senses as well as the physical nature were affected. From that time onward man became more interested in the care of the body than for the care of the eternal part, the soul. The great concern of Davies' preaching was to turn the attention of man from thinking too highly of himself to think soberly of his real condition. He said:

We now hear panegyrics upon the powers of man, the dignity of his nature, and I know not what; as though these powers had never been shattered by the fall.³

In this one can see Davies' insistence upon the doctrine of original sin.

2. The Nature of Sin

A surprisingly small place was given to the part of Satan

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1. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 301.

2. Ibid., p. 298.

3. Ibid.

in the fall of man. Davies was content to describe the part of Adam as the federal head of the race. Smith says:

His doctrine of original sin follows faithfully the federal tradition. Expressly teaching that God constituted Adam a federal head and public representative of mankind, he urged that the fall involved mankind in both guilt and corruption.¹

Without attempting to work out a system of belief on this point, Davies took man as he found him in the world and tried to apply the remedy that had been provided. It did become necessary, at times, for him to make certain statements by way of explanation, and in regard to the present state of man he said:

But if Adam's posterity are stripped of these privileges and immunities which belonged to their nature in him, and which were ensured both to him and them, if he continued obedient; and if they are stripped of these on account of sin; then it is evident his sin is imputed to them, and they are punished for it.²

He regarded sin as the disobedience of the first pair in the garden of Eden but with such far reaching results that the whole created world was affected by it. He commented as follows:

It is evident the curse affects the ground, not only as to Adam, but also his posterity through all generations; and, therefore, as it was once inflicted, so it is still continued on account of his sin, for which they suffer as well as himself.³

The penalty for disobedience was death. Therefore, death came into the world of nature as a result of the fall of man. Davies further stated that the original dominion, which man exercised over the animal world, was lost. The manifestation of sin among men may be seen in the general indifference towards God and religious things,

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1. Davies, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 188.
2. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 312.
3. Ibid., p. 302.

and in the conduct of men toward one another, they being drunkards, swearers, unclean, malicious, contentious persons, and the like.

Davies said the fallen state might be recognized by "... the general prevalence of vice, irreligion, and debauched pleasures among the rich, ...¹

3. Judgment

Davies laid great emphasis upon the teaching of the judgment of God. There is a sense in which it begins now, but there will also be a grand and awful final event. He likened the judgment of this life to children's affairs, but the final scene he described as a solemn, tremendous, and glorious affair. Once while speaking to the young people at Nassau-Hall in Princeton, New Jersey, he warned them that by rejecting the gospel light they were dooming themselves to everlasting darkness, because they were voluntarily abusing the light. The day of universal judgment has been appointed by God who gave assurance of it through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the appointed judge. At that time Christ will appear in glory with a dignity that is befitting his person. Davies commented as follows:

Being God and man, all the advantages of divinity and humanity center in him, and render him more fit for the office than if he were God only or man only. This is the august judge before whom we must stand.²

It has not been deemed necessary to give many of the Scripture references used by Davies in constructing his arguments, since

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1. Ibid. p. 302.

2. Davies, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 361.

it has previously been made clear that he did make great use of the Bible, but at this point one of his quotations will be given:

The Son of Man shall come in his glory and in the glory of the Father and all the holy angels with him; and then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.¹

While Christ is descending to the judgment the parties to be judged will be summoned. Davies used an unusually vivid imagination in describing such scenes, and the reading of one scene will enable one to see why he had such an influence over the people. He said:

Now also the slumberers under ground begin to stir, to rouse and spring to life. Now see graves opening, tombs bursting, charnel houses rattling, the earth heaving, and all alive, while these subterranean armies are bursting their way through. See clouds of human dust and broken bones darkening the air, and flying from country to country over intervening continents and oceans to meet their kindred fragments and repair the shattered frame with pieces collected from a thousand different quarters, whither they were blown away by winds, or washed by waters.²

Finally, all the children of men are assembled before the judge, in the upper air, with the earth in view. Before Davies could go on with the judicial process, he was led off into what he called a practical digression. He said:

And O! what vast multitudes, what millions of millions do all these make! And do not some, alas! do not many of you belong to one or other of these classes of sinners whom God and Christ and Scripture and conscience conspire to condemn? If so, to the left hand you must depart among devils and trembling criminals whose guilty minds forebode their doom before the judicial process begins. But who are these glorious immortals upon the right hand? They are those who have surrendered themselves entirely to God, through Jesus Christ, who have heartily complied with the method of salvation revealed in the gospel; who have been

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1. Matthew 25: 31
2. Davies, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 364.

formed new creatures by the almighty power of God; who make it the most earnest persevering endeavor of their lives to work out their own salvation and to live righteously, soberly and godly in the world.¹

Following the gathering of the nations the sentence will be pronounced, and when the inhabitants have been removed from the earth, too, it will meet its fate.

