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Desiring to do good: Sarah Fielding’s *David Simple* in the context of Christianity and the writings of Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

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This is to certify that the master's thesis of

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has met the requirements of Iowa State University

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For the Major Program
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Kathleen Hickok, John Monroe and especially Allen Michie. This thesis had its origin in his course and its completion would not have been possible without his help and encouragement.
1. Introduction

In 1774, Mary Scott published *The Female Advocate; A Poem. Occasioned by Reading Mr. Duncombe's Feminead*. Scott regrets that "it was only on a small number of Female Geniuses that Gentleman bestowed the wreath of Fame" (v), and attempts to rectify this by honoring these "Female Geniuses" in her poem. Scott honors such names as Queen Elizabeth, the novelist Charlotte Lennox, the Bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu, and Sarah Fielding. About Fielding, Scott writes:

‘Twas FIELDING’s talent, with ingenuous Art,
To trace the secret mazes of the Heart.
In language tun’d to please its infant thought,
The tender breast with prudent care SHE taught.
Nature to HER, her boldest pen lent,
And blest HER with a mind of vast extent;
A mind, that nobly scorn’d each low desire,
And glow’d with pure Religion’s warmest fire. (22-23)

Although Gae Holladay claims that Scott’s poems "indicate strong religious fervor" (iii), it is interesting that Scott acknowledges the religious aspect of Sarah Fielding’s work, choosing to end the poem by a mention of how her mind “glow’d with pure Religion’s warmest fire.” Although it seems as if Fielding’s contemporaries recognized Christianity to be central to her writing, much recent criticism neglects to mention this aspect of her work, or relegates it to a brief discussion. However, it is rather obvious to anyone reading Fielding’s most famous novel, *The Adventures of David Simple* or its sequel *Volume the Last,*¹ that Fielding’s writing

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¹ *The Adventures of David Simple: Containing an Account of his Travels Through the Cities of London and Westminster, In the Search of a Real Friend* was published in 1744, followed by a second edition “Revised and Corrected With a Preface By Henry Fielding” in the same year. In 1747 Fielding published *Familiar Letters Between the Principal Characters in David Simple, And Some Others. To Which is added A Vision,* although this work is only tangentially connected to the events of the first book. *The Adventures of David Simple. Volume the Last, In Which His History is Concluded,* which could be considered a “true” sequel, was published in 1753. Most commentators only discuss *The Adventures of David Simple and Volume the Last,* choosing to ignore *Familiar Letters.* There are three modern editions of *David Simple,* all also containing *Volume the Last,* but not *Familiar Letters.* The first was published by Oxford University Press in 1969 and edited with an
is greatly influenced by the prevailing Anglican discourse of the period. It is the religious aspect of Fielding’s work with which this essay is mainly concerned. This religious context is essential for an understanding of *David Simple* and sentimental literature in general.

It has been acknowledged by commentators that Fielding created one of the first, or even perhaps the first, men of feeling in English literature. Gerald Barker argues that Fielding “anticipates the novel of feeling decades before such writers as Mackenzie, Goldsmith, and Henry Brooke” and goes on to state that together “with Lucius Manley, the hero of Mary Collyer’s *Felicia to Charlotte* (1744), David Simple shares the distinction of being one of the two earliest examples of the Man of Feeling in English fiction” (69).

Likewise, Felicity Nussbaum states that in “David Simple, Sarah Fielding creates perhaps the first man of feeling” (436). There is little question, then, that as an early writer of “sentimental” fiction and as perhaps the originator of the English man of feeling, historically Fielding is an extremely important writer. Until recently, however, she has received very little critical attention. This has changed in the past twenty years or so, and recently there has been much published on her work, especially on the *David Simple* series.

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Since it seems likely that Sarah Fielding had a significant hand in creating and setting the agenda for the English man of feeling of the period, it is worthwhile to examine the origins of this phenomenon. Although the cultural factors that influenced the sensibility of the period are complex and varied, perhaps the most important is Christianity, and Anglicanism specifically. Tim Parnell observes that the "Anglican discourse is among the most significant in the complex of discourses and ideas that informed the eighteenth-century 'cult', or culture, of sensibility" (xv). The period's Christian influence on the mid-century novel of sentiment is documented in R.S. Crane's influential essay "Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling.'" Crane discusses writings and sermons by Anglican divines of the Restoration and early eighteenth-century to locate the origins of "the peculiar moral doctrine which lay back of the mid-eighteenth-century cult of the 'man of feeling'" (206). Crane writes:

What I would suggest, in short, is that the key to the popular triumph of "sentimentalism" toward 1750 is to be sought, not so much in the teaching of individual lay moralists after 1700, as in the combined influence of numerous Anglican divines of the Latitudinarian tradition who from the Restoration onward into the eighteenth century had preached to their congregations and, through their books, to the larger public essentially the... ethics of benevolence, "good nature," and "tender sentimental feeling." (207-208)

Crane considers four central aspects of the ethical discourse of these divines during the period from around 1660 to about 1725: virtue as benevolence, benevolence as feeling, benevolent feelings as natural to humankind and the joy to be found in benevolence. One may perhaps see at least part of the genesis of David Simple's character in each of Crane's categories.

For example, the disagreement between the benevolent David Simple and the rational Mr. Orgueil is probably influenced at least somewhat by this discourse, as Crane
demonstrates a similar dispute in the divines’ opposition to the doctrine of Stoicism. He points out that for the divines, the “words ‘charity’ and ‘benevolence’ had a double sense, connoting not only the serviceable and philanthropic actions which the good man performs but still more the tender passions and affections which prompt to these actions and constitute their immediate reward” (214). This is in disagreement with the Stoical ideas of extreme rationality and distrust of the passions. According to Crane, “in nothing was [the divines’] revolt against ‘the Stoic’s pride’ more evident than in their repudiation of the notion that though the good man must relieve the distresses of others he must not allow himself to be emotionally affected by the misfortunes he sees” (216). Crane argues that for these divines, there can be no benevolence “that does not spring from the tender emotions of pity and compassion” and we should “look upon them as the marks which distinguish men of genuine goodness from those who are merely righteous or just” (217). This confrontation between the discourse of the Anglican divines and the beliefs of the Stoics is given a central place by Fielding in *David Simple* in the conflict between David’s active and passionate benevolence and Mr. Orgueil’s “Love of Rectitude” (57).

Crane’s thesis about the origins of sensibility has not gone uncontested; indeed, his contentions have been attacked by Donald Greene in numerous writings, but especially in his “Latitudinarianism and Sensibility: The Genealogy of the ‘Man of Feeling’ Reconsidered.” Greene argues against Crane:

1. The identification of virtue with benevolent actions and feelings of “good will to all men” long antedates 1660.
2. So does the “antistoical” admiration for warm human emotion.
3. The doctrine that human beings are innately capable of some degree of mutual affection and benevolence was likewise held by Christian teachers long before 1660. But the holding of this tenet did not compromise their adherence, either before or after 1660, to the orthodox “Augustinian” doctrines of original sin and the need for
divine grace, as Crane’s essay seems to suggest and as many of those who have relied on it have assumed.

4. Anglican divines did not teach that virtuous behavior should be practiced because of its rewards in the form of complacency and self-approbation. That is, three elements of the “complex” were far from novel in the eighteenth century, and if the fourth existed then, Anglicanism cannot be held responsible for it. In addition, ... Crane and those who have relied on his essay seriously distort the historical meaning of the term “latitudinarian.” (160)

Although after reading Greene one may be inclined to think that the two authors’ positions are irreconcilable and that Crane is off-target, this isn’t necessarily the case. John K. Sheriff has defended Crane and writes:

Greene does not treat the relation of the sermon literature to the man of feeling in fiction and drama. Most of what he says about Augustinian theology being the prevailing doctrine of the period has never been seriously challenged. But this theology is the backdrop against which the speculation about benevolence and natural goodness becomes an inspiration for artists and moralists of the period. ... [Greene] seeks the prevailing religious tenor of the period; the persons he attacks seek backgrounds to a literary type. Greene does not write about the sermon literature in relation to the man of feeling. Greene’s conclusions about the religious tenor of the period and the conclusions by Crane and others about the genealogy of the man of feeling are not necessarily contradictory. (104-105)

In any case, Crane’s thesis has been very influential for eighteenth-century literature scholars. In his study, The Moral Basis of Fielding’s Art, Martin Battestin argues that it is these religious influences that shape Henry Fielding’s Joseph Andrews (1742). Battestin claims Henry Fielding’s “ethic has been traced to its source in the popular latitudinarianism of his day” and his work demonstrates “abundant evidence of his sympathies with orthodox

