

Systematic Theology and the Preaching of Samuel Davies

By Breno Macedo

Introduction

The revival of religion in North America during the 18th century has always been a fascinating subject. It was a time when George Whitefield visited the new land. It was a time that saw the rise of powerful preachers like Samuel Blair and Gilbert Tennent who were responsible for the spread of the Christian gospel in colonial America. It was a time of religious excitement and turbulence, of massive conversions but also of division in the Philadelphia Synod. It was during this time that the Old Light/New Light controversy took place. While some were interested in confessionalism and high academic training for ministers, all that mattered for others was the preaching and spread of the gospel under the guidance and power of the Spirit.

This article will focus on Samuel Davies, perhaps the greatest preacher of his time, a Presbyterian minister who served God's church in Virginia in the second half of the 18th Century. Great attention will be paid to his preaching, that area in his ministry for which he became most known. This article will be divided in two sections: the first will present a brief overview of Davies' life from the beginning of his education to his late ministry at Princeton, and the second will explore Davies' sermons. It will be concluded that, contrary to the later movement called revivalism, which emphasized the method to the detriment of the message and of doctrinal faithfulness, Davies is the best example America has ever produced of a preacher who trusted completely in the Lord of the Church to bring effectiveness to his sermons through the divine Spirit and yet labored boldly to employ the best that academic rigor, logic and rhetoric could offer for the benefits of his listeners and to the growth of Christ's kingdom.¹

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Samuel Davies was born in New Castle, Delaware, in 1723. His parents, David and Martha Davies, were children of Welsh immigrants. Davies' father was a humble farmer "of moderate intellectual power and attainments, but of unexceptionable Christian character."² Davies' mother was a pious and godly woman who dedicated him to pastoral ministry from his birth.³ She was also known as a woman of very strong mind and, because she disliked her Baptist pastor, she became a member of a Presbyterian church.⁴ Thus, Davies grew up within Presbyterian circles and his theological training took place under the classical curriculum of Samuel Blair's log-college at Fagg's Manor in Pennsylvania.⁵ There,

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1. Davies' works as a poet and hymn writer are not covered in this article. For specific literature on these areas of Davies' ministry see: Craig Gilborn, "Samuel Davies' Sacred Muse," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 41 (Je 1963): 63–79; Louis F. Benson, "President Davies as a Hymn Writer," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society (JPHS)* 2, no. 6 (September 1904): 277–288; Louis F. Benson, "Hymns of President Davies," *JPHS* 2, no. 7 (December 1904): 343–354; Jeffrey H. Richards, "Samuel Davies and Calvinist Poetic Ecology," *Early American Literature* 35, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 29–50.

2. William Buell Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, vol. 3 (New York: R. Carter and Brothers, 1859), 140.

3. Henry Alexander White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders* (New York: The Neale Pub. Co., 1911), 44.

4. James H. Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," in *Colonial Presbyterianism: Old Faith in a New Land*, ed. S. Donald Fortson III (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2007), 182.

5. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 44. Davies began his education under the tutelage of his mother until the age of ten. Later, at the age of twelve, he had the opportunity of attending a school. Before attending Blair's school, Davies had begun his theological studies under a Welsh Baptist minister name Abel Morgan. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:140.

“he received his Classical Greek and Latin ministerial education in which he excelled as a student.”⁶

Davies was licensed to preach on July 30, 1746, by the New Side Presbytery of New Castle. On February 19, 1747, he was ordained as an evangelist “with a view to a mission among some of the destitute congregations in Virginia, especially in Hanover County.”⁷ Virginia was considered as a very difficult area for the spread of Presbyterianism. According to Sprague, at least two things would make Davies’ work particularly arduous: the status of the Episcopal Church as the established Church of Virginia, and the rebellion of the Dissenters against the civil authorities.⁸ In spite of the expected resistance to his ministry, Davies arrived in Williamsburg, Virginia, in April of 1747.

EARLY MINISTRY

Upon his arrival in Virginia, Davies made sure to demonstrate to the local authorities that he was no “rebel.” During his petition before the General Court, he confessed his faith before Governor Gooch and his council, expressing it according to the doctrines of the Westminster Standards and also according to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.⁹ Although by that time the Court had several suits against Dissenting ministers “for holding religious worship in a manner not recognized by the law of the Provinces,” Davies’ petition was granted and he received permission to minister in five western counties.¹⁰ He immediately started his labors, becoming active in a large area having its

boundaries as Pennsylvania to the North, the Appalachian Mountains to the West, and the Atlantic Ocean to the East.¹¹

The beginning of Davies’ ministry was marked by sacrifice and sorrow. Sarah, Davies’ first wife, whom he married on October 23, 1746, died soon after he started his labors; and he himself also became very ill to the point of needing the care of other persons at night due to the high fevers that assailed him, which at times were so strong to the point of making him delirious. In spite of his fragile condition, Davies labored faithfully.¹² A friend described him as someone who had not hope of living long but who was “determined to spend the little remains of an almost exhausted life, as he apprehended it, in endeavoring to advance his Master’s glory in the good of souls.”¹³ The Virginians enthusiastically received his labors, and many decided to secure Davies’ presence in the region by sending to his presbytery a call for him after sitting three or four months under Davies’ preaching.¹⁴

In the spring of 1748, Davies was called to be the pastor of one hundred and fifty families who lived in Hanover County. Davies established residency twelve miles from Richmond and his ministry in that region was greatly blessed. During the summer of the same year, many were walking great distances, some traveling as far as 60 miles to listen to his preaching.¹⁵ The end of that year was marked by two great blessings in Davies’ life. The first was a personal blessing when on October 4th he married again, this time to a Virginian named Jane Holt. She gave Davies six children and aided him “with counsel and sympathy in all the toilsome work of his ministry.”¹⁶ The second was a ministerial blessing, when his license to preach was renewed by the civil authorities of Virginia. At the moment of that request, Davies also asked to preach at three additional meeting-houses. His petition met resistance in the person of Peyton Randolph, the King’s Attorney General. Randolph argued that the Act of Toleration passed in England for the benefit of Dissenter ministers was not valid in Virginia, and that the four meeting-houses that were already under the Davies’ care were more than enough for a preacher who was not part of the Anglican Church. Davies, of course, argued in the affirmative, explaining that the Act of Toleration in fact granted the Virginians “a right as citizens to secure license for as many preaching places as would suit their own convenience.”¹⁷ Davies’ argumentation was brilliant and logical, full of wisdom and demonstration of legal knowledge. He persuaded the members of the council, who renewed his license and granted him the right to preach in an increased total of

6. Smylie, “Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor,” 182.

7. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:140; Smylie, “Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor,” 182; Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1987), 48.

8. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:140.

9. Smylie, “Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor,” 182; White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 44.

10. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:140–141; Smylie, “Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor,” 182.

11. Smylie, “Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor,” 182.

12. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:141. Davies’ first wife passed away on September 15, 1747, when he returned briefly from Virginia to Delaware. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:141.

13. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 45.

14. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:141.

15. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 45.

16. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 45; Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:141. Sprague refers to Davies’ second wife by the name of Jean. Read more about the benefits of Davies’ second marriage in Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750–1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 10–11.

17. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 46.

seven places, granting Davies the three additional places he had requested.¹⁸

It is important to note here Davies' pastoral spirit and ecclesiological consistency that empowered his argument and made him so persuasive. In his argumentation, Davies emphasized that he was not "proselytizing" anyone. He was not convincing people to leave the Episcopal Church and to become Presbyterians. In other words, he was invading no one's ecclesiastical boundaries.¹⁹ In fact, the reason for his petition was the existing real demand given those who had left Anglicanism "of their own free will" and who "wished preachers of their own choosing." It was the urgent invitation that these Dissenters issued to Davies, therefore, that made the young Presbyterian minister to become preoccupied with them and to desire to minister to them. Moreover, Davies explained, the reason for the dissent was the lack of preparation of the Anglican ministers who were said to entertain "their hearers 'with languid harangues on morality' and left out most entirely 'the glorious doctrines of the gospel.'" ²⁰

TRIP TO ENGLAND²¹

Samuel Davies' early ministry was also marked by his active participation in the Synod of New York. In 1753 he was invited to leave the South and to join the famous Northern Presbyterian Gilbert Tennent for a trip to the British Isles. This journey aimed to raise funds for a new college in Princeton, New Jersey.²² Personally, Davies also hoped to raise some funds to help in relieving the hardships of Virginia's Presbyterians.²³ Tennent and Davies departed on November 17 and arrived in London on December 25.²⁴ They were warmly received in both England and Scotland, and both men had a very busy schedule. At this occasion, Davies met George Whitefield "who counseled him in what to expect from the British as he traveled, preached, and solicited funds."²⁵

Davies preached everywhere and had much acceptance. Sprague affirms that "he preached to not only universal acceptance, but universal admiration."²⁶ He occupied the pulpit of several churches in London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, and the people who heard him became very anxious to receive written copies of his sermons.²⁷ Perhaps one of the most curious and interesting situations on this trip was Davies' encounter with George II, the King of England. Henry A. White affirms that the King attended one of Davies' sermons and, being very much impressed with the Dissenting minister, he loudly expressed his approval of Davies' preaching. Davies, on the other hand, interpreted such conduct of the King as somewhat irreverent for the

public worship of the people of God. Pausing the sermon for a while, the Virginian Presbyterian looked at the king and publicly rebuked him with the following words: "When the lion roars the beasts of the forest all tremble; when King Jesus speaks, the princes of the earth should keep silence."²⁸

LATER MINISTRY

Davies returned from Europe and arrived in Virginia on February 13, 1755, and upon his arrival he immediately returned to his ministerial work. Davies' ministry may be understood in light of his view of Gospel ministry, which was very high. In his sermons delivered on the occasion of the installation of new ministers, he expresses the seriousness of pastoral ministry. He was an advocate of a highly educated and trained clergy. But he also affirmed that while ministers must be educated, they also must be constantly examining the motives of their own hearts and the reasons of their own souls, while seeking pastoral ministry and while exercising it. They should connect their education with personal piety and, once united, both elements should be distilled

18. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 46. Later, while visiting London, Davies brought the issue to the attention of the King, who gave him a royal declaration that the Act of Toleration was also valid in the Virginia. See Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:141.

19. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 46; Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," 183.

20. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 46. Iain Murray affirms that such high view of the catholicity of the church was a marking characteristic of revival periods. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 26–30.

21. For an extensive account of Davies' journey to the British Isles see Samuel Davies and George William Pilcher, *The Reverend Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753–55* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967).

22. Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," 187; White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 48; Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:142.

23. Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," 187; White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 48. Thomas S. Kidd affirms that during Davies' trip to London he not only promoted the College of New Jersey but "also sold his vision of evangelizing Native American and African Americans in Virginia." Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 239.

24. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:142.

25. Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," 188. In fact, Whitefield was very encouraged when he knew about the trip. He expressed his excitement in the following words: "I am glad Mr. Tennent is coming with Mr. Davies, if they come with their old fire I trust they will be able to do wonders." Citation found in Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 14.

26. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:142.

27. Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," 188.

28. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 49.

in the format of experimental sermons. Their sermons should have a creation-fall-redemption-consummation format in order that the Gospel, the center of all sermons, be intelligible to those who hear. While being teachers and leaders of the flock of Christ in a local Church, ministers should also be friends with those he shepherds, remembering his own humanity and their need of redemption.²⁹

Davies' passionate view of pastoral work is probably best noticed in his ministry among the slaves. Although he himself was not against slavery, he devoted much time to those African-Americans who lived in the homes of the members of his congregation. Around 300 slaves frequently heard his sermons and about 100 of these were baptized by him. Once he wrote: "Two Sundays ago I had the pleasure of seeing forty of their black faces around the table of the Lord, who all made

credible profession of Christianity, and sundry of them with unusual evidence of sincerity."³⁰ Smylie summarizes: "He was deeply concerned about slaves as individuals, God's children, their need of salvation, their need to know about Christian faith and life, and to be able to read and understand the Scripture, and to deepen their devotion and quest for holiness."³¹ Bibles were sent from England to the African slaves who usually spent several hours learning how to read so they would be able to have their own copies.³² Among the favorite literature of the slaves was Isaac Watts' hymnal which they much enjoyed singing. Once Davies wrote: "all night in my kitchen: and sometimes, when I have awaked about two or three o'clock in the morning, a torrent of sacred harmony poured into my chamber, and carried my mind away to heaven. In this seraphic exercise, some of them spend almost the whole night."³³

