James Louis Fortuna, Jr.

"The Unsearchable Wisdom of God"

A Study of Providence

in Richardson's

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I

Pamela: The Context

Mr. Pope here charged me to make his warm Compliments to you as an honest good Man, and to tell you that he had read Pamela with great Approbation and Pleasure, and wanted a Night's Rest in finishing it, and says it will do more good than a great many of the new Sermons.

Dr. George Cheyne to Richardson, Bath, February 12, 1741 (Mullett, p. 65)
Prologue

Early in the preface to *Sir Charles Grandison*, Samuel Richardson states that his first novel, *Pamela,*

exhibited the Beauty and Superiority of Virtue in an innocent and unpolished Mind, with the Reward which often, even in this Life, a protecting Providence bestows on Goodness. A young Woman of low Degree, relating to her honest Parents the severe Trials she met with from a Master who ought to have been the Protector, not the Assailer, of her Honour, shews the Character of a Libertine in its truly contemptible Light. This Libertine, however, from the Foundation of good Principles laid in his early Years by an excellent Mother; by his Passion for a virtuous young Woman; and by her amiable Example, and unwearied Patience, when she became his Wife; is, after a Length of Time, perfectly reclaimed.¹

Although attached to his last novel, this preface emphasizes some of the major concerns of Richardson's work, and it is my contention that such terms as "Virtue," "Reward," "a protecting Providence," "severe Trials," and a "Libertine...reclaimed" are not casual items of diction but, rather, point to the fundamental design of his first novel. Moreover, this design in some sense derives from a fictive mirroring of what was considered to be the world order of his day—a world order which was Christian, sustained through a divine providence both general and particular, and one in which the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice were not the tenets of a sequestered piety but rather things believed actually to occur in daily life. But, while it is

readily admitted that Richardson the man was a Christian, the
significance of the specifically Christian material in his novels and the
degree of his debt to the theological views of his age are still the cause
of much critical controversy.  

It is not to my purpose to give a running survey or box score of the
more than two centuries of *Pamela* criticism. The raptures of
Richardson's female correspondents, as well as the praise of such
contemporaries as Denis Diderot, the Abbé Prévost, Alexander Pope,
Samuel Johnson, Colley Cibber, Aaron Hill, Edward Young, Jean­
Jacques Rousseau, and others, are amply documented in the biog-
raphies and collections of correspondence listed in my bibliography.
Even the attacks—*Shamela* and the multitude of anti-*Pamela*
literature—have been noted and discussed many times.  

My bibliog-
raphy also contains the interpretative and analytical material used in
preparing this study, and can serve as a beginning for anyone inter-
ested in assessing the manifold critical approaches to *Pamela* or in
amassing a scholarly consensus regarding its literary reputation. In
general, however, most critics have stressed (rightly) the superiority
of *Clarissa* to *Pamela*, Richardson's artistic innovations or his debt to
the theater, his proto-Freudian characterizations or his literary
theories, his preoccupation with the nuances of passion or his concern
with the phenomena of a rising middle class—while even those few
who have investigated the religious elements have often fallen short

2. Richardson himself made numerous references to his religious beliefs, such as
the statement to Lady Bradshaigh that, from his youth, he "was a church-man, who
had a profound reverence for the apostles, St. Paul in particular": *The Correspondence
of Samuel Richardson*, ed. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, 6:206—hereafter cited as Corre-
spondence. There is also a valuable discussion of Richardson's "Christianity" in John A.
Dussinger's "Richardson's 'Christian Vocation.' "  

Parodies, and Adaptations of Richardson's Pamela*. There has generally been more work
done on the religious and even providential elements in Fielding's novels than on
Richardson's. For example: James A. Work's "Henry Fielding, Christian Censor";
Allan Wendt's "The Moral Allegory in *Jonathan Wild*"; Martin C. Battestin's *The
Moral Basis of Fielding's Art*; William Park's "Fielding and Richardson"; Eric Rothstein's
"The Framework of Shamela"; and Howard D. Weinbrot's "Chastity and Interpola-
tion: Two Aspects of *Joseph Andrews*."  

Two seminal articles dealing specifically with the implications of providence in
Fielding's novels are: Martin C. Battestin's "*Tom Jones*: The Argument of Design," and
Aubrey L. Williams's "Interpositions of Providence and the Design of Fielding's
Novels." My discussion of the theme of *Pamela* is indebted particularly to Williams's
approach to Fielding (and more recently to William Congreve), and, as will become
evident later in this study, Richardson's fictive world view, like Fielding's, is definitely a
providential one.
of placing them into a unified context. What is still needed, even with the current renaissance of interest in Richardson’s work, is a revaluation of the Christian theme of Pamela. And, as a first step, a few words should be said regarding perennial charges of Richardson’s Puritanism and his exploitation of Christian ideas.

A review of Pamela criticism reveals that it has frequently been easier for critics to talk of various techniques, such as the use of journal narrative, or to discover medieval, Renaissance, and Restoration forerunners, than it has been to evaluate the larger implications which Christianity holds for the work itself. In particular, there has persisted a tendency to interchange the terms Christian, Puritan, morality, and religion, and to accept too quickly the religious tags offered by previous writers. Moreover, these tendencies have created a fertile ground for confusion. For example, the view that Richardson’s literary roots are Puritan or Calvinist is not supported by a careful reading of the canon, where none of the major characters in his novels appear to be anything but orthodox Anglican and where even Methodists are referred to as “overdoers” by Lady G. in Sir Charles Grandison (2, p. 498). Perhaps, however, it is Harriet Byron who best summarizes Richardson’s own sentiments when she asks:

4. A great deal of close attention has been paid to the Christian elements in Clarissa; a sampling of the criticism should include: Allan Wendt’s “Clarissa’s Coffin”; John A. Dussinger’s “Conscience and the Pattern of Christian Perfection in Clarissa”; Dussinger’s “Richardson’s Tragic Muse”; and, most especially, the “Clarissa” sections of Margaret Anne Doody’s A Natural Passion. Moreover, the following imperfect list contains examples of the many possible approaches to Richardson’s novels—with critical positions ranging from the socioeconomic to the neo-Freudian: Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel; Ira Konigsberg, Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel; Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist; Elizabeth Bergen Brophy, Samuel Richardson. The Triumph of Craft; Morris Golden, Richardson’s Characters.

5. Perhaps growing out of the work of Katherine Hornbeak (Richardson’s Familiar Letters and the Domestic Conduct Book), this modern tendency to view Richardson’s moral sources as Puritan is present particularly in Ian Watt’s influential The Rise of the Novel. For Watt, Richardson had “at best a shallow notion of religion” and Pamela itself is in part a supreme representation of the “Puritan conception of marriage” (pp. 216, 137). A more recent and representative example is provided by Roger Sharrock’s “Richardson’s Pamela: The Gospel and the Novel.” Sharrock frequently interchanges the terms, Christian, Puritan, and Calvinist, and asserts at one point that although the social and religious traditions immediately available to Richardson were “Puritan and middle-class,” this “Puritan moral idea” was in its “decadence” by the time Pamela was written (72). Moreover, Sharrock’s general approach to Pamela as character (that she is an eighteenth-century exemplar of the Christian “new aristocracy” of “ordinary men and women,” p. 67) is cited by Margaret Anne Doody in support of her interesting interpretation of Pamela as “pastoral comedy” and a “vital statement of Christian equality” (A Natural Passion, pp. 34, 69).
Am I a prude, my dear? In the odious sense of the abused word, I am sure, I am not: But in the best sense, as derived from prudence, and used in opposition to a word that denotes a worse character, I own myself one of those who would wish to restore it to its natural respectable signification, for the sake of virtue; which as Sir Charles himself once hinted [2, p. 354], is in danger of suffering by the abuse of it; as Religion once did, by that of the word Puritan (3, p. 101).

It is difficult to see how Richardson, himself an orthodox Anglican, could support a decadent Calvinism or his works be made to typify the vestiges of English Puritanism. But, it also seems that an acceptance of a Puritan source for Pamela has led some modern critics to the conclusion that the Christian dimension of the work is somewhat opportunistic—that Richardson uses a religious terminology to cover or to give spiritual depth to what essentially is a secular purpose. In many ways, Cynthia Griffin Wolff provides a typical example of this line of reasoning when she asserts that all of Richardson's major characters "are engaged in secularizing an essentially Puritan attitude, and their difficulties are those which typified one or more generations during the early eighteenth century," and that, since Richardson was forced to go beyond his Puritan literary sources (his characters facing "worldly" rather than "religious quandaries"), he "almost always moved in the direction of secularizing. His aim, expressed in different ways throughout the novels, was always to discover an ethic which could prove useful and practical to a secular reading public." And, for Wolff, Richardson's aim is at its

6. Not all critics view Richardson as writing out of a Puritan religious tradition—for example, Diana Spearman, The Novel and Society, and Doody's A Natural Passion (in particular, pp. 178–79, where she attacks Dorothy Van Ghent's insistence on a Puritan model for Clarissa's death). Richardson himself appeared to have had a tolerant attitude toward different sects as indicated by the Italian-Catholic episodes in Sir Charles Grandison, 3:140–41 of that work, and by such passages in the Correspondence as those found in 5:186–87 and 6:13. Despite his tolerance, however, none of the major characters shows signs of supporting enthusiasm in any form.

7. This approach to Pamela clearly is evident in Michael Davitt Bell's "Pamela's Wedding and the Marriage of the Lamb." More recently, however, and even after mentioning Pamela's "fierce Protestantism" and her "spiritual development through searching her own conscience," Doody concludes that (since the story owes much to the "folk-tale" and "fable") "both her problem and its solution are secular. Both she and Mr. B. possess desires which the world is capable of satisfying in a manner conducive to happiness" (A Natural Passion, p. 99).

8. Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character, pp. 5, 231—
most "notorious" in Pamela—leading him to paint there a sensationalistic portrait of the "sin of lust" and to put forth "unfortunate equations of goodness with virginity and of blessedness with money" (231). Moreover, earlier in her book, Wolff reflects the conclusions of generations of critics concerning Pamela's ethos thus:

The superficial ethic that emerges from the novel—that the resolutely virginal will get money—is as simple-minded as it is offensive. Presumably it was acceptable to at least some of Richardson's audience, perhaps because it embodied so clearly the cant of Puritanism turned commercial. English Puritanism had always shown a dangerous tendency to concretize the benefits of virtue; and Richardson, with the caution of a man new to the business of novel writing, backs away from any attempt to deal with the serious, real problems that his work raises, choosing instead to reinforce the prejudices of his audience (72–73).

Briefly, I think it is basically simplistic to interpret the religious dimension of Pamela in this way. Such an interpretation, if offered as Richardson's major intention, not only narrows the scope of his effort but also fails to attack the work on its own terms. Any underscoring of the presence of a religious ethic in a novel carries the subsequent necessity for specifically assessing, in context, the total implications of that ethic—beyond, I hasten to add, a charge that ultimately it should be taken as evidence of pandering to the benighted tastes of a putatively secular reading public. In general, however, the difficulty with Wolff, and indeed with many modern critics, is their reluctance to take the various Christian elements in Pamela as individual manifestations of a tradition which is broader and richer than such tags as Puritanism or prudential ethics would seem to indicate. Then too, such critical concentration on bits and pieces of eighteenth-century Christianity has also served to obscure the unity of the novel's overriding theme.

The thesis of my study is, however, that this major theme is a

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9. For example, Roger Sharrock earlier concluded that since "Calvinism had always inculcated that the Lord would reward his saints," in Pamela "the reward takes the form of vigorous social aspiration" (73).
providential one. For, I think that by correctly understanding how providence (in many ways, the single most important theological concern of the age) works in *Pamela*, most of the contingent religious elements can be seen in context as serving a larger purpose: as literary evidence of an eighteenth-century belief that a divine power was perpetually at work, in and through man and nature, to protect and reward struggling virtue. Without at least noting the existence of this larger purpose in *Pamela*, moreover, a critic may very well lose sight of an important dimension of Richardson's subsequent achievement.
1. Richardson and Christian Providence

"Morality is but as one Round of a Ladder"

Along with many divines in the Renaissance, Restoration, and eighteenth century, Richardson himself insists on a distinction between morality and the Christian religion. However important morality and ethics (or such subsidiary concepts as honor) may be for the preservation of the good in society, these are for Richardson no more equivalent to the basic doctrines of the Gospels than Puritanism is to the major thrust of English Christianity. Accordingly, toward the end of *Pamela II*, Pamela writes to her parents of her former wishes regarding Mr. B.'s progress:

There was but one thing wanting to complete all the happiness I wished for in this life; which was, the remote hope I had entertained, that one day, my dear Mr. B. who from a licentious gentleman became a moralist, would be so touched by the divine grace, as to become in time, more than moral, a religious man, and, at last join in the duties he had the goodness to countenance (420).

Further on in the same letter, Mr. B. asks Pamela, "Is there not, my Pamela, a text, That the unbelieving husband shall be saved by the believing wife, whilst he beholds her chaste conversation coupled with fear?" (442). Upon her affirmative answer, he states:

Then, my dear, I begin to hope, that will be my case; for, from a former affair, of which this spot of ground puts me more in mind, I see so much reason to doubt my own strength, which I

had built, and, as I thought securely, on moral foundations, that I must look out for a better guide to conduct me, than the proud word honour can be, in the general acceptance of it among us lively young gentlemen (422).

Following this, Mr. B. speaks directly of what he sees as central to his progress:

But I depended too much upon my own strength: and I am now convinced, that nothing but religious considerations, and a resolution to watch over the very first appearances of evil, and to check them as they arise, can be of sufficient weight to keep steady to his good purpose, a vain young man, too little accustomed to restraint, and too much used to play upon the brink of dangers, from a temerity, and love of intrigue, natural to enterprising minds (423).

This distinction between the moral and the religious—the Christian man—is insisted upon again in Clarissa, a work which, as Richardson himself states, was written “above all, to investigate the highest and most important doctrines not only of morality, but of Christianity.” In speaking of the libertines who appear in his second novel, he states that they are not “infidels or scoffers, nor yet such as think themselves freed from the observance of those other moral duties which bind man to man” (I, xiii). Thus, between Lovelace and his companions, morality is almost a social cement, a code of behavior which is necessary to prevent anarchy and civil dissolution. Between Clarissa and Anna Howe, however, it is not this kind of morality which predominates, but rather a “friendship, between minds endowed with the

2. This is not to say that the words moral and morality are never used by Richardson to denote Christian truths. For example, compare Correspondence, 6:245, with pp. 73 and 144 of Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson, ed. John Carroll—hereafter cited as Selected Letters. What I am emphasizing here, and what the evidence of the novels suggests, is that mere morality, the adherence to various rules of conduct or civil tradition, without, as Pamela says, being “touched by the divine grace,” is not, however necessary a first step, the same thing as the “religious considerations,” the Christian truths which, as my following chapters demonstrate, stand as the most important thematic concerns in Richardson’s novels. For the best treatment of this, see pp. x–xi of The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum, in particular Richardson’s statement that “Morality is but as one Round of a Ladder, which shall mount us to the true Christian Perfection.”

noblest principles of virtue and religion” (I, xiii), a friendship dependent less upon a code of social behavior than upon a belief in the religious order which supersedes such a code. Moreover, when, toward the end of Sir Charles Grandison (a work in which generally accepted concepts of honor and moral behavior serve almost as foils to the correct religious standards of Sir Charles), Harriet Byron says, “But Sir Charles, madam, is a Christian!” (3, p. 282), the word itself can be taken as a concise summation and evaluation of his character within the novel.

I have dwelt at some length upon the importance of the word Christian for purposes of noting the confusion created by a critic who, even though granting the significance of Christianity or religion in Richardson’s novels, lumps all spiritual-sounding words together, and still thinks he is speaking to the point. To argue that Richardson’s works are Christian, one should be concerned primarily not just with the individual prudential or ethical or moral aspects of them, but, rather, with the more comprehensive religious world view upon which they are patterned. They are to be seen, it seems to me, as well within the mainstream of a traditional English Christianity—a body of doctrine and thought stretching from St. Paul to Edward Young, an ideology manifesting itself in England not just on the theological level but also on the literary level from Chaucer to Alexander Pope.3

Within this traditional Christian mainstream, moreover, the doctrine of divine providence represents an important aspect of Richardson’s own view of the world as it is revealed in his correspondence. For

example, Edward Young's evaluation of Richardson's mission as a novelist is not empty flattery but an incisive insight into his aims and accomplishment: "When the pulpit fails, other expedients are necessary. I look on you as a peculiar instrument of Providence, adjusted to the peculiar exigence of the times; in which all would be fine gentlemen, and only are at a loss to know what that means. While they read, perhaps, from pure vanity, they do not read in vain; and are betrayed into benefit, while mere amusement is their pursuit. I speak not this at a venture; I am so happy as already to have had proofs of what I say."

A similar evaluation addressed to Richardson is by the Dutch translator of Clarissa, Johannes Stinstra, who tells him that one "cannot forbear to observe and venerate the hand and dispensation of Providence, whose footsteps we commonly not enough acknowledge in particular cases, which thus from your earliest years has instilled in your mind those happy facts, which afterwards have produced such fine and useful fruits. However I must admire that this talent so long has laid hidden, the whole interval from your youth to your more advanced years." Throughout his correspondence, Richardson himself appears as a believer in providence. His evaluation of himself, in a letter to J. B. Defreval, is reminiscent of contemporary theological writings which stressed the intrinsic dignity of individual men and the close association between human action and divine support: "My own industry, and God's providence, have been my whole reliance. The great are not great to me, unless they are good. And it is a glorious privilege, that a middling man enjoys who has preserved his independency, and can occasionally (though not Stoically) tell the world, what he thinks of that world, in hopes to contribute, though by his mite, to mend it."

Important events in Richardson's life and in the lives of his friends were also frequently described in providential terms. Writing to Thomas Edwards about a "warehouse room" fire, Richardson states that he "had a providential deliverance" from it. In a letter to Mrs. Delany, concerning both her recent "blustering" passage to Ireland and the actions of a young lady during it, he states: "Well might the young lady behave with magnanimity. Had she not as much reason to rely on the care of Providence as Caesar on his fortunes, when he

4. Correspondence, 2:32–33.
5. The Richardson-Stinstra Correspondence and Stinstra's Prefaces to Clarissa, ed. William C. Slattery, p. 60—hereafter cited as "Slattery."
7. Correspondence, 3:49.
encountered the Egyptian boatman in a like storm.” In a letter dealing in part with Richardson’s problems concerning Irish literary pirates, the Reverend Philip Skelton assures him that “whether we succeed or fail in our other endeavours, to serve our friends, there is one in which we cannot be disappointed; I mean that proposed by my dear friend, in soliciting Divine Providence for each other’s happiness.” Writing to Sarah Westcomb concerning ways in which that lady might offer comfort to her suffering mother, Richardson reminds her that “God, who has so often delivered you and preserved you against all probability, is still at hand—his power and his goodness unabated.” In a letter to Edward Young dated May 24, 1759, Richardson assesses recent events in his life and concludes by stating: “Dear Sir, what awful Providences! In the past two years, (to go no farther back,) what have I not suffered! But I am sure of being entitled to your pity and prayers.” A final example is that of Richardson’s friend and early physician, Dr. George Cheyne, who at one point in their correspondence counsels him to give up apothecaries, have “Patience and Perseverance,” and “trust to God and Providence under the lowest, thinnest, and coolest diet you can bear with in Hopes that in Time this may mend your Blood which would infallibly mend all the rest”; at another point he reminds him that suffering itself may be a “Means in the Order of Providence” to teach true humility and the way of perfection.

8. Correspondence, 4:85. Also noteworthy is Lady Bradshaigh’s statement (describing her recent flight from an impending earthquake) that she “religiously” believed that “God’s providence is over all his works; and on that every serious person must depend, whatever situation he may be in” (Correspondence, 6:3). Richardson himself remarked on the Lisbon earthquake thus: “When the Almighty’s judgments are abroad, may we be warned” (Correspondence, 5:67).

9. Correspondence, 5:196.
10. Correspondence, 3:264.
11. Letter 145, Richardson to Young, London, May 24, 1759, Monthly Magazine (March 1, 1819), p. 135. In Letter 108, while suggesting possible changes in Young’s Conjectures, Richardson states at one point (in a memento mori passage), “The gentle slumber indulged to support our frail nature is from Providence, and, as such, they gratefully and temperately enjoy its blessing. The fatal lethargy into which it is so often perverted is the work of man, combined against himself with his worst foe; and, as such, the wise break from it by urging to its utmost the pursuit of real immortality” (Richardson to Young, January 14, 1757, Monthly Magazine, November 1, 1816, p. 335).

12. The Letters of Doctor George Cheyne to Samuel Richardson (1733–1743), edited by Charles F. Mullett, pp. 97, 100. Moreover, Cheyne viewed himself at one point in the correspondence as “an unworthy Instrument in the Hands of Providence to preserve and I hope in Time to recover into good Health and Spirits an honest and serious Man to his Family and Friends” (113).
As even these brief passages from his correspondence indicate, when a writer such as Richardson chooses for his first fictional heroine a defenseless waiting-maid, who, early in her trials, comforts herself "that God who takes the innocent Heart into his Almighty Protection . . . is alone able to baffle and confound the Devices of the Mighty" (100), he is not being eccentrically self-righteous or indulging in moralistic cant but, instead, is echoing the theological concerns of his age. Such a writer seems only to be affirming his acquiescence in common views of his age about the close association between the existence of God and His providence.

Christian Providence: A Survey

The reality of God's frequent intervention in the affairs of His creation was often directly linked in Richardson's lifetime to His very existence. During a sermon preached before the House of Commons on April 16, 1690, Archbishop John Tillotson (Richardson's favorite seventeenth-century divine) reminded his listeners that "Next to the acknowledgment of God's Being, nothing is more essential to Religion, than the Belief of his Providence, and a constant dependence upon him, as the great Governor of the World, and the wise Disposer of all the Affairs and Concernments of the Children of Men."13 In 1754, John Leland, in a work both approved of and in part printed by Richardson, summed up this same connection by stating: "The doctrine of divine providence hath a very near connection with that of the existence of the Deity, and is no less necessary to be believed. To acknowledge a God that brought all things into existence, and yet to deny that he afterwards taketh care of the creatures he hath made, or

13. "Success Not Always Answerable to the Probability of Second Causes," The Works, 2:341. As T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel note on p. 553 of Samuel Richardson: A Biography, "Thomas Birch called Archbishop Tillotson Richardson's 'favourite,' and in the 1738 edition of Defoe's Tour is added the reflection that 'a new Sect, lately sprung up, called Methodists, with great Pretences to Meekness, and intolerable Conceit and Vanity, at present seek publicly to depreciate the Memory and Works of that truly great Man.' " It also should be noted that James Mauclerc draws heavily from Tillotson's sermons in his Christian's Magazine (London, 1748), a religious digest "Revis'd and Corrected by Mr. Samuel Richardson, Editor of Pamela and Clarissa" and originally published in 1737 (see Eaves and Kimpel, Samuel Richardson, pp. 69–71).
that he exerciseth any inspection over them, as a moral governor, or concerneth himself about their actions, and the events relating to them, is, with regard to all the purposes of religion, the same thing as not to acknowledge a God at all."

Moreover, there is nothing for the true Christian outside the power and concern of God. Belief in the omnipotence and direct intervention of God in the world implied for the age, and for Richardson, the possibility that He may effectively enter into any and all events to support the good and punish the evil: "In a word, if we allow God to be the Governour of the World, we cannot but grant, that he orders and disposes of all Inferiour Events; and if we allow him to be a Wise and a Rational Governour, he cannot but direct them to a certain End." Without such an active God and the frequent signs of his intervening power, man, it was believed, would wander lost in a world governed by chance or the whims of purely secular powers. For, as John Balguy noted: "Were the World without a Governour, or without a Governour of infinite Wisdom and Perfection, the Nature and Circumstances of Mankind would be a scene of mere Disorder and Confusion."

Because of a conviction that man's vision was limited, divines throughout the period found it necessary to distinguish between chance or fortune and divine providence. For most religious writers, God's control of his creatures stood in direct opposition to beliefs in the merely whimsical nature of creation. Thomas Burnet, speaking

14. A View of the Principal Deistical Writers, Letter 24, "Lord Bolingbroke," 1:450. Richardson printed the second volume of this book, according to William M. Sale, Jr., Samuel Richardson: Master Printer, p. 184—hereafter cited as "Sale." Sale's book is invaluable because it includes an appended list of the works published and printed by Richardson. And, as Sale states on p. 3: "From the outset of his career Richardson began to exercise choice over the books that he printed. As he became more and more independent, the exercise of this choice became more clearly a measure of his preferences and his prejudices. His press assumed a character that was in large part the character of its master."


16. The Foundation of Moral Goodness. My citation is taken from British Moralists, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2:90. In his correspondence (June 8, 1754) with Johannes Stinstra, Richardson relays an answer by Mr. Duncombe pertaining to Stinstra's "Observations on Balguy's Tracts" as well as on the works of Tillotson ("Slattery," pp. 82-83). Moreover, as Sale notes (p. 148), Richardson printed Balguy's A Collection of Tracts Moral and Theological (1734).