E. The Doctrine of Salvation.

1. Incarnation

No man can save himself since his crime is infinite and he is only a finite creature. However, help was found in Christ, who was born of the royal line of David in the city of Bethlehem. Though of royal lineage and the Son of God, he was born in a stable though he was heralded by angels. Davies said, "In such circumstances of abasement did the Lord of glory enter our world."² These facts he found to be attested by the prophets and the writers of the New Testament. In commenting on the nature of Christ, Davies had the following to say:

A God-man divinity and humanity united in one person; the Ancient of days, yet not ~~but~~ 1760 years old; the everlasting Father, and yet the virgin Son, the child of Mary; the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, and yet the Servant of the Servants. The highest dignity and glory, and the lowest condescension and humility meet in him. ... Here are infinite majesty and the most transcendent meekness; the deepest reverence towards God and a full equality with him; infinite worthiness of good and the most perfect patience under the sufferings of evil; a submissive, obedience and supreme and universal dominion; absolute sovereignty and humble resignation.³

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1. Ibid., p. 370.

2. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 427.

3. Davies, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 194.

2. Justification by Faith

a. Repentance and Faith

After the incarnate Son of God appeared man had to accept his mediation. Davies always preached that repentance was a prerequisite to salvation. The person must feel his own need and earnestly seek the grace of God. He taught that the gospel and its ordinances had been given to bring man to repentance.¹ He also felt that afflictions were used at times to bring some to turn to God. Some of his most moving appeals for repentance were made during times of crisis when he called on his people for a show of patriotism. He pleaded:

And therefore, O my countrymen, and particularly you brave men that are ~~the~~ occasion of this meeting, repent; fall down on your knees before the provoked sovereign of heaven and earth against whom you have rebelled. Dissolve and melt in penitential sorrow at his feet.²

His was not a works' righteousness, for he always urged the people to have faith in God. The instrumentality employed by God to bring about the union with Christ, was said by him to be faith, the grand pre-requisite to salvation. To further illustrate faith to the people he called it a hearty consent, a feeling of need, enlightened understanding, enabling power to accept Christ, and a dependence upon Christ alone for pardon.³ Davies did not believe that man in his depraved condition was capable of initiating faith, therefore, he called faith and repentance gifts of God.⁴

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1. Davies, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 159.

2. Ibid., p. 48.

3. Cf. Davies, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 44.

4. Cf. Ibid., p. 380.

b. Forgiveness and Regeneration

To be satisfactory a faith must give assurance of forgiveness and provide a means of regeneration. Davies made no claims for any ecstatic assurance, but he devoted an entire sermon to the new birth. He reasoned that if one had been born again then he would have all the assurance needed. Regeneration was more than a mere rational change. He taught that it is the work of God transforming the life of the person. He described the work thus:

In short, the mean, depraved, earth-born creature, is made an infant angel; ... Should you see a clod of earth rising from under your feet, and brightening into a sun, it would be not so glorious a transformation.¹

Davies pleaded with his people to seek the new birth in order that they might fit into the society of heaven.

3. Sanctification and the Spiritual Life

Birth is only the beginning of growth in the natural life. Davies saw a great sympathy between the natural and the spiritual life. After a person has been born again, his hope begins to make excursions into the future and to anticipate the happiness of the redeemed. Davies saw and taught that in order to enjoy the blessedness of the redeemed state, holiness is an absolute essential. He defined it as, "... a conformity in heart and practice to the revealed will of God."² In his fallen state man does not have power to practice holiness; Therefore, Davies stated that whenever it is found it is a supernatural thing. The Holy Spirit is the sole sanctifying agency

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1. Ibid., p. 380.

2. Davies, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 161.

of the heart.