One of the most important achievements Davies made for Presbyterianism was the formation of the first Southern Presbytery. The Presbytery of Hanover was formed on December 3, 1755, in connection with the New Side Synod of New York, and Davies was elected its first moderator.³⁴ Smylie explains the importance of a presbytery in that geographical region: "In doing this the body extended organized Presbyterian influences westward in Virginia and Southward into North Carolina, thus further taming America's frontier."³⁵

The last phase of Davies' ministry took place in Princeton, when he became its president. Davies was chosen to succeed Jonathan Edwards in 1758 but he declined the appointment. In the following year he was again elected and though still reluctant he did accept the appointment, receiving the "blessing" of his Synod. He moved, very reluctantly, from Hanover to Princeton on July 26 of that same year, leaving behind the congregation he so much loved and the presbytery he helped to form, and officially occupied the position of president in September 26.³⁶ One of the first official duties Davies performed as president of Princeton was an evaluation of the institution's library which he regarded as "one of the best helps to enrich the minds both of the officers and students with knowledge." This analysis of the library later became a tool for fund-raising and focused on the weaknesses of the collection.³⁷

In spite of his busy life as president, Davis did not neglect his main ministerial passion: preaching. Along with his presidential duties he faithfully labored as the pastor of the Presbyterian Congregation at Princeton, regularly filling the pulpit there. His sermons attracted many and in the rare occasions in which he shared the pulpit with another preacher anyone could

29. Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," 190–192. For additional details of Davies' ministry see also White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 53–54. In a letter written in 1749, Jonathan Edwards shared with a friend his knowledge about Davies' ministerial efforts in Virginia. He said: "I heard lately a credible account of a remarkable work of conviction and conversion, among whites and negroes, at Hanover, Virginia, under the ministry of Mr. Davies. Who is lately settled there and has the character of a very ingenious and pious young man." Citation found in Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 9.

30. Citation found in White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 54.

31. Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," 193. In a letter to the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge in London, Davies wrote the following about the black members of his church: "A considerable number, (about an hundred) have been baptized, after a proper time for instruction, and having given credible evidence, not only of their acquaintance with the important doctrines of the Christian religion, but also a deep sense of them upon their minds, attested by a life of strict piety and holiness." Citation found in Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 12.

32. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 55. See also Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 239–240.

33. Citation found in Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," 193–194. For more regarding Samuel Davies and slavery see George William Pilcher, "Samuel Davies and the Instruction of Negroes in Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 74, no. 3 (July 1, 1966): 293–300; Jeffrey H. Richards, "Samuel Davies and the Transatlantic Campaign for Slave Literacy in Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 111, no. 4 (January 1, 2003): 333–378.

34. White, *Southern Presbyterian Leaders*, 51–52; Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," 189. White provides an exhaustive list of the ministers present in the formation of the presbytery.

35. Smylie, "Samuel Davies—Preacher, Teacher, and Pastor," 189–190.

36. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, 3:143.

37. George William Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), 178. Davies also sought to improve the academic qualifications of the college adopting a more demanding system of evaluation. Overall, it is clear that Davis held in the most high regard theological education. See Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia*, 179–181.

perceive the disappointment in the heart of those who were present.³⁸

THE PREACHING OF SAMUEL DAVIES

Having considered Davies' life and, thus, having laid out the social-historical background to understand his sermons, this section will focus on his preaching. As has already been remarked, it was as a preacher that Davies became famous during the time of the Great Awakening in Colonial America. His sermons began to be published while he was still alive and appeared for the first time in two volumes in 1770, edited by Thomas Gibbons in London.³⁹ They remained in print for at least a century. In order to grasp Davies' diversity in preaching, this section will focus on the subjects that received attention in Davies' sermons, and on his style. There are at least three main areas in which one can classify his sermons: dogmatic, apologetic and evangelistic. Observations will be made on Davies' rhetoric while analyzing each one of these categories.

Samuel Davies' Dogmatic Sermons

There are eighty-two sermons in Davies' three volumes and all of them contain a clear and descriptive title which hints to the reader the topic addressed. It seems that the *lectio continua*, the common practice of preaching sequentially through a book of the Bible, was not Davies' approach to preaching. The texts varied according to the topic he desired to expound to his hearers. On the other hand, it was not uncommon for Davies to preach a sequential sermon in order to better explain or complement the message previously delivered. For example, on sermon IV, entitled "The Nature and Universality of Spiritual Death," Davies addresses the issue of total depravity and, particularly, man's inability to profit any spiritual good from religion.⁴⁰ In the following address, sermon V, "The Nature and Process of Spiritual Life," Davies addresses the same subject from a positive perspective. He begins this sermon by apologizing to his hearers, explaining that "it is not my usual method to weary your attention by a long confinement to one subject," but soon he gives a reason why to labor a little longer in the same topic: "the subject of my last discourse was so copious and interesting that I cannot dismiss it without a supplement."⁴¹ This demonstrates Davies' sensibility in choosing his topics and in being careful with the timing in which he developed particular themes. Another example of this sequencing of sermons is sermon XLI, "The Nature of Looking to Christ Opened and Explained," followed by sermon XLII, "Arguments to Enforce our Looking to Christ."⁴²

In spite of not preaching through entire books of the Bible, Davies was a "dogmatic preacher" in the sense that he used almost all places of systematic theology as themes for his sermons. Davies clearly used his preaching as a way to catechize his hearers and instruct them in the matters of theology. The very first of Davies' collected sermons is entitled "The Divine Authority and Sufficiency of the Christian Religion." It seems that the editor rightly chose this sermon to be the first in the collection, for in it Davies argues for the truth of the Christian religion based on the sufficiency of the Scriptures, functioning as a kind of prolegomenon to Davies' works. In this sermon he teaches his listeners that in God's revelation of the Old and New Testaments the Almighty brings men to repentance. "We have not only Moses and the prophets," Davies affirmed, "but we have also Christ, who is a messenger from the dead and his apostles; and therefore, surely, 'if we do not hear them, neither will we be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.'"⁴³ After making a thorough analysis of this sermon, Morton Smith affirmed: "Davies found in the Bible an inspired Word of God, that this Word came with the full authority of God Himself, and that it was a necessary and sufficient revelation for our faith and life."⁴⁴

On the subject of theology proper, Davies taught in his sermons about the triune God of the Bible, who is the absolute sovereign ruler over all nations and kingdoms and the supreme law-giver. This is the description he offers in sermon XVI on God's divine government. In it, Davies considers "the divine government in various views, as legislative, providential, mediatorial, and judicial" and affirms that in all these spheres Yahweh's rule is always a matter of "universal joy."⁴⁵ In sermon

38. Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent*, 181.