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3 Part of the controversy arises because of the difficulty in defining the term “latitudinarianism.” G.R. Cragg observes that it “stood for a temper rather than a creed” (qtd. in Greene 175). In a recent study of latitudinarianism, W.M. Spellman writes, “As seventeenth-century labels go, ‘Latitudinarianism’ is as broad and as problematic a term to define as ‘Puritanism’” (1). He goes on to state that it has been known as everything from “a synonym for religious moderation ... to a derisive sobriquet in the hands of embittered Nonconformists, High Churchmen, and non-jurors, to a convenient but indeterminate historical description of the entire eighteenth-century Anglican establishment” (1). Spellman adds that these churchmen were connected “more by personal friendship and a common point of view than by a specific set of political or ecclesiological tenets” (5).
Low Church doctrine" (Moral 11). Furthermore, Battestin argues that it “is the liberal moralism of the Low Church divines ... that underlies the ethos, and much of the art, of *Joseph Andrews*” (Moral 13). Battestin goes on to state:

The modified Pelagian doctrine of such latitudinarian churchmen as Isaac Barrow, John Tillotson, Samuel Clarke, and Benjamin Hoadly – all of whom Fielding read with sympathy and admiration – is essential background for a right interpretation of his ethics in general and of the meaning of *Joseph Andrews* in particular. In the sermons of these divines and others who shared their belief in a pragmatic, common-sense Christianity, he found ready made a congenial philosophy of morals and religion. It was an optimistic philosophy stressing the perfectibility, if not the perfection, of the human soul, and one directed toward the amelioration of society. In both respects it was exactly suited to the satirist’s purposes. We may look here for the sources of Fielding’s didacticism, for the rationale behind the ethic of good nature and good works that distinguishes his writing from *The Champion* to the end of his career. (Moral 14)

Henry Knight Miller also discusses these influences on Henry Fielding’s conception of ethics, but is less adamant about their direct influence. Miller acknowledges Henry Fielding’s debt to the latitudinarian-benevolist divines and claims he “had read and admired the works of such men as Tillotson, Barrow, Burnet, and Hoadly; yet it is perhaps to the point to observe that by the middle of the eighteenth century, the ideas ascribed above had become widely disseminated ... so that it is scarcely possible to trace all the component elements of Fielding’s conception to specific sources” (66-67). Knight goes on to state that Henry Fielding’s writings aren’t necessarily in complete harmony with all of the teachings of the latitudinarians, and that his “emphases necessarily differed from those of the latitudinarians” (80-81).

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4 See especially pages 66-88.
Other scholars strongly disagree with Battestin's whole-hearted endorsement of the latitudinarian influence. For example, Ronald Paulson sees Henry Fielding being influenced by deist writers:

It seems likely that ... Fielding would have come at [his] benevolist ideas through deist writers rather than latitudinarian Anglican clergymen. There was a significant overlap: The agency of reason was the premise of both Latitude Men within the Church of England and deists without. Shaftesbury, as well as the latitudinarian clergy, believed in conscience, an internal moral light; both justified religion by the standard of pragmatism: religious beliefs served to make one happy. The deist, of course, went further, believing in a transcendent god only, the moral teachings of Jesus, their corruption by priestcraft, and religion based on mere custom (as Hume would argue, on belief and faith, not reason). Fielding, like Hume and Gibbon, had the excuse that his deism was only anticlericalism directed against popish superstition. This is not to say that Fielding did not read and enjoy sermons, but it does mean that Battestin's singleminded focus on sermons is in general a poor guide to the understanding of Fielding's theology. (76)^

Regardless of the specific amount of latitudinarian influence in the work of Henry Fielding, and especially to his conception of good-nature, it seems certain that at least a portion of this discourse was influential to his thinking; more importantly, it seems clear that Christianity was an important foundation to his conception of good-nature. This will be elaborated in Part 2.

If Henry Fielding's primary influences, at least in the composition of *Joseph Andrews*, were the teachings of the Anglican clergy, then it stands to reason that Sarah Fielding was also heavily influenced by these teachings. At the time of the composition of *David Simple*, Sarah Fielding was working closely with her brother. In fact, she contributed first to Henry's writing before publishing her own works. She was probably the author of both Leonora's letter in *Joseph Andrews* and Anna Boleyn's narrative in *Henry's A Journey*

from *This World to the Next* (1743) (Bree 7). Furthermore, as Battestin and Clive T. Probyn point out, it is certain “that when Sarah began to write for publication (perhaps by 1740), she did so in close collaboration with her brother” (xxvi). Many commentators have called attention to specific connections between Fielding and her brother. Richard Terry discusses her debt to essays from Henry’s *Miscellanies* (1743), especially his “Of the Remedy of Affliction for the Loss of our Friends” (540). Barker argues that Henry “probably influenced his sister’s conception of her hero” through the character of Heartfree in *Jonathan Wild* (1743) and through his concept of “good-nature” (70). Consider an excerpt from Henry Fielding’s verse essay “Of Good-Nature”:

> What by this Name, then, shall be understood?
> What? but the glorious Lust of doing Good?
> The Heart that finds it Happiness to please,
> Can feel another’s Pain, and taste his Ease.
> The Cheek that with another’s Joy can glow,
> Turn pale, and sicken with another’s Woe;
> Free from Contempt and Envy, he who deems
> Justly of Life’s two opposite Extremes.
> Who to make all and each Man truly blest,
> Doth all he can, and wishes all the rest? *(Miscellanies* 31)

Here we can perhaps see both Henry’s reliance on the teachings of the latitudinarian divines against the Stoics as pointed out by Crane and Battestin, and we can also observe how Sarah Fielding would later apply some of Henry’s thoughts as articulated here to the character of David Simple. Again, this discussion will be elaborated in Part 2. Thus, at least some, and probably a good portion, of the genesis of David Simple is founded in Christianity. Again, regardless of the exact origins, it seems certain that Henry’s writings and thoughts on good-nature were an important influence for the character of David Simple. Although Christianity was clearly very important to Sarah Fielding, something that will hopefully become evident
below, she obviously did not set out to explicitly create a "latitudinarian" hero. However, the Anglican discourse of the period influenced her significantly, either directly or at least indirectly through her collaborations with and readings of Henry's work. The important thing to keep in mind is that Simple arose in the context of an intellectual climate in which the concept of good-nature was being debated and discussed, and much of this debate was in the context of Christianity, even if the specific influences of this discussion are difficult to pinpoint with complete accuracy.

The question of the religious background of David Simple is interesting because it is somewhat at odds with the author's feminism. Since Sarah Fielding was trying to advance an original feminist position, as many commentators have discussed, then this position must coexist strangely alongside her strong belief in Christianity. There is little question that the Christian patriarchal tradition has been detrimental to women throughout history. Many critics have noticed the dangers of the close connection between classic literature and the Christian tradition. For example, Lois A. Chaber writes at the end of her discussion of Richardson's Clarissa that the "close link between Christian patriarchal tradition and masterpieces of the Western literary canon poses, indeed, a continuous and perhaps ultimately irresolvable dilemma for feminist critics" (537). This dilemma is perhaps even greater when the author is a female. Gary Kelly, in his discussion of religion in the work of the Bluestockings, states "modern feminism often has difficulty with religion in women's writing, especially established religions such as Anglicanism, which may be regarded, at least historically, as patriarchal and anti-feminist, if not misogynist" (182). However, Kelly goes on to state "the strong and motivating commitment of Bluestocking feminism to religion and especially the established state church ... asks us to consider ways in which feminisms of
the past may have attempted to feminize religion, indeed to put religion at the service of feminism” (182). Along with the feminism in Fielding’s work, the religious influences must be taken into consideration. Certainly some critics of Fielding fail to take her religious background into consideration, and as a result some of what they say is perhaps distorted.

In *David Simple*, David’s Christianity takes the form of active charity. David is able to act in this manner because he is independently wealthy. In the sequel, however, this changes, and as a result *Volume the Last* presents a slightly different theology. I will argue that much of *Volume the Last*, and especially the ending, is influenced by the Christianity present in Richardson’s *Clarissa*, expressed through Sarah Fielding’s published pamphlet, *Remarks on Clarissa* (1749). In both works there is little question that David is a Christian hero, but what it means to be a Christian hero changes between the two. Events force David and his friends to stop attempting to make this life better and instead focus their energies to reflections on the afterlife. I will begin with a discussion of the first volume, *The Adventures of David Simple* and follow that up with a discussion of the third volume of the trilogy, *David Simple. Volume the Last*, in both examining the influence of Christianity in the text.
2. David Simple

Attempting to examine Sarah Fielding’s influences from her brother’s work entails some danger. For years she was only viewed, often patronizingly and condescendingly, in the context of either her brother or Samuel Richardson. Linda Bree writes that when “critics of the canon noticed Sarah Fielding’s work at all, it was either to learn more about Henry … or to dissect the style and content of Sarah’s fictions as an inevitably unsatisfactory patchwork of qualities directly derived from her brother and her friend” (vii). In recent years, as she has been seen as a legitimate and influential novelist in her own right, the result has been a minimization of the influence of her brother’s work on her own. Nevertheless, I think it is essential to examine David’s character in the light of Henry Fielding’s conception of good-nature to get at a fuller understanding of his origins. However, I am definitely not examining Henry’s influence on Sarah Fielding for the purposes of calling her work derivative of, or inferior to, his work. It is clear that she also influenced Henry, and this influence is certainly worth further exploration as well.