17. While there were many religious controversies in the eighteenth century, the most significant, especially for Providentialists, grew out of the earlier Epicurean notion of a chance or materialistic creation of the world. Thus, when in Richardson's circle such terms or classifications as deist or atheist were lumped together with
of the Epicurean notion of a chance coalition of atoms. A material theory of creation, states in *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* that "'tis little better than non-sence, to say the World and all its furniture rise by chance, in that notion of it." John Tillotson, in speaking of these neo-Epicurean notions of creation, insists at one point that such a theory was not even as reasonable as the possibility that "twenty thousand blind-men . . . sent out from the several remote parts of England" should wander up and down and finally "meet on Salisbury-plains and fall into rank and file in the exact order of an army." Robert South, in a sermon based on Proverbs 16:33 (a commonly cited providential text), says that "as all Contingencies are comprehended by a certain Divine Knowledge, so they are governed by as certain and steady Providence," and, further, that "God's Hand is as steady as his Eye," able "thus to reduce Contingency to Method, Instability and Chance it self to an unfailing Rule and Order." Again, Tillotson, in "A Thanksgiving-Sermon for the Late Victory at Sea," states that political wisdom or success also depends upon "an unaccountable mixture of that which the Heathen called Fortune, but we Christians by its true name, the Providence of God; which does frequently interpose in human Affairs, and loves to confound the wisdom of the wise, and to turn their counsels into foolishness." Samuel Clarke, in

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Epicurean, it was done with a view toward exposing the total incompatibility of such ideas with orthodox Christian belief in divine providence and the continuous concern of God for his creation. Thomas Edwards, in a letter to Richardson (January 15, 1755), states it best when, after agreeing with Richardson's own negative assessment of Bolinbroke, he comments: "I know not whether his system may be more properly called deistical, or atheistical; since, though in words he allows a God, he seems to make him such a one as Epicurus did; and to think that we are beneath his notice, and have very little or nothing to do with him. He laughs at all notions of revelation, or a particular providence, and reckons the present life the whole of man's existence" (Correspondence, 3:109). Richardson's own discussion of Deism and Atheism is found in Part III of the *Vade Mecum*, and in Correspondence, 3:106–7, and 5:275.

The contemporary literature concerning orthodox attacks on Epicurean philosophy is extensive; good examples are provided by the "Prefaces" to Thomas Creech's translation *T. Lucretius Carus, Of the Nature of Things*, and *Christian's Magazine*, pp. 75, 164–68. And, for excellent modern discussions of this issue see: Martin C. Battestin's *The Providence of Wit* and Aubrey L. Williams's *An Approach To Congreve*.


Richardson and Christian Providence

his Discourse upon Natural Religion, states the power of God that:

Again; 'Tis a thing absolutely and necessarily Fitter in it self, that the Supreme Author and Creator of the Universe, should govern, order and direct all things to certain and constant regular Ends, than that every thing should be permitted to go on at adventures, produce uncertain Effects merely by chance and in the utmost confusion, without any determinate View or Design at all.  

As William Law remarks in A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, moreover, nothing in the life of individual men and the creation is left to chance:

We are as sure that nothing happens to us by chance, as that the world itself was not made by chance; we are as certain that all things happen and work together for our good, as that God is goodness itself. So that a man has as much reason to Will every thing that happens to him, because God wills it, as to think that is wisest which is directed by infinite wisdom.

Charles Wheatly, in a sermon printed by Richardson in 1728, insists on this point when he asks:

When did your Studies or Affairs succeed beyond your Expectations, or even beyond your Hopes and Wishes?—Often, I hope, you will all reply.—But perhaps you will add, that this was owing to a lucky Hit, a happy chance, or a sudden Thought.—But who is it (permit me to ask once more) that governs Chance, and inspires Thought?—And if Thought and Chance descend from Heaven;—You may undervalue them if you please:—But I shall think them nobly born. To impute our Abilities and Success to human Chance alone—is to conceive meaner Notions of what we are, and what we do, than ever Heathens, with their poor, weak, and barren Helps, ever entertained of old.

24. Fifty Sermons on Several Subjects and Occasions, 1: 139-40. This sermon ("BEZALEEL and AHO LIAB: Or, Men's Abilities and Skill the Gifts of God") "was preached on 7 December 1727 before the Merchant-Taylor's School" and printed by Richardson in 1728 ("Sale," p. 214).
In the terms of the age, to say that chance ruled in the world was to imply in effect that God had abdicated His position as the center of all things, as the sustainer of all existence, and, subsequently, that justice, mercy, and order itself had ceased to exist. The implications of a universe ruled by chance are cogently described by John Tillotson in his sermon "Success Not Always Answerable to the Probability of Second Causes":

Were there not in the World a Being, that is wiser, and better, and more powerful than our selves, and that keeps things from running into endless confusion and disorder; a Being that loves us, and takes care of us, and that will certainly consider and reward all the good that we do, and all the evil that we suffer upon his account. I do not see what reason any man could have to take any comfort and joy in Being, or to wish the continuance of it for one moment.25

At one point in Thomas Sherlock's Discourses (a work referred to as "noble" by Richardson), there is found the similar reminder that "were it not for the Comfort arising from this providential Care of God over the World, the best Thing a Wise Man could do for himself, would be to get out of it as soon as he could; the only Way to secure himself from the Miseries and Calamities which men by their Folly and their Wickedness are perpetually drawing down upon themselves and others."26 And John Wilkins flatly states that "Goodness, Justice, Dominion . . . must all signify nothing without Providence in the Application of them."27

If indeed man were ruled by the stars, or predestined by the dictates of a fate, it was believed by providentialists that he was no longer a reasonable person, but rather a grotesque and expendable cog in some vast machine going nowhere and accomplishing nothing. Fortune, usually depicted as blind, dispensing its gifts without apparent plan or purpose, cannot significantly differentiate between man as species and man as individual. Under the guidance of providence, however, man, marked by both individuation and personality, be-

25. Works, 2:357.
26. Several Discourses Preached at the Temple Church, from vol. 5, Discourse V (based on Acts 7:25), p. 124. For Richardson's comment on this work, see Correspondence, 3:107.
27. Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion, Chap. 9, "Of the Communicable Perfections of God," p. 117.
came part of a good plan as a specific being having intrinsic worth from the moment of birth. Thus, a belief in providence precludes the coincidental or accidental (though not such events as seem to be mere coincidence or accident), for such terms have no valid meaning for reasonable creatures, but imply simply a lack of understanding of the particular workings of providence. In the real world, whether it be a shipwreck or the fall of a prince, an untimely death or a last-minute reprieve of an innocent man, it was providence and not fortune at work. Not that man was to remain passive, blindly accepting every event of his life as God's will in the sense that he became merely an inert tool in the hand of a master craftsman; rather, man was to be watchful for those moments when God's will and human purpose intersected for the accomplishment of some larger public or private good. For, as it is stated in Chapter 20 of *The Christian's Magazine*, the religious digest edited by Richardson:

> THO God over-rules the Actions of Men, to do what he himself thinks fit to be done; yet he lays no Necessity upon human Actions; Men will and chuse freely, pursue their own Interests and Inclinations, just as they would do if there were no Providence to govern them; tho' they may be restrained from doing so much Wickedness as they would, yet all the Wickedness they commit is their own free Choice, even when it serves such Ends as they never thought of; and therefore they are and act like free Agents, notwithstanding the Government of Providence.²⁹

Believing that God watches over both the species and the individual, English divines emphasized a doctrine of general and particular providence and a consequent system of rewards and punishments invoked both in this life and in the next.³⁰ General providence was apparent in such things as the creation of the world, the sustaining of

²⁸. Regarding “freedom of will,” George Stanhope states that God “leaves us to choose our Virtues, that so they may qualify us for a noble Recompense: And he suffers our Vices to be our own Act, for otherwise they could not be capable of Punishment”: *A Paraphrase and Comment Upon the Epistles and Gospels*, 1:236—hereafter cited as *Gospels*.


³⁰. The ways of illustrating the workings of providence and the position of man are manifold during the period. For example, general and particular providence frequently were illustrated by the “wheel within a wheel” of Ezekiel. See Richardson's friend, Edward Young's *An Argument Drawn from the Circumstances of Christ's Death for the Truth of His Religion* (1758). A copy of this sermon was sent to Richardson to proof and criticize, and was printed by him (“Sale,” pp. 216–17).
that world and of mankind, the upholding or destroying of kingdoms, and sometimes was viewed as dominating a particular or special providence concerned for the well-being of even the lowliest of creatures. John Leland thus states: “Particular events are, in the ordinary course of things, ordered in such a manner as is subordinate to the general laws of providence relating to the physical and moral world. And what are usually called occasional interpositions, are properly to be considered as applications of general laws to particular cases and occasions.”

The more common position is, however, that of Isaac Barrow, who saw them of equal significance and importance, simply as two manifestations of the same divine power, “general in the government of mankind; particular in God's dealing with each single person.”

English religious writers often stress that since it is difficult for man to discern the exact meaning of God's purpose in a particular instance, he should beware of judging God by human standards. In light of this common human limitation, Richardson himself in the Vade Mecum underscores the folly both of trying to bring down “the Mysteries of Almighty God” to the “Limits of our weak Capacities,” and of the subsequent rejection of “whatever appears not clear to our short-sighted Reason.”

And John Wilkins speaks to this point when he warns: “... tho' some particular Dispensations may seem unto us to be difficult and obscure, His judgments being unsearchable, and his ways past finding out; yet we may be most sure, that there is an excellent Contrivance in all of them, Though clouds and darkness may be round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.” In other words, it is God's will and not man's that is paramount. Indeed, as William Sherlock states (in a passage included in The Christian's Magazine), to trust in providence “is not to trust in God, that he will do that particular thing for us which we desire; but to trust our selves and all our concernments with God, to do for us in every particular case which we recommend to his care, what he sees best and fittest for us in such cases.”

Man must bear in mind, moreover, that God “reserves

31. A View of the Principal Deistical Writers, 1:455.
32. The Theological Works, edited by the Reverend Alexander Napier, 7:46: A Brief Exposition of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Decalogue, To Which is Added the Doctrine of the Sacraments.
34. Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion, Chap. 17, “Of Passive Obedience, or Patience and Submission to the Will of God,” p. 212.
35. A Discourse concerning the Divine Providence, p. 374. This passage also is included in The Christian's Magazine (Chap. 21, p. 180).
to himself a liberty to judge whether it be good for us; but if what we desire be good for us, our trust and dependence on God will engage Providence on our side.\textsuperscript{36}

It was common for divines to use as examples of this particular providence those times when the helpless, the despondent, the unlikely, or the prideful were singled out for such rewards and punishments as they deserved. There was, as Robert South stated, “not the least thing that falls within the cognizance of Man, but is directed by the counsel of God. Not an Hair can fall from our Head, nor a Sparrow to the Ground, without the Will of our Heavenly Father.”\textsuperscript{37} No one could be certain of knowing at the time the exact purpose behind events, for often even a man’s despondency or failure was the very means used by God to effect His desired end. A belief in providence indeed should cause a man to beware of despairing in the face of even dreadful calamities:

\textellipsis therefore, let no Man who owns the Belief of a Providence, grow desperate, or forlorn, under any Calamity, or Straight whatsoever; but compose the Anguish of his Thoughts, and rest his amazed Spirits upon this one Consideration, That he knows not which way the Lot may fall, or what may happen to him; he comprehends not those strange, unaccountable Methods, by which Providence may dispose of him.\textsuperscript{38}

For Tillotson, this special providence of God, “which sometimes presents men with unexpected opportunities, and interposeth accidents which no human wisdom could foresee,” also “gives success to very unlikely means, and defeats the swift, and the strong, and the learned, and the industrious.”\textsuperscript{39}

The probable times for a particular intervention by God were even capable of being systematized into lists of rules. For example, Isaac Barrow argues that occasions of providence could be inferred from such marks as the “wonderful strangeness of events”;\textsuperscript{40} or “when plots, with extreme caution and secrecy contrived in darkness are by

improbable means, by unaccountable accidents, disclosed and brought to light” (458); or the “seasonableness or suddenness of events. When that, which in itself is not ordinary, nor could well be expected, doth fall out happily, in the nick of an exigency, for the relief of innocence, the encouragement of goodness, the support of a good cause, the furtherance of any good purpose” (460); or the “righteousness of the case” itself (465); or the “correspondence of events to the prayers and desires of good men” (466); or God's “dispensing rewards and punishments” according to men's just deserts to fit the “actions upon which they are grounded” (467); or, and most pertinent to Pamela, those times whenever

right is oppressed, or perilously invaded; when innocence is grossly abused, or sorely beset; when piety is fiercely opposed, or cunningly undermined; when good men for the profession of truth, or the practice of virtue, are persecuted, or grievously threatened with mischief; then may we presume that God is not unconcerned, nor will prove backward to reach forth his succour(466).

George Hickes, in a “list” similar to Barrow's, offers as a prime example of God's special intervention those times when His assistance “falls out very seasonably for the Relief, and Vindication of oppressed Innocence.”

And John Wilkins, in a passage reminiscent of Tillotson, emphasizes those extraordinary providences which “have many times happened ... for the punishing of obstinate Sinners, and for the Deliverance of such as were Religious, in answer to their Prayers”; events suggesting for the age the probability that, as Richardson notes in Pamela regarding the virtuous “who are reduced to a low Estate,” “God will, in his own good Time, extricate them, by means unforeseen, out of their present Difficulties, and reward them with Benefits unhop'd for” (Riverside, p. 410).

Viewed within the context of a theology which was vitally concerned with the manifestations of divine providence in the natural world, such statements as those by Richardson and his friends, as well

41. “A Sermon Preach'd in the Cathedral Church of Worcester, on the 29th of May, 1684,” A Collection of Sermons, 2:34.
as those by English divines, surely suggest that the use of providence in Richardson's first novel was not merely casual or decorative. Moreover, since Richardson's later novels also mirror the religious world view of the age in which they were written, with providence forming their most important thematic concept, a brief demonstration of the presence of providential language and situation within Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison can serve to show not only that its prevalence in Pamela is somehow central rather than incidental to the design and meaning of his first novel but also that it is somehow central rather than incidental to any detailed consideration of his novelistic career.

43. As Sale notes, the "clergy constituted the largest single group for which he printed," and most of these works were by "more or less orthodox members of the Church of England" (pp. 125–26). And as Richardson himself informed Edward Young (regarding John Stanley's request that he read Heaven Opened To All Men): "I had but little time to read anything that I thought controversial, or shocking to fundamentals" (Letter 5, Richardson to Young, undated, Monthly Magazine, December 1, 1813, p. 419).
Early in *Clarissa*, and at a time when James and Arabella Harlowe are methodically forcing an acceptance of Solmes as proof of Clarissa's indifference to Lovelace, Clarissa remembers Dr. Lewen's advice of "Steadiness of mind" when one is convinced of being absolutely in the right (I, 93). Although already fearing that more trials are to come and that even such "steadiness" might be construed as merely "stubbornness," "obstinacy," or "prepossession," she nevertheless writes to Anna Howe:

So, my dear, were we perfect (which no one can be), we could not be happy in this life, unless those with whom we have to deal (those more especially who have any control upon us) were governed by the same principles. But then does not the good doctor's conclusion recur—that we have nothing to do but to choose what is right; to be steady in the pursuit of it: and to leave the issue to Providence? (I, 94). \(^1\)

Later in the first volume, following Lovelace's appearance in the woodhouse and the ever increasing severity of her relatives, Clarissa says of a proposed meeting with Solmes: "Let Mr. Solmes come and go, as my papa pleases: let me but stay or retire when he comes, as I can; and leave the rest to Providence" (I, 261). Shortly after the disastrous meeting with Solmes, and in the face of threats to carry her to her Uncle Antony's, Clarissa questions the apparent whimsicality of her present trials:

O my dear! what is worldly wisdom but the height of folly? I, the meanest, at least the youngest, of my father's family, to thrust myself in the gap between such uncontrollable spirits—to the interception perhaps of the designs of Providence, which may intend to make these hostile spirits their own punishers. If so, what presumption! Indeed, my dear friend, I am afraid I have thought myself of too much consequence. But, however this be, it is good, when calamities befall us, that we should look into ourselves, and fear (I, 413).

A few pages later, and in a similarly contemplative mood, Clarissa questions: "Who knows what the justice of Heaven may inflict, in order to convince us that we are not out of the reach of misfortune; and to reduce us to a better reliance, than we have hitherto presumptuously made?" (I, 419). Soon, writing from St. Albans following her flight, Clarissa describes to Anna the arguments used by Lovelace to persuade her to leave with him. During this debate, he threatens the safety of her family if Solmes should succeed, and Clarissa retorts: "To Providence, Mr. Lovelace, and to the law, will I leave the safety of my friends. You shall not threaten me into a rashness that my heart condemns! Shall I, to promote your happiness, as you call it, destroy all my future peace of mind?" (I, 479).

Although Lovelace indeed tricks Clarissa into just such a "rashness," into fleeing the trials being inflicted upon her by the greed of her family and their support of a match with Solmes, she nevertheless immediately condemns herself for taking this step. While certainly innocent in comparison with Lovelace, Clarissa is constantly aware that leaving her parents' house was a precipitate and even prideful action.2 At this early stage in her trials, moreover, she closely assesses her previous conduct, and bitterly laments both her excessive reliance upon her own strength and her willingness "to be the arbiter of the quarrels of unruly spirits"—a willingness which she now views as "presumptuous" and "presumption punished—punished, as other sins frequently are, by itself" (I, 486). This process of reassessment and self-analysis continues, and, shortly before her departure for London, she anticipates with faith much of what in fact does happen in the coming months: "Since it is now too late to look back, let me collect all

2. See Dussinger's "Conscience and the Pattern of Christian Perfection in Clarissa," and Ira Konigsberg's "The Tragedy of Clarissa." Despite the significance of Clarissa's pride in refusing to submit to her parents' wishes, I think that greater emphasis should be placed on her initial failure to persist in her own stated belief that she must trust to providence to support her during her early trials.
my fortitude and endeavour to stand those shafts of angry Providence which it will not permit me to shun! That whatever the trials may be which I am destined to undergo, I may not behave unworthily in them, but come out amended by them” (II, 168). Once in London, the receipt of Colonel Morden’s letter, warning her to avoid the advances of a libertine, causes Clarissa to lament: “That a man of a character which ever was my abhorrence should fall to my lot! But depending on my own strength; having no reason to apprehend danger from headstrong and disgraceful impulses; I too little perhaps cast up my eyes to the Supreme Director: in whom, mistrusting myself, I ought to have placed my whole confidence—and the more, when I saw myself so perseveringly addressed by a man of this character” (II, 262).

There is now, however, no garden gate through which to flee the trials awaiting her—only a growing necessity in fact to “choose what is right; to be steady in the pursuit of it; and to leave the issue to Providence.” From even these few examples, an insistent theme is visible in the novel. Following an initial refusal to abide by the dictates of her parents, an initial wavering in her decision to follow the advice of Dr. Lewen or consistently to take to heart the religious “principles wrought ... into” her “earliest mind” by the “pious Mrs. Norton” (I, 419), Clarissa is progressively attacked from all sides—pressured by vindictive and well-meaning relatives alike, and entreated and importuned by a “lover” who in many ways (through his use of such agents within the Harlowe family as Joseph Leman) is able to prod them all at will, resulting in constant upset and turmoil. On many occasions she is left defenseless except for a pious hope, a hope nurtured by her early acceptance of religious principles, that somehow, some way, God, through His providence, will make His will clear to her and effectively support her during this time of testing and trouble. Once she has physically left the protection of her parents’ house, moreover, Clarissa is not only provided with numerous opportunities to deny her religious beliefs but is also faced with seemingly invincible enemies of all virtue or goodness: Lovelace himself, almost satanic in his general characterization and his delight in contrivance and intrigue, a “damnation rogue” (III, 161), knowing the good and yet unwilling to amend himself sufficiently to do the good; Madam Sinclair and her whores; and the world itself—London in particular, a place of perjurers and pimps and cutthroats far removed from the quiet garden of Harlowe Place and the serenity of the Dairy House. Nevertheless Clarissa endures, learns much, and by the time of her
death becomes not an object of pity but an example, a very special instance, of the permanence of the good and of the active and continuous concern of God for suffering virtue.

It is not my purpose to examine each instance where providence is alluded to by Clarissa or the other characters, or where events occur which find their counterpart in the sermons and homiletic literature of the age. Clarissa time and again comments upon her progress, present state, and future hopes by linking them to the purposes of Heaven, the plan which only God can see clearly. For example, at one point shortly after the rape she states: "Great and good God of Heaven... give me patience to support myself under the weight of those afflictions, which Thou, for wise and good ends, though at present impenetrable by me, hast permitted" (III, 232). Not long after this plea to Heaven, and in answer to Lovelace's question as to where she would go even if he permitted it, she asserts: "No matter whither. I will leave to Providence, when I am out of this house, the direction of my future steps... The evils I have suffered... however irreparable, are but temporary evils. Leave me to my hopes of being enabled to obtain the Divine forgiveness for the offence I have been drawn in to give to my parents, and to virtue; that so I may avoid the evils that are more than temporary" (III, 265–66). In general, a close reading of the text reveals that Clarissa moves from an initial and frequently waver- ing acceptance of the truth of religious principles toward a final and tested belief in their efficacy—a belief which she earns only after much personal suffering, and a belief which sustains her as she approaches death. Thus, more pertinent to an understanding of the thematic significance of providence in the novel is Clarissa's death itself and the letters subsequently delivered to all the principals involved in her story.

Although Richardson himself—along with various divines of the period—viewed "calamity" as "the test of virtue, and often the parent of

3. For example, one could note the actions of Joseph Leman. Although instrumental in Lovelace's early successes within the Harlowe family, Leman is later the direct cause of his master's ultimate failure and death. This is no simple "bitter bit" story, but finds a counterpart in numerous providential texts throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For Richardson's own evaluation, see the "Postscript" to Clarissa (4:557–58). The story of Haman provides a scriptural source for such accounts of the wicked being ensnared by their own devices (Esther 7).

4. It is interesting to note that one of the books which Lovelace furnishes for the "Sinclair library" (2:194) is George Stanhope's Gospels, a work filled with denunciations of pride and numerous statements regarding the necessity of testing Christian principles in the context of the real world—see 2:169, for example.
it, in minds that prosperity would ruin," the profound suffering of a Clarissa, presented throughout the novel as almost a paragon of the Christian virtues, stirred in his own time some rather passionate and interesting responses. He was advised by Mrs. Pilkington that when Colley Cibber heard that Clarissa must die, he said: "G-d d--n him if she should; and that he should no longer believe Providence, or eternal Wisdom, or Goodness governed in the world, if merit, innocence, and beauty were to be so destroyed: nay, (added he) my mind is so hurt with the thought of her being violated, that were I to see her in Heaven, sitting on the knees of the blessed Virgin, and crowned with glory, her sufferings would still make me feel horror, horror distilled." Richardson himself, however, answering Lady Bradshaigh's repeated desire that Clarissa be rewarded in this world, thus emphasizes what he was trying to depict in his novel:

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 aver, 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?

5. Selected Letters, p. 151. For a discussion of the reasons and uses of trials and afflictions in life, see Stanhope's Gospels (4:277–83), as well as the following chapter of this present study.
7. Correspondence, 4:225. As A. D. McKillop points out, Richardson's "defense of his ending" also "stirred up a long discussion of poetic justice by William Duncombe, Joseph Highmore, and George Jeffreys." Samuel Richardson, Printer and Novelist, p. 140. This discussion is found in Letters by Several Eminent Persons Deceased, ed. John Duncombe—see 2:210–11 in particular.

For another excellent contemporary discussion of the significance of Clarissa's death and her highlighting of providence, see Johannes Stinstra's "Preface" to the "Seventh and Eighth Volumes" ("Slattery," pp. 204–5). Midway in his "Postscript" to Clarissa, Richardson himself states in a footnote: "And here it may not be amiss to remind the reader, that so early in the work as vol. i, pp. 419–20, the dispensations of Providence are justified by herself. And thus she ends her reflections—"I shall not live always—may my closing scene be happy!"/She had her wish. It was happy" (4:558); moreover, pp. 554–58 of the "Postscript" contain Richardson's own discussion of poetic justice in Clarissa.
That Richardson kept "the Christian system in his eye" appears further evident if the various letters Clarissa entrusts Belford to send in the event of her death are carefully examined. She writes to Belford himself (whose spiritual growth stands in direct contrast to Lovelace's progressive hardness of heart): "... let me hope that I may be a humble instrument in the hands of Providence, to reform a man of your abilities" (IV, 355); she begs forgiveness from her father and mother (IV, 359–61); she pleads with her brother, cautioning him against taking revenge on Lovelace, to "Leave, then, the poor wretch to the Divine justice ... and if Heaven will afford him time for repentance, why should not you?" (IV, 362); she asks for pity from her sister (IV, 363–64); and, after regretting her own presumption in thinking that she might "be a means in the hand of Providence to reclaim a man whom" she thought "worthy of the attempt," reminds Lovelace of the spiritual danger of his past activities, admonishes and prophetically warns him to: "Lose no time. Set about your repentance instantly. Be no longer the instrument of Satan, to draw poor souls into those subtile snares, which at last shall entangle your own feet" (IV, 437).

But it is the letter to her Uncles John and Antony that provides the best insight into her progress—indeed the major instance of her perception of the significance of providence.

The ways of Providence are unsearchable. Various are the means made use of by it, to bring poor sinners to a sense of their duty. Some are drawn by love, others are driven by terrors, to their Divine refuge. I had for eighteen years out of nineteen rejoiced in the favour and affection of every one. No trouble came near my heart. I seemed to be one of those designed to be drawn by the silken cords of love. But perhaps I was too apt to value myself upon the love and favour of every one: the merit of the good I delighted to do, and of the inclinations which were

8. Lovelace's hardness of heart is almost a commonplace in Richardson criticism. Richardson's statements concerning this also are numerous (Correspondence, 4:187, and the "Preface" to Sir Charles Grandison). Eighteenth-century theological treatments of this sin are found in Stanhope's Gospels (1:303–7; 2:176), and in Chapter 22 ("Concerning God's Hardening of Men") of The Christian's Magazine. A pertinent seventeenth-century example is provided by Gilbert Burnet's Life of Rochester, p. 102.

9. Pertinent to this statement by Clarissa is Stanhope's discussion of the "good" which was derived from the "shameful" death of Christ—in particular the fact that by this very means Satan fell "into his own Snare, and in the same Net [Psalms 9:14] that he hid privily, was his own Foot taken; His Devices returned upon his own Head, and his Mischiefs fell upon his own Pate" (Gospels, 2:497).
given me, and which I could not help having, I was, perhaps, too ready to attribute to myself; and now, being led to account for the cause of my temporary calamities, find I had a secret pride to be punished for, which I had not fathomed: and it was necessary perhaps that some sore and terrible misfortunes should befall me, in order to mortify that my pride and that my vanity.