39. Samuel Davies, *Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Davies, A. M., President of the College of New Jersey*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1864), 10.

40. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:167.

41. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:189.

42. Samuel Davies, *Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Davies, A. M., President of the College of New Jersey*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1864), 5-6. The way in which these two sermons are organized gives one the impression that, originally, they were one single sermon. In the introduction of the first sermon Davies explains that his design is to, first, explain the duty of looking unto Jesus, and, second, to urge such practice in the life of the hearers. Davies, *Sermons*, 2:341. It may very well be the case that the editor published Davies' development of the second heading as a sermon in itself. See also in this very same volume sermons XLIX and L entitled "The Divine Life in the Souls of Men Considered."

43. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:76-77.

44. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology*, 51.

45. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:426.

XVII entitled “The Name of God Proclaimed by Himself,” Davies explores God’s attributes. “Things are known by their names,” Davies affirms, “and God is known by his attributes.”⁴⁶ He does so by considering the divine attributes found in Exodus 34:6–7, developing each one of the “names and perfection ascribed here to God,” and showing that “they all concur to constitute his goodness.”⁴⁷

Still on the same subject, in sermon XVII entitled “God is Love,” Davies’ deepens the subject of God’s attributes by affirming that God’s “other perfections are but various modifications of love.”⁴⁸ Looking through these lenses, Davies teaches that divine wisdom, power, holiness, and justice are all different forms of God’s love. Davies’ applications from the statement that God is love are remarkable: first, sinners must repent because God’s love condemns them and “will confine them in the infernal prison;” second, all the divine acts such as the creation of the world, His seat of judgment, the sacrifice of His Son, His just demands, the creation of hell, are public demonstrations of His love; third, since God is love “all his creatures ought to love him.”⁴⁹ After considering Davies’ doctrine of God as explained in his sermons, Smith concluded: “Davies believed not only in the God of the Bible with all his perfections, but that these perfections were manifested in the works of God. In other words, for Davies, God and his perfections were not just abstract speculations of the human, but rather the God of all perfection is the Living and True God, the God of history, the God who acts in and has control of time.”⁵⁰

46. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:450.

47. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:450.

48. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:466.

49. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:491–492.

50. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology*, 51. Other sermons expounding the doctrine of God are sermon XLIII on the decrees of God (predestination) in Davies, *Sermons*, 2:364–385, and sermon LXX on the sovereignty of God in Samuel Davies, *Sermons by the Rev. Samuel Davies, A. M., President of the College of New Jersey*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1864), 329–354.

51. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:421.

52. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:414.

53. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:427.

54. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:408.

55. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:411. For more on Davies’ expositions on anthropology see sermon IV entitled “The Nature and Universality of Spiritual Death” in Davies, *Sermons*, 1:162–188, and sermon LI entitled “The Ways of Sin Hard and Difficult” in Davies, *Sermons*, 2:539–552. See also Morton Smith’s observations in Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology*, 52–53.

56. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:289.

57. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:290.

Davies also explores anthropological topics in his sermons. Probably the best example is sermon LXXIII entitled “The Primitive and Present State of Man Compared.” In it Davies explains that man was once in a state of innocence in which he was not liable to death, or to “sickness, pain, and mortal accidents.”⁵¹ Along with man, creation enjoyed a perfect state and was made “to furnish man with the supports and comforts of life, without hard labor and toil.”⁵² But most important and noticeable of all is that “man was innocent and holy in his original state, and also entitled to everlasting happiness; but that in his present state, both these are forfeited.”⁵³ Through this sermon Davies insists in the imputation of Adam’s sin to humanity and demonstrates it by comparing pre-lapsarian and post-lapsarian realities. The way out of this state is found in the second Adam, in “the superior efficacy of the grace and righteousness of Christ to procure and bestow life, above that of the offence of Adam, to subject mankind to the coming of death.”⁵⁴ Davies beautifully expresses his astonishment that in Christ those who are captive to death are put to reign in life: “The offspring of the dust, the dying children of Adam the sinner, the feeble mortals that were once the subjects, the slaves of the tyrant death, shall reign in life. What a glorious and surprising, miraculous advancement is this! And for this they are indebted, not to themselves, but to the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, who has conquered death for them, and dignified them with life and immortality.”⁵⁵

Davies also employed his sermons to teach on subjects in the area of Christology. In this particular area, Davies did not explore much the person of Christ. Of course, Christ’s divinity and all his excellences as the Son of God are all over his sermons, but there is not a specific sermon dedicated to this topic. On the other hand, Davies excelled in explaining with clarity, tenderness, and warmth the subject of the work of Christ. In sermon X entitled “The Mediatorial Kingdom and Glories of Jesus Christ,” Davies taught his hearers about the offices of Christ in general and about his kingly office in specific. He talks about the different characters that the Scriptures use to describe Christ which, in fact, are insufficient but “assist us to form such exalted ideas of this great personage as mortals can reach.”⁵⁶ He then explains briefly about Christ’s position as priest, advocate, intercessor, and prophet just to introduce the main subject of his discourse: Christ’s kingship. “But there is one character under which he [Christ] is uniformly represented, both in the Old and New Testament, and that is, that of a King, a great King, invested with universal authority.”⁵⁷

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is yet another theological subject Davies explores in his sermons. In sermon LVII entitled “The Success of the Ministry of the Gospel Owing to a Divine Influence,” Davis attributes to the Holy Spirit the effectiveness of Gospel preaching. “The agency of the Holy Spirit,” he says, “is as necessary to fructify the word, and make it the seed of conversion, as the influences of heaven are to fructify the earth and promote vegetation.”⁵⁸ In other words, regardless the abilities of the preacher, if the Spirit was not actively applying the Word in the heart of those who hear, his efforts were in vain. Another thing very clearly expounded in Davis’ doctrine of the Spirit is that He cannot be manipulated nor His effects humanly fabricated. Unlike the revivalists who came after him, Davies taught that “the different success of the same means of grace in different periods of the church *sufficiently shows the necessity of gracious assistances to render them efficacious.*”⁵⁹ Thus, if revival was to come, it would come under the sovereign time and action of God the Spirit.