Henry Fielding addresses his direct contribution to David Simple in his Preface to the second edition. He begins the Preface by stating that people have “ascribed the Honour of this Performance to me” (343), and then spends five paragraphs in the preface to his sister’s work complaining about how others have claimed him to be the “Author of half the Scurrility, Bawdy, Treason and Blasphemy, which these few last Years have produced” (343). After asking the reader’s pardon for “dwelling so long on this Subject” (344), Henry Fielding discusses his direct contributions to his sister’s novel:

the strongest Reason which hath drawn me into Print, is to do Justice to the real and sole Author of this little Book; who, notwithstanding the many excellent Observations dispersed through it, and the deep Knowledge of Human Nature it discovers, is a
young Woman; one so nearly and dearly allied to me, in the highest Friendship as well as Relation, that if she had wanted any Assistance of mine, I would have been as ready to have given it to her, as I would have been just to my Word in owning it: but in reality, two or three Hints which arose on the reading it, and some little Direction as to the Conduct of the second Volume [Books III and IV of David Simple], much the greater Part of which I never saw till in Print, were all the Aid she received from me. Indeed I believe there are few Books in the World so absolutely the Author's own as this.

There were some Grammatical and other Errors in Style in the first Impression, which my Absence from Town prevented my correcting, as I have endeavoured, tho' in great Haste, in this Edition: By comparing the one with the other, the Reader may see, if he thinks it worth his while, the Share I have in this Book, as it now stands, and which amounts to little more than the Correction of some small Errors, which Want of Habit in Writing chiefly occasioned, and which no Man of Learning would think worth his Censure in a Romance; nor any Gentleman, in the Writings of a young Woman. (344-345)

Even if we take Henry Fielding at his word here, and assume that he had little direct involvement in the composition of *David Simple*, I think it is clear that he influenced his sister indirectly.\(^6\)

As stated above, I contend that David's character was greatly influenced by Henry Fielding's conception of good-nature. Among other places, Henry Fielding addresses good-nature in the already mentioned "Of Good-Nature" as well as in several passages from the *Champion*.\(^7\) Henry Fielding's "Of Good-Nature" is practically a description of David Simple. David definitely experiences the "glorious Lust of doing Good" (Miscellanies 31). For example, when reflecting on his rescue of Valentine and Camilla, David "fancied them entirely happy, – and that their Happiness was owing to him. None but Minds like David's can imagine the Pleasure this Consideration gave him" (216). David definitely has a "Heart that finds it Happiness to please, / Can feel another's Pain, and taste his Ease" (Miscellanies


\(^7\) See the *Champion* for 16 February and 27 March 1740.
David also has “The Cheek that with another’s Joy can glow, / Turn pale, and sicken with another’s Woe” (Miscellany 31). Just as David delights in others’ pleasures, he strongly identifies with those who suffer woe. When David sees the landlady harassing Camilla and Valentine, he “stood like one struck dumb” and his “Tears flowed as fast as [Camilla’s]” (99). Many other such examples of this behavior could be cited from the text. Finally, David is certainly “Free from Contempt and Envy” (Miscellany 31). As the narrator states when David is listening to the conversation of Mr. Orgueil’s company, “In short, nothing but Envy and Anger, at not having been the Author of every thing that was said, could have prevented any body’s being pleased with every Expression that was made use of. And, as David’s Mind was entirely free from those low, mean Qualities, his Entertainment was pure and unmixed” (45).

Henry Fielding elaborates his conception of good-nature in the Champion for Thursday, March 27, 1740. He states that as “Good-nature is a Delight in the Happiness of Mankind, every good-natured Man will do his utmost to contribute to the Happiness of each Individual” (254). He goes on paraphrase a line from Macbeth when he states that good-nature “is (as Shakespear calls it) the Milk, or rather the Cream of Human Nature, and whoever is possessed of this Perfection should be pitied, not hated for the want of any other” (255). It certainly seems possible that Sarah Fielding has this idea in mind when she echoes her brother and writes, “David … had more of what Shakespear calls the Milk of Human Kind, than any Man that ever was born” (100). Likewise, Henry states that good-nature “extends the Power, Knowledge, Strength, and Riches of Individuals to the Good of the Whole” (255). The idea of the importance of the good of the community over the good of

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8 Macbeth I.v.17
the individual is a central theme of *David Simple*. As the narrator states at the end of the text, "real Happiness" is attainable if every person has a "sincere Regard to the Interest and Pleasure of the whole" (237). Furthermore, later in his essay, Henry claims that this good-nature has its foundations in Christianity, and that to be good-natured is to draw near to God:

I know not so great, so glorious, so lovely an Idea of the benevolent Creator of the Universe, as that which is affixed to him by the noble Author [Shaftesbury] whom we have so often quoted, and shall quote. He is (says he) *The best-natur'd Being in the Universe*; the more therefore we cultivate this sweet Disposition in our Minds, the nearer we draw to Divine Perfection; to which we should be the more strongly incited, as it is that which we may approach the nearest to. All his other Attributes throw us immediately out of Sight, but this Virtue lies in Will, and not at all in Power. (255)

Interestingly, in his definition of good-nature in "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," Henry Fielding establishes that good-nature is in some sense independent of religion, and is instead an imbedded personal characteristic: "Good-Nature is that benevolent and amiable Temper of Mind which disposes us to feel the Misfortunes, and enjoy the Happiness of others ... without any abstract Contemplation on the Beauty of Virtue, and without the Allurements or Terrors of Religion" (*Miscellanies* 158). Thus, although acting benevolently is certainly in agreement with true Christianity and allows humanity to best approach divine perfection, the primary motivation to act this way is not because of a reliance on future rewards or punishments given by God. It is not a rational thought process that leads one to act benevolently; it is rather an innate sense, a personal instinct.² What Aaron Schneider says about Parson Adams is also true of David Simple:

² Miller writes that at first glance, Henry Fielding's statement here might seem to be arguing "that the benevolent impulse, to be genuine, must be independent of religious rewards and punishments"; however, "it is more likely that his intended stress is simply upon the 'naturalness' of good-nature" (70). Miller adds that Henry Fielding "never doubted that the Christian religion as he understood it was the ultimate basis of moral behavior" and that for him, "good-nature (or, in effect, virtue, benevolence, charity) and religion were
“Adams’s interactions with the world are based mainly on simple, innocent, benevolent instinct unmediated by conscious, rational reflection on the ways of the world” (370). Good-nature, for Henry Fielding, and I maintain for Sarah Fielding as well, “is essentially a passion, an intrinsic impulse in the natures of some men that leads them to desire and promote the happiness of others” (Schneider 387). Again, I believe it is here, in Henry Fielding’s conception of good-nature, that we must locate at least part of the origin of David’s interesting characteristics. This, of course, isn’t to say that Sarah Fielding subscribed completely to all of Henry’s ideas of good-nature and thought to recreate them verbatim in the character of David Simple; rather, I contend that Simple is certainly an original creation of Sarah’s, but that a good portion of his origin should be seen in the context of Henry’s conception of good-nature, and consequently a Christian context.

It is this context that I feel several other critics fail to take into consideration when they consider David Simple. Deborah Downs-Miers argues in “Springing the Trap: Subtexts and Subversions” that, despite Barker’s claim that he is “obviously the protagonist” (73), David is “the ostensible protagonist” and the “real protagonist of all three volumes is a woman, Cynthia” (311). Furthermore, she argues that the “ostensible subject of the novel is friendship; the real subject is the necessity for true friendship within marriage and how that is to be achieved” (311). Although I agree that Fielding would obviously consider Cynthia a central character and that one of her aims is to explore marriage, I disagree that David exists to hide the “real” protagonist, Cynthia. I don’t think we need to look at the novel as an either/or distinction between David’s problems and Cynthia’s problems. Fielding uses David complementary moral forces, together constituting the very ‘bands of civil society’ ... and of the two, religion went beyond good-nature, both in giving promise of a life to come and in inspiring a more sublime morality than could any more human passion” (71-72).
to explore certain issues and Cynthia to explore other issues, but to shove David to the side as Downs-Miers does is to ignore the context out of which Fielding composed her novel and the importance she places on David and the Christianity that underlies his character.