Davies' interest was not in the doctrine of sanctification as such, but in the practical application of it in the lives of Christians. To assist the people in this he gave them a list of five observations for guidance. First, one would love God for his holiness and not with selfish motive for what God had done. Second, a sanctified person must love the law of God because it is pure, not allowing even the least sin in his life. Third, one would also love the gospel method of salvation, where complete dependence is placed in the righteousness of Christ. This method Davies held to be far more rational than and far superior to the licentiousness of the antinomian teaching.¹ Fourth, holiness implies an habitual delight in its holy practice towards God and man. Fifth, there must be universal practice of holiness.²

It would be wrong to interpret the Sanctification of Davies as perfectionism. One would be equally in error in saying that his religion was a mere ritualism, for he continually insisted that religion was to be lived and the Christians should measure themselves according to Bible standards. He would not admit that a Christian can remain a Christian and habitually commit sin. A very necessary part of his teaching was the insistence that the Christian must have the help of the Holy Spirit to live without sin.

F. Summary

In this chapter it has been pointed out that Davies' sermons

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1. Cf. Davies, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 166.

2. Ibid., pp. 162-169.

were constructed around the framework of the great doctrine of the Bible. The doctrine of God in his creative power and omnipresence as the sovereign over all the nations was evident in all Davies' sermons. He pictured God as the moving cause in nature, the disposer of the affairs of nations and of men. Through his omniscience God was able to foresee all future events and the crises of history as well as the disturbances in nature.

It was seen that there is in the sermons of Davies, the teaching that God has established a moral law in the moral sphere, which was broken by the sins of men. The love of God was seen to be great enough to overcome the penalty incurred when the law was broken. God did this by giving his own Son whose righteousness was great enough to satisfy the demands of the law.

Davies believed all men to be degenerate since the fall, and the results of that degeneracy to be seen in the indifference towards God and wickedness and cruelty to their fellow men. He believed in a final judgment where all will be tried by the Bible standards. He appealed to men to accept the salvation which was being offered through Christ. As a pre-requisite to salvation he taught men to turn to God in repentance and ask God for a faith sufficient to bind them to Christ. He said that the only agency able to bring this union into being was the Holy Spirit. A further office of the Holy Spirit, he asserted, was the constant working with those who prayed for his grace to make them holy. Christians were

entreated to accept this supernatural power rather than to rely upon rationalism. These doctrines came from the Bible which to him was sufficient revelation.

CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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A. Summary

The purpose of this thesis as stated in the introduction is to discover the elements of power in the sermons of Samuel Davies which made him one of the greatest preachers in the Colonial Period. It was thought best to consider first the contributing influences in the early life of Davies, to find out something of his early training and those who influenced his life during his school years; then, to see the conditions in the Virginia Colony that may have called forth his power. It was decided to examine his sermons in an effort to seek out some elements of power in his method of outline, use of content, of theme, method of illustrating and of making his appeal. Finally, it was decided to study the theology of Davies to try and find the predominant doctrines that were his. A summary should then be made of all the main elements entering into his life and sermons. In conclusion these were all to be tied together in order to get a complete and integrated picture of the things that made Davies a great preacher.

The first chapter revealed that Davies was born into a very devout Christian home and that, from the very beginning of childhood,

he was brought into close contact with the written Word and the prayers of his mother. When he was first sent away to school, he became somewhat careless of spiritual things for a time, but all the time was conscious of the nearness of death. He came under the influence of the revival leaders of the time, especially George Whitfield and the Tennents, who were the founders of the famous "Log Colleges". He attended another such college, founded by Samuel Blair, a graduate of the original college. His association with these men gave him a fiery zeal for the salvation of the lost.

The loss of his wife and child during the first year of his married life, together with his tendency to be consumptive, brought his thought to the matter of death again. Thinking he had but a short time to live, he resolved to hasten with the message to dying men. He was healed and went on to his great work in Virginia, where he was challenged by the wickedness on the part of the common people, and the indifference towards religion by the church people. Being of an independent spirit, he worked for religious toleration in the Virginia Colony and won the first rounds of the battle. There also he preached some of his greatest sermons appealing for patriotism by way of repentance and the help of God.