Another place in which Davies expounds his doctrine of the Spirit is on sermon LXV entitled “The Happy Effects of the Pouring Out of the Spirit.” This is probably the place in which Davies better articulates his view of the Holy Spirit. For him, it is the Spirit who actively participates in the life of the Church, bestowing upon her all divine heavenly blessings and adding to her those who belong to Jehovah. “The Holy Spirit of God is represented in the Scriptures as the original fountain of all the real goodness and virtue which is to be found in our degenerate world; the only author of reformation, conversion, sanctification, and every grace included in the character of a saint, or a good man.”⁶⁰ From this belief, Davies draws two urgent and necessary applications. First, the Spirit is responsible for the transformation of the man; the Spirit alone is the transformer of society. Unless He is poured from high upon a nation, it will never enjoy true transformation and change. “Thus, you see, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the great and only remedy for a ruined country; the only effectual preventive of national calamities and desolation, and the only sure cause of a lasting and well-established peace.”⁶¹ Christians, therefore, are encouraged to pray fervently for the coming of God’s Spirit with power to change society. But second, and most importantly, without the active work of the Spirit there will be no Christians to pray for revival, there will be no conversions, there will be only desperation and doom: “Unless the Spirit be poured out upon us, thousands of Britons, thousands of Virginians, must perish for ever; perish not in their own country, but in hell; not by the sword

of the French, or Indian instruments of destruction, but by the sword of divine justice, and the horrid instrument and torture in the infernal regions.”⁶²

Davies also approached several aspects of soteriology in his sermons. Sermon LVI constitutes a great example on how to preach the foundational doctrines of faith and justification. In order to make his listeners to understand the biblical idea of justification Davies appeals to their personal experience: “You cannot but know what it is to be pardoned, or forgiven, after you have offended: and it must be equally plain to you what it is to be loved and received into favor, by a person whom you have offended; and these two things are meant by justification; when you are justified, God pardons or forgives you all your sins; and he receives you again into his love and favor, and gives you a title of everlasting happiness.”⁶³ It is important to note how warm and experimental is this explanation of justification. It preserves all theological content in a way that is not only understandable but also practical. Davies explains faith in a similar fashion. He begins with a general and “common-sense” definition of faith, applicable to any area of life, and culminates with the biblical idea of justifying faith which is grounded in Christ and which constitutes in that supernatural trust his salvific work: “Faith, in its general nature, is the belief of a thing upon the testimony of another. A divine faith is the belief of a thing upon the testimony of God; and consequently faith in Christ must be the belief of the testimony of God concerning him in the gospel. Hence faith is said to be a receiving *the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son*; and unbelief, on the other hand, is the *not believing the record which God gave of his Son.*”⁶⁴

When preaching to the church, Davies also preached

58. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:10.

59. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:24–25. Emphasis mine.

60. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:207–208.

61. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:211.

62. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:223.

63. Davies, *Sermons*, 2:651.

64. Davies, *Sermons*, 2:652. Other areas of soteriology Davies explored in his sermons are: *adoption* in sermon XXXIII entitled “the nature and blessedness of sonship with God” in Davies, *Sermons*, 2:174–194, *repentance* in sermon XLIV entitled “the nature and necessity of true repentance” in Davies, *Sermons*, 2:386–404, *regeneration* in sermon XLVIII entitled “the nature and author of regeneration” in Davies, *Sermons*, 2:481–502, and *sanctification* in sermon XLIX entitled “the divine life in the souls of men considered” in Davies, *Sermons*, 2:503–518. Hughes Oliphant Old makes a good assessment of Davies on the subject of holiness in Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Moderatism, Pietism and Awakening*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 163–164.

about the church. He made ecclesiology another theme of his biblical expositions. He did not approach issues of church government but preached powerfully about the offices of the church, particularly about the teaching elders. Sermon LXXVII entitled “The Love of Souls, a Necessary Qualification for the Ministerial Office” is a good example of such practice.⁶⁵ In it, Davies lists what he believes to be crucial characteristics that enables a man to be a minister: “the love of God, and the love of man, and all the various modifications of this sacred passion—ardent devotion and active zeal, charity, compassion, meekness, patience, and humility; the accomplishments of *the man of sense, the scholar, and the Christian*, are necessary to finish this character, and make us *able minister of the New Testament*.”⁶⁶ However, he chooses to focus on one particular characteristic, “one bright star in this heavenly constellation,” he said, “the love of souls.”⁶⁷ Through the sermon, Davies demonstrates the importance and usefulness of love for all kinds of souls in the execution of the ministerial office. He affirms that through such love, a minister ingratiates himself with mankind and promotes his usefulness,⁶⁸ affects the heart and ears of his listeners,⁶⁹ encourages ministers in the diligent and earnest execution of their office,⁷⁰ helps them to bear with patience and joy the hardships of the office,⁷¹ and keeps them from evil and sin.⁷² He concludes his sermon with an appeal to peace and unity in the church among ministers, for if

they must love all kinds of souls they surely must love one another. “If we love one another with a pure heart fervently, with what life and ardor will it inspire our intercession for each other, when we are far apart, in our respective closets?”⁷³

