

Norman Hopkins has produced a very informative and readable account of the life and labours of Samuel Annesley, the maternal grandfather of John and Charles Wesley. It is full of interesting political, ecclesiastical and social detail relating to the period yet without distracting from the main character. The book highlights Annesley's contacts with so many of the leading Puritan preachers and theologians of the day. The appendices provide further fascinating insights into the ministry of this Presbyterian minister whom the state forced into Nonconformity. I warmly recommend this biography.

— **Philip Eveson, Principal Emeritus of London
Theological Seminary**

Once again Norman Hopkins has opened a window on church history. He is using his 'retirement' years well to help us discover characters from his native Kent profoundly used of God and yet sadly forgotten by the church. In this book we are given details of the many trials connected with living for the truth in the seventeenth century, but his chapter on preaching is so helpful in a time when too many are content to simply explain a passage. In every age preachers need to be 'adaptable ... clear ... practical ... pastoral and experimental.' We look forward to his next 'discovery.'

— **Bernard Lewis, Retired pastor, missionary and
lecturer in Pastoral Theology**

For those who appreciate Puritan theology, the six volumes of the *Morning Exercises* are a wonderful resource. They were

intended to give guidance for dealing with the challenges to the Christian life. What is not so well known are the circumstances under which they appeared. They are sermons preached on weekdays to Christians who were about to set off to work. The first appeared before the outbreak of Nonconformist persecution after 1662. The organiser was Samuel Annesley, grandfather of John and Charles Wesley. Norman Hopkins has diligently researched Annesley's life, revealing a man of rich experience, a pastor who served in town and country as well as being for a time a naval chaplain. He was well-equipped to identify the challenges to the Christian life and also the men who could well address them.

— **Robert W. Oliver, Retired pastor and lecturer in Church History at London Theological Seminary**

A quiet but potent 'mover and shaker' among the Dissenters of the seventeenth century, Samuel Annesley gives us a pattern of faithfulness and fruitfulness during difficult and dangerous times. Here we find a man who, with little regard for the opinion of men, took his opportunities to serve the Lord as they came. Norman Hopkins' biography offers a wealth of incidental detail of a life with a savoury influence, full of thought-provoking incident and rich with happy instruction.

— **Jeremy Walker, Pastor of Maidenbower Baptist Church, Crawley**

SAMUEL ANNESLEY (1620–1696)

THE ST PAUL OF THE NONCONFORMISTS

Norman L. Hopkins

~ Evangelical Lives ~

Volume 3



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Foreword

I have been lecturing on the Wesley brothers, John and Charles, for the past forty years or so and have read widely about their remarkable ministries in sermon and song. When I do so, I usually spend some time going into their background before their conversions in May of 1738, part of which deals with their family history. Samuel Annesley, of course, normally gets a mention, especially in relation to his twenty-five children, all but one of which were born to his second wife. The usual reaction of my students is a predictable one: astonishment at the fact that his second wife, Mary White, must have been pregnant for some twenty-four years or so. I also mention that Annesley was an influential figure among the Presbyterian wing of the Puritan movement.

But that is it. I have said little more because I have known little more about him. Well, this marvellous study by Norman Hopkins has enlightened me as to the valuable — in seventeenth-century terms, ‘useful’

SAMUEL ANNESLEY

— ministry that engaged all of Samuel Annesley's powers during one of the most tumultuous centuries of English history.

I am, and I trust many other readers will be, much in Pastor Hopkins' debt for this fine study of a significant Puritan leader whose life and ministry should never have been forgotten.

Michael A. G. Azad Haykin
Dundas, Ontario, Canada
2026

CHAPTER I

Early life and first ministry

Samuel Annesley was born in 1620, and baptised in the parish church of Haseley, Warwickshire on 27 March. This was a small village just four miles away from the town of Warwick, which was then a Puritan stronghold.

His parents were John and Judith Anerlye, a godly couple and well to do. His grandmother named him Samuel, for she said, 'I can say I have asked him of God.' His father, John, died when he was under 10 years of age, and so the care of his education devolved on his mother, who was known as 'a very prudent and religious woman.'

Edmund Calamy described him as,

an Israelite indeed. One that may be said to be sanctified from the womb; inasmuch as he was so

early under serious impressions, that he oft declared he never knew the time he was not converted.³

At five or six years old, Annesley started a lifelong custom of reading 20 chapters in the Bible every day.

Even as a child, he had a strong sense of vocation to the ministry of God's Word. He was not even dissuaded from responding to this call by a childhood dream in which, as a minister, he was sent for by the Bishop of London, to be bound for martyrdom.⁴ The dream was certainly a portent, not that he was to endure literal martyrdom, but that he was to suffer for his ministry, at the hands of the bishops of the state church.

Annesley attended Coventry Grammar School, and then at the age of 15 went up to Oxford, matriculated at Queen's College, and graduated BA on 21 November 1639, just before the outbreak of the Civil War.

³ Edmund Calamy, *An Account of the Ministers ... Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration in 1660* (London, 1713), 47.

⁴ Edmund Calamy: *A Continuation of the Account of the Ministers ... Ejected and Silenced after the Restoration in 1660* (London, 1727), 65.



Old Coventry Grammar School

Marriage

On 21 July 1641, in the church of All Hallows, Bread Street, London, Samuel Annesley married Mary Hill. Both were recorded as being from Barford, just south of Warwick. The parish register appears to read, 'received nothing for the person attending, they were friends of Mr. Seaman's.'

This indicates the kinds of friendships that Annesley was forming, for Lazarus Seaman became a member of the Westminster Assembly and in 1644 was

made master of Peterhouse, Cambridge. Later, in 1653, Oliver Cromwell appointed Seaman vice chancellor of the University of Cambridge, and one of the 'Visitors' with authority to ensure that the university was operating according to its charter and statutes.