Likewise, Carolyn Woodward argues in “Sarah Fielding’s Self-Destructing Utopia: The Adventures of David Simple” that David Simple offers “a (disguised) sustained feminist critique” (76). Woodward claims Fielding’s point with both David and the novel as a whole “is to hold the ‘desirable’ feminine virtues up to scrutiny and to demonstrate that these virtues – innocence, passivity, privacy – are crippling weaknesses that prevent the social change that would occur with the flourishing of what are, to her, true feminine virtues: nurturance and nonhierarchical sharing” (74-75). Again, I feel that Woodward fails to examine David’s character in the proper context of both Henry Fielding’s ideas of good-nature and the influences of the Anglican clergy and others. Although I agree that Fielding does show David’s characteristics to be weaknesses in the sense that they don’t allow him much worldly success, in the same way that Parson Adams “embodies a virtue that lacks the practical wherewithal to advance his worldly interests” (Schneider 368), I disagree that Fielding’s purpose here is to critique these traditional feminine virtues as destructive to women. I would argue that Fielding doesn’t locate the source of these virtues in traditional conceptions of femininity alone, but rather she locates them at least partly in the concept of good-nature and its Christian foundations which she shares with Henry. Again, I believe failure to take this background into consideration leads to a misunderstanding of David’s character.

The importance of the Christian context in David Simple will become even clearer when we examine Fielding’s use of religion throughout the text. From the beginning,
Fielding is careful to establish a Christian framework for David’s wanderings. The beginning of the text is a parallel to the uncorrupted, prelapsarian Garden of Eden. Daniel, David’s brother, who, as the narrator states, “was in reality one of those Wretches, whose only Happiness centers in themselves” (8) and who riots away his money on “Women and Sots” (19) is the Satan figure who first brings corruption to David’s Eden by tempting a female, the servant-girl Peggy. Peggy, despite going “on in an honest way” (9), is convinced by Daniel’s “persuasive Arguments” (10) to be an accessory to the forging of David and Daniel’s father’s will. Ultimately, Peggy is convinced to follow Daniel for payment, “for the Sight of Money is much more prevalent than the Idea of it” (10). Peggy, like Eve, then convinces her male companion, John, another servant, into following the scheme. This makes Daniel reflect both on humankind’s natural inclination to goodness, as well as on the temptations from love: “[Daniel] had no Scruple on the Fellow’s account; for once get the Consent of a Woman, and that of a Man (who is vulgarly called, in love with her) consequently follows. For though a Man’s Disposition is not naturally bad, yet it is not quite certain he will have Resolution enough to resist a Woman’s continual Importunities” (10). Thus, Daniel recognizes that, although humankind is inclined to goodness, worldly temptations such as love and money are enough to corrupt. In any case, Fielding establishes at the beginning of David Simple a Christian framework for David’s adventures by likening his exclusion from his inheritance to humankind’s expulsion from paradise into a corrupted world, an allusion made explicit by the narrator’s referencing of Milton’s Eve. After Peggy and John’s money runs out, they quickly “grew out of all Patience” (16) with one another.

Interestingly, with the character of Daniel we can perhaps see Sarah influencing her brother’s writings. Linda Bree observes that it “seems very possible” that “the David-Daniel relationship formed a model for Henry Fielding’s later unbrotherly brothers Tom Jones and Blifil” (33).
and their consciences start affecting them. The only “Comfort [John] had left was in abusing Peggy” and she claims “nothing but her Love for him could have drawn her into it,” going on to exclaim, “as [John] was a Man, and knew better than her, he should not have consented, or suffered her to do it” (16). At this point the narrator states, “For tho’ I dare say this Girl had never read Milton, yet she could act the Part of throwing the blame on her Husband, as well as if she had learned it by heart” (16). Thus, in Fielding’s parallel between David’s childhood and the Garden of Eden, Daniel is Satan, and Peggy and John are Adam and Eve, but it is David who represents humankind, as he is thrust into a harsh and uncaring world for which his good-nature seems ill-prepared. Fielding is careful to set up David’s wanderings in a Christian context, a context that is further reinforced during David’s first encounters with London society.

After the situation with the will is squared away and David is “in the possession of a very easy comfortable Fortune,” he decides to take “the oddest, most unaccountable Resolution that ever was heard of, viz. To travel through the whole World, rather than not meet with a real Friend” (20-21). Considering where he might have the best chance to meet with a “real Friend” (21), David reflects “that no Circumstance of Time, Place, or Station, made a Man either good or bad, but theDisposition of his own Mind; and that Good-nature and Generosity were always the same, tho’ the Power to exert those Qualities are more or less, according to the Variation of outward Circumstances” (21). This certainly seems to reinforce David’s own experiences with his brother, as both were raised comparably, but David was good and Daniel was evil.

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11 Peter Sabor, in his notes to the novel, points out that this is an allusion to Paradise Lost IX.1143-61 “in which Eve blames Adam for not forbidding her to stray from his side” (376).
At any rate, after a brief, unsatisfactory visit to the Royal-Exchange, David thinks his quest is at an end when he meets Miss Nanny Johnson, the daughter of a wealthy jeweler. Although part of his attraction to Miss Johnson is clearly sexual, the greater attraction for David is her exemplary behavior in his eyes, for he watches “her very narrowly, to see, if her Mind was equal to her Person, which was indeed very agreeable” (23). David considers her behavior to be “in all respects engaging” and “her Duty to her Father, Complaisance and Affection to her Sister, and Humanity to the Servants” causes him to conclude that “his traveling was at an end” (24). Ironically, it is Miss Johnson’s duty to her father that causes the breakdown of David’s relationship with her, for of course Mr. Johnson’s only motivation for a match for his daughters is monetary gain for himself; he thinks it was “worth while to endeavour to encrease” David’s liking for her (23).

Religion in this situation quickly comes to the forefront. A “rich Jew” (25), visiting Mr. Johnson on business, becomes smitten with Nanny’s older sister. Of course religion here becomes a stumbling block for the match, but this is quickly overcome by her father because although the rich Jew “might object to her being a Christian” she had always obeyed her father and “therefore he need not fear her conforming to whatever he pleased” (26). Thus, the sister is approached with the thought of changing her religion to better her father’s financial situation:

She was at first startled at the thoughts of changing her Religion; but as she had no more Understanding, than was just necessary to set off her own Charms, by knowing which Dress, and which Posture became her best; and had never been taught any thing more than to go to Church of a Sunday, when she was not wanted to stay at home to overlook the Dinner, without knowing any other Reason for it than Custom: The rich Presents the Jew made her, and the Promises of keeping her great, soon overcame all her Scruples, and she consented to have him. (26)
There are several interesting things happening in this passage. The sister’s lack of understanding, the fact that she has never been taught anything but religion as a custom, is what creates her readiness to shrug off her Christianity for monetary gain. This connection between education and religion is something that Fielding stresses at several points throughout both *David Simple* and *Volume the Last*. For example, when Cynthia relates that she and Camilla were friends because of a shared love of reading and learning, Cynthia’s “Mother was frighten’d out of her Wits” and Cynthia states that she believes her mother thought they “should draw Circles - - - and turn Conjurers” (84). Thus Cynthia’s mother has the belief that education is detrimental to Christianity, and might in fact turn her daughter to the occult. Likewise, in *Volume the Last*, Mrs. Dunster defends Cynthia’s education of the children to Mrs. Orgueil because Cynthia often reads “the Bible to the Children” (257). Fielding is careful throughout both novels to establish that education, especially for women, is an important foundation for their religion. Here we can perhaps see an important area where Fielding’s feminism and Christianity overlap. This connection would be worth further exploration.

The religion of Nanny’s sister can be later contrasted to David’s religion, which is shown to be internal, rather than just a custom. Although we rarely see David attend to the customs of Christianity by attending church or preaching, his character is nevertheless deeply religious. His is an ingrained religion; it is a part of David’s character, and not simply a custom to be followed. Thus Fielding, like her brother, establishes that it is more important to actively follow Christian principles, rather than simply to follow religious traditions. For

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12 It is obvious throughout all her writings that the education of women was an important issue to Fielding. As Dale Spender writes, “Sarah Fielding felt very strongly about the denial of imaginative and moral education to girls. It was one reason she wrote *The Governess* (1749)” (190).
Fielding it is necessary to exemplify Christian behavior through active virtue rather than through faith and custom alone. Fielding wants to emphasize the active role of the Christian hero; thus David's Christianity is ingrained and he demonstrates it through his charitable behavior. Because David's Christianity is primarily manifested through his virtuous actions rather than through his words, we can understand why the novel is not more openly religious.