Lastly, Davies preached on the subjects regarding the last things. In fact, eschatology seems to be at the heart of Davies’ sermons in general. Gerald Bilkes rightly evaluated Davies as “a man who is eschatological in vision and experiential at heart. He met the tremors of the eschaton with a sweetness in the soul.”⁷⁴ In spite of Davies’ generalized eschatological tone, he also preached topically on eschatological subjects. For example, sermon XIX entitled “The General Resurrection” is a fine example of how a revivalist preacher approached the theme. He begins the sermon making the claim that the whole planet earth is a giant graveyard. “In every age, and in every country, that sentence has been executing, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return*. The earth has been arched with graves, the last lodgings of mortals, and the bottom of the ocean paved with the bones of men.”⁷⁵ Such a depressing introduction becomes in Davies’ mouth the perfect setting to explain the blessed and encouraging biblical doctrine of the resurrection. “And shall they lie there always?” he asks, “Shall this body, this curious workmanship of heaven, so wonderfully and fearfully made, always lie in ruins, and never be repaired?”⁷⁶ Davies answers the question by vividly explaining John 5:28–29, alerting all to that great day when all kinds of people, “infants and giants, kings and subjects, all ranks, all ages of mankind shall hear the call.”⁷⁷ For believers, among other blessings, is the certainty of inheriting a new glorified body. “The bodies of all saints will be formed glorious, incorruptible, without the seeds of sickness and death. The glorified body of Christ, which is undoubtedly carried to the highest perfection that matter is capable of, will be the pattern after which they shall be formed.”⁷⁸ But for unbelievers, while their bodies will also be restored, the end is very different. “They will be raised immortal that they may not be consumed by everlasting fire, or escape punishment by dissolution or annihilation.”⁷⁹ Davies carries this prophetic and apocalyptic tone through the whole sermon and concludes it with a climactic call for his hearers to urgently consider the things of eternity. “The world is dying all around you. And can you rest easy in such a world, while unprepared for eternity?”⁸⁰ Bilkes marvelously summarized Davies’ use of eschatology when he wrote: “Davies combined eschatological fervor with experiential splendor to proclaim the need for and beauty of the awakening of the soul from the sleep of death.”⁸¹

65. A footnote explains that this sermon was “preached in Cumberland County, Virginia, July 13, 1758, at the ordination of the Rev. Messrs. Henry Patillo and William Richardson.” Davies, *Sermons*, 3:500.

66. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:500.

67. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:501.

68. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:503.

69. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:507–508.

70. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:509.

71. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:510.

72. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:512.

73. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:519. Other examples of sermons on ecclesiology, particularly on the ministry of the teaching elder see sermon XLV entitled “The Tender Anxieties of Ministers for Their People” in Davies, *Sermons*, 2:405–428, and sermon LXXVIII entitled “The Office of Bishop a Good Work” in Davies, *Sermons*, 3:529–561.

74. Gerald Michael Bilkes, “The Preaching of Samuel Davies,” *Reformation & Revival* 9, no. 1 (Wint 2000): 124–125.

75. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:493.

76. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:494.

77. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:498.

78. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:501.

79. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:502.

80. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:516. For further eschatological sermons see sermon XX entitled “The Universal Judgment” in Davies, *Sermons*, 1:517–552, and sermon LXIV entitled “The Sign of the Times” in Davies, *Sermons*, 3:167–201.

81. Bilkes, “The Preaching of Samuel Davies,” 133.

Samuel Davies' Systematic Theology	
Prolegomena	Sermon I—Revelation and Scripture
Theology proper <i>The doctrine of God</i>	Sermon XVI—Divine Government Sermon XVII—The Name of God (Attributes) Sermon XVIII—God is Love Sermon XLIII—God's Decrees Sermon LXX—Sovereignty of God
Anthropology <i>The doctrine of man</i>	Sermon IV—Man in the state of spiritual death Sermon LI—The doctrine of sin Sermon LXXIII—The state of man past and present
Christology <i>The doctrine of Christ</i>	Sermon VIII—The compassion of Christ Sermon X—Christ's mediatorial kingdom and glories Sermon XXVI—The sufferings of Christ
Pneumatology <i>The doctrine of the Holy Spirit</i>	Sermon LXV—Outpouring of the Spirit Sermon LVII—Success of the gospel owing to divine influence
Soteriology <i>The doctrine of Salvation</i>	Sermon XXXIII—Adoption Sermon XLIV—Repentance Sermon XLVIII—Regeneration Sermon LVI—Justification and faith Sermon XLIX—Sanctification
Ecclesiology <i>The doctrine of the church</i>	Sermon XLV—Anxieties of ministers for their people Sermon LXXVII—Qualification of the minister Sermon LXXVIII—The office of bishop
Eschatology <i>The doctrine of the last things</i>	Sermon XIX—The general resurrection Sermon XX—The universal judgment Sermon LXIV—The sign of the times

It would be possible, therefore, to edit a volume called "Samuel Davies' Systematic Theology" based on his sermons. The table above organizes the dogmatic topics Davies addressed in a systematic order.⁸²

Samuel Davies' Apologetical Sermons

Davies also used the pulpit to defend the Christian faith from its competitors. With ardent zeal and a fearless spirit, Davies confronted the opponents of the Christian worldview as presented in the Scriptures. Maybe the best example of Davies' apologetical endeavors is found in sermon LXXII entitled "Practical Atheism, in Denying the Agency of Divine Providence, Exposed." The sermon is not specifically targeted to atheists but to Christians who behave like atheists. By practical atheism

Davies meant the life that patterned a disbelief or disregard for God's active rule of reality. "Secondary causes are advanced to the throne of God and the administration of the world is put into their hands, in his stead, feeble, precarious mortals set up for independency, and would manage their affairs themselves, without a proper subordination to that power by whom they live, move and have their being."⁸³ Although Davies was dealing with Christians, "the temper and conduct of multitudes is equivalent to a professed disbelief of divine providence," and he saw such conduct in his midst.

82. This table is not intended to be exhaustive. It may be complemented with other of Davies' sermons that escaped the attention of this writer.

83. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:380.