Temptations were accordingly sent. I shrunk in the day of trial. My discretion, which had been so cried up, was found wanting when it came to be weighed in an equal balance. I was betrayed, fell, and became the byword of my companions, and a disgrace to my family, which had so prided itself in me perhaps too much. But as my fault was not that of a culpable will, when my pride was sufficiently mortified, I was not suffered (although surrounded by dangers, and entangled in snares) to be totally lost: but purified by sufferings, I was fitted for this change I have NOW, at the time you will receive this, so newly, and, as I humbly hope, so happily experienced (IV, 364–65).

This letter in many ways marks the high point of Clarissa's self-awareness, and it is "Providence" which she now credits as having been at work in the world through which she has journeyed—a force intricately linked to the recent events in her life. Man's goal, exemplified by Clarissa herself, is to arrive at a "Divine refuge" in spite of the dangers, trials, and temptations to which the human condition is subjected. There is no escaping the trials of life, no garden gate leading to a better world, and, as Richardson suggests at this point, perhaps the best anyone can expect is to remain steady throughout such trials and eventually attain a death similar to Clarissa's: hopeful and quietly trusting in a God Whose mercy and justice, love and wrath, concern and guidance are visibly present in the world, and Who uses various instruments to draw men to Him, yet always allowing a freedom of will and choice of action in the creatures He created and sustains. Clarissa, as this letter also suggests, is purged not of an adolescent vanity or a feminine coyness, but rather of a potentially dangerous belief, born in the safety of a sequestered life, in her own

10. In Richardson's Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflexions, a work which he called "the pith and marrow of nineteen volumes, not unkindly received" (Correspondence, 2:48), three of the five "sentiments" under the heading "Providence" are taken from this last letter to Clarissa's uncles, John and Antony.

11. As Richardson himself stated in a letter to Lady Bradshaigh, "O that my own last hour, and the last hour of those I love, may be such as that I have drawn for my Clarissa!" (Correspondence, 4:228).
unwavering goodness and purity—a belief which she almost equated with proof of salvation. The merit given her by others was frequently accepted as her just due, unearned, and believed to be further proof of her value without the need to preserve and exercise, actively and continuously, each day, the fragile virtue, the precarious goodness found in all men. By the time of her death, however, she has taken to heart the warnings of God, has read aright the "ways of Providence" in the world, and can be said to be in a good way toward salvation, toward seeing that even death itself is but God's method of subduing "His poor creatures to Himself" (IV, 299). In life, her ultimate choices were correct, and her final reward is left to God.

The divine warnings—the "ways of Providence" which Clarissa takes to heart—are lost on Lovelace. While she attains self-knowledge, strength, and comfort from her trials and sufferings, he progressively hardens his heart. Following her death, he raves for a time, but his pride remains unshakable. As noted earlier, Clarissa's last letter to him explicitly describes what he can expect if, by his continued wickedness, he multiplies his offenses and refuses to repent. In a passage telescoping Job 18 and 20, Clarissa further warns him that:

The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. He is cast into a net by his own feet—he walketh upon a snare. Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side. The first-born of death shall devour his strength. His remembrance shall perish from the earth; and he shall have no name in the streets. He shall be chased out of the world. He shall have neither son nor nephew among his people. They that have seen him shall say, Where is he? He shall fly as a dream: he shall be chased away as a vision of the night. His meat is the gall of asps within him. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through. A fire not blown shall consume

12. Such a situation can result in a "Pride," as Stanhope notes, whereby "we are led into false Notions of our Virtues, and Performances; and swell'd with Imaginations of our Worth" (Gospels, 3:534).

13. A pertinent Anglican statement concerning the "fitness" of such a death is this one by Stanhope: "No Death can be hasty or unseasonable, which comes, when a Man hath satisfied the Ends he lived for. No Life is long, which determines, before the Purposes of living are made good and its Work done. But Happy, Happy They, who after the most distressed, the most laborious, the most despised Instances of their Virtue, can sing this Song of Triumph to themselves, that they have been faithful in their Charge; and done what it was their Duty to do" (Gospels, 2:573).
him. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him. The worm shall feed sweetly on him. He shall be no more remembered. This is the fate of him that knoweth not God (IV, 437).

Even this graphic and prophetic statement fails to cause Lovelace to leave his pride. In his next letter to Belford, he appears to be a man suffering yet steadfast in his refusal to submit to a power greater than his own:

I have been in a cursed way. Methinks something has been working strangely retributive. I never was such a fool as to disbelieve a Providence; yet am I not for resolving into judgments everything that seems to wear an avenging face. Yet if we must be punished either here or hereafter for our misdeeds, better here, say I, than hereafter. Have I not then an interest to think my punishment already not only begun, but completed; since what I have suffered, and do suffer, passes all description? (IV, 438).

Although Lovelace constantly laments the death of Clarissa, it appears to be an essentially selfish lamentation. He even repents sending this letter to Belford, and states: “I own that I am still excessively grieved at the disappointment this admirable woman made it so much her whimsical choice to give me. But, since it has thus fallen out; since she was determined to leave the world; and since she actually ceases to be; ought I, who have such a share of life and health in hand, to indulge gloomy reflections upon an event that is past; and being past, cannot be recalled?” (IV, 442).

Ultimately it is his progressive egoistic selfishness, whereby Lovelace closes his ears to the warnings of providence and hardens his heart in response to the stirrings of conscience, that causes his destruction. Belford pleads with him shortly before his departure for Europe: “...if you do not quickly reform, it will be out of your power to reform at all; and that Providence, which has already given you the fates of your Agents Sinclair and Tomlinson to take warning by, will not let the principal offender escape, if he slight the warning” (IV, 449). Lovelace, however, at first chides Belford for indulging in “the dismal and the horrible” at the expense of “gaiety” (IV, 450), and then goes on to plead that he himself is “not answerable for all the extravagant consequences that this affair has been attended with; and
which could not possibly be foreseen” (IV, 451–52). The instances of Lovelace’s refusal to heed “the most affecting Warnings” of providence following the death of Clarissa are numerous; his persistence in viewing as nonsense the growing evidence of “the handwriting upon the wall” against him is unshakable (IV, 517), and eventually her prophecy is fulfilled when he literally is “cast into a net by his own feet” and killed by Colonel Morden in a duel inadvertently brought about by a “conscience-ridden” letter from his former tool, Joseph Leman, stating that the colonel vowed “to have his will” of him (IV, 515). His pride, so manifest in his retorts to the concerned and sincere admonishments of Belford, causes him to meet the colonel and subsequently receive a mortal wound at his hands. Lovelace’s last words, “LET THIS EXPIATE!” (IV, 530), especially when joined with his refusal to heed the colonel’s advice to “snatch these few fleeting moments, and commend yourself to God” (IV, 529), are evidence not of a sincere repentance, but rather, again, of a pride which causes him to demand that his own death be acceptable as an “atonement” for the suffering and death of Clarissa. Unlike Clarissa, however, Lovelace dies in selfishness and pride, a blind “Sacrifice to his own Folly,” a man “Hoist with his owne petar,” and an example for others of the providential justice which many divines saw manifesting itself against the wicked frequently in this life, but most assuredly in the next.14

ii

“An humble Instrument in the Hand of Providence”:

Sir Charles Grandison

While not as insistent as Clarissa upon overt providential control, Sir Charles Grandison nevertheless presents a fictive world view patterned

14. For a valuable examination of the role of Colonel Morden, see Robert M. Schmitz’s “Death and Colonel Morden in Clarissa.” Richardson’s own statements regarding the impossibility of Lovelace’s “atonement” are legion (for example: Correspondence, 4:188–90).

The statement on Lovelace’s “folly” is taken from Sarah Fielding’s excellent contemporary pamphlet Remarks On Clarissa, p. 48—see pp. 291-92 of Eaves and Kimpel’s biography for a discussion of this work. The Remarks also are included in the Forster Collection of Richardson’s correspondence from which my citation was taken.

The fact that Lovelace is “Hoist with his owne petar” has often been noted by critics. Richardson’s own appraisal is found on pp. 167, 168, and 375 of his Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflexions. Also relevant is this statement by Archbishop Tillotson: “God doth many times by his Providence order things so, that in this Life mens
upon a real world belief in the providence of God.\textsuperscript{15} The major plot proceeds by way of the long and elaborate courtship of Harriet Byron, and not until late in the novel is it certain that she and Sir Charles will wed. The prime obstacles to their marriage comprise the subplot and derive from two different sets of circumstances: the prior "engagement" of Sir Charles to an Italian gentlewoman, the Lady Clementina, and the ever present danger posed to both Sir Charles and Harriet by various rakes, most notably Sir Hargrave Pollexfen.

The Clementina problem, a result of Sir Charles's rescuing the scion of a wealthy Italian family and being accepted into their confidence, involves conflicts of both religion and nationality. The lady herself comes dangerously close to insanity in an attempt to reconcile her Roman Catholic heritage with the Anglicanism of Sir Charles—causing him in turn to agonize (after returning to England) over the seeming irreconcilability of honoring a prior commitment and his growing love for Harriet. Moreover, the machinations of Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, ranging from the abduction of Harriet to his attempts at forcing Sir Charles into a duel, provide means whereby Sir Charles's essential character is revealed and also serve to reveal the futility of selfish and prideful behavior.

The Clementina problem, coupled with those involving Sir Hargrave, helps to heighten a picture of the world as "maze" or as a scene of baffling social twists and turns in which even the probable event seems uncertain of ever being realized. Within this world, Sir Charles moves from crisis to crisis, arrives at critical times to save suffering innocence, and always attributes his success to a power greater than his own—wishing, as he states at one point, only to be "an humble instrument, in the hand of Providence" (2, 454). Having personally escaped "by the Divine assistance" various "snares" laid to corrupt him (2, 137), Sir Charles in many ways serves as a visible instrument through which this supernatural assistance is shared with others. Unlike a Lovelace finally hardened in sin and unwilling to repent, or a Mr. B., originally indulging his sinful desires and finally started on the way of salvation by the continuing example of a worthy and patient

\footnotesize{Unrighteousness returns upon their own pates. There is a Divine Nemesis which brings our Iniquities upon our selves" ("Preach'd At the Morning-exercise at Cripple-Gate," Works, 10:309).}

\footnotesize{15. For interesting appraisals of Grandison, see Dussinger's "Richardson's Christian Vocation," (especially pp. 13–14), Leon M. Guilhamet's "From Pamela to Grandison: Richardson's Moral Revolution in the Novel," pp. 203–5; and Margaret Anne Doody's A Natural Passion, pp. 241–305.}
woman, Sir Charles, instilled from childhood by his mother in "notions of moral rectitude, and the first principles of Christianity" (1, 261), stands from his initial appearance in the novel both as a mature good man and as an active agent for the continuance of this good in a world too often excessively passionate and subject to civil dissolution as a result of various codes of honor which are little more than euphemisms for murder. 16

The clearest statement of the world order by which Sir Charles Grandison is shaped comes when Dr. Bartlett shows the assembled company Emily Jervois's translation of the "Sonnet of Vincenzo da Filicaia":

See a fond mother incircled by her children: With pious tenderness she looks around, and her soul even melts with maternal Love. One she kisses on the forehead; and clasps another to her bosom. One she sets upon her knee; and finds a seat upon her foot for another. And while, by their actions, their lisping words, and asking eyes, she understands their various numberless little wishes, to these she disperses a look; a word to those; and whether she smiles or frowns, 'tis all in tender Love.

Such to us, tho' infinitely high and awful, is PROVIDENCE: So it watches over us; comforting these; providing for those; listening to all; assisting every one: And if sometimes it denies the favour we implore, it denies but to invite our more earnest prayers; or, seeming to deny a blessing, grants one in that refusal (1, 432).

This translation generally describes what in fact does happen in the novel. Providence, the active representation of the love, mercy, and justice of God, works in and through man and nature to govern, aid, and guide according to a purpose not always immediately clear but always finally equitable. As providence working in the world is seen

16. Many critics see him as a prig. A statement of Richardson's appraisal of the humanity of Sir Charles, however, is found in Correspondence, 3:169–70.

Also relevant to Sir Charles's "character" is Archbishop Tillotson's sermon "Concerning Our Imitation of the Divine Perfections" (cited by Richardson in the last volume of Grandison), in which he states, speaking of the necessity of "patterns" of "perfection": "The way to excel in any kind, is, optima quaeque exempla ad imitandum proponere, to propose the highest and most perfect examples to our imitation" (Works, 6:289). Prefacing his citation of this passage, Richardson states that "Sir Charles Grandison is therefore in the general tenor of his principles and conduct (tho' exerted in peculiarities of circumstances that cannot always be accommodated to particular imitation) proposed for an Example" (3:466).
"assisting every one," so periodically in the novel momentum is carried by a number of timely assists, events so extraordinary that to view them as mere coincidence is to make probability itself seem ludicrous. Here I shall examine three episodes which are representative of such assists and such larger concerns: the Harriet-Pollexfen abduction scene; the Danby story; and the later episode of Sir Hargrave in France.

Sir Hargrave Pollexfen's abduction of Harriet Byron from a masquerade ball sets in motion a string of occurrences which lead to the first appearance of Sir Charles in the novel. Sir Hargrave uses Harriet's newly hired servant, William Wilson, to arrange to carry her to the house of the Widow Awberry at Paddington. Once she is safely there, Sir Hargrave plans to force Harriet to marry him. The plot is put into effect, and when Harriet stoutly resists the attempted marriage ceremony, calling upon God to protect her, Sir Hargrave, finally afraid of her fits and screaming, forces her into his coach and starts for his Windsor seat. Soon thereafter, while wrapped in a cloak with her mouth and eyes bound, and feeling the coach stop, Harriet works the gag free and cries out, "Help, for God's sake" (1, 166). What follows is her rescue by Sir Charles, who, apparently by the sheerest of chances is riding near Hounslow. Later, however, Harriet says of the events leading up to her rescue: "Lord L. carried his Lady [Sir Charles's sister Caroline] down to Scotland, where she was greatly admired and caressed by all his relations. How happy for your Harriet was their critically-proposed return, which carried down Sir Charles and Miss Charlotte to prepare every-thing at Colnebrooke for their reception!" (1, 384).

While this scene is not explicitly providential, the "critically-proposed return" of Lord and Lady L., which sets in motion the equally critical arrival of Sir Charles at the exact time and place near Hounslow where he could be of service to a helpless woman, is nevertheless reminiscent of treatments of the workings of divine providence. During his sermon, "The Being of God Proved from Supernatural Effects," Isaac Barrow, for example, asks his congregation: "if, sometime or other, in their lives, they have not in their pressing needs and straits (especially upon their addresses to God for help) found help and comfort conveyed unto them by an insensible hand; if they have not sometimes in a manner unaccountable escaped imminent dangers; if they have not in the performance of their duty and devotion toward God experienced a comfort more than ordi-
nary; if they cannot to some events of their life aptly apply those observations of the Psalmist [Ps. 34: 6, 7, 8; 145: 18, 19] *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of his troubles: The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and deliveth them: O taste and see that the Lord is good. O taste and see. . . ."* When it is remembered that for Barrow one of the characters of this particular providence of God was the "seasonableness and suddenness of events," when something occurred which was not probable "in the nick of an exigency, for the relief of innocence, the encouragement of goodness, the support of a good cause, the furtherance of any good purpose," one may perhaps view Harriet's rescue by Sir Charles as something other than merely fortuitous or coincidental. Moreover, when for Archbishop Tillotson "all application to God by Prayer doth evidently suppose, that the Providence of God does frequently interpose to over-rule events besides and beyond the natural and ordinary course of things, and to steer them to a quite different Point, from that to which in human probability they seem'd to tend," the fact that Harriet herself calls upon God for help and is subsequently rescued by a man who wishes to be "an humble instrument, in the hand of Providence" may also lead one to conclude that this scene is only the first of many which, taken together, delineate a providential world order in which the characters exist.

The Danby story provides another example of the significance of providence as ordering device in the novel. Following the death of his friend Danby, Sir Charles, in reading the will, finds that he has been named executor and "residuary legatee" because he "had been the principal instrument in the hand of Providence, of saving his life" (1, 448). Later, after his noble treatment of Danby's two nephews and niece (children of the very brother who, it is soon learned, had attempted to murder Danby), Sir Charles says to them: "Look upon what is done for you, not as the reward of any particular merits in yourselves, but as your debt to that Providence, which makes it a

19. "Success Not Always Answerable to the Probability of Second Causes," *Works*, 2:354. A typical statement of the importance and efficacy of prayer is this one by Jeremy Taylor: "Do not think that God is only to be found in a great prayer, or a solemn office: he is moved by a sigh, by a groan, by an act of love"—*Holy Living and Dying with Prayers Containing the Whole Duty of a Christian*, from *Holy Dying*, Chap. IV, Section I, p. 407. Richardson mentions *Holy Living and Dying* in *Correspondence*, 4: 237.
principal part of your religion, to do good to your fellow-creatures. In
a word, let me injoin you, in all your transactions, to *remember mercy*, as
well as *justice*” (1, 455).

The story itself is told by Sir Charles at a family gathering. Prompted by Lord L., Sir Charles tells how Danby, a thriving mer­
chant settled at Cambray, was troubled by his profligate brother. Jealous of Danby’s support of his children and recent refusal to give
him any more money, this brother plotted to murder Danby and, be­
because of the lack of a will, inherit his fortune. About this time Sir
Charles visited Danby and was persuaded to spend a few days with
him at his villa in the Cambresis. Around midnight he was awakened
by violent noises from Danby’s bedchamber and, drawing his sword,
discovered a ruffian about to cut the throat of the helpless merchant.
After a scuffle in which he seriously wounded one of the would-be
assassins and drove off the other two, Sir Charles revived Danby and
secured the wounded man, who soon confessed that it was Danby’s
brother who had hired them. Later, the “surviving villains,” sentenced
to the “gallies,” related that “they knew nothing of Mr. Danby’s having
a guest with him: If they had, they owned they would have made their
attempt another night” (2, 106). Thus, a chance acquaintance and a
propitious time for a visit to a villa save the life of an innocent and
worthy man, and later enable Sir Charles to assure both justice and
mercy for the equally innocent children of the very man whose plot he
had been able to foil.

To view this episode, brief as it is, as just another reiteration of the
incredible goodness of Sir Charles is to miss the point, for the episode
is typical of the general movement of the novel, which consists of a
series of similar episodes. Whether physically saving Harriet or
Danby or Jeronymo, whether spiritually salvaging Emily’s mother and
Major O’Hara or Everard Grandison, Sir Charles is always at the right
place at the right time, not because of any artistic naïveté on
Richardson’s part but because he inhabits a fictive world which mir­
rors a real one in which an omnipotent and omniscient God rules,
sustains, and frequently intervenes, using His creatures to correct a
wrong or save a suffering innocent. Sir Charles acknowledges as
much when he states of himself at one point that “God only knows . . .
what may be *my* destiny!—As generosity, as justice, or rather as
Providence, leads, I will follow” (2, 382), and to the Marchioness at

20. Cf. the scene in which Sir Charles saves the life of Dr. Bartlett (1:460 ff.) and
the one in which he rescues Jeronymo Poretta (2:119–20).
another that “Providence and you, madam, shall direct my steps” (2, 455).

One could wish himself to be such a divine instrument, moreover, without any taint of moral smugness, primarily because in the terms of the age such instruments were thought to be essential for the continued well-being of all human existence. As Isaac Barrow put it: “... the instruments of Providence being free agents, acting with unaccountable variety, nothing can happen which may not be imputed to them with some colourable pretence” especially when it is remembered that “Divine and human influences are so twisted and knit together, that it is hard to sever them.”21 One of the major reasons why God and man are so often linked in theological discussions of providence is that the belief in such an intervening “supernatural” power does not preclude the need for natural action on man’s part in the world as it is but rather makes it necessary.22 Thus, Sir Charles, by continuously acting and engaging life to the best of his ability, while at the same time acknowledging the significance of divine power and influence in the world, indeed emerges as a fit instrument of God.23

A final example of his instrumentality may be gathered from the occasion when Sir Charles and Dr. Lowther are stopped just outside Paris by a terrified servant who states “that his master, who was an Englishman, and his friend of the same nation, had been but a little while before attacked, and forced out of the road in their post-chaise, as he doubted not, to be murdered, by no less than seven armed horsemen” (2, 428). Noticing that the servant’s livery is that of Sir Hargrave Pollexfen (traveling on the continent to forget his failure with Harriet Byron and disgrace in her abduction), Sir Charles rushes to the scene, where he finds two gentlemen being beaten unmercifully. The gentlemen are Sir Hargrave and his companion, Mr.


22. As Stanhope states, discussing the parable of the “Tares and Wheat”: “a mixture of Bad Men ministers many occasions of Virtue to the Good, and gives them great advantages of exerting Themselves, without such a mixture never to be had” (Gospels, 2:169).

23. Richardson himself attests to this need for “action” by stating to Lady Bradshaigh (Correspondence, 4:222): “A becalmed life is like a becalmed ship. The very happiness to which we are long accustomed becomes like a stagnated water, rather infectious than salutary.”
Merceda. After stopping the attack and helping the two bloody victims as much as possible, Sir Charles tries to determine the cause of the incident. It finally becomes apparent that Pollexfen, Merceda, and Bagenhall had “made a vile attempt . . . on a Lady’s honour at Abbeville,” and Bagenhall, guilty of seducing, on promise of marriage, a manufacturer’s young daughter, had escaped with the father pursuing him (2, 431). The demand that Pollexfen and Merceda kneel and ask pardon of the lady’s husband is met, and the two then “kneed again to their deliverer, and poured forth blessings upon the man whose life, so lately, one of them sought; and whose preservation he had now so much reason to rejoice in, for the sake of his own safety” (2, 432). Dr. Lowther, happily one of the best-skilled physicians in England, presumably patches them up sufficiently for the Channel crossing.

That this rescue of Sir Hargrave is not merely an example of Sir Charles mechanically returning good for evil, or yet another attempt by Richardson to raise to epic proportions his hero’s benevolence, is soon evident. Later in the novel, and after Sir Charles’s marriage to Harriet, a subdued Sir Hargrave, believing himself close to death, says to Sir Charles: “Great God . . . how are you rewarded! How am I punished! Is there not hope that I have all my punishment in this life? I am sure, it is very, very heavy” (3, 266). At the time of his death Sir Hargrave says, “Fain . . . would I have been trusted with a few years trial of my penitence. I have wearied heaven with my prayers to this purpose. I deserved not perhaps that they should be heard. My conscience cruelly told me, that I had neglected a multitude of opportunities! slighted a multitude of warnings!—O Sir Charles Grandison! It is a hard, hard thing to die! In the prime of youth too!—Such noble possessions” (3, 461). Following this, Sir Hargrave warns his surrounding friends of the dangers of living such a life as his, compares his present unhappy end with the happiness of Sir Charles, and dies with Grandison comforting him and calling “out for mercy for him, when the poor man could only, by expressive looks, join in the solemn invocation” (3, 462). Thus, Sir Hargrave, unlike Lovelace, moves in the novel (and as a direct result of the activities of an acknowledged instrument of providence) from rake to a man at least on the way to true penitence to one with a chance of obtaining mercy from God. His penitence at the end of his life and his provision for his relatives and charity toward the man who has won Harriet are not sentimental
Richardson's Christian Canon touches but, rather, are reminiscent of the attempts by divines to deal with both the presence of evil and the seeming inequality of rewards and punishments in this world. For, however true it may be that an afterlife will finally rectify unpunished wrongs, there is, as John Veneer pointed out and as Sir Hargrave represents, “another Reason why God does not immediately punish wicked Men,” and that is so “they may have time to become better; that his Goodness, as St. Paul expresseth himself, may lead them to Repentance”24—or as Tillotson expresses it: God sometimes “bears long with us, and delays the punishment of our sins, and doth not execute judgment speedily, because he is loth to surprise men into destruction, because he would give them the liberty of second thoughts, time to reflect upon themselves, and to consider what they have done, and to reason themselves into repentance.”25

One of the conclusions to be drawn from this brief examination of Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison is that there is more to their seemingly improbable or accidental events than has been recognized. For, such things as the survival of Clarissa's chastity while in the power of Lovelace and Sinclair, or the timely arrivals of Sir Charles Grandison, are not examples of Richardson's naivété in novelistic technique, but rather are essential components of his novelistic design. Moreover, the fictional “world” of Richardson's novels seems little different from the providentially controlled “real” world to which English divines addressed themselves in sermon, tract, and scriptural commentary. As Richardson himself stated of Clarissa, in a letter to Lady Bradshaigh—after requesting that she "honour the volumes with a place with your Taylor's Living and Dying, with your Practice of Piety, and Nelson's Fasts and Festivals, not as being worthy of such company, but that they may have a chance of being dipt into thirty Years hence": “they appear in the humble guise of a novel only by way of accommo-

25. “The Nature and Benefit of Consideration,” Works, 1:273. Also noteworthy is Charles Wheatly's sermon, "The Wheat and the Tares" (Fifty Sermons, 1:301), and, in particular, Stanhope's Gospels (2:172), where it is stated of evil men that: “The longer such People are spared, the more leisure and opportunities they have for Amendment. The examples of Others, the various Disposals of Providence, the signal Mercies and Severities of it, are so many fresh Arguments, continually offering themselves, and stirring up new Thoughts and serious Reflections. And every Judgment, that stops short of utter extirpation, is an awakening Call; an Expedient for cherishing the Principles of a spiritual Life.”
dation to the manners and taste of an age overwhelmed with luxury, and abandoned to sound and senselessness." And as Sydney Smith later put it: "Sir Charles Grandison is less agreeable than Tom Jones; but it is more agreeable than Sherlock and Tillotson; and teaches religion and morality to many who would not seek it in the productions of these professional writers."