After the Restoration, Seaman was ejected from All Hallows and gathered a congregation of his former hearers, who formed a new church, in Silver Street. He published several sermons, and had a valuable library, the catalogue of which is preserved at the Baptist Academy, Bristol. He died in 1695.⁵

Lectureship

In the early 1640s, it was recognised that there was a 'great scarcity' of preachers, and a scheme was set up to tackle this problem.⁶ Preachers known as 'lecturers' were appointed in various localities across London and the provinces. The appointments were made by

⁵ Walter Wilson, *History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses, in London* (London: W. Button & Son, 1810), Vol. 3, 6–12.

⁶ William Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil Wars and under the Commonwealth 1640–1660* (London: Longmans, 1900), Vol. 2, 82–83.

parliament, usually in response to petitions from local parishes.⁷

In the first several months of the scheme, around 150 preachers were appointed, and thereafter an average of five ministers a month.⁸ The first appointment, on 12 February 1642, was Thomas Wilson (1601–1653) who became the weekly preacher of Maidstone, just upstream from Chatham on the river Medway. Wilson was a member of the Westminster Assembly, and his life was written by his successor in Maidstone, George Swinnock (1627–1673).

Answering a request from the parish of Chatham, the House of Commons ordered on 20 December 1642 that Samuel Annesley, ‘an orthodox and learned Divine, shall be the Lecturer.’⁹ Chatham had grown steadily from 1600 onwards with dockyard extensions, and a growing population. It was one of Britain’s most

⁷ Youngkwon Chung, ‘Puritan Lecturers and Anglican Clergymen during the Early Years of the English Civil Wars.’ *Religions* 12(1) (2021). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12010044>.

⁸ Chung, ‘Puritan Lecturers and Anglican Clergymen.’

⁹ Betty I Young, ‘Sources for the Annesley Family.’ *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, XLV (1985), 49.

important Royal Dockyards, building, repairing, and maintaining its warships.

Soon after this, Parliament abolished episcopacy and so the question of the supply of new ministers became more urgent. Thus, the Westminster Assembly began to discuss ordination in January 1644. They were pressed to hasten these discussions by the Earl of Warwick, who wanted chaplains for the navy. Thus, an ordinance was passed in October, authorising 23 ministers in London to ordain further ministers.¹⁰

On 29 November, the first ordination 'according to the new platform' was held at St Lawrence's, London. Then on 18 December 1644, a classis of elders and seven ministers ordained Samuel Annesley (one of the signatories of the certificate being the famous William Gouge).¹¹ Annesley was then commissioned as the chaplain to HMS *Globe*, under the command of the Lord High Admiral, Robert Rich, the Earl of Warwick.

¹⁰ Harold Smith, 'Interregnum ordinations.' *The Churchman*, April 1926, 109.

¹¹ Smith, 'Interregnum ordinations,' 109.



Robert Rich (1587–1658), the second Earl of Warwick

Cliffe

The following year Annesley was also appointed as rector of the parish of Cliffe, near to his base at Chatham in Kent. Here he had a living worth £300–400

annually — an astoundingly large income. The living at St Helen's, Cliffe was described in the 17th century as 'one of the prizes of the church.'¹² For many rectors, it was the starting point for promotion. From the 13th century up to the 20th century, six archbishops, 18 archdeacons, seven bishops, four deans, six chancellors (four of which being either King's or Lord's) and 26 canons started out at Cliffe.¹³



St Helen's Church, Cliffe

¹² Cliffe History, <https://www.cliffehistory.co.uk/>.

¹³ Scott Robertson, 'The Rectors of Cliffe at Hoo.' Kent Archaeological Society. Available at: https://www.cliffehistory.co.uk/rectors_of_cliffe.html.

Annesley succeeded Griffin Higgs, who was removed by parliamentary authorities. The local people liked Higgs, who joined their dancing, drinking, and merrymaking on the Lord's Day. They were prejudiced against Annesley and threatened him with spits, forks, and stones. He concluded that they were ignorant but not hardened and so he told them, 'Use [Treat] me as you will, I am resolved to continue with you, till God has fitted you, by my ministry, to entertain a better man.' In a few years, the people were reformed, and their enmity changed into kindness.

The entries in the parish record of Cliffe show that Annesley began his work there in September 1645. His son Samuel was baptised there on 30 November 1645. There is also a record of the burial of his wife Mary, on 2 December 1646. This suggests that she may have died of complications following childbirth. The care of the little one must have fallen to others, for we know that in 1648 Samuel Annesley was often away from his pastoral charge during his time as a chaplain. Then an entry on 1 February 1649 records the burial of the son Samuel.¹⁴

¹⁴ Annesley did not sign the register himself after 1647 (the handwriting in the book changes after that time).

Some months later Annesley had to leave Cliffe permanently.¹⁵

Fast Day Sermon July 1648

In 1648, Annesley was in London. On 31 March he added an opinion to a parliamentary paper on the question of marriage after divorce.¹⁶ Then on 14 April he was honoured by his university with a Doctorate of Civil Law. This was thanks to the backing of the Earl of Warwick, who liked his chaplains to be 'doctors.' The Anglican critic Anthony Wood churlishly claimed that Annesley had solicited the DCL when he learned that as incumbent at Cliffe in Kent he was required to keep a church court.

On 16 July, Annesley was chosen to preach the monthly fast-day sermon before the House of Commons. Although he preached before the Commons on several occasions in his lifetime, his only published sermon is the one that he preached on 26 July, in St Margaret's.

The practice of fast day sermons had come about due to the unsettled times. In England, fast days,

¹⁵ Young, 'Sources,' 49.

¹⁶ Young, 'Sources,' 49.