In the attempt to cure his hearers from this terrible practical atheism, Davies first step is to demonstrate the doctrine of divine providence. He points to different self-evident arguments, which he could use to make such demonstrations like the perfections of God and his relation to creation, the natural dependence of creatures upon their creator, or the confessed obligation to worship God.⁸⁴ But none of these is the method he chooses. He could also use the Bible but, according to him, “it would be to insult you, as entirely ignorant of your Bibles”⁸⁵ since this doctrine is so plain and clear in Scripture. Thus, Davies offers a new method to demonstrate God’s providence, “a class of new and unexpected witnesses to this truth,” and this source is the example of the heathens who give testimony of God’s providence through their lives and writings, even while having no revelation but the light of nature. “It will show you,” affirms Davies, “that the substance of this truth is so evident, that even the light of Nature could discover it, without the special help of Revelation—and it may put you, that call yourselves Christians, to the blush, to find even heathens exceed you in a full persuasion of this truth, and perhaps a practical regard to it.”⁸⁶ He points to biblical examples like those of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. He moves on to the work of heathen writers like the Greek philosopher Plato, the Roman poet Horace, the Roman statesman Cicero, demonstrating that all these men, even without the Bible, acknowledge the active control of God in all things. He, then, concludes: “Christians! Protestants! If ye will not learn the doctrine of an all-ruling Providence from your Bibles, learn it, at least, from Plato and Cicero. Can you shut your eyes against the light of nature and of Revelation too, when they mingle their beams, and pour upon you in a flood of day?”⁸⁷

After refuting practical atheism Davies call his hearers to repentance. Using strong language he presses toward his hearers’ conscience the need for an urgent change in their lives. Davies’ “prophetic utterance” is so convicting that it is here cited in full: “And I am bold to pronounce that you have no other alternative,

but REPENT or PERISH. I will not presume to determine the time, the degree, or the circumstances; but I am bold to renew by declaration, that misery and ruin await our country, if we still continue incorrigibly impenitent. Men and money; arms, ammunition, and fortifications, courage, conduct, and skill, are all necessary for the defence of our Land; but there is an unthought-of something as necessary as any, or all these, and that is REFORMATION—a general, public reformation: and without this, all other means will be to no purpose in the issue.”⁸⁸

Davies’ apologetical sermons constitute a fine example for preachers in our day. The problems have not changed much and, in fact, practical atheism inside and outside the church has become even stronger. Davies’ sensitivity to the needs of his people and courage to address them publicly from the pulpit should inspire preachers today to do the same. Even stronger cases than the one Davies formulated for the Christian worldview are now available for pastors, cases that do not simply advocate theism in general but Christian theism. Why the reluctance? Why the lack of interest? Where is the sense of urgency? Pastors today must master the arguments in favor of the Christian God, the biblical God, and they must plead with the souls of their listeners, as if their own lives were in danger. They must preach as a preacher once said: as a dying man trying to convince other dying men. If Davies’ example is not enough, may one look to the examples of the Old Testament prophets, of Jesus Christ, and of the apostles.⁸⁹

Samuel Davies’ Evangelistic Sermons

The last division of Davies’ sermons this article will consider comprise those sermons in which he engages his hearers with passionate appeals for their conversion. In sermon III entitled “Sinners Entreated to Be Reconciled to God,” Davies begins his address describing God’s plan of redemption in his Son, Jesus Christ. He quickly but clearly describes the destroyed relationship between God and man and how the offending party made arrangements to overcome such destruction. “The great Sovereign of the universe, though highly provoked, and justly displeased with our rebellious world, has been so gracious as to contrive a plan of reconciliation whereby they may not only escape the punishment they deserve, but also be restored to the favour of God and all the privileges of his favorite subjects.”⁹⁰ He goes on to describe Christ’s part in this redemptive plan. It is through Him, through His perfect obedience (active and passive) that the Father reconciles the world to himself: “This plan was laid in Christ; that is, it was

84. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:387–388.

85. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:388.

86. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:389. Emphasis mine.

87. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:395.

88. Davies, *Sermons*, 3:400.

89. For other examples of apologetical preaching see sermon XXI entitled “The One Thing Deedful” in Davies, *Sermons*, 1:551–577, sermon XXIII entitled “Indifference to Life Urged from its Shortness and Vanity” in Davies, *Sermons*, 1:597–620, and sermon XXX entitled “The Rule of Equity” in Davies, *Sermons*, 2:99–116.

90. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:138.

he who was appointed, and undertook to remove all obstacles out of the way of their reconciliation, so that it might be consistent with the honor and dignity of God and his government. This he performed by a life of perfect obedience, and an atoning death, instead of rebellious man.”⁹¹ In this, Davies describes the biblical way of salvation. He begins with man’s depravity and desperate need to have peace with God and communicate that such peace is possible and was achieved by God himself.

What is curious to note is that in this sermon, after having laid out God’s redemptive plan, Davies does not immediately plead with his hearers for repentance. Instead, he speaks of the ambassadors Christ has selected, to whom he has given authority, to exercise the ministry of reconciliation. Very early in the sermon, Davis already introduced the issue of the responsibility of ministers. To lead God’s people in worship and to choose a subject for their instruction and meditation “is a province of the most tremendous importance that can be devolved upon a mortal; and every man of the sacred character who knows what he is about, must tremble at the thought, and be often anxiously perplexed what subject he shall choose, what he shall say upon it, and in what manner he shall deliver his message.”⁹² It becomes obvious the serious business that gospel ministry is! Now, when speaking of Christ’s ambassadors, Davies highlights their authority and importance. He impresses upon the minds of his listeners that those who preach Christ are worth to be listened to, in fact, they must be listened to and, then, he affirms: “I appear among you this day as the ambassador of the most high God; I am discharging an embassy for Christ; and I tell you this with no other design than to procure your most serious regard to what I say.”⁹³ In other words, Davies highlights his delegated authority not to profit from it or to rule over those under his ministry, but to stir up their emotions, to sensitize their consciences, to break their heart, and open their ears so they may attentively listen.

Davies’ next step is to identify those who should have the highest interest in his message and it is thus that he identifies them: “my business lies directly with such of you as are yet enemies to God, you are the only persons that stand in need of reconciliation.”⁹⁴ But with this expression he does not mean only unbelievers. In fact, to bring conviction that everyone needs reconciliation to God he proposes to those “who are become the friends and subjects of the King of heaven” to be patient and to pray for those poor unbelieving souls who are present in the crowd. This invitation

becomes a means to point to the generalized need for reconciliation. “But by this proposal,” Davies affirmed, “I am afraid I have deprived myself of hearers on this subject; for have you not already placed yourselves among the lovers of God, who consequently do not need to be reconciled to him?”⁹⁵ Davies created the perfect opportunity to reveal the hypocrisy of those who believed they were at peace with God, but were not. In order to identify those in need of reconciliation he probes the hearers with searching question. “Do not your tenderest thoughts dwell upon the objects of your love? But has not your mind been shy of him who gave you your power of thinking?”⁹⁶ “Now, do not your own consciences witness against you, that you indulged, and still do habitually indulge the love of some sin or other?”⁹⁷ “So also, when you perform good office to mankind; when you are harmless, obliging neighbors; when you are charitable to the poor, or strictly just in trade; is the love of God, and a regard to his authority, the reason and principle of your actions?”⁹⁸