Of course, the sister's marriage quickly brings about the downfall of David's marriage designs. The Jew brings a rich acquaintance, Mr. Nokes, who quickly falls in love with Nanny, causing Mr. Johnson to forget all about David's interest because Mr. Nokes is a more advantageous match. This causes a brief period of indecision for Nanny, when she must choose between the riches of Mr. Nokes and her love for David. The money quickly wins out, and Nanny drops David. However, the narrator does something interesting here; she depicts Nanny not as evil, but rather as a generally good person corrupted by the temptation of money, in the same way Peggy was earlier corrupted. The narrator writes:

I hope to be excused by those Gentlemen, who are quite sure they have found one Woman, who is a perfect Angel, and that all the rest are perfect Devils, for drawing the Character of a Woman who was neither: for Miss Nanny Johnson, was very good-humour'd, had a great deal of Softness, and had no Alloy to these good Qualities, but a great Share of Vanity, with some small Spices of Envy, which must always accompany it. And I make no manner of doubt, but if she had not met with this Temptation, she would have made a very affectionate Wife, to the Man who loved her. (29)

Nanny is, in short, just a regular person, a mixture of good and evil, who because of the corruption of a fallen world, is tempted by the lure of money to make a poor decision. Unfortunately, the narrator is not kind to Nanny, who "never had the Pleasure of enjoying that Fortune" because both she and her husband quickly succumb to "spotted Fever" (34).
David, after eavesdropping on Nanny and discovering her intent, handles the situation surprisingly, quickly reacting in a stereotypically masculine fashion:

He went back to his own Room, where Love, Rage, Despair and Contempt alternately took possession of his Mind: He walked about, and raved like a Madman; repeated all the Satires he could remember on Women, all suitable to his present Thoughts, (which no great wonder, as most probably they were writ by Men, in Circumstances not very different from his.) In short, the first Sallies of his Passion, his Behaviour and Thoughts were so much like what is common on such Occasions, that to dwell long upon them, would be only a Repetition of what has been said a thousand times. (30)

Although at first it might seem that Fielding is lifting the mask somewhat off David’s character and revealing the hostile masculinity hidden below, when seen in the context of Henry’s thoughts on human nature, I don’t think this is the case. In his “An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men,” Henry Fielding writes that the “first, and as it were, spontaneous Motions of the Soul, which few, as I have said, attend to, and none can prevent ... doth not properly constitute the Character” (Miscellanies 160). Miller, in his editorial notes on the work, elaborates this point and states, the idea that “reflex actions’ do not properly constitute one’s ‘Character’ is a significant aspect of [Henry’s] conception of human nature” (160). It seems to me that this is also the case with Sarah Fielding’s conception of human nature. The “first Sallies” of David’s passion do not constitute his character or undermine his good-nature. In fact, they serve to highlight his good-nature, as the narrator makes clear after the excerpt quoted above: “For as tenderness was always predominant” in David’s mind, “no Anger, nor even a just Cause of Hatred, could ever make him inveterate, or revengeful: It cost him very little to be a Christian in that Point” (30). David is naturally inclined, unlike Daniel, to be good-natured, and this natural inclination of his behavior aligns
him closer to Christianity. Thus David's Christianity is ingrained in his character and is made manifest through his benevolent actions.

After David's disappointment with Nanny, he departs and encounters several other characters, the most interesting of which is Mr. Orgueil. Because Orgueil "did not rate Men at all by the Riches they possessed, but by their own Behaviour" David thinks he has finally "met with the Completion of his Wishes" and found a true friend (44). David observes Orgueil and "could not find he was guilty of any one Vice" and determines that his only failing is "a too severe Condemnation of others Actions" (45). Orgueil expects everyone to "act up to the strictest Rules of Reason and Goodness" (45). Orgueil shows David about London, introducing him to various people and situations.

Of course, David soon learns that Orgueil is not what he is looking for in a friend. David first suspects this to be the case when he observes that Orgueil could tell a tragic tale with "dry Eyes and quite unmoved" (55). It is here that Orgueil's true colors are revealed and he is distanced from David's innate sense of good-nature. Orgueil states that he looks "upon Compassion, Sir, to be a very great Weakness; I have no Superstition to fright me into my Duty, but I do what I think just by all the World, for the real Love of Rectitude is the Motive of all my Actions" (55). Orgueil goes on to criticize David's form of compassion as self-interest: "If I could be moved by a Compassion in my Temper to relieve another, theMerit of it would be entirely lost, because it would be done chiefly to please myself" (55). Orgueil's position, then, is almost the complete opposite of David's. Barker observes that "Orgueil's unreliability, as well as the extremity of his argument, negates what might otherwise be seen as a highly subversive position in a novel of sensibility" (72). As several commentators note, Orgueil is in fact "a satirical attack on Stoic rationalism" (Barker 72), the
same Stoic rationalism that Crane argues the latitudinarian clergy were so concerned to
distance themselves from. What is interesting about Orgueil’s portrayal in *David Simple* is
how he is explicitly described as not being aligned with Christianity. He claims he has no
superstition to scare him into doing what is right and as Mr. Spatter, David’s next traveling
companion, states, Orgueil “has made a God of himself” and “calls all Religion Superstition,
because he will own no other Deity; he thinks even Obedience to the Divine Will, would be
but a mean Motive to his Actions” (56). David’s realization about Orgueil’s true nature
(even though Mr. Spatter is a less than reliable narrator, as David himself acknowledges in
*Volume the Last* (250)) causes him to restate his search for a true friend in religious terms.
When David decides to leave Orgueil and follow Spatter, Spatter asks him “What is it that
you are seeking?” (58). David responds that he is searching for “a Person who could be
trusted, one who was capable of being a real Friend; whose every Action proceeded either
from Obedience to the *Divine Will*, or from the Delight he took in doing good; who could not
see another’s Sufferings without Pain, nor his Pleasures without sharing them” (59). Thus,
after his disappointments with Orgueil’s godlessness, David explicitly reformulates his
search for a friend in Christian terms; he seeks someone whose conduct aligns him or her
with divine perfection or who takes delight in doing good (a position we have seen to also be
Christian and espoused by the latitudinarian clergy). Fielding contrasts the explicitly
Christian aspect of David’s character to the irreligious one of the Stoic Orgueil, and clearly
sides with David’s innate sense of good-nature, establishing his behavior in the text to be,
following the true version of Christianity.
Indeed, it is also Mr. Spatter’s lack of true Christianity that causes David to abandon him as well. As Spatter and David are discussing various topics they end up on revenge. Here David recognizes that Spatter is not a true Christian:

David said, “of all things in the world he should hate a Man who was of a vindictive Temper; for his part he could never keep up Anger against any one, even tho’ he should endeavour to do it. All he would do, when he found a Man capable of hurting him (unprovoked) was to avoid him.” “Indeed, Sir, (says Spatter) I am not of your mind, for I think there is nothing so pleasant as Revenge; I would pursue a Man who had injured me, to the very Brink of Life: I know it would be impossible for me ever to forgive him, and I would have him live, only that I might have the Pleasure of seeing him miserable.” David was amazed at this, and said, “Pray, Sir, consider, as you are a Christian, you cannot act in this manner.” Spatter replied, “he was sorry it was against the Rules of Christianity, but he could not help his Temper; he thought forgiving any body a very great Meanness, and he was sure it was what he could never bring himself to do.” (75)

David is so disturbed by this doctrine that “he could not sleep that Night,” and the next day he leaves “without taking Leave or any Notice of him, in order to seek a new Lodging,” going so far as to call Spatter “a perfect Daemon” (76). Although Varnish’s description of Spatter lessens David’s disgust of him somewhat, it is again evident in this passage that at the root of what David is searching for is someone like himself, whose character is founded on what Fielding considers to be true Christian principles. Thus, as we have seen, David’s character is influenced greatly by Fielding’s Christianity, and David’s search for a real friend is in some real sense a search for a fellow true Christian. David’s passive doctrine of quietly avoiding someone “whenever he found out anything he thought despicable” (59) is not a sign of weakness in his character; it is rather a sign of Fielding’s conception of true Christianity and its manifestation in David’s actions.

After leaving Spatter, David comes into contact with Cynthia. Cynthia is a fascinating character, who in many ways is a contrast with David.
Camilla, "provide convincing accounts of the almost insuperable difficulties, in 18th-century society, of a virtuous gentlewoman in adversity" (Bree 36), a difficulty Fielding herself was all too familiar with, stating in her "Advertisement to the Reader" that the reason she really produced *David Simple* was "Distress in her Circumstances" (3). Indeed, as Camilla later tells David, "there is no Situation so deplorable, no Condition so much to be pitied, as that of a Gentle-woman in real Poverty" (132).

It is Cynthia's different background and different circumstances that cause her to have a different view of human nature than David. Interestingly, Sara Gadeken sees Cynthia as remaining "recognizably of the rational tradition" in opposition to David's universal benevolence (548). Gadeken sees Cynthia as a contrast to David, because rather "than considering benevolence to be a universal human characteristic, Cynthia holds a more Hobbesian view that, left unchecked, humans are by nature tyrants" (549). Gadeken points out Cynthia's rather pessimistic opinions on human nature. Cynthia's experiences with the real world have caused her to exclaim, "there are very few People, who have any Notion of Obligations, that are not pecuniary" (91). Cynthia explains that this cruelty is due to humankind's "love of Tyranny" (91). Yet, because of her actions, David finds no fault in Cynthia, even offering to marry her, an offer Cynthia turns down because she "secretly liked and esteemed" Valentine (97). Cynthia does, however, accept David's help in leaving her depressing circumstances. It is certainly the case that Cynthia's conception of human nature is different than David's. However, David still sees something "good-natured in her Countenance" (79) and she eventually becomes part of his community with Camilla and Valentine. Since Cynthia differs so much from David, yet is still a part of his community of friendship, and is thus aligned in the novel with David's true Christian principles, it seems as
if Fielding is offering a more inclusive type of Christianity than it might at first appear. With Cynthia, Fielding is able to explore religion using a completely different type of character, one perhaps more aligned with rationalism than David’s innate benevolence. Indeed, Fielding would have found much less in her brother’s writings on women than on men. In his “Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men,” Henry states, “the Knowledge of the Characters of Women being foreign to my intended Purpose; as it is in Fact a Science, to which I make the not the least Pretension” (Miscellaneies 161).