This is not to say, however, that because of the religious dimension of his work, Richardson (or any contemporary fiction writer, for that matter) was simply composing a theological tract. *Pamela, Clarissa,* and *Sir Charles Grandison* are novels, literary works, and, as such, engage life through use of a form entirely different from that of a sermon or polemic. Despite this crucial difference, many of the ideas used by writers in these two distinct modes are markedly similar and are evident during the Restoration and the eighteenth century in the works of such literary men as Congreve, Dryden, Richardson, and Fielding and such divines as Tillotson and Barrow, Veneer and Stanhope. Moreover, nourished by such ideas and placed within such a religious context, *Pamela* offers but the first instance of an

27. This is noted by Eaves and Kimpel in *Samuel Richardson: A Biography,* p. 398.
28. For modern arguments in support of the phenomenon of a frequent intermingling of the concerns of literary men with those of religious writers during the Restoration and eighteenth century, see Battestin's *The Providence of Wit,* and Williams's *An Approach To Congreve.* Directly pertinent to Richardson's own assessment is his letter to Lady Bradshaigh (October 26, 1748), where he states of *Clarissa*: "Such are the Lessons I endeavour to inculcate by an Example in natural Life. And the more irksome these Lessons are to the Young, the Gay, and the Healthy, the more necessary are they to be inculcated.

A Verse may find him who a Sermon flies
And turn Delight into a Sacrifice—Of this Nature is my Design.
Religion never was at so low an Ebb as at present: And if my Work must be supposed of the Novel kind, I was willing to try if a Religious Novel would do good" (*Selected Letters,* pp. 91–92). In the "Postscript" to *Clarissa,* Richardson prefaces the two lines from George Herbert's *The Church-Porch* by stating that "In this general depravity, where even the pulpit has lost great part of its weight, and the clergy are considered as a body of interested men, the author thought he should be able to answer it to his own heart, be the success what it would, if he threw in his mite towards introducing a reformation so much wanted. And he imagined, that in an age given up to diversion and entertainment, he could steal in, as may be said, and investigate the great doctrines of Christianity under the fashionable guise of an amusement" (4:553).

Moreover, as Edward Young stated of Richardson in the *Conjectures on Original Composition:* he was a "friend" who "has relied on himself; and with a genius, as well moral as original, (to speak in bold terms,) has cast out evil spirits; has made a convert to virtue of a species of composition, once most its foe: as the first Christian emperors expelled demons, and dedicated their temples to the living God." *The Complete Works. Poetry and Prose,* 2:573.
insistent theme which was to concern Richardson throughout his later work: the presence of an active God and His relationship to the physical well-being and spiritual growth of His creatures. And, as Pamela's subtitle, "Virtue Rewarded," suggests, this physical and spiritual relationship more specifically involves the trial or exercise of the creatures who inhabit such a providentially controlled world.
3. “Our Spiritual Warfare”: Divine Providence and the Trial of Virtue

One recent critic, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, while discussing a “fundamental criticism” of *Pamela*, states that the apparent “insistence” in the subtitle upon temporal “rewards and punishments will not do. It is true neither to life, nor to morals, nor to Christianity.”! For Kinkead-Weekes, the subtitle “and the state of mind that appended it, are naïve, crude, and inconsistent with the faith Mr. Richardson professes; but once again the trouble lies with the ordinary self of the author, commenting on the works of his imagination when the imagination has lapsed” (117). Accordingly, the subtitle and “moral summary” seem to be rather unfortunate attempts by Richardson to package his novel for readier consumption by “a very unsubtle middle and lower class audience”; such attempts have nourished attacks on the seeming “discrepancy between the naïve sub-title and ‘morals; and the complexity of the moral experience in the fiction itself” (117).

While it is difficult to see exactly how the reward of virtue rings false to traditional English Christianity, or how one proves conclusively that Richardson was pandering to an unsubtle middle- or lower-class morality, it is evident nevertheless that his subtitle and “few brief Observations” have proved a stumbling block to even those critics otherwise willing to consider sympathetically the religious theme of his first novel. Moreover, unless one is prepared to grant that *Pamela* itself, however serious or “ultimately... religious” it may be in intention (115), is merely an interesting thematic failure on the road to *Clarissa*, something must be done to place in fuller context the fictive pattern suggested by its subtitle—a pattern of testing, growth, and reward which seems to me neither naïve nor crude but, rather, reflective of contemporary theological treatments of the nature of earthly existence.


44
Within the providential universe they posited, Christian writers viewed man as peculiarly subject to temptation, trial, and testing. Together with a consequent system of rewards and punishments invoked in both this world and the next, such emphasis upon testing seems to be (in both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance) a basic and almost commonplace method, common to both theologian and literary man alike, of explaining the vagaries of human existence. Richardson's correspondence, moreover, shows that the fundamental structure of this method was familiar to him: in speaking of Lady Bradshaigh's persistent request for a happy ending to Clarissa, he states, "But yet I had to shew, for example sake, a young Lady struggling nobly with the greatest difficulties, and triumphant from the best motives, in the course of distresses, the tenth part of which would have sunk even manly hearts." A year later, in answering the objections of a "Very Reverend and Worthy Gentleman," Richardson notes that Clarissa was "proposed for an Example to the Sex. And her Trials are multiplied to give her so many Opportunities to shine thro' the various Stages of those Trials." In writing to Frances Grainger, he first points out that "No one that disapproves of the Conduct of Clarissa and of her Principles but must find fault with the Doctrines laid down in the Bible, or know not what they are," and then goes on to emphasize not only the "Punishment of Lovelace and of the whole Harlowe Family, even in this World" but also the fact that his "Christian Heroine" must "trust to Heaven for her own Reward"—a "future Reward" which was, as he informed Aaron Hill, one "of my principal Views to inculcate in this Piece." In the Vade Mecum, Richardson reminds his readers that "To facilitate the Virtue of Patience, so necessary in this Vale of Tears," God "has manifested fo us, the Treasures that are hid in Adversity, and the Advantage of being persecuted for his Sake," and "that what the World calls Misfortune and Calamity, often proves the blessed Occasion of making us happy

2. Correspondence, 4: 186 (To Mrs. Belfour, October 6, 1748).
3. As Eaves and Kimpel point out on p. 289 of their Richardson biography, the Answer to the Letter of a Very Reverend and Worthy Gentleman (dated June 8, 1749) defended the "fire scene" and was "directed (as he told Stinstra) to 'two particular Divines'." Also, as they note on p. 646, this printed letter is found in the Forster Collection (from which my citation is taken).
4. Carroll, Selected Letters, p. 144 (To Frances Grainger, January 22, 1749/50), and p. 73 (To Aaron Hill, October 29, 1746), respectively.
both in this Life and the next."\(^5\) Perhaps the best evidence of Richardson's own familiarity with the religious significance of trials, however, comes in the preface to \textit{Sir Charles Grandison}, where he refers to \textit{Pamela} itself as a work depicting "the severe Trials" of its heroine, trials closely associated with her "Reward" by "a protecting Providence."

Contemporary recognition of the significance of the testing pattern in Richardson's work is not confined to his own correspondence, but appears also in the writings of those associated with him in a professional way. \textit{Clarissa}'s Dutch translator Johannes Stinstra, in his preface to the seventh and eighth volumes, speaks to the controversy surrounding the "unhappy ending" and states: "One observes that this life is not immediately rewarding but is, instead, a trial and preparation for another life in which the pious will receive the real reward for their good works. That we must regard it as such is taught to us explicitly in the Christian revelation and consistently confirmed by all parts of it; and the consideration of our present state of living and human nature itself can instruct us about it rather clearly."\(^6\) Later in this preface, Stinstra reminds his readers that the "happiness and unhappiness of this world are indeed both suitable to make the man who behaves himself properly under both of them more virtuous and thus to make him progress more and more in the most noble perfection for which the rational nature is capable and to prepare him for the enjoyment of the highest good, for which the merciful God really intended us" (202); and he then goes on to query: "And who should be acknowledged to have a greater virtue—he who has withstood uncorruptedly all sorts of trials, or he who, in one kind of trial, has found and shown only his steadfastness?" (203). Toward the end of the preface, he touches upon one of the most frequently cited results of earthly trials, self-knowledge:

A virtuous mind becomes stronger and firmer in adversities, and by repeatedly conquering them, increases steadily in moral perfection. When everything goes his way, the best man does not control his actions and thoughts so carefully and often overlooks some hidden defects which misfortune, attracting his attention, uncovers before his view and teaches him to improve (204).

The subject of Christian testing also occupies a strategic position in

5. Part III, p. 64.
the theology of most of the religious writers either printed or preferred by Richardson himself. In Chapter 46 of *The Christian's Magazine* is this statement:

> we come into this World, not to stay here, or to take up our Abode and Rest; but this World is only a State of Trial and Discipline, to exercise our Virtues, to perfect our Minds, to prepare and qualify ourselves for the more pure, and refined, and spiritual Enjoyments of the other World: We come into this World, not so much to enjoy, as to conquer, and to triumph over it, to baffle its Temptations, to despise its Flatteries, and to endure its Terrors; and if we live long enough to do this, we live long enough.  

Archbishop Tillotson, at one point in a sermon on "The Christian Life," views this world as a place designed for the "trial of our virtue, and the exercise of our obedience"; in another sermon, dealing with "The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus," he states that God "permits" even the "best of his servants many times to be involved in the greatest calamities, to try their faith in him, and love to him; to improve their virtue, and to prevent those sins into which the mighty temptations of a perpetual prosperity are apt to draw even the best of men."  

John Leland points out that the "evils and sufferings which good men endure in this present state are perfectly consistent with the divine justice, because they are either sent as chastisements and corrections for their sins and miscarriages, or as seasonable trials for the exercise and improvement of their virtues, and to discipline them for a better world; and that in a future state the trial shall be over, and their virtue fully rewarded, and they shall arrive at the true felicity and perfection of their nature." Moreover, as Richardson's friend the Reverend Patrick Delany flatly stated: "Rewards and Punishments are the great springs and wheels that set the whole world in motion; there is hardly any thing to be done in life, without the aid of one or both of these."

In general, trials, temptations, and afflictions in this world were, for the Christian, special times during which God seemingly permitted

8. *Works*, 4: 168 and 6: 213 (2d sermon on this text), respectively. Sermon title, volume, and page number hereafter will be cited in text.
evil to gain the upper hand for purposes and ends known finally only to Himself. For George Stanhope, whose Gospels find a place in the "Sinclair library," trials were permitted to "prove" depth of belief, to "Increase . . . spiritual Strength," to prevent "Spiritual Pride and Security," to correct "some past Misdemeanor" or subdue some "rebellious" lust, to magnify "the Power of Divine Grace," to reveal special "Examples of surprising Patience, Resolution, and Firmness of Mind" for the imitation of the generality of mankind, and, finally, for purposes of "Weaning the Affections from things here below, raising the Mind by Heavenly Dispositions, and, in Proportion to their present Sufferings, reserving a sure and more abundant Recompence, for the Crown of their Labours at the last Great Day."11 Perhaps, however, it is the popular divine and Bishop of London, Thomas Sherlock, who stated best the proper Christian attitude toward the seemingly endless trials and temptations to which the human condition is disposed: "In a Word, it is no Man's Fault that he is tempted, it is the Condition of our spiritual Warfare; it is the Combat to which God calls us for the Proof and Trial of our Virtue. Then only are we guilty when we give way to Temptations, and forsake God to follow the Pleasures or the Gains of Wickedness."12

As even this brief survey suggests, the literature involving Christian testing is vast. The references to it by Richardson and his contemporaries indicate that there is more to "Virtue Rewarded" than is generally understood; it is also possible to amplify those aspects of this tradition which seem directly pertinent to the religious theme of Pamela: the "educational" value of trials and temptations, their usefulness in teaching man about himself and the nature of the world he inhabits.

George Stanhope, during his discussion of Matthew 8:23-27, notes that "every Man hath a Post appointed him by God, and the Character of a Christian to maintain. And Few arrive to any uncommon Excellencies in this Station, except Such, as make their way up to them

11. 4:277-78.
through Sufferings. Hence 'tis, we commonly call Afflictions *Tryals*, because they are the Test of a Man's Virtue, and discover what he really is." The sermons of Tillotson contain many references to the educational value of afflictions and temptations—their help in revealing a man's basic character to himself or in purging and purifying the dross contained in that character. For example, in "The Goodness of God," Tillotson states that "God teacheth men temperance by want, and patience by reproach and sufferings, charity by persecution, and pity and compassion to others by grievous pains upon ourselves" (7, p. 56); in "The True Remedy against the Troubles of Life," he advises that "if we make the best use of the evils and afflictions which befall us, and bear them as we ought, we our selves may do a great deal to turn them to our benefit and advantage; to the bettering of our Minds, and the improvement of our Virtues, and the increase of our Reward" (9, p. 179). Moreover, for Tillotson, man generally does not know himself or the limits of his frailty and weakness until he is tried, and thus only when men "are prest by a great Necessity, when Nature is spurr'd up and urged to the utmost," is it that they "discover in themselves a Power which they thought they had not, and find at last that they can do that which at first they despaired of ever being able to do" ("Of the Difficulty of Reforming Vicious Habits," 2, p. 204).

Coupled with the view that trials and afflictions served to teach man about himself was the belief that these also were permitted for purposes of curing him and enabling him to become a healthy and knowledgeable inhabitant of the world. Christ was frequently referred to as the "great Physician," and man's sufferings viewed as the "physick, and means of cure, which the providence of God is often necessitated to make use of," a "physick" which, however seemingly inequitable to man's limited vision, worked only for his ultimate good (Tillotson, "The Wisdom of God in His Providence," 6, p. 421). If the world itself was sometimes a hospital, it was more particularly a teaching hospital in which the judgments of God were seen as the "wise methods which the great Physician of the World uses for the cure of mankind; they are Rods of his School and the Discipline of his Providence, that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteousness" (Tillotson, "Of the End of Judgments," 1, p. 194). Thus, in undergoing trials and temptations, through patient resignation under afflic­tion, man learned his true place in relation to the world and was

14. It should be noted that for English divines, patient resignation was not the
prepared for the ultimate revelation of the purpose of God, which was fully granted only after death:

For the life which we live now in this world, is a time of exercise, a short state of probation and tryal, in order to a durable and endless state, in which we shall be immutably fix'd in another world. This world, into which we are now sent for a little while, is as it were God's school, in which immortal spirits clothed with flesh, are trained and bred up for eternity (Tillotson, "Of the Work Assigned to Every Man," 5, p. 224).

Moreover, the greatest lesson taught a man in this school was his true relation to God Himself—a discipline designed primarily to "throw men upon their backs, to make them look up to heaven" (Tillotson, "The Mercy of God," 7, p. 84).

Although their educational and curative values were the general reasons most often given by English divines for the existence of human suffering and trial, the best insights for a Christian were gained from those times in particular when religious principles themselves were put to the test. It was believed that this "fiery Trial" of persecution not only revealed the sincerity of religious belief but also provided the means for determining the very strength of a man's character: "This is the utmost proof of our integrity, when we are called to bear the cross, to be willing then to expose all our worldly interest, and even life itself, for the cause of God and religion" (Tillotson, "Of Sincerity towards God and Man," 4, p. 8). While such a severe trial was not common, Christians nevertheless were always to be prepared for it by knowing well the reasons for their particular

same thing as blind or mindless apathy in the face of suffering. The proper human response to pain and affliction is cogently summarized in Chapter 62 ("Against Impatience, Anger, and Murmuring") of The Christian's Magazine. Moreover, theologians frequently linked patience and submission with the belief that no man was tempted or afflicted above what he was able to bear—for example, see Tillotson's sermon, "The Excellency of Abraham's Faith and Obedience" (4: 43). For, as I Cor. 10:13 states: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."
religious belief. Thus, the Christian was frequently admonished to try the grounds of his faith in order to defend his belief against the assaults of the ungodly. Reason, the greatest gift of God, was seen as an effective means toward helping a man maintain sufficient resolution in the face of persecution, for, as Tillotson notes, the “more reasonable our faith is, and the surer grounds it is built upon, the more firm it will abide, when it comes to the trial” while, if “our faith of another world be only a strong imagination of these things, as soon as tribulation ariseth, it will wither; because it hath no root in itself” (“The Christian Life,” 4, p. 173). For the sincere Christian, a tacit acknowledgment or mere superficial adherence to religious principles was not enough to insure steadfastness in the arena of daily living. Rather, it was only that man who “hath examined his religion, and tried the grounds of it” who “is most able to maintain them, and make them good against all assaults that may be made upon us, to move us from our stedfastness” (Tillotson, “Of Constancy in the Profession of the True Religion,” 4, p. 74). Furthermore, and directly pertinent to Pamela’s initial character, it was frequently noted that “he that hath not examined, and consequently does not understand the reasons for his religion, is liable to be tossed to and fro, and to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and the cunning craftiness of those that lie in wait to deceive” (Tillotson, “Of Constancy,” 4, p. 74).

Moreover, Christians were enjoined to adapt the teachings of the Church to their daily lives. Tillotson speaks to this issue in “The Nature and Benefit of Consideration”:

... most men take the principles of Religion for granted, That there is a God, and a Providence, and a State of Rewards and Punishments after this Life, and never entertained any considerable doubt in their minds to the contrary: but for all this they never attended to the proper and natural consequences of these principles, nor applied them to their own case; they never seriously considered the notorious inconsistency of their lives with this belief, and what manner of persons they ought to be who are verily persuaded of the truth of these things (1, p. 259).

It was the efficacy of tested religious beliefs, in the world itself, the testimonium rei and not merely pious words, that was emphasized again and again in sermon and commentary. Christians were often admonished to “endeavour after the reality of religion, always remembering that a sincere piety doth not consist in shew, but substance, not
in appearance, but in effect” (Tillotson, “Of Sincerity towards God and Man,” 4, p. 12). Building upon Christ’s words to His disciples that “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17), English divines stressed a living religion, a system of belief which was fully realized only through the daily activity of its adherents. For Tillotson, “Our lives must justify our godly talk, and our actions must give weight to our words” (“Of the Form, and the Power of Godliness,” 9, p. 14). For Thomas Sherlock, even faith itself “cannot be a Principle of Religion, till it has its Effect and Operation in the Heart.” For Charles Wheatly,

To render the Word successful with us, we must not be contented with only hearing, and considering, and assenting to the Truth and Reasonableness of what is delivered and preached; but we must also with Patience and Perseverance apply ourselves to the Practice of what is taught, notwithstanding any Hardships, Difficulties or Discouragements to which it may expose us; that we must obey the Exhortations and Instructions that are given, not only where we can do it without putting any Curb upon our Interest or Desires; but also where it calls us to Acts of Mortification, Self-denial and Restraint, and even though it should lay us open to Affliction or Persecution for its Sake.  

Afflictions and trials were viewed also as serving momentarily to blur even further the already limited vision of man—making him likely to lose sight of the presence and purpose of a concerned God. Treatments of the seemingly inequitable nature of earthly existence—the pain and suffering of the innocent and the power and prosperity of the wicked—were for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as ancient as Job and Ecclesiastes and as current as Paradise Lost or An Essay on Man. It was a prime article of belief for Tillotson that the “glorious reward of the sufferings which we have met with in this life, will in the next clear up the goodness and justice of the divine providence from all those mists and clouds which are now upon it, and fully acquit it from those objections which are now raised against

it, upon account of the afflictions and sufferings of good men in this life, which are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in them" ("The Goodness of God," 7, p. 56). Thus, whatever the appearance of things in this world, whatever the seeming inequalities of human existence, it was believed to be essential for man to bear in mind that the various trials and temptations of life were but stages leading toward the ultimate revelation of the will of God:

We are, indeed, liable to many things in this world, which have a great deal of evil and affliction in them, to poverty, and pain, and reproach, and restraint, and the loss of our friends and near relations; and these are great afflictions, and very cross and distasteful to us; and therefore, when we are in danger of any of these, and apprehend them to be making towards us, we are apt to be anxious, and full of trouble; and when they befall us, we are prone to censure the providence of God, and to judge rashly concerning it, as if all things were not ordered by it for the best: But we should consider, that we are very ignorant and shortsighted creatures, and see but a little way before us, are not able to penetrate into the designs of God, and to look to the end of his providence. We cannot (as Solomon expresseth it) see the work of God from the beginning to the end; whereas, if we saw the whole design of providence together, we should strangely admire the beauty and proportion of it, and should see it to be very wise and good (Tillotson, "The Wisdom of God in His Providence," 6, pp. 420–21).

Although trials and afflictions might be but God's discipline or "physick," ultimately leading man toward this final revelation, the dangers of the journey itself were still such that one could lose sight of even the evidence of divine providence manifested in terms of this world. The danger of becoming despondent or unmindful of the workings of God was frequently underscored by English divines, who viewed such despair and stubbornness as antithetical to the growth in spiritual strength and insight into the providential design which were believed to be the major reasons for permitting trials in the first place. Accordingly, Christians were admonished to be cautious of despairing, primarily because of the difficulty in computing clearly "the good of evils" or "the mercies of providence in things afflictive at first hand."17 Moreover, it was believed that throughout even extraordi-

nary temptations and trials, good men "may expect to be born up and comforted in a very extraordinary and supernatural manner" (Tillotson, "The Support of Good Men," 5, p. 199), a support, particularly in special cases, which stood forth as clear evidence of a divine control and purpose operating in the world: "... in a word, when we are reduced to the greatest extremity and distress that can be imagined, even in this case, if ever it should happen, we should support our minds with a firm belief of the Providence of Almighty God, and of his tender and compassionate care of Mankind, especially of those that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy" (Tillotson, "The True Remedy against the Troubles of Life," 9, p. 216).

While each human creature was important to God as an object of his providence, those who attempted to live righteously, those virtuous and innocent, were consistently viewed as being worthy of his special notice and concern. For Tillotson, "... innocency is a great stay and support to our minds under sufferings, and will bear up our spirits, when nothing else can; especially if a man suffer for a good conscience, and for righteousness sake: because then, beside the comfort of innocency, we are intitled in a special manner to the favour of God, and the comforts and supports of his holy spirit, and the hopes of a glorious reward from that God, for whose sake and in whose cause we suffer" ("The Wisdom of Religion Justified," 8, p. 238). Even more particularly, God is concerned for the well-being of the "honest and pious Poor," and, "provided they be rich in Faith and Virtue," He has "made them equal to the greatest of the Sons of Men, and vested them in the same Title to the same Inheritance, and to every precious Promise, which his Blessed Gospel hath any where made to Them, who best love, and are best beloved by him." For, God often tests the hardest those whom he loves the best:

Afflictions in this world are so far from being a sign of God's hatred, that they are an argument of his love and care; whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Those he designs for great things hereafter he trains up by great hardships in this world, and by many tribulations prepares them for a kingdom (Tillotson, "The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus," 2nd sermon on this text, 6, p. 210). 19

19. As Lewis Bayly, Bishop of Bangor, states: "... afflictions are not signes either of God's hatred, or of our reprobation: but rather tokens and pledges of his fatherly love unto his children whom he loveth, and therefore chasteneth them in this life, where upon
This particular testing of the virtuous was often permitted for purposes of singling out special cases to reward or punish—a reward and punishment sometimes accomplished in this world. While, as stated earlier, all seeming inequalities would eventually be set right and made clear, sometimes this was done in the terms of the present world to set an example for the edification of a general mankind. As Sir Thomas Browne states (in a work known to Richardson): "... the mercy of God hath singled out but a few to be the signals of his justice, leaving the generality of mankind to the paedagogy of example." Such examples were viewed as essential proof of not only the wisdom of God but also of his continuous concern for the well-being of his creatures. A single example could do much toward leading great numbers of people to the acknowledgment of the wisdom of the Creator and the efficacy of His commandments: "... in the judgment of the wisest among the Jews, it was not unworthy of the Goodness and Wisdom of the divine Providence to permit the best Man to be so ill treated by wicked Men: And further, that in their judgment the innocence and virtues of an eminently righteous Man are then set off to the best advantage, and do shine forth with the greatest lustre, when he is under the hardest circumstances of suffering and persecution from an evil World" (Tillotson, “Concerning the Incarnation of Christ,” 3, p. 93). Such particular examples, whether found in scripture, sermon, or contemporary event, were also taken to be clear illustrations of the manner in which God frequently chose to reveal his will and purpose to his creatures:

... notwithstanding the rage and craft of evil men, poor and unarmed innocence and virtue is usually protected, and, sometimes, rewarded in this world, and domineering and outrageous wickedness is very often remarkably checked and chastised. All which instances of God's providence, as they are greatly for the advantage and comfort of mankind, so are they an effectual declaration of that goodness which governs all things, and of God's kind care of the affairs and concernsments of men; so that if we look no further than this world, we may say with David,
Verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily there is a God that judgeth the earth (Tillotson, “The Goodness of God,” 2nd sermon on this text, 7, pp. 45–46).

Moreover, it seems precisely such a declaration of God’s goodness and “kind care of the affairs and concerns of men” that Richardson personally judged to be at the core of the meaning of Pamela’s own example when he states:

Let the desponding Heart be comforted by the happy Issue which the Troubles and Trials of the lovely Pamela met with, when they see, in her Case, that no Danger nor Distress, however inevitable or deep to their Apprehensions, can be out of the Power of Providence to obviate or relieve; and which, as in various Instances in her Story, can turn the most seemingly grievous Things to its own Glory, and the Reward of suffering Innocence; and that, too, at a Time when all human Prospects seem to fail (410–11).

When placed against the backdrop of Christian testing, the reward of virtue does not seem to be either superfluous or a crude attempt at overzealous moralizing on the part of Richardson, but rather to be a fairly straightforward indication of the theme of his first novel. Judging from the sermon literature both preceding and contemporaneous with its publication, Pamela, on the evidence of its subtitle and general plot alone, would appear to be a work which owes much to the broad Christian tradition of human testing, providential example, and growth in spiritual perception. Perhaps by viewing Pamela as part of this tradition, as a fictive treatment of the educational value of testing and providential concern and reward in terms of this world, a more satisfying starting point for a revaluation of the religious dimension of Richardson’s novels can be achieved.
And the principal Complaints against me by many, and not Libertines neither, are, that I am too grave, too much of a Methodist, and make Pamela too pious. I have in View, however, to avoid inflaming Descriptions; and to turn even the Fondness of ye Pair, to a kind of intellectual Fondness. . . . In my Scheme, I have generally taken Human Nature as it is; for it is to no purpose to suppose it Angelic, or to endeavour to make it so. There is a Time of Life in which the Passions will predominate; and Ladies, any more than Men, will not be kept in Ignorance; and if we can properly mingle Instruction with Entertainment, so as to make the latter seemingly the View, while the former is really the End, I imagine it will be doing a great deal. For when the Mind begins to be attach'd to Virtue, it will improve itself, and outstretch the poor Scenes which I intend only for a first Attractive.