In chapter II the elements of power especially evident in the sermon methods of Samuel Davies were considered. He was shown to have introduced the purpose of his sermon at the very beginning. His introductions were seen to have been an integral part of every

sermon, bringing the reader at once into the thought by way of the text, or by some analogy to capture the interest of the listener. It was seen that every sermon had a text, which appeared in almost every paragraph following. The theme was always stated and the steps in its development pointed out so that even the dullest in the congregation might gain from the sermon. Every sermon was so logically arranged that anyone could follow the thought. Sometimes he took the parts of the text and gave an exposition of each word or phrase. At other times he worked out a series of propositions which he proceeded to argue. At other times he asked questions which he would answer. Whichever method was used his careful preparation held the attention of the hearers.

It was discovered from Davies' use of Biblical illustrations, his constant bringing into sermons the spirit as well as the letter of the Word, and from his choice of texts, that he had an exceptional grasp of the total scope of the Scriptures. Another unique feature of his ministry was his placing of Christ in the center position as the answer to every human problem. Christ was the central figure in the infallible Book. His preaching was Biblical and Christo-centric, a combination that must go hand-in-hand in order to give powerful preaching.

Next considered was the emphasis that Davies placed upon experience in his appeals. For him Christianity had to be lived before it was real. He sometimes used, with great effectiveness

philosophical arguments, but only for concomitant or supplementary reasons. The thing that counted most with him was the experiences of those who lived in Bible times. After citing examples of this he would appeal to the experiences of his listeners. With such arguments he called to the people to turn away from sin and to turn to God and His righteousness. There was also a great patriotic burden upon his heart to save the country from France and the Catholic Church. He appealed to the people to repent so that God could help them. Davies had a vivid imagination which he used with telling power in describing the joys of heaven and the miseries of hell. He applied all his powers and knowledge to the Scriptures for the everyday lives of the people.

In chapter three it was shown that the great doctrines of the Bible formed the framework of Davies' sermons. A few doctrines were expounded at length in the sermons while others are mentioned only incidentally. He preached on the love of God, the sovereignty of God, the Providence of God, judgment, resurrection, regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the work of Christ, the mediator. God was pictured as Creator, Sustainer, and Disposer of men and nations, who established a moral law that has been broken by sinful men.

Man was seen to have fallen through the sin of Adam, but God provided a way of salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ. In his degenerate state man was thought to be unable to do anything

for himself, so God in a supernatural way enabled him to repent and have faith. Christ, the Son of God, was born of a virgin, but with infinite righteousness so that he was able to fulfill all the demands of the law. The Holy Spirit has been supplied as the agency of God applying his grace to men and in the work of regeneration and sanctification.

B. Conclusion

In conclusion it may be said that the success of Davies' preaching was due to both internal and external forces at work in man. There is no doubt that Davies had been endowed with a great intellect and insight into the nature of man and the relation of history to man. He felt very definitely the call of God coming to him, probably through the influence of his mother's prayers, but also through the preaching of Gilbert Tennent, whom he called his spiritual father. The flaming zeal of the revivalists of his day set off the spark that had been smouldering since childhood. These men enabled him to put the Bible and Christ crucified in a central position in his life.

Like an Old Testament prophet his burning zeal seared the consciences of those who had broken God's laws. He saw clearly and interpreted frankly the events of the time as warnings, coming from an aggravated God who was about to roar against them

if they did not repent. The Spirit of God pleaded with men and this man, moved by the same Spirit, declared the counsel of God. Men were ready to repent and plead for a vital religion, and here was a man prepared and willing to instruct them in the ways of righteousness. The spirit of freedom was beginning to burn with a faint glow in his time, and Davies seeing this flicker fanned it into a flickering torch which others, later, were to receive and carry to full religious and political toleration.

What may be learned from Davies that will be of help today? There were in his life and preaching some elements of power that could well be utilized. His full and complete dedication to the call of God is certainly important. The central position of the Bible is indeed significant. The realization that man is a sinner and the confronting of him with the demands of divine justice would be a far cry from the social gospel of today. The great emphasis which he placed upon the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of it was a powerful incentive to turn men from sin.

Davies' use of the solid meat of the gospel to illustrate Bible truths has a far more lasting effect upon men's minds than many of the anecdotes used today. His sound reasoning, thorough preparation and imaginative powers have been an inspiration to this writer to seek to avoid insulting the intelligence of the audience or failing to speak to the lowest intelligence. Man must be challenged to think about divine things as the world challenges one's

thinking. Davies can help one to see what it means to depend upon the help of the Holy Spirit. The ministry today must rely fully upon God's help in order to accomplish the greatest results for Him.

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