The primary exploration of Cynthia’s religion occurs during her stagecoach ride. Cynthia is traveling in a stagecoach in the company of “Three Gentlemen” (137), described by the narrator as “the Clergyman, — - - the Atheist - - - and the Butterfly” (138). Naturally, all three begin a theological discussion. Both the Atheist and the Butterfly, described by the narrator “as irreligious as the Atheist” (139), attack the idea of God. The reader is clearly meant to side with the Clergyman in the argument, as the Butterfly and the Atheist are portrayed as ridiculous and their motives for disbelief are shown to be less than sincere. What is interesting in this conversation is Cynthia’s role. Here Fielding brings Cynthia closer in agreement with David’s concept of universal benevolence when she reflects that the Clergyman, in his defense of theism, “was not endeavouring to shew his own Parts, but acting from the true Christian Principle of desiring to do good” (140). Like David, true Christianity to even the more rationalist Cynthia is still the desire “to do good.” Thus, again for Fielding, true Christianity in the text is represented in the characters through actions stemming from innate goodness. Cynthia’s thoughts on the Clergyman are confirmed when

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13 Of course, the central reason for this scene is to demonstrate how annoying and even dangerous it is for a woman to be traveling alone, as all three male stagecoach riders, including even the Clergyman, sexually harass Cynthia. For an interesting discussion of this scene, see Spender 187-189.
he reappears at the end of the novel to relate the story of the Atheist, who turns out to be
David's brother Daniel, and to marry the couples. After witnessing the reunion of Camilla
and Valentine with their father, the narrator states "the Clergyman's real Goodness made him
partake of all their Pleasures" (236), thus connecting him with Fielding's conception of good-
nature and true Christianity in the novel.

At the end of *David Simple* the group of David, Camilla, Cynthia and Valentine
achieve real happiness, and the novel ends with the narrator explaining how the reader might
find this type of happiness:

> It was this Care — Tenderness - - - and Benevolence to each other, which made *David*,
and his amiable Company happy; who, quite contrary to the rest of the World, for
every trifling Frailty blamed themselves, whilst it was the Business of all the rest, to
lessen, instead of aggravating their Faults. - - - In short, it is this Tenderness and
Benevolence, which alone can give any real Pleasure, and which I most sincerely
wish to all my Readers. (238)

Again, it is this benevolence that is essential to happiness and good-nature, and as we have
seen, this benevolence springs from a Christian foundation. Thus, as Liz Bellamy states;
"David and his friends eschew the acquisitiveness and self-interest that have been shown to
be endemic within, and essential to, the working of the economic system, and create a
community based on pure and primitive Christian morality" (134). However, in *Volume the
Last*, this happy community is destroyed, and the role of religion in the text takes a slightly
different tone. It is to *Volume the Last* that we now turn.
3. Volume the Last

In 1753, Sarah Fielding published *The Adventures of David Simple, Volume the Last In Which His History is concluded*. Fielding claims *David Simple* is a "Moral Romance" (3), but *Volume the Last* is perhaps best described as a "somber tragedy" or a "grim farce" (Terry 525). What makes *Volume the Last* so interesting is how at odds it is with the positive ending of *David Simple*. Fielding acknowledges that hardship is unavoidable even for a community as perfect as David’s at the end of *David Simple*, but she also says that this hardship will only strengthen the community’s happiness: "The very Infirmities, which it is impossible for human Nature to escape, such as Pain – Sickness, &c. – were by their Contrivance not only made supportable, but fully compensated in the fresh Opportunities they gave each Individual of testifying their Tenderness and Care for the whole" (237). If life’s hardships do indeed give David’s community a means for supporting group happiness, then this is given a severe test in *Volume the Last*. With the sequel, Fielding tests David’s community "empirically in the stress and strain of everyday domestic life" (Barker 78) and finds it wanting. Indeed, by the end of the book, everyone has died except Cynthia and David’s child Camilla.

Several commentators have discussed possible reasons for Fielding’s turn from romance to tragedy. One way to perhaps partially explain this turn to tragedy is to do so by an examination of Fielding’s circumstances between the time of *David Simple* and *Volume the Last*. Throughout this period, Fielding continued to live in financial hardship. Furthermore, within the space of seven months, she experienced the death of three sisters and a nephew. Fielding’s older sister Catharine died on 5 July 1750 and on 3 August her 8 year old nephew Henry was buried (Battestin and Probyn xxxi). At the end of the year, two more
sisters, Ursula and Beatrice, also died (Battestin and Probyn xxxi). It certainly seems possible that these tragic events partially influenced the more somber tone of *Volume the Last*.

Interestingly, contemporary readers didn’t know how to react to *Volume the Last*. In a letter dated 12 February 1753, John Upton wrote to the classical scholar, philosopher and Fielding friend James Harris that “Mrs Fielding has published a 3d volume of David Simple; the world think it a meer 3d volume and not a new story, and thus the book stops with the booksellers. She should, I told her, have changed the title; for Novelty is the charm of the present age” (qtd. in Probyn 74). Moreover, in 1782 when David Simple’s story was reissued, only *The Adventures of David Simple* appeared, “as if *Volume the Last* were being discarded as a regrettable aberration” (Terry 526).

In the work itself, there is a partial explanation for its differences with the original as well as its lack of novelty. *Volume the Last* contains a Preface, by “A Female Friend of the Author” (242), who was probably Jane Collier. She writes:

> The Author of *David Simple* has, in the two first Volumes, carried him thro’ many Disappointments to his desired Port. He sought a faithful Friend and a most amiable and faithful Companion; he found both: the History of his SEARCH therefore was naturally at an end. But our Author was willing to exemplify the Behaviour of a Man endowed with such a Turn of Mind as *David Simple*, in the natural and common Distresses of this World, to illustrate that well known Observation, that “The Attainment of our Wishes is but too often the Beginning of our Sorrows.” And farther to shew, that in a Society united by well directed Affections, and a Similitude of Mind, in which not one Individual has a selfish View, or a single Wish that is not conducive to the Good and Happiness of the Whole, every Evil may be lessened and alleviated, so that cheerful Poverty may become almost the Envy of many that are called the Rich and Great.

> This Design, it must be confessed, might have been as well executed by raising up a new set of Company of the same Turn of Mind, and giving them new Names; and by this pretended Appearance of Novelty the Readers who seek for such Food only, would have been more gratified. (241)
Collier ends her Preface by stating that Fielding’s intention is to show “how such a Man” as David “would support himself under the worldly Misfortunes and Afflictions to which human-kind is liable” and that “if any of her Readers approve not of her Manner of releasing him from his Difficulties, nothing that can be said by me has any Chance of altering such their Opinion” (242). It is this manner of releasing David from his difficulties that is one of the most fascinating aspects of Volume the Last. With David’s death (and probable ascension into Heaven), his status as a Christian hero is secure, and if the implication that David is a Christian hero is mostly implicit in David Simple, it is much more explicit in Volume the Last. With the sequel, Fielding brings the Christian philosophy underlying her writing to the forefront. Furthermore, if Fielding got much of the Christian foundation for the first volume from Henry, it seems that much of the Christianity in the last volume can be traced to Henry’s rival, Samuel Richardson.

Many critics have noted that Volume the Last is much more “Richardsonian” than the first volume. Barker writes that Volume the Last is “[u]doubtedly influenced” by Richardson’s Clarissa (1747-48) (78). In The Times Literary Supplement from 29 May 1969, the author writes that with Volume the Last, “Sarah Fielding moved closer to the spirit of her friend Samuel Richardson, relying less on plot complications and more on the use of gradually intensifying feeling” (“Love” 1:278). Contemporary readers also remarked on Richardson’s impact on Fielding. In a letter to Richardson dated 5 November 1749, Edward Young, discussing Fielding’s The Governess, writes “I have read Miss Fielding with great pleasure. Your Clarissa is, I find, the Virgin-mother of several pieces; which like beautiful suckers, rise from her immortal root” (27).
Not all critics, however, agree that Fielding was greatly influenced by Richardson. G.A. Starr writes that despite Fielding’s “professions of esteem for Richardson” her “indebtedness to his work seems to me rather limited – as does the evidence for a countervailing loyalty to the novelistic example of her brother Henry. Fielding’s artistic relationship to these two would repay further scrutiny” (120). Although I would mostly disagree with Starr’s comments, this issue is extremely complex and impossible to trace exactly. Again, to argue that Richardson had some influence on Fielding certainly does not mean that she is unoriginal or that she is simply attempting to mimic his style. Their relationship, and indeed her relationship with Henry as well, was dynamic, with each influencing and reacting to one another. Just as Fielding contributed to Henry’s writings, she also had an impact on Richardson’s. For example, as Peter Sabor points out, Fielding’s Remarks on Clarissa “played a significant role in shaping Richardson’s revisions and additions to Clarissa” (vi). And as Bree observes, “there is evidence that contemporaries saw Richardson as building on Fielding’s example” (75). The anonymous author (“A Lover of Virtue”) of a pamphlet entitled Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa, and Pamela (1754) is highly critical of Richardson’s work, but claims David Simple is “the best moral romance that we have” (19). Perhaps the best statement about the relationship between Henry, Sarah and Richardson is by Battestin. About the three, he writes that it “would prove to be a fascinating, intensely personal triangular relationship in which all three authors, jealously interacting, spurred each other on to their best work, as well as to less appealing displays of pettiness and spite” (Henry 379).