Richardson to Dr. George Cheyne on Pamela II, August 31, 1741 (Mullett, pp. 67–68)
4. On God all future Good depends:
The Bedfordshire Section

Pamela II—"the Son of my dear good Lady departed": Mr. B. and the Trial of Virtue

Among the many distinctive features of the Bedfordshire section, the most noteworthy involve the complete failure of Mr. B.'s contrivances to seduce Pamela and Pamela's own tendency not only to judge her master's actions against the principles of her religious education but also to rely upon the counsel of Mrs. Jervis and delay her return home. That this is not evidence that Mr. B. is merely a bungling would-be rake or that Pamela is a conniving hypocrite seems clear if one notices the presence of a certain tension in the initial scenes of the novel between order and disorder—a tension which seems to provide the basic framework for what is soon revealed to be a steadily intensifying confrontation between the selfishness and pride of Mr. B. and the religious faith of Pamela. Moreover, a close attention to Mr. B.'s later assessment of the events in Bedfordshire (his own "chronological preface" to the novel proper) reveals three things. First are the religious order and good rule of his mother's household—a rule likened by her on her deathbed to the duty of a king toward his subjects. Second is the restiveness of Mr. B. under this order. While not totally corrupt, he nevertheless freely confesses his prior arrogance, lust, lack of discipline, and selfishness, as well as his readiness to conclude that the abundant evidence of Pamela's piety and religious training is merely an artful facade. Third there is pointedly made clear the special place occupied by Pamela within this household—a

unique relationship with her mistress which stems essentially from her own native humility and innocence, traits nourished and strengthened by a religious upbringing.

In discussing his motivations, Mr. B. relates how his natural interest in a sheltered and beautiful young girl quickly turned from idle daydreaming to placing himself actively against the influence of her education and his mother’s watchful eye and concern. His initial conceit and vanity are soon consumed by lust, and thoughts of a possible dalliance quickly become something much more dangerous and sinister. He views his mother’s improvement of Pamela as preparing her for his own attempts, thinking at one point that this education, particularly in the social graces, will but make her “new” to him if she behaves “worthy” of it (104). Accordingly, his first strategy is one of affecting haughty and reserved airs in order to “demolish the influence of such an education,” and he regards her natural awe and reverence for him as evidence that his plan is working (104, 105). This confidence in his own ability (a belief that he can “pull down in three hours” what his mother’s lessons have been “building up in as many years,” 105) is quickly bruised, for Lady B. proves suspicious, and Pamela herself continues oblivious to the subtleties of his intrigue. Moreover, as he runs afoul of Pamela’s humility, he tries to pass it off as evidence of a “little rustic affectation of innocence, that to such as cannot see into her, may pass well enough” (107), and decides to make her fear him, so that whatever kindness he shows her afterward will build on gratitude “and never question old humdrum Virtue . . . but the tempter without, and the tempter within, will be too many for the perversest nicety that ever the sex boasted” (108).

The influence of Pamela’s religious training and humility does cause Mr. B. at least temporarily to abandon his first plot to abduct her to Lincolnshire. At one point in the sequel, he has occasion to read from her “commonplace book,” and her reflections on Proverbs 22:6 (Train up a child in the way it should go) spark an exchange during which Lady B. sadly comments on the lack of a sincere piety in her son. ² Parrying with his mother, he grants the seeming goodness of Pamela, but slyly adds: “. . . let’s see what she’ll be a few years hence. Then will

². See Patrick Delany’s Fifteen Sermons Upon Social Duties; sermons 4–7 (“The Duty of Parents to Their Children”) are based on Proverbs 22:6 and deal with the religious education of children during the early eighteenth century. For a late-seventeenth-century series of sermons on this same text, see Tillotson’s “Of The Education Of Children,” Works, 3, sermons 51–53. Excerpts from this sermon series are included in Chapter 76 (“Concerning Education”) of The Christian’s Magazine.
be the trial"; to which Lady B. quickly answers: "She'll be always good, I doubt not" (110). Stung by this comment, he changes the subject, but not without admitting to himself that Pamela's skill in writing and the soundness of her religious views have made him form "a still higher opinion" of her. But even this grudging admission does not deter him from resolving to "watch by what gradations she may be made to rise into love, and into a higher life, than that to which she was born," a life as his "mistress" (110). Accordingly, he decides to abduct her, being finally convinced that "there was no coming at her here, under my mother's wing, by her own consent," and knowing that "to offer terms to her, would be to blow up my project all at once" in this household, where even the housekeeper "Mrs. Jervis would stand in the way of my proceedings as well as my mother" (111).

The fatal illness of his mother causes Mr. B. to delay putting his plot into effect. Regarding this decision, he further relates how his mother's final hours resolved him "to conquer, if possible, my guilty passion, as those scenes taught me, while their impressions held, justly to call it; and I was much concerned to find it so difficult a task" (113). Moreover, he notes particularly that Pamela's steadfastness and virtue (her "affectionate duty" and prayers for her mistress) "insensibly" had brought him "to admire her in every thing she said or did" (113). This growing sense of Pamela's worth, in working counter to Mr. B.'s own inflated opinion of himself, soon initiates a painful internal struggle involving his personal happiness and well-being. 3 His renewed desire to test the reality of her innocence and virtue against his own selfish presuppositions regarding the female character quickly makes even the lessons of his mother's death and her example of less importance to him than the instant gratification of his own guilty passion. And, this obstinate and selfish opposition to the older order of his mother's day forms the basis of his later attacks and makes his failure there, as described by Pamela herself, something more than the artful chronicle of a bungler. 4

3. For pertinent evaluations of Mr. B.'s character, struggle, and "pride," see: Gwendolyn B. Needham's "Richardson's Characterization of Mr. B. and Double Purpose in Pamela"; Dorothy Parker's "The Time Scheme of Pamela and the Character of B."; John A. Dussinger's "What Pamela Knew: An Interpretation," in particular, p. 389, where he notes in passing Mr. B.'s change "from angel to Lucifer, from master to rake, from childhood friend to seducer"; M. Kinkead-Weekes's "Introduction" to the 1962 Everyman edition of Pamela and his Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist.

4. The difficulty and danger in which Mr. B.'s actions increasingly are placing him bear a resemblance to George Stanhope's description of the nature of "an ungodly
In the opening letters, Richardson seems careful to present Mr. B. as the scion of an older order. The recommendation of the servants "one by one" to his care and protection by his dying mother almost takes on the nature of a regal assumption of power, and the request that her son particularly remember Pamela—the special recipient of her own good lessons and concern—seems calculated to impress upon him the responsibilities of his coming stewardship. His first two attempts on this very maidservant, however, not only mark the abandoning of his duty but also begin the process whereby he will eventually involve everyone in the household in his struggle. Moreover, these two scenes are but the first of a series in which Mr. B.'s actions appear to be striking at the core of his own peace and that of his estate and simultaneously testing Pamela's selfhood—the tenets of her religious training and her own inherent assumptions regarding the world. Before considering the effects of this trial on Pamela herself it will, however, be helpful to examine briefly the implications raised by Mr. B.'s behavior.

One of the most striking features of the Bedfordshire section is Mr. B.'s "progression" from "the best of Gentlemen" (26) to an "Implement . . . in the Hands of Lucifer" (86)—from seeming to be "an Angel" (31) to being revealed instead as a "Black-hearted Wretch" (86). Accompanying his changing character and appearance is the growth of his pride, which, however much he struggles against it, nevertheless prods him into devising various contrivances designed to dominate and ruin one whom he was requested to protect. It is interesting to note, however, that throughout this progression there is clear evidence that the disorder in his own personality—the struggle between his sense of duty, right action, and incipient love for Pamela and his arrogance and lust, his denial of the worth of any power greater than his own—comes to cause a gradual spreading of this.

5. For a later discussion of the dangers of "Slavery to passions" and the ever changing or 'protean' quality of evil, see Charles Howe's Devout Meditations, pp. 7–8. Richardson mentions this work in Correspondence, 6: 240.
disorder and upset to the estate itself. From the agonized indecision of Mrs. Jervis, to the examples of the butler, Jonathan, and the steward, Longman (men who are saddened by the extreme alteration in their master), to the lesser maids and servants, who tremble in their beds during his most serious attack on Pamela—the very order of the Bedfordshire household seems to be threatened by the selfishness and lust of its own master.

Despite this spread of disorder, however, all his plots and attempts are constantly checked and frustrated by the presence of these very servants, the legacy in a sense of the older order of his mother's day. Accordingly, from Mrs. Jervis, who persistently reminds him of his duty and obligation as master of "an orderly and well-govern'd House" (39) to the warnings of Jonathan and the evidence of Longman's love for Pamela, from the frequent rallying of the "whole Family" around her to his own grudging admission on several occasions that his servants had rather serve her than him, and finally from the "utmost Grief" once again of "all the Family" in the face of Pamela's abduction—from all this it is abundantly made evident in Bedfordshire that Mr. B. has little chance to avoid at least thinking of the possible consequences of his actions. Rather than admit to any wrongdoing himself, however, he consistently places all blame upon others (most notably Pamela), and appears shocked that he is not held in reverence by his own servants—constantly demanding to be respected as a master and yet acting in a way suggestive of a brute. Moreover, instead of attempting to live up to his mother's expectations and to be the best of gentlemen, a good example to his servants, his pride and growing delight in intrigue reveal him to be a man in serious danger of becoming in fact a "Workman" of "Lucifer" (65) and a master totally lacking in the "Fear of God" (73) which alone can ensure the preservation of the well-ordered household that he inherited—a man very much in need of being taught the folly of both pride and immorality.  

6. As *The Whole Duty of Man* states: "For he that is proud sets himself up as his own god, and so can never submit himself to any other rules or laws than what he makes to himself"—a dangerous endeavor especially when it is remembered that "if God spared not the angels for this sin, but cast them into hell, let no man hope to speed better," from Sunday 6, "The Great Sin of Pride," pp. 136, 139.

7. Regarding the seriousness of Mr. B.'s failure to live up to his responsibilities as master, see Sermon 11 ("The Duty of Masters to Their Servants") of Patrick Delany's *Fifteen Sermons*, in particular the statement "Masters should set their servants a good example" for "Example sways the whole world, and either ruins or reforms it, as it is
“to avoid the Tempter”: Pamela in Bedfordshire

Although Mr. B.'s actions serve to set things in motion and help to provide the context in which the trial of virtue will take place, we must initially note also a crucial difference between the Pamela of the first letter, who confidently assures her parents that “God will not let me want” (26), and the Pamela of Letter xxix, who trusts that “God will provide for me” (81)—between the Pamela of Letter iii, who asserts that she will rest content with “Rags and Poverty, and Bread and Water” rather than “forfeit my good Name, let who will be the Tempter” (28), and the Pamela of Letter xxiii, who prays that her “sweet Companion my Innocence” may “be always my Companion! And while I presume not upon my own Strength, and am willing to avoid the Tempter, I hope the Divine Grace will assist me” (59; italics mine). Such letters clearly suggest that, alongside Mr. B.'s own struggle and his introduction of disorder into the well-knit fabric of his mother's estate, there takes place a certain maturity in Pamela's reliance on the tenets of her religious training. Taken together, it seems no accident that the increase in Mr. B.'s turmoil and wrath, his steady intensification of lust and arrogance which makes him on several occasions appear “demonic,” is complemented by Pamela's own growth in spiritual perception, maturity, and independence, but rather can be viewed as careful preparation for what is to become clear to them only in Lincolnshire.

Moreover, what is being established even in the failure of Mr. B.'s first two attempts is the fact that in the context of Bedfordshire, within the confines of a well-ordered estate and under the watchful eyes of his servants, he has little chance of succeeding. While this is important in providing a practical as well as technical reason for Pamela's abduction to Lincolnshire, it should also be kept in mind that within such an environment the exact nature of her own progress in perception and experience—indeed, her most significant dimension as a fictional character—may be overlooked.8 In other words, the obvious and
ready availability of strictly human support may plausibly blur the stages leading to her "happy Resolution" in Letter xxx to "go away, and trust all to Providence, and nothing to myself" (84–85). Essentially it is her changing relationship with Mrs. Jervis that provides the clearest insight into the implications of Pamela's portrayal in Bedfordshire, for it helps bring into focus her final temptation and sheds light on her initial letter from Lincolnshire—a prologue to the central section of the novel.9

The first thirteen letters reveal not only the naïveté and sheltered innocence of Pamela, her dutiful and trusting nature, but also her increasing dependence upon Mrs. Jervis for both physical security and a continuation of the good advice begun by her parents and Lady B. From the first, Mrs. Jervis and order, good rule and advice are almost synonymous to Pamela; despite the presence of the good will and love of the entire household for her, it is Mrs. Jervis who is most important. For example, her parents' first warning letter, with its advice to come away instantly if Mr. B. makes the "least Attempt" upon her "Virtue" (28), naturally upsets Pamela, but mere thoughts of the presence of the housekeeper quickly dispel all fear or suspicion. She relates that Mrs. Jervis is a "very good Woman" who "is always giving me good Counsel"—a woman she loves next to her parents, one who keeps "good Rule and Order" in the household itself and who delights in having "good Books" read to her (30). Because of all this, Pamela is moved to become "quite fearless of any Danger" despite her parents' caution to her (30). This initial and quite natural reliance is encouraged in the second warning letter. Made fearful by

Stuart Wilson, "Richardson's Pamela: An Interpretation"; and Margaret Anne Doody, A Natural Passion. While they do not credit him, William Hazlitt suggested as much when he stated of Pamela that "the interest of the story increases with the dawn of understanding and reflection in the heroine: her sentiments gradually expand themselves, like opening flowers": Works, ed. P. P. Howe, 6:118–19.

But, even granting this sexual or social awakening or the problem of her reliability as a narrator, the change itself, her development as a fictional character nonetheless is expressed in religious language.

9. This relationship, and Mrs. Jervis's seeming limitations as an advisor, are discussed by numerous critics, most notably by Dussinger in "What Pamela Knew," pp. 379–81. Despite his insight into her reliance upon this "surrogate mother" during the early scenes and her final attempt to "fathom her sinister world alone," however, Dussinger neglects to do justice to the exact nature of Pamela's previous religious training and relies much too heavily on Adam Smith's Theory of the Moral Sentiments in understanding her dilemma—a dilemma involving much more than "trying to serve two opposing forms of authority" (379), or learning to determine moral truth and correct social behavior "by trial and error" (382).
Mr. B.'s attentions and their daughter's own exaggerated assessment of his goodness, her parents advise her to hide nothing from the housekeeper and to “take her Counsel in every thing” (32–33).

Mr. B.'s first overture, proving that her parent's fears were well founded, further strengthens this relationship, for Pamela, debating with herself and afraid of being accused of robbery if she follows their advice to leave immediately, decides to tell all to Mrs. Jervis despite her master's caution to secrecy (36). However worried over Pamela's beauty, the housekeeper finally urges her to stay and to trust that their master's “shame” will prevent further attempts. Despite this evidence of a counsel contradictory to that of her parents, Pamela nevertheless informs them: “And so, as you order'd me to take her Advice, I resolv'd to tarry to see how things went, without he was to turn me away” (37). Her parents' third letter, however muddled, seems to approve of this decision. Hoping that God, in light of their daughter's past conduct and “virtuous Education,” will enable her finally to “overcome,” they also greatly fear the stratagems which the “Devil” may encourage Mr. B. to employ, and, after warning her that “it may be presumptuous to trust too much to your own Strength,” and hoping that God will direct her for the best, they at least feel easier as long as she has “Mrs. Jervis for an Adviser, and Bedfellow” (38). Having begun their letter by reminding their daughter (in a passage echoing George Stanhope) that “Temptations are sore things; but yet without them, we know not our selves, nor what we are able to do,” they conclude it by committing her to God's “blessed Protection” (38).

While these early letters generally indicate the presence of a certain conflict in Pamela between what she has been taught and the difficulty of strictly applying such teachings to her present situation, the next six letters depict a specific and steady movement away from her previous and naïve dependence upon Mrs. Jervis. Moreover, as Pamela is forced to see and, more important, to accept the human limitations and frequent failings of Mrs. Jervis, she increasingly comes to consider the complexities of life and the place of her own beliefs within it.

10. What Pamela seems to be engaged in throughout the Bedfordshire section bears a resemblance to the “complex process” of “verification of the Christian Faith” discussed by E. J. Bicknell. Particularly pertinent is his statement that a “child's religion must begin by being second-hand, based not on experience but on authority. As he grows, he begins to verify for himself what he has been taught. This verification is not only intellectual but moral and spiritual. He learns the reasons for the beliefs that he has accepted on authority”: A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, p. 250.
For example, the housekeeper’s early advice to remain in Bedfordshire, in hopes that Mr. B.’s “shame” will prevent him from further attempts, is quickly seen to be merely wishful thinking when he not only tries again but also childishly shifts all blame to Pamela. During the meeting following this second attack, Mrs. Jervis is ineffectual in expostulating with him, and even seems to extenuate his behavior. This turn of events causes Pamela to pluck up her own spirit and to lecture Mrs. Jervis (in Mr. B.’s presence) on the relative duties of servants and masters (44). And, however initially fearful that the housekeeper is angry with her for her behavior during this meeting, and in spite of wanting a good “Character,” so that it will not be thought she was “turn’d away for Dishonesty” (46), Pamela nevertheless concludes that to remain in the household after all these warnings would be but to encourage her master to further indecencies. She decides, instead, to return home once “all the Duties of my Place” are completed.¹¹

Although there is now little doubt in Pamela’s own mind about the necessity to flee Mr. B.’s “temptations,” something needs to be said about Mrs. Jervis’s frequent advice to her to stay. In a sense, the housekeeper’s actions can be viewed as an attempt (however futile, yet certainly human) to serve not only Mr. B., the son of her late mistress, but also the older order of Lady B.’s day, an order and rule informed by the religious principles upon which Pamela relies—trying at once to serve an increasingly selfish social authority and virtue, to honor simultaneously the prerogatives of her master and the needs of innocence. Quite naturally, this almost desperate attempt causes her to be placed in an impossible position as buffer between Mr. B.’s growing desire for Pamela and Pamela’s own horror over the seeming indifference of her master toward the religious truths on which she has been taught to pattern her life. The wavering of Mrs. Jervis during these early scenes, however confusing, also serves the technical function of providing Pamela with ample opportunity and occasion to test her own thoughts and perceptions and, in the process, a chance for

¹¹. As Patrick Delany notes in Sermon 10 (“The Duty of Servants to Their Masters”), this is no small consideration. Speaking of a servant’s “Faithfulness” to his “trust,” Delany states that “an honest care and management of all goods and things committed to their charge, without fraud, or waste . . . is of all others the highest and most important part of the servant’s duty; because his own conscience and his master’s interest are more nearly concerned in it than in any other: it being oftentimes in the power of a wicked servant by one hour’s wilful villainy in this point, to ruin the best master, and the wealthiest man” (Fifteen Sermons, pp. 195–96).
her to grow in self-confidence, charity, and independence. Moreover, it is soon evident that these very instances of human limitations are serving to prepare Pamela for the trials yet to come.

It is the central portion of Letter xix, however, which serves as a definite turning point in her relationship with Mrs. Jervis. At one point, while countering Mr. B.'s charges that she has been impertinent, Pamela queries: “Do you think I should ever have forgot myself, if he had not forgot to act as my Master?”; and she then asks what Mrs. Jervis would have done in her place (49). As almost a comment upon her own struggle, and hoping that she would act as Pamela has done, Mrs. Jervis nevertheless tries to extenuate their master's actions by listing his good qualities and speaking of his love, a love he has unsuccessfully “try'd to overcome” (49). Applying a bookish knowledge of life to her present situation (having “read of Things almost as strange from great Men to poor Damsels”), Pamela perceptively questions why her master can “stoop to like such a poor Girl as I” (49). Thinking that all this is but a pretense to ruin her, and rigidly asserting that “she that can't keep her Virtue, ought to live in Disgrace,” she sees also the aptness of something her “poor dear Parents have always taught me,” and hopes, “if I was sure he would always be kind to me, and never turn me off at all, that God will give me his Grace, so as to hate and withstand his Temptation, were he not only my Master, but my King, for the Sin's sake” (49).

Mrs. Jervis's initially unqualified delight at these words is tempered, however, by her criticism of Pamela's seriousness of expression, her remarks that Mr. B. is “vex'd” with himself over his current behavior, and finally a promise that “he never will offer you any Force” (50). Significantly, Pamela counters this by a careful dissection of all of Mrs. Jervis's previous advice regarding her master's shame. Again, having “read” that “many a Man has been ashamed at a Repulse, that never would, had they succeeded,” she discounts the opinion that he loves her and fears that he now “hopes to ruin me by my own Consent” (50). Pertinently remembering her parents' advice to her in their third letter, she then states: “It would be very presumptuous in me to rely upon my own Strength, against a Gentleman of his Qualifications and Estate, and who is my Master; and thinks himself intitled to call me Bold-face, and what not; only for standing on my necessary Defence” (50)—a retort which goes unchallenged by Mrs. Jervis.

Pamela's subsequent account of how beloved she is by all her
"Fellow-servants" seems an attempt to comfort herself or find compensation in the face of her discovery of the housekeeper's obvious limitations. It should be noted, however, that from this point on, she moves away from undue reliance upon Mrs. Jervis. Whatever comfort she derives from others becomes secondary to the evidence suggesting her increasing tendency to use what she has previously been taught—a reliance upon herself closely associated with an emerging hope for divine guidance and a steady growth in charity. For example, in Letter xx, her decision not to tell Mrs. Jervis about her plans concerning the "going-away dress" is followed by a passage in which she seems saddened that Lady B. did not live longer so that "none of these Things might have happen'd" (53). Moreover, her assertion here that "Every thing turns about for the best," while more hope than certainty, nevertheless seems reminiscent of earlier statements (most notably those involving presumption) which came alive for her only by applying them to her personal situation. As the later scenes will bear witness, however, what begins here as an almost offhand hope is evidence of a significant new movement toward awareness of such a divine purpose operating in the world.

The letters immediately preceding Mr. B.'s most serious physical attack (the incident of Mrs. Jervis's bedchamber) further reveal Pamela's changing relationship with the housekeeper, and suggest a definite development in her own perception of the implications of recent events. Letter xxr describes yet another debate over the true significance of Mr. B.'s unsettled behavior. In her attempt to do justice to her master's struggle, the housekeeper is led to use the very argument which he unsuccessfully urged on Pamela during his first attack. Pamela's spirited rejoinder (warning that she "shan't love" Mrs. Jervis if she is trying to persuade her to stay while knowing full well the hazards of remaining in Bedfordshire) leads the housekeeper quickly to assure her that "he thinks it won't be for his Reputation to keep you: But he wish'd ... that he knew a Lady of Birth, just such another as yourself, in Person and Mind, and he would marry her Tomorrow" (54). These words concerning Mr. B.'s "love," especially in light of his past actions and the "End he aims at," are an "Abomination" to Pamela's ears, and prompt her to inform Mrs. Jervis, "I shan't think myself safe till I am at my poor Father's and Mother's" (54). Under-scoring the different relationship between them, Pamela quickly assures her counselor that she still thinks herself "safe under her Protec-
tion and Friendship" (54), but, in an aside to her parents, also relates that as soon as her duties in the household are completed she will then inform them of the exact manner of her return home.

Reminiscent of the concluding portion of Letter xix, Letters xx11 and xx111 contain additional mention of the love and active support of the other servants, notably Jonathan and Mr. Longman. But whatever comfort this affords is short-lived, for the sarcastic compliments of the visiting ladies soon frighten her and provide yet another reason “for leaving this House” (59). Presently alone, she carefully considers the possibility of her master’s “love.” Appearing very human at this point, she is “vex’d” (in a sense further saddened by her master’s behavior) that his “Crossness” still affects her so deeply. Convinced that Mr. B. now hates her “heartily,” she wonders, especially if Mrs. Jervis’s assessment is true, how it can be possible for love to border so closely on hate. Finally, however, she decides that his “wicked Love is not like the true virtuous Love, to be sure” (59). And, carrying this reasoning a step further, she evaluates his recent actions in light of her reading of the Biblical story of Amnon and Tamar, and concludes that, unlike Tamar: “How happy am I, to be turn’d out of Door, with that sweet Companion my Innocence” (59).12 Speaking of this innocence, she then resolutely states: “O may that be always my Companion! And while I presume not upon my own Strength, and am willing to avoid the Tempter, I hope the Divine Grace will assist me” (59). It is noteworthy that whatever comfort Pamela is afforded at this point comes not from thoughts of the support of Mrs. Jervis or the admitted concern of her fellow servants but rather from a reliance upon herself, supplemented by a growing hope for divine assistance, and occasioned by the proper application to her own situation of a biblical story and her parents’ early advice.

This religious comfort and the need to trust her own judgment are further underscored in Letter xxiv, where she relates how Mrs. Jervis’s advice to “go in with her” to Mr. B. in her “new Dress” was the occasion for “a great deal of Trouble upon me, as well as Crossness” (61). Reflecting on this instance of Mrs. Jervis’s bad counsel, Pamela nevertheless states (noting the complexity and difficulty of the housekeeper’s position), that “tho’ she did not mean any Harm,” it seems clear that “she cannot live without him. And he has been very good to her” (64). Moreover, such acceptance of the limitations of her former counselor serves to force Pamela even more upon trust in herself and

a hope for divine guidance. In beginning her description of Mr. B.'s most serious attack, she counters her own despair of an earthly justice by hoping for a divine one—trusting that "God Almighty ... in time will right me!—For he knows the Innocence of my Heart" (64).