These probing questions finally bring Davies to the climax of the sermon: the moment when he appeals to sinners. Having presented them the possibility of reconciliation, having aroused the hearers’ attention to the seriousness of the ministerial office, and having made their sin and need for reconciliation clear, Davies’ listeners are ready to hear the call of the gospel. “Ye rebels against the King of heaven! Ye enemies against my Lord and Master Jesus Christ! (I cannot flatter you with a softer name) Hear me; attend to the proposal I make to you, not in my own name, but in the name and stead of your rightful Sovereign; and that is, that you will this day be reconciled to God.”⁹⁹ Such a powerful call is followed by a rich description of what involves such reconciliation: repentance, broken-hearts, self-condemned spirit, recognition of rebellion, embracement of the offer of peace in Christ, a life of service. “For I beseech you,” says Davies, “as though God did beseech you by me, and it is in Christ’s stead, that I pray you be reconciled to God. Therefore, however lightly you may make of a mere proposal of mine, can you disregard an overture from the God that made you, and

91. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:138.

92. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:137.

93. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:140.

94. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:142.

95. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:143.

96. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:144.

97. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:148.

98. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:149.

99. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:152.

the Savior that bought you with his blood! in which I am but the faint echo of their voice from heaven.”¹⁰⁰

One may not feel very comfortable with Davies’ persuasive language. But no one should make the mistake of thinking that the Virginian Presbyterian trusted his persuasion for the conversion of his hearers. He certainly deemed it necessary, but also useless without the power and convincing action of the Holy Spirit. In fact, Davies’ use of persuasion demonstrates his love for souls, the love he considered so important in the exercise of gospel ministry. He sounds like a father addressing his most beloved son who has gone astray. For Davies, the multitudes who traveled miles to listen to him were that son. Certainly such love and passion for souls, such elaborated and biblical persuasion coupled with dependence on the King’s Spirit, is lacking today in church pulpits. There is much that modern preachers must learn from Davies.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

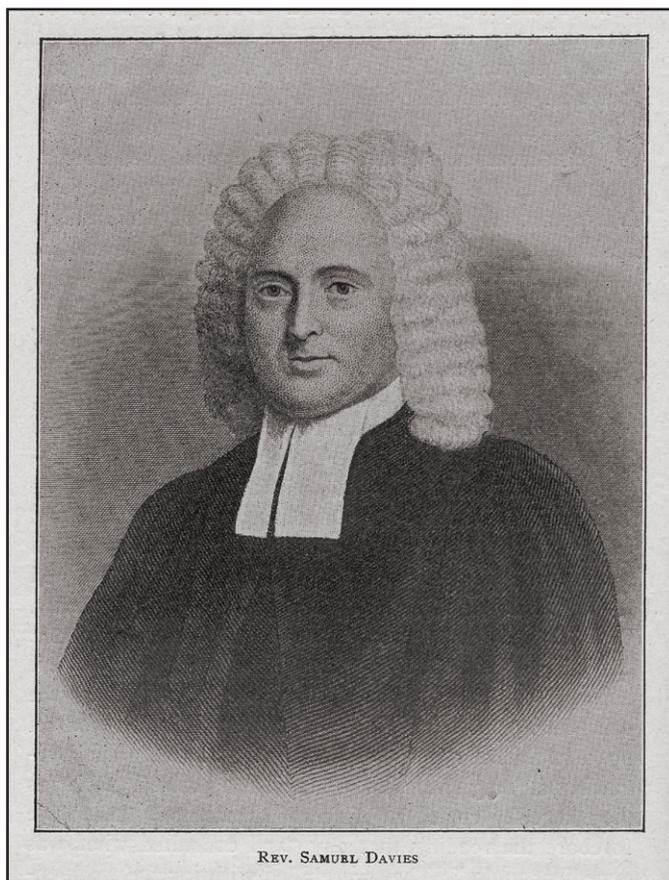
Certainly the second half to the 18th century was a fantastic time in America. The revival of religion that this land experienced left lasting marks that are still felt throughout the country. The Virginian pastor Samuel Davies was, undoubtedly, one of the instruments the Almighty God used to bring such revival. A man of

many talents, Davies was used to strengthen Southern Presbyterianism and to bring the Gospel to many Dis-

senters believers. He was also the instrument of training of many young ministers during his short time as president at Princeton. Davies has left a beautiful and encouraging legacy that automatically inspires anyone who comes in contact with it.

However, above all, it was as a pristine preacher that Davies became most known. His sermons constitute a fine example of the preaching activity at the time. They demonstrate his solid and confessional theology, his doctrinal commitments and convictions, his passion for his ministry, his love for the Master, and his desire to see souls fed and converted. Davies’ zeal for those under his shepherding is seen partic-

ularly in the way he employed logic and rhetoric to create persuasive sermons. Without abandoning the necessity of the Holy Spirit, without compromising the content of his message, Davies was blessed with the mighty divine actions in bringing many to conversion under his ministry. The need remains for men of such passion like Davies as well as for the outpouring of God’s blessed Spirit. Regarding the first need, ministers today can and must do something about it; regarding the second, they, and the church, can only pray that the Lord may desire again to bestow such empowering of the Spirit upon his Son’s bride. ■



REV. SAMUEL DAVIES

Samuel Davies (1723–1761), Presbyterian minister and fourth president of Princeton University. Engraving reproduction courtesy of The PCA Historical Center, St. Louis. Used with Permission. All Rights Reserved.

100. Davies, *Sermons*, 1:157.

101. For more examples of Davies’ evangelistic preaching see sermon VI entitled “Poor and Contrite Spirits the Objects of Divine Favour” in Davies, *Sermons*, 1:211–229, and sermon XL entitled “The Doom of the Incurable Sinner” in Davies, *Sermons*, 2:316–336. For an outstanding study on Davies’ rhetoric see Barbara Ann Larson, “A Rhetorical Study of the Preaching of the Reverend Samuel Davies in the Colony of Virginia From 1747–1759” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1969).