In any case, it becomes obvious that Richardson did indeed have an impact on Fielding when we further examine their relationship. It is unclear exactly when Fielding and
Richardson first became acquainted. According to Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Richardson was “very intimate” with her before the publication of Henry’s *Joseph Andrews* (I:1xxix). Eaves and Kimpel, Richardson’s biographers, however, note that “there is no extant evidence … of Richardson’s friendship with Sarah Fielding or her three sisters before 1747” (294). Nevertheless, it is clear through Fielding’s surviving letters to Richardson that she held him in the highest esteem and that they enjoyed “an easy and familiar relationship” (Battestin and Probyn xxx). Indeed, in a letter dated 26 June 1755, we can see Fielding’s intense admiration for Richardson as she describes his family in a way that could almost describe David’s:

> My love to Mrs. Richardson, and all who have the happiness to be under your roof. To live in a family where there is but one heart, and as many good strong heads as persons, and to have a place in that enlarged single heart, is such a state of happiness as I cannot hear of without feeling the utmost pleasure. Methinks, in such a house, each word that is uttered must sink into the hearer’s mind, as the kindly falling showers in April sink into the teeming earth, and enlarge and ripen every idea, as those friendly drops do the new-sown grain, or the water-wanting plant. There is nothing in all the works of nature or of art too trifling to give pleasure, where there is such a capacity to enjoy it, as must be found in such an union. (130)

It is in Fielding’s first extant letter to Richardson, however, that we can see perhaps the most interesting aspect of her appreciation for him. On 7 January 1749, Fielding’s 56-page pamphlet defending Richardson’s *Clarissa, Remarks on Clarissa*, was published. In a letter to Richardson dated the following day, 8 January 1749, Fielding included a presentation copy of *Remarks*. In this letter, Fielding shows her extreme esteem for Richardson with her intense humility:

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14 Although it was published anonymously, Fielding is now generally accepted as the author of *Remarks on Clarissa*. 
"'Tis but a sham quarrel between you and your pen; for had it been real, I flatter myself, that, knowing how delighted, how overjoyed, I should have been, with making your pen my master, you would have solicited him to have admitted me as his servant. Humble and faithful would I have been; I would have obeyed his call; his hours, though six, or even five, in the morning, should have been mine. Indeed, what is there I would not have done? Pleasantly surprised should I have been, suddenly to have found all my thoughts strengthened, and my words flow into an easy and nervous style: never did I so much wish for it as in this daring attempt of mentioning Clarissa: but when I read of her, I am all sensation; my heart glows; I am overwhelmed; my only vent is tears; and unless tears could mark my thoughts as legibly as ink, I cannot speak half I feel. I become like the Harlowes' servant, when he spoke not; he could not speak; he looked, he bowed, and withdrew. In short, Sir, no pen but your's can do justice to Clarissa. Often have I reflected on my own vanity in daring but to touch the hem of her garment; and your excuse for both what I have done, and what I have not done, is all the hopes of, | Sir, your ever faithful | humble Servant. (123)

There are several interesting aspects to this letter. We can clearly see Fielding's enthusiasm for Clarissa and her great respect for Richardson. Even more fascinating is the closing line, which as Battestin and Probyn point out, is a "measure of [Fielding's] extraordinary deference towards [Richardson] and his novel" because "these words derive from the General Confession in the Anglican Order for Morning Prayer, to be said while kneeling" (124). 15 Here we can see how important Anglicanism was for Fielding and how it intertwines with her respect and admiration for Richardson, something made even clearer with Remarks on Clarissa itself.

It is through Remarks on Clarissa that we can trace some of Richardson's specific influences on Fielding, especially on Volume the Last. Bree writes that although the sober third-person narrative of Volume the Last "could not have been more different from the techniques displayed in Clarissa," Volume the Last "is informed by the detailed

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15 Battestin and Probyn include the General Confession: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults" (124).
consideration of the form and purpose of fiction that arose out of Fielding’s defense of Richardson’s novel. In particular, Richardson’s insistence upon a tragic, rather than a comic, ending, as consistent both with real life and with true Christian exemplarity, helped to shape the final part of David Simple’s story” (79). The ending of Volume the Last provides the greatest evidence of David as a Christian hero, and this ending is something Fielding seems to have first experienced in Clarissa.

Of course, at the end of Clarissa, Clarissa has died and presumably attained her rightful place in the Christian heaven. This raises the question of poetic justice: How is virtue to be rewarded, in this life or in another? For Richardson, it is clearly in another life, the Christian afterlife. In his postscript to Clarissa, Richardson explicitly addresses the issue of the novel’s ending, and especially the idea of “poetical justice” (1495). Richardson writes:

Nor can it be deemed impertinent to touch upon this subject at the conclusion of a work which is designed to inculcate upon the human mind, under the guise of an amusement, the great lessons of Christianity, in an age like the present; which seems to expect from the poets and dramatic writers (that is to say, from the authors of works of invention) that they should make it one of their principal rules, to propagate another sort of dispensation, under the name of poetical justice, than that with which God by Revelation teaches us he has thought fit to exercise mankind; whom, placing here only in a state of probation, he hath so intermingled good and evil as to necessitate them to look forward for a more equal distribution of both. (1495)

At the end of the Postscript, Richardson adds:

And who that are in earnest in their profession of Christianity but will rather envy than regret the triumphant death of CLARISSA, whose piety from her early childhood; whose diffusive charity; whose steady virtue; whose Christian humility; whose forgiving spirit; whose meekness, whose resignation, HEAVEN only could reward? (1498)
Richardson tells us that he was motivated to write the Postscript because of “many anonymous letters” that discuss this topic (1495). In his published correspondence, he addresses the importance of Heaven to his art. In a letter to Aaron Hill, dated 29 October 1746, Richardson writes: “I had further intended to make [Clarissa] so faultless, that a Reader should find no way to account for the Calamities she met with, and to justify Moral Equity but by looking up to a future Reward; another of my principal Doctrines; and one of my principal Views to inculcate in this Piece” (73). In a letter dated 15 December 1748 to Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson writes:

A Writer who follows Nature and pretends to keep the Christian System in his Eye, cannot make a Heaven in this World for his Favourites; or represent this Life otherwise than as a State of Probation. Clarissa I once more averr could not be rewarded in this World. To have given her her Reward here, as in a happy Marriage, would have been as if a Poet had placed his Catastrophe in the Third Act of his Play, when the Audience were obliged to expect two more. What greater moral Proof can be given of a World after this, for the rewarding of suffering Virtue, and for the punishing of oppressive Vice, than the Inequalities in the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments here below? (108)

It is clear from his writings how important the Christian afterlife was to Richardson. What is interesting are Fielding’s comments on the ending of Clarissa. Her Remarks on Clarissa concludes with an exchange of letters between Bellario and Fielding’s “own representative” (Sabor v), Miss Gibson. In Miss Gibson’s response to Bellario, she writes that if “the Story was not to have ended tragically, the grand Moral would have been lost” (54). She continues:

[Clarissa] I think could not find a better Close to her Misfortunes than a triumphant Death. Triumphant it may very well be called, when her Soul, fortified by a truly Christian Philosophy, melted and softened in the School of Affliction, had conquered every earthy Desire, baffled every uneasy Passion, lost every disturbing Fear, while nothing remained in her tender Bosom but a lively Hope of future Happiness. When her very Griefs were in a manner forgot, the Impression of them as faint and languid
as a feverish Dream to one restored to Health, all calm and serene her Mind, forgiving and praying for her worst Enemies, she retired from all her Afflictions, to meet the Reward of her Christian piety.