In the minutes before the attack itself, Pamela carefully schools her former teacher and leads her step by step through her previous reasonings about conditions in Bedfordshire. Cutting methodically through all attempts to extenuate or explain away her master's behavior, Pamela correctly perceives that his harshness is merely an effort to frighten her for his own purposes if he supposes her fond of staying, "as indeed" (and as further evidence of charity and sadness over his alteration) "I should, if I could be safe; for I love you and all the House, and value him, if he would act as my Master" (65). Finally, declaring that since all Mrs. Jervis can promise is that he will not use force, Pamela concludes: "... so I, a poor weak Girl, was to be left to my own Strength, God knows! And was not this to allow him to tempt me, as one may say? and to encourage him to go on in his wicked Devices—How then ... could I ask or wish to stay?" (65). Acknowledging that Pamela has "a Justness of Thought above" her "Years" (65), and in light of what she personally witnessed after the previous confrontation, Mrs. Jervis finally seems convinced that her young charge must indeed leave. Happy over this evidence of loyalty, Pamela is nevertheless doubly fearful now that even the housekeeper has given over her master.

The subsequent attack proves these fears to be valid, and although Pamela credits Mrs. Jervis with saving her, it is equally made clear that the mere presence of such protection will not prevent Mr. B.'s attempts. Moreover, in a graphic way, this attack, by affirming all her previous reasonings during the various debates with Mrs. Jervis, serves to reveal fully the frailty and limitation of human support. Speaking to this, she relates to her parents that "At first I was afraid of Mrs. Jervis; but I am fully satisfied that she is very good, and I should have been lost but for her" (67). However distracted, Pamela immediately discerns the major danger in her former dependence upon the housekeeper by stating: "What would have become of me, had she gone out of the Room, to still the Maids, as he bid her. He'd certainly have shut her out, and then, Mercy on me! what would have become of your poor Pamela!" (67–68). While her confidence may be restored in Mrs. Jervis's loyalty, it is also evident that the housekeeper's well-meaning officiousness has finally convinced Pamela of the necessity of
trusting in herself and in the strength to be gained from the now fully stated and no longer offhand “hope” that “God Almighty . . . in time, will right” her, and send her “safe from this dreadful wicked Man” (68).

The next morning brings the “Concerns and Wishes of the Family, and Multitudes of Enquiries” about Pamela’s well-being, and reveals a Mr. B. who grandly admits that although he has “rais’d a Hornet’s Nest” about his “Ears,” which may “have stung to Death” his “Reputation” (68), Mrs. Jervis’s admonishments are for him personally merely “antiquated Topics” occasioned by “imaginary Faults” (69). Pamela’s momentary joy at the hint of his intended marriage to a lady of quality (a sign of her charity in wishing “his Prosperity with all my Heart, for my good old Lady’s sake”) is quickly darkened by Mr. B.’s charge that her present shyness is evidence of shame for her “Freedom of Speech” during his last attack. Unable to bear “this barbarous Insult” and in spite of her previous terror, she manages to state, in a retort that goes unanswered: “O the Difference between the Minds of thy Creatures, good God! How shall some be cast down in their Innocence, while others shall triumph in their Guilt!” (69). Hoping that his intention to marry is indication of a sincere “Repentance and Amendment,” and that the worst of her trials are over, she assures her parents that “I won’t be too secure neither” (70).

This need for personal caution in spite of the concern of the household is reiterated in Letter xxvii. Alone with her master and asked to judge his “Birth-day” clothes, she is subjected to his kinder and yet equally “vexatious” behavior. For, there is evidence here of a definite shift of strategy as Mr. B. exhibits kindness, some self-control, and even humor in his treatment of her. Pamela, however, at first is saddened by the discrepancy between his rich suit of clothes and his recent behavior, and then relates how this first serious talk with her master dissolves into a sharp exchange when he refuses to take to heart her attempts to bring him to a sense of his duty and of the spiritual danger toward which his actions have been leading them both. At one point, he tries to extenuate his latest attack, and she pertinently warns him not only of the spreading disorder in the estate resulting from his struggle but also of her own awakening hope for divine assistance: “. . . if you could be so afraid of your own Servants knowing of your Attempts upon a poor unworthy Creature, that is

13. As Eaves and Kimpel point out: “Birth-day” clothes are a “suit of clothes to be worn at Court on the king’s birthday” (Pamela, n. 1, p. 70).
under your Protection while I stay, surely your Honour ought to be more afraid of God Almighty, in whose Presence we all stand, in every Action of our lives, and to whom the greatest as well as the least, must be accountable, let them think what they list” (71). Viewing all this as evidence of “a very pretty romantic Turn for Virtue” and musing that “I don’t suppose but you’ll hold it still; and no body will be able to prevail upon you,” Mr. B. finally turns all her admonishments into a coarse joke, causing her to lament after leaving him that “he grows quite a Rake! Well, you see, how easy it is to go from bad to worse, when once People give way to Vice” (72).

However unsuccessful in bringing Mr. B. to his senses, Pamela seems to draw the right conclusions from recent events when, in the final portion of this letter, she discusses the example of Squire Martin. Mr. B.’s hunting crony, a master who (like others in the neighborhood) not only countenances but participates in the seduction of his own maidservants, prompts her to comment on the wickedness and “Fruits of such bad Examples.” Musing on the chaos spread throughout an estate by the wickedness of its master, she applies these examples to her own case, and asks: “... what sort of Creatures must th~ Womenkind be, do you think, to give way to such Wickedness? Why, this it is that makes every one be thought of alike: And, alack-a-day! What a World we live in! for it is grown more a Wonder that the Men are resisted, than that the Women comply” (73). Although initially reminiscent of her earlier assertion to Mrs. Jervis that “she that can’t keep her Virtue, ought to live in Disgrace” (49), she quickly adds, revealing the maturity and charity which her own recent trials have occasioned as well as her sadness over Mr. B.’s struggle:

But I am sorry for these Things; one don’t know what Arts and Stratagems these Men may devise to gain their Vile Ends;

14. The seriousness of this warning, theologically, is attested to by such a statement as this one by Charles Wheatly: “Our chief and most awful Regard, should always be had to the all-seeing Eye of the omniscient, and omnipresent God: And this, if we have an habitual Mindfulness of it, will always be sufficient to quicken our Virtue, and to check our hottest Inclination to Vice. But alas! we see and know by Experience, that Men stand more in Awe, of the Eye of a Child, than they do of the Sovereign Judge of the World. And therefore, perhaps it may affect some People more (though I by no Means urge it as an equal Restraint) to tell them again, that when they are acting any Fraud or Lewdness, or other Vice, free as they imagine from any that can see them, they have numerous Angelick Eyes upon them, which, were they but apprehensive of it, would abash them more, than the Presence of all whom they stand in awe of on Earth” (“The Existence of Angels,” Fifty Sermons, 3: 174–75). For another statement by Pamela regarding this “all-seeing Eye” of God, see p. 112.
and so I will think as well as I can of these poor Creatures, and pity them. For you see by my sad Story, and narrow Escapes, what Hardships poor Maidens go thro', whose Lot is to go out to Service; especially to Houses where there is not the Fear of God, and good Rule kept by the Heads of the Family (73).

Further evidence of Pamela's growth in perception appears plainly in Letter xxviii. Revealing her to be calmer and more experienced, that letter as well as Letter xxix are directly preparative to the final meeting with Mr. B. in Bedfordshire. While still not compromising her principles, she also begins to exhibit greater self-control and courage than previously. As if having taken to heart the many times her master has exploded as a result of a quick retort or shrillness in countering his proposals, she seems to be changing the form but not the substance of her defense. Moreover, recent events have proved to her that, however surrounded by concerned servants, the only sure reliance, given the complexity of their relationship with Mr. B., is one based upon a prudent defense of self, a defense informed by a steadfast loyalty to the principles by which she has been raised and has begun to see tested and proved valid against her own experience of the world. More immediately pertinent, however, is her final disappointment in Mrs. Jervis—the result of the housekeeper's well-meaning attempt to move Mr. B.'s compassion by allowing him to eavesdrop during the “bundle scene” of Letter xxix. For, although Pamela forgives Mrs. Jervis, there is no indication that she intends to follow her advice in the future. She is now left entirely to her own defense. Letters xxx and xxxi, recounting her final temptation in Bedfordshire, describe the first true test of that defense.

The fact that Pamela is weaned from an undue reliance upon others, and moves toward a proper and appropriate use of what she has been taught and what she has experienced, stands her in good stead during this most dangerous “Scene of Wickedness.” Alone with her master, she appears stronger than in any previous scene—more politic, more polished, more in control of herself and the outward display of her emotional state. This control, in keeping her master from a fit of temper, enables her to consider more coolly the substance and implications of his words. Moreover, it is apparent that Mr. B.'s kindness to Pamela (the new tactic he has used since his failure in Letter xxv) is here at its height. Throughout the scene he plays upon her charity, the development of which cannot have been lost upon
him (especially since he has read all her letters), and speaks to her kind and generous and gentle temperament. However finally transparent, his initial offers and words, his swearing by "God" and his own "salvation," particularly his desire to help her parents and his profession of love to her, tend to place Pamela under a very real danger; for, at this moment when in a sense the "tempter without" tries to enflame the "tempter within" to join forces in her seduction, she feels her heart giving away. At this precise point, however, she begs her master not to "tempt a poor Creature, whose whole Will would be to do yours, if my Virtue and my Duty would permit" (83), and, in the face of his anger that his reformation is not instantly believed, she recites the Lord's Prayer, saying aloud over his bemused objections: "Lead me not into Temptation. But deliver me from Evil, O my good God" (84). Almost on command, Mr. B. leaves her to consider his proposals, and retires to the next room.

Pamela's deliberations contain almost a summary analysis of her recent trials, and it is no surprise that considerations of human support form the major portion of her musings. At first, she thinks that to stay an extra fortnight could do no harm, especially with Mrs. Jervis present to give her at least the same physical protection which has been sufficient to preserve her on several occasions in the past. Not content with this reasoning, she then worries, in a passage directly alluding to Mr. B.'s recent change of tactics, that she might have greater difficulty withstanding his kindness than his anger. In countering this fear, however, she places hope not in the support of man but rather in the assistance of divine "Grace" (84), and, while wishing to believe that his open avowal of love is honorable and indicates a sincere desire to abandon his wicked attempts upon her, she nevertheless finally comments upon the major flaw in her master's proposal: "He talks . . . of his Pride of Heart, and Pride of Condition; O these are in his Head, and in his Heart too, or he would not confess them to me at such an Instant. Well then, thought I, this can only be to

15. Pamela's words here find a counterpart in Patrick Delany's discussion of "lawful commands" and his reminder to servants that "if your master should command you to lye, or steal, to defame, or defraud, or commit any vice or villainy whatsoever, there you are absolutely to disobey him, because GOD hath commanded you, not to do any of these things; and the Apostles have taught us, that we are to obey God rather than men. But as long as the master's commands are within the bounds of religion, and the laws of the land, so far the servant is obliged to submit, and pay intire obedience to them. And this he is to do with fear, and cheerfulness" ("The Duty of Servants to Their Masters," Fifteen Sermons, pp. 182-83).
seduce me” (84). Carrying her reasoning a step further, she notes, building upon what she has learned from her initial reliance on human support, that if he is insincere it would be easy for him “to send Mrs. Jervis and the Maids out of the way... so that all the Mischief he design’d me might be brought about in less than that Time” (84). To remain in Bedfordshire in light of these possible dangers would be in fact presumptuously to trust in her own strength, so, resolving instead to “trust all to Providence, and nothing to myself,” she decides to decline his offers, no matter how generous, and return home (84–85). Following this resolution, which she believes God inspired her with, she writes of the further “Dangers God has enabled” her to “escape” (85). Soon noting the transparency of Mr. B.’s contrivances concerning Mr. Williams, she totally rejects all proposals and, instead of being returned home, is abducted to Lincolnshire.

In spite of its immediate outcome, her decision to return home is the correct one. For, apart from her own youth, dependence upon others, and frequent terror and confusion, she at least has arrived at a decision not only to leave the scene of her temptation but also to trust in God regarding the future. In a very real sense, she has developed or progressed as far as possible within the confines of Bedfordshire, and her humility and trust in providence at this point indicate that she is well prepared for the next stage or plateau in her development. Her belief in God and initial tacit acceptance of Christian principles will be augmented, through severe struggle, by a deepening reliance on Him and the use of these principles to sustain her in the coming time of physical isolation and terror. Moreover, while it is no surprise that she survives within the context of the Bedfordshire estate (given the support and concern of all its servants), it is surprising that she also survives in Lincolnshire, within an estate in a sense dedicated to her ruin. What Richardson seems to have established in the first section of the novel, in Pamela’s initial trust in the support of man, is a “natural” context which will prepare us for the later, and “supernaturally” supported, survival of her virtue. At this point in her story, however, all is obscure, with the only certainty being to trust in God and flee these present temptations.

16. The evidence of the Bedfordshire section also suggests that Pamela is being weaned from an undue reliance upon others for some special purpose—is being “prepared” as the means whereby the very God upon Whom she personally is coming to rely will reveal His “Providence” and “good Pleasure” not just for her but also for Mr. B. and for the estate itself.
5. “When all human Means fail”: Temptation and Deliverance in Lincolnshire

The last numbered letter of the Bedfordshire section, the description of her leave-taking and journey, reveals a Pamela markedly different from the one who confidently asserted in Letter I that “God will not let me want.” The prayer which begins this letter should be viewed as a crucial prologue to her journal of events in Lincolnshire:

Let me write and bewail my miserable hard Fate, tho’ I have no Hope that what I write will be convey’d to your Hands!—I have now nothing to do but write, and weep, and fear, and pray; and yet, What can I pray for, when God Almighty, for my Sins, to be sure, vouchsafes not to hear my Prayers; but suffers me to be a Prey to a wicked Violator of all the Laws of God and Man!—But, gracious Heaven, forgive me my Rashness! O let me not sin against thee; for thou best knowest what is fittest for thy poor Handmaid!—And as thou sufferest not thy poor Creatures to be tempted above what they can bear; I will resign, thro’ thy Grace assisting me, to thy good Pleasure. But since these Temptations are not of my own seeking, the Effects of my Presumption and Vanity, O enable me to withstand them all, and deliver me from the Dangers that hang over my poor Head, and make me perfect thro’ Sufferings, and, in thy own good Time, deliver me from them!

Thus do I pray, imperfectly as I am forced by my distracting Fears and Apprehensions; and O join with me, my dear Parents! (94–95).

What follows this prayer is a narration of her departure from
Bedfordshire and the successive stages in her realization that she is being abducted. This prayer, with its initial despair and yet growing hope in God’s concern for her plight and blessing on her own endeavor to withstand what is to come, should be viewed in context as a comprehensive statement regarding the progression of confusion, despair, and hope evident not only during her recent trials in Bedfordshire but also, and more important, during her journey to Lincolnshire itself. Her description of her hopeful departure, the attentions of all her fellow servants, and Longman’s assurance that “Providence will find you out” (95) are soon darkened in the narrative by thoughts of Mr. B.’s “false Heart,” thoughts which are dispelled only by a supplication to “Heaven” to “preserve” her “from his Power and from his Wickedness” (97). Mr. B.’s first letter, with its evidence of his continuing struggle and acknowledgment of the futility of his activities in a place where all the servants are “possess’d” in her favor, coupled with the discovery of Farmer Norton’s loyalty to her master, causes Pamela to despair and to weep bitterly. At this precise point, however, she relates that she “had recourse again to my only Refuge, that God who takes the innocent Heart into his Almighty Protection, and is alone able to baffle and confound the Devices of the Mighty” (100). A brief time later, the appearance of Mrs. Jewkes and the growing probability of imminent ruin cause Pamela to give over “all Thoughts of Redemption” and to despair once more. Again, and even in the face of a plot that “has been too long a hatching to be baffled,” she nevertheless states: “But then I put my Trust in God, who I knew was able to do every thing for me, when all other possible Means should fail: And in Him I was resolv’d to confide” (102). Toward the end of her narration, she mentions the “brown nodding Horrors of Lofty Elms and Pines” surrounding the Lincolnshire mansion, and comments to herself that here “I fear, is to be the Scene of my Ruin,” immediately adding, “unless God protect me, who is all-sufficient” (102).

What Richardson seems to be establishing here is the framework in which the scenes to come will be placed—scenes depicting a Pamela forced even further away from dependence upon others and toward an even greater reliance upon the strength of purpose and worth she has gained from the testing of her religious principles in Bedfordshire. Such self-reliance, however, is soon to be complemented at critical times by an assistance more than natural. It is not that she will not despair, but each moment of despair will be but the opportunity to
advance in faith and perception—an advancement which in itself suggests the view of faith as a quickening of the spirit and a receptiveness to the presence of a greater reality undergirding that of daily living or the terror of trial and temptation. But it is only through further trial in an environment dedicated to her ruin that both Pamela and her tempter can be led to an insight into this reality—an insight bound up with the final theme of the story itself.

Following Pamela's abduction to Lincolnshire, moreover, Mr. B. disappears from the narrative (at least physically) for almost seventy pages. Although not personally present, his influence is felt everywhere, and it soon becomes apparent that he is systematically isolating her from all human support. His various letters both to her and to his Lincolnshire housekeeper, Mrs. Jewkes, reveal that accompanying his emotional struggle, there also is evidence of a certain blindness. Whether blaming Pamela for the drastic step he has taken (108) or doubting the loyalty of his own tools, he appears as a man in turmoil whose pride seems to have blinded him to the very real danger in which he has placed her.1 For Pamela herself, however, this growing isolation, as well as the fact that she has been "vilely trick'd" (93) and left to the pleasure of strangers, soon results in bewilderment in the face of her master's contrivances. This initial bewilderment is most noticeable in her language, which, however similar to her diction in Bedfordshire, soon contains new and significant features.

"so I must set all my little Wits at Work"

As if in comment upon her stage of development before the abduction, Pamela from the first trusts to her own initiative and acts.

1. Applicable to the disorder which Mr. B.'s pride and lust have caused, as well as his blindness to the potential danger of his actions, is this statement by John Balguy: "Whenever Passion prevails over Reason, and governs instead of it: it produces Natural Disorder, as well as Moral. It not only throws a Cloud over the Mind for the time present: but leaves a dark Shade behind it. Every vicious Action both debilitates the Agent, and stupifies the Understanding, in proportion to the Nature and Degree of it. To commit Sin, is to enter into Servitude. Every After-Commission encreases the Bondage; and is an actual Diminution both of Light and Liberty." A Second Letter to a Deist, p. 18. Also pertinent to Mr. B.'s persistent refusal to accent personal blame for his actions is this statement by George Stanhope: Pride "taints all our Principles, and
Resolving to “set all my little Wits at Work” (106), she quickly enlists the aid of her master’s Lincolnshire chaplain, Mr. Williams. Willing to “do any thing to preserve” her “innocence” (106), she contrives to exchange correspondence with him, and relates that “I hugg’d myself with the Thought” of this “Invention” (113). However innocent, the subsequent series of efforts to deceive Mrs. Jewkes and counterplot her master nevertheless soon reveal a certain murkiness of purpose. Although frequently expressed in a language of religious supplication similar to that in Bedfordshire and during her abduction, Pamela’s plans during these initial scenes seem in the main to be unduly reliant upon her own physical effort, and, moreover, reveal her to be excessively impatient whenever they fail to produce quick results. In the flush of her own successes she appears supremely hopeful, while the successes of her master and Mrs. Jewkes in counterplot almost paralyze her will to act at all, leading her at one point early in her captivity to marvel sadly:

Well, these are strange things to me! I cannot account for them, for my Share; but sure nobody will say, that these fine Gentlemen have any Temper but their own wicked Wills—This naughty Master could run away from me, when he thought none but his Servants should know his base Attempts... but is it not strange, that he should not be afraid of the All-seeing Eye, from which even that black poisonous Heart of his, and its most secret Motions, could not be hid—But what avail me these sorrowful Reflections? He is and will be wicked; and I am, I fear, to be a Victim to his lawless Attempts, if the God in whom I trust, and to whom I hourly pray, prevent it not! (112).

The most striking feature of the early Lincolnshire scenes involves precisely this inability to fathom any reason beyond mere whim or “because she is not able to defend herself, nor has a Friend that can right her” (110) for her master’s apparent delight in doing “the Devil’s Work” (112). As she becomes more and more confused, the trust so evident during her account of the abduction steadily gives way to despair under the “dark Prospects” before her. For example, her upset and confusion cause her at one point to state of Mr. B.’s sudden
offer of Mr. Williams for her husband that “I have been so long in a Maze, that I can say nothing of this for the present. Time will bring all to Light” (132); and she remarks to Mrs. Jewkes, “I have been so used to be made a Fool of by Fortune, that I hardly can tell how to govern myself; and am almost an Infidel as to Mankind” (133). Reflecting further on this strange turn of events, and hoping for the best, she nevertheless fears that “if this should turn out to be a Plot, I fear nothing but a Miracle can save me” (133). After learning that Mr. Williams was set upon by “Rogues in his Way home last Night” (134), she wonders why it is that every “Accident” breaks her “Peace” and resolves during Mrs. Jewkes’s absence to act upon “strange Temptations” to use the key provided her by the parson and flee (135).

The description of her first attempt to escape contains a jumble of impatience, religious hope, and indecision. Her resolution “to try to get away, and leave the Issue to Providence” (136) is quickly shattered when fear blurs her vision, causing her to mistake cows for bulls in the pasture through which she must pass, and finally leads her to state:

So here I am again; and here likely to be; for I have no Courage to help myself anywhere else. O why are poor foolish Maidens try’d with such Dangers, when they have such weak Minds to grapple with them!—I will, since it is so, hope the best: But yet I cannot but observe how grievously every thing makes against me (137).

This statement, recalling her “prologue” prayer and her trust at that point that God “sufferest not [his] poor Creatures to be tempted above what they can bear” as well as her resolution (evidence of the hard-won gains of her recent trials) to “resign” herself through the “assistance” of divine grace to God’s “good Pleasure” (94), focuses on a major difficulty besetting Pamela throughout the initial scenes in Lincolnshire. The darkness surrounding her, her black and uncertain prospects, her impatience, shortsightedness, indecision, and the steady failure of her plots to escape—all serve to bring her dangerously close to losing sight of the lessons of Bedfordshire.

Yet, what immediately precedes her second attempt to escape is evidence of a growing resolution, arrived at in spite of these “over-clouded” prospects and in face of these “strange Turns and Trials” (143), once again to exert her own strength and escape the dangers
surrounding her. This particular contrivance, however, with the neighboring gentry indifferent and Mr. Williams in jail,\(^2\) with her master vowing to “decide her Fate” (145) and with the arrival of his trusty Swiss, the “horrid” Mr. Colbrand (147–48), is undertaken less in a spirit of self-confidence or trust in others than in the hope (although still darkened) that “Heaven” will interest itself in her plight and “succeed to me my dangerous, but innocent Devices” (149). Learning that the “robbing of poor Mr. Williams” was planned by Mrs. Jewkes “and executed by the Groom and a Helper, in order to seize my Letters upon him” (149), she decides to act—committing herself and her cause once again “to thy Providence, O my gracious God” (150).

iii

“tho’ the Prospect be all dark”

Marking as it does a crucial turning point in Pamela’s story, the temptation beside the pond provides not only the first true test of the depth of her belief and willingness to live up to the principles of her religious education but also her first clear opportunity to pass through the darkness occasioned by her frequent despair and glimpse a divine purpose seemingly at work even in the recent events of her life.\(^3\) Accordingly, and almost emblematic of her own shortsightedness, her attempted escape takes place on “a dark misty Night” (150) within a setting unilluminated by even so much as a candle. Her wanderings in the garden soon take on the overtones of groping rather than purposeful action when her key proves useless, she is knocked senseless by a falling brick in her efforts to scale the garden wall, and is finally forced to lie “flat upon the Ground” in a “dreadful way,” bruised and

2. Although with the imprisonment of Mr. Williams, Pamela is finally isolated, at the same time we become aware that Mr. B. is beginning to be plagued and thwarted (like Lovelace later) by the very tools he has used to achieve his present ends. John Arnold (once his most trusted agent) has proved a villain (144), and even Mr. Williams, slyly suggested by him on numerous occasions as a possible husband for Pamela, has attempted to effect her escape.

3. The significance of the pond scene has been noted many times by critics, including Anna Barbauld, who says of Pamela’s temptation to suicide that “considerations of piety at length prevail, and she determines to trust to Providence” (Correspondence, 1: Iviii). See also Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist, pp. 47–49.
bleeding. At this moment of supreme despair, as she is creeping and limping away from the wall, a “sad Thought came just then into” her head urging her to throw herself into the pond to “put a Period to all” her “Griefs in this World” (151).4 Relating to her parents after the event her thanks for escaping this “Temptation” (151), a temptation she also blames on the “Weakness and Presumption, both in one, of her own Mind” (150), she proceeds to tell them of her “Conflicts on this dreadful Occasion, that God’s Mercies may be magnify’d in my Deliverance” (151).

Having resolved to commit suicide, she relates that her “maim’d” condition caused her to take a long time reaching the pond, a “weakness of Body” which happily “gave Time for a little Reflection” and allowed a “Ray of Grace” to “dart in upon” her momentarily “be­nighted Mind” (151). This “Ray of Grace” makes possible a timely internal debate over the wisdom of committing suicide to avoid the dangers surrounding her. Sitting alone in the dark “on the sloping Bank,” she first tries to find some hope to cling to, something in her present situation which may presage even a glimmer of possible deliverance:

I then consider’d, and after I had cast about in my Mind, every thing that could make me hope, and saw no Probability; a wicked Woman devoid of all Compassion! a horrid Helper just arriv’d in this dreadful Colbrand! an angry and resenting Master, who now hated me, and threaten’d the most afflicting Evils! and, that I should, in all Probability, be depriv’d even of the Oppor­tunity I now had before me, to free myself from all their Persecu­tions (152).