The Death of Clarissa is, I believe, the only Death of the Kind in any Story; and in her Character, the Author has thrown into Action (if I may be allowed the Expression) the true Christian Philosophy, shewn its Force to ennoble the human Mind, till it can look with Serenity on all human Misfortunes, and take from Death itself its gloomy Horrors. (55)

It is perhaps here that we can best locate the turn from romance to tragedy present in Volume the Last. Also, here we can see Fielding turning from her brother to Richardson. Sabor points out that it is clear that “Sarah had discussed Clarissa with Henry” (viii). Henry, however, wanted the novel to end happily, which would seem to be in disagreement with his sister’s expectations of the ending. In a letter to Johannes Stinstra dated 2 June 1753, Richardson writes that Henry Fielding “had been a zealous Contender for the Piece ending, as it is called, happily” (qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel 295). Sarah Fielding’s comments in Remarks on Clarissa are a strong defense of the importance of Christian death to a true Christian philosophy, an idea that I believe influenced Volume the Last.¹⁶

If David is a Christian hero in David Simple through his Parson Adams-like active charity and virtue, in Volume the Last the Christian hero he most emulates is the suffering Job. Numerous times throughout Volume the Last, Fielding makes an explicit parallel between David and Job. As the narrator states at the end of Chapter V, “For, like Job, David Simple patiently submitted to the temporary Sufferings allotted him” (261).¹⁷ David as a suffering Job is interesting, because as Battestin points out, Job’s story is another defense of divine providence, because “the subject of the Book of Job is ... the demonstration and

¹⁶ Terry sees the ending of Volume the Last as being influenced by Henry, and in particular his essay “Of the Remedy of Affliction for the Loss of Our Friends” published in his Miscellanies. See Terry, especially pages 539-541
¹⁷ For further parallels between David and Job in the novel, see pages 303 and 328.
vindication of divine Providence, whose dispensations, while apparently unequal with respect to this life, will be proved just in the hereafter" (Providence 201). In this light, we can see how Fielding’s act of linking David with Job is another connection between David’s role as a suffering Christian hero and his vindication through death, the ultimate role of the true Christian hero as demonstrated by Richardson. Again, the importance is placed on the reward of virtue in the next life, heaven, as opposed to this life.

Although David and his friends do briefly find happiness in this life at the end of David Simple, Volume the Last quickly demonstrates how futile this is and how true happiness is to be found only in the next life. The novel explicitly connects this with true Christianity. Volume the Last contains numerous references to the reliance of heaven being the only true happiness for a Christian. For example, early in the novel the narrator states that as David’s group “had suffered, as yet, no material Separation, so they had not tasted of that temporary Sorrow, which, though enough to embitter our Cup, is not sufficient to subdue a Christian Mind, whose Reliance on a future State is its only Foundation for Happiness” (261). The pessimism in this passage is strong, a pessimism backed up by the tragic events of the novel. However, this passage and the novel as a whole shouldn’t be seen as completely pessimistic or completely tragic because Fielding’s worldview necessitated looking forward to Heaven, something she was no doubt increasingly doing at the time of the novel’s composition. Several critics have discussed this aspect of Volume the Last and there is some disagreement. John Richetti states that even “the most pious of Christian readers, I would guess, found it difficult to keep steadily in mind that the last shall be first and that death is a joyful release to heavenly bliss” (250). Janet Todd claims that the sense of the afterlife in Volume the Last “is less able than in Clarissa to compensate for the generalised
ills in this world” (165). Betty Schellenberg, however, disagrees with Todd’s assessment, pointing to the novel’s last line as evidence (158), where the narrator states, “I chuse to think [David] is escaped from the Possibility of falling into any future Afflictions, and that neither the Malice of his pretended Friends, nor the Sufferings of his real ones, can ever again rend and torment his honest Heart” (342). I agree with Schellenberg, and furthermore think one of the aims of *Volume the Last*, like one of Richardson’s stated aims of *Clarissa*, is to demonstrate to the reader the importance of a belief in the Christian afterlife to a true Christian philosophy. On his deathbed, David reflects that he has “experienced all the Horrors of Friendship” as he realizes “the Fallacy of fancying any real or lasting Happiness can arise from an Attachment to Objects subject to Infirmities, Diseases, and to certain Death” (341), a far cry from the optimistic ideas on the power of a community of friends that informs *David Simple*. Thus, for the Christian hero in *Volume the Last*, true happiness is only to be achieved in the afterlife.

One way this happiness is to be realized is through a reunion of friends. As David’s sufferings mount, so does his hope in death as the place for the reunion of his happy community. When Camilla dies, David is of course grief-stricken; yet he is able to find comfort in thoughts of the afterlife. The narrator writes:

Had David been an Infidel, not all the Books composed by the wisest Philosophers, would have taken one Arrow from a Heart so sensible as his of every tender Connection. He would have raved to Madness, or wept himself to Death: but when the Christian Hope came over his Mind, that his Camilla was really happy, – that the Loss was all his own – and that a short Time longer struggling through Life would put an End to all his Sorrows also, and render him happy, his Grief would subside, and patient Resignation take its Place (329).

The narrator makes it clear that Camilla’s death “was an uniform Conclusion to her Life,” as she “was all Resignation and Submission to the Will of her God” (327). David, likewise,
comforting himself in Camilla's "Innocence" (after a temporary rage where, "like Job, he could almost have contended with the Almighty"), "humbly acquiesced, satisfied in the Wisdom as well as the Goodness of the great Disposer of Events" (327-328). In other words, both Camilla and David are perfectly passive before God's providential plan. Their passivity marks them as truly pious. The only way true piety can be expressed is "through perfect passivity, for only when passive can one acquiesce to and serve as an adequate vehicle for the enactment of God's will" (Poovey 305).

Moreover, David's view is aligned with Fielding's sense of true Christianity. This is made clear when the only truly malevolent character, Mrs. Orgueil, reflects on Camilla's death, for "She in reality led her whole Life in bemoaning the Certainty of her own Mortality" (329). Mrs. Orgueil, whose actions in the text are openly evil, is unable to be comforted like David with true Christianity. It is interesting that Fielding chose to bring back Mr. Orgueil and add a wife whose conduct is even worse than her husband's. Mr. Orgueil's place in Volume the Last can be seen as another demonstration on how not to act, as his "rule of rectitude" only results in further hardship for David and his community. Orgueil is again shown to represent a false set of beliefs, a set of beliefs that are not only impractical and harmful in real-life, but are explicitly anti-Christian. In David Simple, Orgueil's belief system is shown to be flawed because David disagrees with it, but in Volume the Last his system causes real and permanent harm, which results in a further heightening of David's active and religious charity. That Fielding intended Orgueil to represent a twisted form of religion in contrast to David's pure form is made clear at the end of the novel when Orgueil and David have a theological discussion caused by Mr. Orgueil's illness:
Almost their whole Conversation consisted in an Endeavour on David's Side to prove that human Wisdom can soar no higher than the Knowledge of our Dependence on God, and acting in Conformity to that Knowledge; whilst Mr. Orgueil laboured hard to prove his own Self-dependence, and the Justness of worshipping his Idol, human Reason. He indeed admired Christ's Sermon on the Mount, for the Beauty of its Morality; then thought himself a Christian, and could be highly offended at any one making a Doubt of it; although the Drift of every Word he uttered, plainly proved that his every Notion of Religion was confined to Self-adoration. (332)

Orgueil's idea of Christianity is empty and without merit. Orgueil is meant to be an object of ridicule, and as Sabor points out in his textual notes, Orgueil's admiration for the Sermon on the Mount is misplaced, since the sermon "emphasizes the virtues of self-sacrifice and humility" (393). Orgueil's false Christianity brings David's into greater relief, again emphasizing the importance of the dependence on God and the afterlife for true happiness, something that seems to be a central theme of Volume the Last.

In both works of the David Simple series, David is clearly a Christian hero. However, in Volume the Last, what it means to be a Christian hero takes a decidedly pessimistic and tragic turn. One wonders if maybe Fielding hoped that Christianity provided the best possible means for equality between the sexes, in the idea of a non-hierarchical, otherworldly afterlife. Clearly, both works "affirm as transcendent the [ideal social circle's] central social principle of placing the group before the self," but in Volume the Last, Fielding "displaces" its realization from this world into another, the Christian heaven" (Schellenberg 118).

Perhaps the idea of an un-gendered afterlife allowed Fielding to overlook the obvious sexism inherent in Christianity. Ironically, it is her contemporary society's reliance on Christian foundations that creates many of the problems for the characters of David Simple. For example, as Bree points out, the lack of any kind of equality in marriage for women was supported by legal principles that were "backed up by even more powerful and pervasive
beliefs based on biblical requirements for a wife to obey her husband” (37). Perhaps Fielding recognized this, but realized that in the idea of a supernatural Christian heaven, true female equality might be possible. Even this seems doubtful, however. Male domination of Christianity probably must continue into the afterlife, as Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* (1791) demonstrates. Discussing Christianity, Mrs. Knowles states, “I hope that in another world the sexes will be equal” (944). Boswell responds, “That is being too ambitious, Madam. We might as well desire to be equal with the angels. We shall all, I hope, be happy in a future state, but we must not expect to be all happy in the same degree” (944-945). It seems that for some, even with the hope of a Christian afterlife, true gender equality is never to be attained.
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