Despite so hopeless a situation and the probability of imminent ruin, she nevertheless quickly asks: “What hast thou to do, distressed Creature . . . but throw thyself upon a merciful God, (who knows how innocently I suffer) to avoid the merciless Wickedness of those who are determin’d on my Ruin?” (152). As so often in the past, however, this determination to trust in God is thwarted by the physical reality of her present danger, and during this moment of doubt a thought that “was surely of the Devil’s Instigation” appears in her deliberations: a

4. Concerning water as a traditional place of temptation and trial, see Maynard Mack, King Lear in Our Time, pp. 61–62; Dustin H. Griffin, Satires against Man: The Poems of Rochester, p. 209 f.; and the “Slough of Despond” episode in Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress.
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further and stronger urging to drown herself so that her captors will then believe that she “preferr’d her Honesty to her Life” when they come finally to view her “poor Corse” (152). But once again her bruises slow her down and give time to reconsider, time to see instead of imagine the consequences of suicide. Weighing carefully these consequences, she chides herself, and thinks:

What art thou about to do, wretched Pamela? how knowest thou, tho’ the Prospect be all dark to thy short-sighted Eye, what God may do for thee, even when all human Means fail? God Almighty would not lay me under these sore Afflictions, if he had not given me Strength to grapple with them, if I will exert it as I ought; And who knows, but that the very Presence I so much dread, of my angry and designing Master, (for he has had me in his Power before, and yet I have escap’d) may be better for me, than these persecuting Emissaries of his, who, for his Money, are true to their wicked Trust, and are harden’d by that, and a long Habit of Wickedness, against Compunction of Heart? God can touch his Heart in an instant; and if this should not be done, I can then but put an End to my Life, by some other Means, if I am so resolved (152–53).

Although still physically in the dark, Pamela’s subsequent reasonings reveal that a process has begun by which confusion and despair increasingly are transformed into the very means whereby she is permitted to see herself clearly for the first time—the means of showing her that while her earlier assertion is certainly true that no one is given a trial greater than one can bear, the outcome of such a trial is directly dependent upon exertion of one’s strength in an acceptable way. Almost in comment upon her former pride in contri-

5. This statement seems to be an allusion to Mr. B.’s second attack on Pamela in Bedfordshire and his flippant comparison of her case to that of “Lucretia” (42). As this present scene attests, however, what was once trivial has become serious, for Pamela appears here in very real danger of outdoing even Lucretia and committing suicide on the mere threat of rape. Christian views of Lucretia as “prideful” and more concerned with her own personal humiliation than with divine law and a true steadfastness to chastity are at least as ancient as St. Augustine’s City of God—see Book I, Chapter 19, in particular.

6. Pamela’s remark concerning the necessity of exerting her “strength” as she “ought” has a forerunner in such an observation as this by the author of The Whole Duty of Man: “We are not therefore to affright ourselves with the difficulty of those things God requires of us, but remember he commands nothing which he will not enable us to perform, if we be not wanting to ourselves. And therefore let us sincerely do our parts, and confidently assure ourselves God will not fail of his” (p. 29).
vances, despair over their failure, and initial willingness to “do any thing to preserve” her “Innocence” (106), she now asks: “How knowest thou what Purposes God may have to serve, by the Trials with which thou art now tempted? Art thou to put a Bound to God’s Will, and to say, Thus much will I bear, and no more? And, wilt thou dare to say, that if the Trial be augmented, and continued, thou wilt sooner die than bear it?” (153). Presently viewing her very despondency as a sin, she interprets her present sufferings in the light of a divine purpose which perhaps has “permitted these Sufferings on that very Score, and to make me rely solely on his Grace and Assistance, who perhaps have too much prided myself in a vain Dependence on my own foolish Contrivances” (153). Moreover, reminded here of all the “good Lessons” of her “poor honest Parents, and the Benefit of their Example,” she finally decides to place complete trust in God, and to avoid utterly the temptation of the “grand Enemy” (Satan) to despair:

What then, presumptuous Pamela, dost thou here, thought I? Quit with Speed these guilty Banks and flee from these dashing Waters, that even in their sounding Murmurs, this still Night, reproach thy Rashness! Tempt not God’s Goodness on the mossy Banks, that have been Witnesses of thy guilty Intentions; and while thou hast Power left thee, avoid the tempting Evil, lest thy grand Enemy, now repuls’d by Divine Grace, and due Reflection, return to the Charge with a Force that thy Weakness may not be able to resist! And lest one rash Moment destroy all the Convictions which now have aw’d thy rebellious Mind into Duty and Resignation to the Divine Will! (153).

Although the episode ends with Pamela recaptured and placed under even closer surveillance by Mrs. Jewkes and the other servants, she now can view her recent “trials” and those yet to come as being under the direct control of “Providence” (156). While in the scenes that follow, she may, like all human beings, occasionally fail to see the

7. What Pamela has learned in steadfastly resisting a temptation to suicide seems pointedly reminiscent of George Stanhope’s warning that “When Distresses and Dangers put us upon unlawful Means of escape, or tempt us to trust to an Arm of Flesh, in the use of such Means as are most lawful; we have no longer Right to look, that He, whom we shut out (so far as in us lies) from any part in our Affairs, will appear and interpose so visibly in our Favour, as he hath often done, and is always ready to do, for Them who flee streight to Him for Succour, and make his Providence their only Rock and Refuge, and disclaim all other Confidences, as impious or vain” (Gospels, 1: 217). For similar statements, see The Whole Duty of Man, pp. 26–27, and Jeremy Taylor, Holy Living, “Several Manners of the Divine Presence,” p. 26.
Pamela: A Reading

equity of her situation, or may complain of the lack of sympathetic friends, or fear the future, at least a beginning has been made whereby she will emerge from this time of testing a stronger and more mature person than she was during the sequestered days in Bedfordshire. And although her “Contrivances” are at an end (156), her will and her increasing depth of perception derived from the testing of her beliefs nevertheless enable her to ward off the temptations and terrors yet surrounding her. Moreover, she never becomes hardened or cynical; still distressed over the alteration in her master, she is even able to feel joy (for her “good Lady’s sake”) at his own escape from drowning (157). At the same time, she is more determined than ever to preserve her virtue. And with the arrival of Mr. B., there begins the final conflict between pride and what has been revealed to be a divine intervention for the support of suffering innocence.

iv

“the dreadful Time of Reckoning”

For Pamela, the scenes immediately preceding Mr. B.’s arrival involve the first test of her new insight, and reveal an increasing ability to distinguish the false from the true. For example, having just learned that John Arnold has been dismissed and that Longman, Jonathan, and Mrs. Jervis “have incur’d” Mr. B.’s “Displeasure, for offering to speak in my Behalf” (157), she is made privy to Mrs. Jewkes’s “Secret” that her master plans to marry her “to this dreadful Colbrand” and then buy her back from him “on the Wedding-day, for a Sum of Money” (157). This cruelty, however, is quickly discerned by Pamela as “horrid romancing” and is taken, without undue fear, as a warning to her to beware the potential introduction of some new “Plot now hatching” to ruin her (157). Moreover, once Mr. B. arrives, this critical ability allows her to speak incisively to the instances of moral blindness occasioned by his lust and fortified by the advice and encouragement

8. Sometimes taken as suggestive of a certain shrewd and calculating temper in Pamela, this statement (as well as others which show her concern for Mr. B.’s well-being) seems instead to be of a piece with the evidence of her kind and gentle nature, evidence of the Christian belief that as long as a man is not totally corrupt or hardened there is hope for salvation, and an instance of her practice of a tenet central to Christianity itself: “Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you” (Luke 6: 28).
of his own tool, Mrs. Jewkes. The coming confrontations reveal a Pamela who never wavers from attempts designed to make as clear as possible to Mr. B. the danger in which he has placed them both; in effect, she attempts to force him to see things as clearly as she has begun to see them following her dark temptations beside the pond.

This evidence of a growing clarity of vision is soon complemented by a steadily increasing strength of purpose, most particularly noticeable in her answers to the “seven Articles” which serve almost as a recapitulation of Mr. B.’s previously unsuccessful attempts to bend her to his will. Throughout her answers, Pamela consistently appeals to superior considerations of duty to God, her parents, and the principles of her religious training. To his offer of 500 guineas and promise to provide handsomely for her parents, she forthrightly informs him that “Money, Sir, is not my chief Good,” and that her parents would “rather choose to starve in a Ditch, or rot in a noisome Dunghil, than accept of the Fortune of a Monarch, upon such Terms”; furthermore, for her personally, not even the “Terrors of death, in its most frightful Forms, I hope, thro’ God’s assisting Grace,” shall “ever make me act unworthy of such poor honest Parents” (165). To his offers of fine clothes and jewels, she retorts that “to lose the best jewel, my Virtue, would be poorly recompensed by those you propose to give me” (166); and to his final proposal of a “Twelve month’s Cohabitation” (with a vague promise of marriage if his love for her increases), she impatiently states: “Little, Sir, as I know of the World, I am not to be caught by a Bait so poorly cover’d as this” (167).

However, finally transparent Mr. B.’s monetary temptations may be, they nevertheless rest upon a threat of very real physical danger made vivid by repeated references to the hopelessness of Pamela’s cause. For example, although valuing the “Free-will of a Person already in my Power,” he pointedly reminds her in Article VI that if she refuses his offers he means at any event to gratify his “Passion” for her “without making any Terms at all” (166). Her answer, given in full knowledge of her own danger and physical weakness, exposes at once the emptiness of this warning by centering on the religious implications of such a threat. Informing him that she “will make no Free-will Offering” of her “Virtue,” she proceeds to warn him that even “if I cannot escape the Violence of Man, I hope, by God’s Grace, I shall have nothing to reproach myself, for not doing all in my Power to avoid my Disgrace; and then I can safely appeal to the great God, my only Refuge and Protector, with this Consolation, That my Will bore
no Part in my Violation” (166). Moreover, however trivial the matter of “Free-will” might be for her master, for Pamela it is central and seems to indicate to her the depth of his imperviousness to religious considerations. Accordingly, her final words in answer to his articles (by speaking to his good qualities as the son of her late mistress) once again attempt to bring him to a true sense of the hollowness of a victory over one whose “Will” or “Intention,” she hopes, “will be innocent of Crime” (164). Begging him on “bended Knees” to “weigh well the Matter,” and speaking of the “Stings” and “Remorse” that will “attend your dying Hour, when you come to reflect, that you have ruin’d, perhaps Soul and Body, a wretched Creature, whose only Pride was her Virtue,” she finally prays:

May God Almighty, whose Mercy lately sav’d you from the Peril of perishing in deep Waters, (on which, I hope, you will give me Cause to congratulate you!) touch your Heart in my Favour, and save you from this Sin, and me from this Ruin!—And to Him do I commit my Cause; and to Him will I give the Glory, and Night and Day pray for you, if I may be permitted to escape this great Evil! (168).

This closing prayer reflects the pattern of steady and unified reliance by Pamela on hope for a deliverance effected despite the physical odds against her. And what finally emerges from these scenes of confrontation with her master and Mrs. Jewkes is a language of supplication notably different from that which accompanied her plots and contrivances to escape. For example, at her master’s arrival, she prays for “Heaven” to “preserve” her “if it be thy blessed Will” (159); during a heated exchange with him in the presence of Mrs. Jewkes, she retorts, in spite of the housekeeper’s sarcasm, “Well . . . since I must not speak, I will hold my Peace: But there is a righteous Judge, who knows the Secrets of all Hearts! and to him I appeal” (162). Reacting to Mrs. Jewkes’s discouragement of Mr. B.’s momentary tenderness, Pamela stammers out a “passionate Exclamation to

9. Pertinent to Pamela’s reasoning on freedom of will is the passage in Book I, Chapter 16, of The City of God, where St. Augustine, discussing rape, states that “as long as the will remains unyielding, no crime, beyond the victim’s power to prevent it without sin, and which is perpetrated on the body or in the body, lays any guilt on the soul.” Moreover, having condemned suicide as an acceptable means of avoiding violation, he states categorically in Chapter 19 that, without the consent of the will, “not only the souls of Christian women who have been forcibly violated during their captivity, but also their bodies, remain holy.”
Heaven, to protect my Innocence” and relates (more in sadness than terror) how this “Word was the Subject of their Ridicule” (163). Prefacing her replies to the proposals, she assures her parents that she is “prepared for the worst,” and fears that although “there will be nothing omitted to ruin me, and tho’ my poor Strength will not be able to defend me,” she will yet not give in voluntarily, and resolves to leave to God “the avenging of all my Wrongs, in his own good Time and Manner” (164). During a discussion with Mrs. Jewkes, she answers her “fleering” language by warning that “tho’ I can have neither Justice nor Mercy here, and cannot be heard in my Defence, yet a Time will come, may-be, when I shall be heard, and when your own Guilt will strike you dumb” (169). Unmoved, Mrs. Jewkes nevertheless speaks almost wonderingly of the “Strength” of “Spirit” Pamela exhibits during this time of great anxiety, and remarks that if her physical strength “was but answerable to that, thou wouldst run away with us all, and this great House too on thy Back” (170). Following her failure to move her master by means of two prayers as he left for church, and after remarking again on her sadness at his alteration, Pamela, knowing the worst soon will be attempted, states, in a passage revealing what she has learned from her temptation beside the pond:

I am so fearful of Plots and Tricks, I know not what to do!—Everything I suspect; for now my Disgrace is avow’d, what can I think!—To be sure the worst will be attempted! I can only pour out my Soul in Prayer to God, for his blessed Protection. But if I must suffer, let me not be long a mournful Survivor!—Only let me not shorten my own Time sinfully! (171).

Shortly after this prayer, Mr. B. tries to achieve through violence what he has been unable to achieve through bribes or terror.

This steadfastness during scenes which heretofore she was unable to bear even thinking of enduring suggests the depth of Pamela’s preparation for her “worst Trial” and her “fearfullest Danger” (172). Moreover, if the pond scene represents the turning point in the testing of her beliefs and the beginning of a more mature awareness of a divine concern in the world, the attempted rape begins the process whereby Mr. B. is brought face to face with the true nature and possible consequences of his persecution and contrivances to seduce one whom he was requested to protect. As the scene opens, he is disguised as the supposedly drunk servant Nan. Covered by her
"Gown and Petticoat" with her "Apron over his Face and Shoulders," he pretends to sleep in a chair in Pamela's bedroom. Later, while writing of the event, Pamela states of this disguise: "What Meannesses will not Lucifer make his Votaries stoop to, to gain their abominable Ends" (175). He is, at this point, not just as "cunning" as "Lucifer" (61), or a "Workman" promoted by "Lucifer" (65), but a very "Votary" of "Lucifer." Reminiscent of traditional views of evil, its protean qualities, Mr. B., in taking for a disguise the uniform of the meanest of his servants, has sunk as low as possible. His previous concern for his reputation, his responsibilities to the stewardship entrusted to him by his dying mother, all are here of less consequence to him than his desire to satisfy his lust. 10

The most noteworthy feature of this scene, however, is the evidence suggesting that the ray of light steadily shining into the darkness of the confusion, terror, and despair surrounding Pamela, has begun likewise to penetrate the meannesses of her master. When it is kept in mind that she herself later directly attributes her survival at this point to the timely disabling of her faculties by God in answer to a prayer for deliverance (177), Mr. B.'s failure and subsequent activities are scarcely to be appreciated apart from a close association with the intervening power of the divinity, His very providence. It is not that Mr. B. is reformed instantly or converted by his fear over Pamela's violent fits, but rather that a beginning has been made toward altering his pride and lust, toward making him receptive (as did Pamela's bruises at pond side) to the reassertion of qualities so long subdued by his lust, the influence of Mrs. Jewkes, and his companions of the "Chase and Green." His silencing of Mrs. Jewkes and stopping short of rape provide a moment of reflection which prepares for his increasing clarity of vision in the scenes to come. As his lust is replaced by an awareness of the felicity to be gained from a "virtuous Love," he is subsequently taught the folly of his previous attempts to seduce virtue. 11 The next day, he shows "great Tenderness" toward Pamela.

10. For an alternative, transvestite view of this disguise, however, see John A. Dussinger, "What Pamela Knew," p. 390.

11. For other relevant views of Mr. B.'s moment of insight, see: Gwendolyn Needham, "Richardson's Characterization of Mr. B. and Double Purpose in Pamela," p. 467; Dussinger, "What Pamela Knew," p. 386; Dorothy Parker, "The Time Scheme of Pamela," (in particular p. 704, where she cogently sums up what has happened to Mr. B. by stating: "The difference in him is not in personality, but in character; his wildness and passion are now regulated by moral virtue"); and Margaret Doody's statements on p. 49 of A Natural Passion.
(177), and, unlike his demands earlier, asks her to place "some little Confidence in me," assuring her that although he "did intend what" she calls "the worst," he can now state that he loves her "beyond all" her "Sex, and cannot live without" her (178). From this point begins a process of mutual concession and testing whereby they both will eventually come to accept the dignity and worth of each other—to move together from the darkness of mutual torment into the light of mutual trust and felicity.

Following their individual moments of insight, however, the scenes preceding Pamela's voluntary return contain evidence of a certain murkiness of vision concerning their true feelings for each other and the difficulty of reconciling those feelings with the demands of the world at large. In a sense, these scenes place emphasis upon their struggling "humanity," their daily need to strengthen a beginning reformation and constantly to exercise a trust in the wisdom of God. Throughout, the difficulty in fully resolving the conflict between Mr. B.'s good qualities and his lust and pride in contrivance is complemented by Pamela's own dark questioning and occasional failure to trust in God's intervening power and concern. What ultimately takes place during these scenes, however, is an analysis of the human condition within a providential world order, a presentation of the frequent tendency (as evidenced by Mr. B.'s actions) to attribute to one's own will events which are essentially the result of a divine plan, and (as evidenced by Pamela's statements) to allow moments of weakness and uncertainty to overshadow temporarily the lessons gained from the rigorous testing of religious beliefs. Three episodes from this section demonstrate the terms of this analysis: the two meetings beside the pond, and Pamela's departure for home.

Despite her master's recent treatment of her, Pamela begins the narration of their first conference beside the pond by remarking to her parents that although this scene of her gravest temptation will ever be a "Trouble and Reproach to me," it may now, in light of what she is about to relate, be also the very place where her "present Hopes . . . began to dawn," as if "God Almighty would shew your poor sinful
Daughter, how well I did, to put my Affiance in his Goodness, and not throw away myself, because my Ruin seem'd inevitable to my shortsighted Apprehension” (183). Walking beside the pond, Mr. B. first tells Pamela how her talk with Mrs. Jewkes before the attempted rape, her words (summarizing her previous life of religious training and steadfastness to her beliefs) “so innocent, and so full of beautiful Simplicity,” had “half disarmed” his “Resolutions” (184). At that time, moreover, seeing her “so watchful over” her “Virtue” and hoping “to find it otherwise,” he assures her that he has come since to discover that his “Passion” for her “is increas’d,” however honorably, by that very fact (184). Still attempting to excuse his actions, and professing that at least he is “not a very abandoned Profligate,” he states of his present unsettled state of mind: “Had I been utterly given up to my Passions, I should before now have gratify’d them, and not have shown that Remorse and Compassion for you, which have repriev’d you more than once, when absolutely in my Power” (184). Mr. B. appears here to be more concerned with what went wrong with his perfectly conceived contrivances than he is with totally facing up to the consequences of his own actions. Perhaps because social “Condition” makes thoughts of marriage unendurable (184) and his “Pride” still “struggles hard within” him (185), he cannot at this point ascribe anything other than a personal reason for his failure to seduce her. He speaks of his remorse and compassion as if they alone were responsible for Pamela’s survival and thus should be gratefully praised by her. Moreover, he seems unable either to subjugate his pride and admit unequivocally his complete love for his servant or to brave the opinion of the world, primarily because he refuses to acknowledge any power greater than his own in bringing about the present turn of affairs.

A further instance of his confusion and lack of courage in acting upon his newfound desire to made amends in spite of the world’s opinion occurs toward the conclusion of this meeting. At one point he remarks: “I have known in this agreeable Hour more sincere Pleasure, than I have experienc’d in all the guilty Tumults that my desiring Soul put me into, in the Hopes of possessing you on my own Terms. And, Pamela, you must pray for the Continuance of this Temper; and I hope your Prayers will get the better of my Temptations” (188). Having already begun to see “why all his hard Trials of me, and my black Apprehensions, would not let me hate him” (185), a comment on the love which has developed from her charity and
consistent sadness over her master’s wickedness, Pamela, “over­power’d” by these words of seemingly sincere repentance, assures him that “I shall be too much rewarded for all my Sufferings, if this Goodness hold” and prays God to “grant it may, for your own Soul’s sake, as well as mine” (188). At this precise moment of mutual concession and dawning trust, however, thoughts of the world’s censure of such a socially imbalanced union cause Mr. B. to waver in his good purpose, a change of heart which throws Pamela into confusion and doubt over the wisdom of her recent admission of love. And, after Mr. B.’s promise to take his “proud Heart to Task” (188), the meeting and first volume end with Pamela hoping that the son of her good lady “cannot be the worst of Men” but trusting in God for the rest (189).

The scenes preceding their second meeting beside the pond do little to dispel Pamela’s doubt, for in quick succession she is made aware of the dismissal of her master’s Bedfordshire servants and is warned by a Gypsy of an impending “Sham-marriage” designed to ruin her. Moreover, to add to these new terrors, Mrs. Jewkes soon obtains the parcel of letters Pamela had hidden before her last attempt to escape. These letters, containing evidence of her confusion and fear during her various efforts to escape with the help of Mr. Williams, do little to convince Mr. B. of the seriousness of his actions or the spiritual danger in which his temptations of an innocent young girl have placed him. His desire to read more of her writings so that he can see the light in which she places things, however, leads to their second meeting beside the pond. Pamela’s account of the major escape attempt seems to captivate him, and after reading it, she relates that he “was very serious at my Reflections, on what God had enabled me to escape. And when he came to my Reasonings, about throwing myself into the Water, he said, Walk gently before; and seem’d so mov’d, that he turn’d away his Face from me; and I bless’d this good Sign, and began not so much to repent at his seeing this mournful Part of my Story” (208). On reading her “Reasonings,” Mr. B. seems to feel a genuine remorse and is further enabled to marvel at her near escape.

For Pamela, however, and even though “All this look’d well,” fear over the “Sham-marriage” causes her to request to be sent home safely to her parents (209). Enraged at this rejection following so closely upon his sincere desire somehow to atone for his previous behavior, Mr. B.’s pride is once more inflamed, and, “in a fearful Passion,” he grants her request (209). During her departure, Pamela relates how
she was moved by his refusal to heed the advice of Mrs. Jewkes that he not let her leave "scot-free" after "all the Trouble she has cost" him (211). Kneeling in the doorway, she begs God to bless her master for this "Instance of . . . Goodness" and promises to pray for him as long as she lives (211). The squire, however, refuses to see her, and despite her joy at leaving the scene of her temptation, she is nevertheless troubled. For, having admitted to herself her love for him, she is confused over the strange turn of events which has caused her master so precipitately to grant her request. Moreover, his lordly behavior leads her to reflect on the pride which seems to be the reason for both his turmoil and her own (210), and finally to say to the coachman, Robert, as she steps into the chariot: "So, . . . here I am again! a pure Sporting-piece for the Great! a mere Tennis-ball of Fortune" (212).

Just as Mr. B.'s fear of public censure makes him cut short his discussion of marriage, and his pride causes him to act wrathfully when his avowed reformation (despite all his previous lies and contrivances) is not instantly believed to be sincere, this last statement by Pamela may be taken as again suggesting the difficulty facing all human beings within a providential universe in discerning at the moment of occurrence the purpose or reason behind particular events.12 But as the pond scene prepared for her best glimpse of God's active purpose in her own life, this departure for home serves to open her eyes more fully to the sense and providential meaning of all that has previously occurred.

Finally granted what she has so constantly desired, Pamela is disquieted by two letters sent after her by her master. In the first of these, while he hopes that she will not expose him unnecessarily except for purposes of clearing her own conduct, he nevertheless assures her that he will not only allow himself to be "accused" by her but will also "accuse" himself if it is "needful" (214). Faced with these signs of a

12. This difficulty was frequently faced by writers using poetic justice in their works. As Richard H. Tyre points out, speaking of the early eighteenth-century dramatists and "The Works of God": "The variety of His works, they believed, was obvious to any observer, but the regularity, which in daily life was largely hidden from man's finite mind, was what they believed must be made evident in their plays to make them meaningful and thus evocative of pity and fear." "Versions of Poetic Justice in the Early Eighteenth Century," p. 35. Furthermore, for Tyre, "Both Addison and Dennis came to see" this "poetic justice as a necessary literary recognition of the divine order controlling men's destinies" (44). For an eighteenth-century discussion of "ordinary" and "special" examples of the "Interpositions of Providence," see John Conybeare's A Defence of Reveal'd Religion, pp. 308–9, a work printed by Richardson ("Sale," p. 161).
Temptation and Deliverance in Lincolnshire

generous nature, she once again confesses to herself her love for him, a love “I know not how it came, nor when it begun; but creep, creep it has, like a Thief upon me; and before I knew what was the Matter, it look’d like Love” (214). The discomfort and the uncertainty which she experiences are compounded by the receipt of a second letter, which shows that Mr. B. has read the remaining portions of her journal and as a result has found that he struggles against his affection for her in vain (216). Moved profoundly by her “generous Concern for me, on hearing how narrowly I escaped drowning (tho’ my Death would have been your Freedom, and I had made it your Interest to wish it); and your most agreeable Confession in another Place, that notwithstanding all my hard Usage of you, you could not hate me,” he now repents of his parting from her, but, as “God is my Witness, for no unlawful End, as you would call it; but the very contrary” (216). Vowing to go to her father’s if necessary and still desiring to see her former letters (sent to her parents “by Williams’s Conveyance”) so that he can have all his “proud, and, perhaps punctilious Doubts answer’d” (216), he begs her to place confidence in him and return.

Although at first still fearful that his “Pride of Heart, and Pride of Condition, may again take place,” Pamela decides (in spite of these doubts and the opinion of the world) that by trusting in Mr. B.’s generosity and returning, she “may be the means of making many happy, as well as” herself “by placing a generous Confidence in him” (217). Reminiscent of the conclusion of the Bedfordshire section, her decision here is indeed the right one, for Pamela’s subsequent adventures, unlike the random bouncings of a “Tennis-ball of Fortune,” reveal instead her progressive awakening to service as an instrument of providence. Moreover, by means of her example and his desire to conquer his pride, Mr. B. begins in earnest his own steady transformation from a votary of evil into a man well on the way toward true repentance and responsible stewardship.
6. "the unsearchable Wisdom of God": The Ways of Providence and the Reward of Virtue

Pamela’s voluntary return initiates a long period of reflection and reconciliation during which a religious language, filled most notably with references to divine providence and grace, serves not only to explain or make clear past events but also increasingly to order and illuminate present experience and future hope.1 In many ways, the scenes preceding the return to Bedfordshire are among the most crucial in the novel, for from them finally emerges the core of the religious theme itself. Moreover, Pamela and Mr. B.’s movement from private mutual trust and thanksgiving to public “Jubilee,” from personal joy toward the steadily confident attempts at reestabishing order and peace throughout the sphere of their influence, makes clearer the full importance of the scenes subsequent to the wedding—making them much more than “tedious lengthening” or mere “exposition” at the expense of genuine “exploration.”2

1. For Gerald A. Barker, however, Pamela merely “reinterprets past events in order to see evidence of divine approval and reward.” “The Complacent Paragon: Exemplary Characterization in Richardson.” I think that such an assessment fails to consider the stages whereby both Pamela and Mr. B. finally arrive at an awareness of the divinely ordered world they inhabit, and, further, tends to make Pamela herself a character incapable of growth, complete from the first, and untouched by such things as the abduction, contemplated suicide, and the numerous other trials of her virtue.

"we have sufficiently tortur’d one another"

Pamela’s first meetings with her master depict a private reconciliation that is carried on in spite of the censuring opinion of the world.
Although he initially does relate that the "World's Censure... sticks a little too close with me still" (224), Pamela's own hopes that she will "be found grateful for all the Blessings I shall receive at the Hands of Providence, by means of your Generosity and Condescension," elicit a complementary desire from Mr. B. that "God will bless me for your Sake" and a resolution to "defy" (as a result of "this sweet Foretaste of my Happiness") the "sawcy, busy Censurers of the World, and bid them know your Excellence, and my Happiness, before they, with unhallow'd Lips, presume to judge of my Actions, and your Merit" (227). Moreover, throughout these scenes there is evident the beginnings of a mutual desire for peace and order, accompanied by a persistent placing of these desires within a providential context. Now loving her "with a purer Flame than ever" he knew in his "whole Life," Mr. B. is enabled to experience "more sincere Joy and Satisfaction" than ever he knew during "all the guilty Tumults" of his "former Passion" (228). Revealing to Pamela how he was moved by her accounts of their former conflicts, and in particular the evidence of her charitable return, he is led to exclaim:

'Tis true, my dear Pamela... we have sufficiently tortur'd one another; and the only Comfort that can result from it, will be, reflecting upon the Matter coolly and with Pleasure, when all these Storms are overblown, (as I hope they now are) and we sit together secur'd in each other's good Opinion, recounting the uncommon Gradations, by which we have ascended to the Summit of that Felicity, which I hope we shall shortly arrive at (229).

Discussing the "Sham-marriage" and how her "White Angel" got the better of his "black one" and inspired him with "Resolution to abandon the Project just as it was to be put into Execution," Mr. B. relates how in his present state of mind "true Love is the only Motive by which I am directed" (231), and desires to read her previous papers so "that I may know whether all my future Kindness is able to recom pense you" (232). In light of these private confessions and sincere resolutions, Pamela reflects on her dawning hopes to be worthy of

3. Regarding Mr. B.'s mention of "black" and "white" Angels, see George Stanhope's Gospels—in particular the statement that "as our Adversary is an Angel; so are our Guards Angels also," protectors who use "all the ways of counter-working his Designs, and the same Methods of insinuating themselves for promoting Piety, which he can possibly have for the hardening us in Vice" (4:500–501).
dispensing to others the blessings she may receive "by his kind Favour," credits the "pious Instructions and Examples, under God" of her parents in bringing her to this happy time, and finally states:

O the Joy that fills my Mind on these proud Hopes! on these delightful Prospects!—It is too mighty for me; and I must sit down to ponder all these Things, and to admire and bless the Goodness of that Providence, which has, thro' so many intricate Mazes, made me tread the Paths of Innocence, and so amply rewarded me, for what it has itself enabled me to do! All Glory to God alone be ever given for it, by your poor enraptur'd Daughter! (232).\(^4\)

Soon, the interaction between Mr. B.'s desire to make amends for his past wickedness and Pamela's own fears of unworthiness and her hope for continued humility in her new situation, serves to fit and prepare them both for their emergence into the larger social sphere of Lincolnshire. Accordingly, his wish that Pamela forgive both Mrs. Jewkes and himself, along with the admission that previously his behavior has been "stark naught" (234), allow for the first test in his eyes of the sincerity of her professions of humility and trust. Hoping that she "will be very forgiving," Mr. B. is gratified when Pamela oblies, wanting never to take upon herself "to make a bad Use of any Opportunities that may be put into" her hands by her "generous Master" (234). Privately asking her parents to pray that she remain humble amidst "all these promising Things so soothing to the Vanity" of her "Years and Sex," she again also hopes always to "acknowledge, with thankful Humility, the blessed Providence which has so visibly conducted" her "thro' the dangerous Paths" she has trod "to this happy Moment" (234). Mr. B. reacts to Pamela's fears of unworthiness by kneeling with her, vowing "everlasting Truth and Fidelity," and hoping that God will "but bless us both with half the Pleasures that seem to lie before us, and we shall have no Reason to envy the Felicity of the greatest Princes" (235).

Reflecting once again on recent events, this time in the privacy of

4. As Charles Wheatly observed (reminiscent of Pamela's growing wonder at the goodness of providence and how it frequently chooses to manifest itself in the world): God "will help our natural Abilities first, to try what Effort they can make; and then if any thing truly needful prove beyond our Reach at last," He "will stoop to our scanty Arm, will let it down and hand it to us: What we are not able of ourselves to compass, he will, either by his own or some other's Aid, communicate and supply" ("BEZALEEL and AHOliaB," Fifty Sermons, 1: 135–36).
her closet, Pamela kneels and remarks on her past sufferings; commenting on the educational value of her trial, she blesses God:

who had thus chang'd my Distress to Happiness, and so abundantly rewarded me for all the Sufferings I had pass'd thro'.—And Oh! how light, how very light, do all those Sufferings now appear, which then my repining Mind made so formidable to me!—Hence, in every State of Life, and in all the Changes and Chances of it, for the future, will I trust in Providence, who knows what is best for us, and frequently turns the very Evils we most dread, to be the Causes of our Happiness, and of our Deliverance from greater!—My Experiences, young as I am, as to this great Point of Reliance in God, are strong, tho' my Judgment in general may be weak and unformed; but you'll excuse these Reflections, because they are your belov'd Daughter's; and, so far as they are not amiss, derive themselves from the Benefit of yours and my late good Lady's Examples and Instructions (235).

Easier than ever before in each other's company, Pamela's wish that her wedding be celebrated in a "holy Place" prompts Mr. B. to prepare his "own little Chapel, which has not been used for two generations, for anything but a Lumber-room" (236). This willingness to re-establish a neglected place of worship seems of a piece with his earlier hopes to make amends for his past actions, and, followed as it is by his revelation of the coming visit of the neighboring gentry, seems also to suggest that this time of initial private reconciliation is over. For, from this point on, private wonder over the ways of providence is increasingly directed toward the world at large, and this movement into a broader social sphere provides not only greater opportunity for the exercise of Mr. B.'s penitence and Pamela's humility but also occasion for the gradual expansion of the influence of the peace and harmony resulting from their now clearly defined love for each other.
confines of the Lincolnshire household. However promising, these scenes of public reconciliation are as dangerous to Pamela and her master as any previous ones in the novel. For, in braving the Lincolnshire society, they are quickly faced with a test of their sincerity and an exercise of the strength of their private convictions regarding each other and the opinion of the world. For Pamela, the universal praise and wonder at her "uncommon Story" provide new difficulties in maintaining perspective amid the material and social benefits now flooding in upon her. For Mr. B., interaction with his neighbors offers the first true test of his own willingness to amend his past life and make active restitution to repair the disorder which his lust and pride have caused. Together, their words and actions during these initial social forays serve as careful preparation for the resurgence of responsibility and the reestablishment of order, so marked a feature of the scenes following the wedding—a preparation most evident in the meetings with Pamela's father and Parson Williams.

Despite Pamela's acceptance by the gentry as an adornment to "any Station in Life" (244), the arrival of her father soon occasions a severe testing of Mr. B.'s own credibility and penitence. Certain that his daughter is "ruin'd," Mr. Andrews is at first deaf to the squire's professions of gratitude to both him and his wife "for being the happy Means of procuring" for Mr. B. so great a blessing (248). It is only after seeing his daughter and hearing from her own lips and those of the assembled company that things are indeed as Mr. B. says they are that he is able wonderingly to praise the "Goodness of God" Who has saved Pamela "from the Depth of Misery" (251). In marked contrast to the previous indifference of the gentry, and Mr. B.'s flippant treatment of Mr. Andrews during their former meeting in Bedfordshire (92–93), trust and harmony now prevail as Pamela is "commanded" to sit "between two of the dearest Men in the World to me . . . each holding one of my Hands" (251)—a scene emblematic of the much altered situation in the Lincolnshire estate and its household.

As almost a necessary balance to the praise and affection of the gentry, there follows in Pamela's meetings with her father and Mr. B. a time for reflection and self-examination, and for further demonstration to her that since "God has brought about" her "Happiness by the very Means" she thought her "great Grievance," she should continue humble and forgiving (255). For her father, there is further cause to wonder and rejoice over the "Ways of Providence" (254). Simultaneous with this is the continued desire of her master for order and
The Ways of Providence and the Reward of Virtue

harmony. However still a novice in penitence, however much he still tends to credit his own will as the basic cause of this happier turn of events, he at least now wishes to carry back to the Bedfordshire household “a Mistress, who should assist” him in repairing “the Mischief she has made in it” (253). In pressing for an early wedding date, he tells Pamela (regarding the chapel) that “being got in tolerable Order” it now “look’d very well” and further promises that “it should always be kept in Order for the future” (257). Revealing his intention to invite the neighboring ladies to dine with them on Sunday, and to “make a tolerable little Congregation” for the celebration of divine services, he hopes that this will demonstrate to Pamela “that the Chapel is really a little House of God, and has been consecrated” and is thus a proper place for the solemnization of their nuptials (257).

Shortly after this disclosure of his intention to celebrate the Sabbath in his newly reordered chapel, there takes place a meeting with Parson Williams. Having contrived this meeting beforehand to effect a reconciliation with his former “rival,” Mr. B. occasions instead an exchange which clearly reveals the very core around which such reconciliation and social harmony itself must revolve. Although one of his first acts upon Pamela’s return was to free the parson from jail, and in spite of a brief meeting with him before the visit of the gentry, this particular scene depicts a Mr. B. who squarely faces up to the total consequences of his past actions. In the presence of Pamela, Mr. Andrews, and the very man so slyly insinuated as a possible husband for her during the time of temptation, he freely states:

I will not pretend to say, that I had formerly either Power or Will to act thus. But since I began to resolve on the Change you see, I have reap’d so much Pleasure in it, that my own Interest will keep me steady. For, till within these few Days, I knew not what it was to be happy (261).

Mr. Williams, “with Tears of Joy in his Eyes,” remarks how “happily” Mr. B. was “touched by the Divine Grace” before he had been hurried “into the Commission of Sins, that the deepest Penitence could hardly have aton’d for,” and advises him that since “God has enabled you to stop short of the Evil,” there is “nothing to do, but to rejoice in the Good, which now will be doubly so, because you can receive it without the least inward Reproach” (261). As comment upon his own progress and grateful acknowledgment of what previously he had doubted and
tested, Mr. B. likewise blesses this grace of God, thanks Mr. Andrews “for his excellent Lessons” and “his dear Daughter for following them,” and hopes “from her good Example, and your Friendship, Mr. Williams, in time, to be half as good as my Tutoress” (261).

Beginning her own reflections on this moving scene, Pamela hopes to put to “good Use” the “Blessings” before her, and goes on to credit not only God’s “Grace” but also the “wonderful Ways” of His “Providence” in using the very thing she dreaded her master seeing, her papers, as “Means to promote” her present “Happiness” (261). When it is kept in mind that an important portion of these papers (as well as the outcome of her plan to escape) were entrusted to God’s “Providence” (150), her acknowledgment and praise of “the unsearchable Wisdom of God” (261) seem an appropriate echo of Romans 11:33 with its insistence that “as none of the promises of God do fail, so the most are in such sort brought to pass, that, if we after consider the circuit, wherein the steps of his providence have gone, the due consideration thereof cannot choose but draw from us the selfsame words of astonishment, which the blessed Apostle hath: ‘O the depth of the riches of the wisdom of God! how unsearchable are his counsels and his ways past finding out!’ ”

Pamela’s hope amid all these promising events to remain a “humble” and worthy “Instrument” of God “not only to magnify his Graciousness to this fine Gentleman and myself; but to dispense Benefits to others” (262), begins the process whereby such graciousness, having already effected reconciliation and honorable love with her master and social acceptance by her neighbors, will extend its power even further within the ever widening influence of her “uncommon Story.” For the present, however, the scenes dealing with public reconciliation end in the context of a divine service attended by servants and gentlefolk alike. Moreover, Mr. Andrews’s choice of Psalm 145 to

5. Richard Hooker, Sermon 7 (“Found Among the Papers of Bishop Andrews”), *The Works*, 3:707. Also pertinent to Pamela’s “wonder” at “the unsearchable Wisdom of God” is this statement in Chapter 20 (“Of Divine Providence”) of *The Christian’s Magazine*: “WHEN we contemplate God, it is like losing ourselves in a boundless Prospect, where we see a great many Glories and Beauties, but cannot see to the End of it: We may discover admirable and surprising Wisdom in that little we see of Providence; but we know so little of what has been done in the World, and by what Means it was done, and what Ends it served, that it is no Wonder if we have as imperfect a View of the Wisdom of Providence, as we have of the History of the World” (p. 178).

6. Perhaps suggestive of the reaffirmation of the previous good rule and order of Lady B’s day is the fact that Pamela is clothed in a dress of her former mistress during this scene—p. 266.
read during the afternoon "Prayers" pointedly reinforces his daughter's praise of the "unsearchable Wisdom of God"—a text promising, as her own experience and example can attest, that God "will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them."

iii

"then shall I not be useless in my Generation"

In the scenes preceding the arrival of Lady Davers, Mr. B. no longer seems concerned or ashamed at the spying eyes of others, but continues his progress in penitence with more assurance than previously. Hoping by degrees to be more habituated to a religious way of thinking the more he "converses with Pamela" (279), he emerges from the scenes prior to the wedding as a worthy protector and comforter of one whom he had tried to seduce. Pamela, however, desiring humility and understanding to counter the dangers of vanity and pride seemingly inherent in "this new Condition," fears to be left to her "own Conduct, a frail Ship in a tempestuous Ocean" and prays for "Ballast" or some other "Pilot" than her own "inconsiderate Will" to guide her in her new duties and responsibilities (279). Increasingly, before the wedding, there is evidence that this pilot or ballast, the providence of God and the religious principles viewed as informing their approaching happiness, is seen to be the basis for a growing desire to make a proper use in the world at large of the power entrusted to them both, to make the harmony of their personal union a further incentive actively to imitate that order in their households and lives.

Mr. B.'s gentleness and love finally dispel Pamela's doubt concerning her own worthiness as well as her fear that, since she has not brought him a proper dowry, all the obligation is on her side. The wedding itself, with Pamela clothed in a dress of her former mistress, seems less an occasion for Mr. B.'s concern over the opinion of the world than one suggestive of the rebirth of the older order of his mother's day. This suggestion of rebirth or recommitment to the worth of Lady B.'s good rule and order is strengthened when Mr. B. not only repels the invasion of his rakish friends (an incident which momentarily disrupts the peace of the wedding day), but also soon
afterward resolves to reinstate in a day of public jubilee the servants
of the Bedfordshire household, who actively had plotted against him
in their desire to help one who has become, by a remarkable turn of
events, their new mistress (300). Forgiving even his former tool John
Arnold, he assures Pamela: “You cannot, my dear Life, be so happy in
me, as I am in you.” And then he states: “O how heartily I despise all
my former Pursuits and headstrong Appetites! what Joys, what true
Joys, flow from virtuous Love! Joys which the narrow Soul of the
Libertine cannot take in, nor his Thought conceive!—And which I
myself, whilst a Libertine, had not the least Notion of!” (300).

Reflecting on the growing harmony and peace around her, Pamela
once more gratefully acknowledges the “all-gracious Dispenser
of these Blessings,” hopes she may “preserve an humble and upright
Mind” to “gracious God,” a “dutiful Gratitude” to her “dear Master
and Husband,” and that she may preserve, “at the same time, an
obliging Deportment to every one else” (301). To these hopes, how­
ever, she adds the desire “to diffuse the Blessings I experience, to all
in my Knowledge!—For else, what is it for such a Worm as I to be
exalted! What is my single Happiness, if I suffer it, Niggard-like, to
extend no further than myself?—But then, indeed, do God Almighty’s
Creatures act worthy of the Blessings they receive, when they make,
or endeavour to make, the whole Creation, so far as in the Circle of
their Power, happy!” (303). Carrying her reasoning a step further, she
speaks to the heart of what she judges to be the purpose or reason for
her remarkable preservation and elevation thus:

Great and good God! as thou hast enlarged my Oppor­
tunities, enlarge also my Will, and make me delight in dispens­
ing to others, a Portion of that Happiness which I have myself so
plentifully receiv’d at the Hands of thy gracious Providence!
Then shall I not be useless in my Generation!—Then shall I not
stand a single Mark of God’s Goodness to a poor worthless
Creature, that in herself is of so poor Account in the Scale of
Beings, a mere Cypher on the wrong Side of a Figure; but shall
be placed on the right Side; and, tho’ nothing worth in myself,
shall give Signification by my Place, and multiply the Blessings I
owe to God’s Goodness, who has distinguish’d me by so fair a
Lot! (303).

Such a responsibility to others is what she conceives to be “the indis­
pendable Duty of a high Condition” (303), and, remembering her
former training as Lady B.’s “Almoner,” she trusts that since it now has
“become [her] Part to do those good things” she will never “forget to look up with due Thankfulness, to the Providence which has intrusted [her] with the Power” (304).  

Moreover, Pamela’s attempts to live up to the duties and responsibilities of her new station soon are complemented by Mr. B.’s own efforts to solidify and extend to others a share of the felicity he has gained. His resolute acquiescence in his wife’s charities (304–5) and his desire for a household order in the “old-fashion’d” mode of his mother’s day (306–7) reveal him to be a man who desires to set an example and truly “answer” by his own manner of living the good “Lesson” he learned at “School”: “Every one mend one” (308). Accordingly, shortly before the arrival of his sister, Mr. B. acts on the principles he has been espousing, and leaves on an errand of mercy—ministrations which make him appear as a “good Angel” to the “distress’d Wife and Children” of his dying friend Mr. Carlton (316). Alone, Pamela is prompted by this impending death (in a memento mori passage) to ruminate on the transitory nature of all life and to remember a “Reflection” of Lady B.’s that, without frequent “Occasions for Concern, even in the most prosperous State . . . we should look no further, but be like sensual Travellers on a Journey homeward, who, meeting with good Entertainment at some Inn on the Way, put up their Rest there, and never think of pursuing their Journey to their proper Home” (315). These melancholy thoughts, however, are mitigated when, remarking on the “Remorse” of Mrs. Jewkes and the “Power of the Heads of Families” (their edifying or corrupting “Example”), she longs “to be doing some Good” so that she will never be condemned for her actions during this the journey to her own “proper Home.”

iv

“As if in comment on these statements concerning the uncertainty of human life, the force of example, and the necessity of making the

7. The responsibility of the rich and powerful, their greater obligation to dispense “blessings” to those less fortunate, was almost a commonplace in the sermon literature of the period. One notable example is Patrick Delany’s sermon, “The Duty of Rulers to their Subjects,” Fifteen Sermons, p. 279. For Richardson’s own statement on the duties of the rich and powerful, see p. 411 of Pamela.

8. For a discussion of the force of example for good or ill, see Delany’s sermon, “The Duty of Masters to their Servants,” Fifteen Sermons—in particular pp. 222–25.
most of earthly opportunity in sharing one’s own benefits with others, the surprise arrival of Lady Davers provides a crucial test of Pamela’s worthiness in her new station, and, for Mr. B., the occasion to face down a supreme representative of the world’s censuring eye; it is a chance to demonstrate totally his steadfastness to his newly regained religious convictions and the depth of the sincerity of his desire for true penitence. In many ways, these scenes immediately preceding the conclusion of the Lincolnshire section delineate the final birth pangs of what increasingly has been presented as a new order: an imitation of the previous good rule of Lady B., and an order resting upon the tested and proven validity of religious principles. Moreover, Lady Davers’s arrival is but a momentary interruption in the movement toward sharing this order with the world beyond Lincolnshire.

At one point (after Pamela’s escape from Lady Davers and during a supper at Sir Simon Darnford’s), Mr. B. admits to the assembled company: “I have offended extremely, by Trials glorious to my Pamela, but disgraceful to me, against a Virtue that I now consider as almost sacred; and I shall not think I deserve her, till I can bring my Manners, my Sentiments, and my Actions, to a Conformity with her own.”9 (338) Speaking directly to Pamela (and with the death of Mr. Carlton still fresh in his mind), Mr. B. then states: “And, in short, my Pamela . . . I want you to be nothing but what you are, and have been. You cannot be better; and if you could, it would be but filling me with Despair to attain the awful Heights of Virtue, at which you are arrived” (338). Following this striking evidence of her former tormentor’s penitence and love, and after their return home, Mr. B. assures Pamela that whatever happens in the morning she is not to be afraid for he is “with” her (343). Having already witnessed firsthand the violence and arrogance of Lady Davers, and having already with some difficulty stood her ground as mistress despite her fear and awe in the presence of her husband’s sister, Pamela seems much in need of such reassurance when the morning brings a series of almost frenzied verbal attacks on them both.

Lady Davers quickly proves to be a force for chaos within the newly ordered environment of the Lincolnshire household; she is a reminder of the vagaries of the outside world and an invader (reminiscent of the visiting rakes and their near disruption of the wedding

9. Pertinent to Mr. B.’s persistent acknowledgments of the faults of his “former life,” sorrow for them, and hope to do better in the future are the words of “general Confession” in The Book of Common Prayer.
day) who, in her ignorance of the remarkable changes in both master and household, offers a very real threat to continued peace and harmony. Unlike the rakes, however, Lady Davers’s extravagance provides the final impetus for Mr. B. to reassume totally the stewardship entrusted to him by his dying mother. In confronting his wrathful and vindictive sister, he in a sense is provided with a mirror image of his own previous behavior and motivation. From the first, there is evident in his attempts toward reconciliation a notable change in his priorities and values, and a certain strength of purpose, as Pamela notes at one point, truly “majestic” in its “Goodness” (351). For example, in blasting his sister’s frantic pride of social condition and birth, he centers his attack on what he now believes must inform all true nobility, stating of Pamela that she “will out-soar us both, infinitely out-soar us; and He that judges best, will give the Preference where due, without Regard to Birth or Fortune” (350). Expanding on this acknowledgment that intrinsic worth outweighs the importance of a merely fortuitous birth, he further rebukes his sister, accepts without protest her mocking amazement that Pamela seems to have “done Wonders in a little time” by not only making a “Rake a Husband” but also a “Rake a Preacher” (350), and hopes that Pamela indeed will be able to call her sister when “she can make as great a Convert of you from Pride, as she has of me from Libertinism” (351).

Lady Davers’s desperate mention of her brother’s seduction of Sally Godfrey and his Italian duel prompts him (even in his wrath) to confess these past sins in the hope that he may be thought sincere in his desire “by degrees, by, a Conformity of” his manners to Pamela’s “Virtue, to shew every one the Force” her very “Example has upon me,” and finally to state:

And now, my Dear, you may withdraw; for this worthy Sister of mine has said all the Bad she knows of me; and what, at a proper Opportunity, when I could have convinced you, that they were not my Boast, but my Concern, I should have acquainted you with myself; for I am not fond of being thought better than I am: ’Tho, I hope, from the Hour I devoted myself to so much Virtue, to that of my Death, my Conduct shall be irreproachable (357).

Pamela’s pleas for a reconciliation, however, are soon joined by those

of Lady Davers and (although initially further enraging Mr. B.) finally have the desired effect: “with Tears on both sides, he put his kind Arms about each of our Waists, and saluted us with great Affection, saying, Now God bless you both, the two dearest Creatures I have in the World” (360).

After being regaled with the neighboring gentry’s high opinion of Pamela, Lady Davers, now desiring to read her journal, informs her:

I should take great Pleasure to read all his Stratagems, Attempts, Contrivances, Menaces, and Offers to you, on one hand; and all your pretty Counter-plottings, which he much praises, your resolute Resistance, and the noble Stand you have made to preserve your Virtue; and the Steps by which his Pride was subdued, and his Mind induced to honourable Love, till you were made what you are: For it must be a rare, an uncommon Story; and will not only give me great Pleasure in reading, but will entirely reconcile me to the Step he has taken (374).

Commenting further on what she knows of this “rare” and “uncommon Story,” Lady Davers then remarks: “There is such a noble Simplicity in thy Story, such an honest Artlessness in thy Mind, and such a sweet Humility in thy Deportment, notwithstanding thy present Station, that I believe I shall be forced to love thee, whether I will or not: And the Sight of your Papers, I dare say, will crown the Work, will disarm my Pride ... and justify my Brother’s Conduct; and, at the same time, redound to your own everlasting Honour, as well as to the credit of our Sex: And so I make no doubt but my Brother will let me see them” (375). Granting this request, Mr. B. assures his sister that “When she came to read them, she would say, that [Pamela] had well deserv’d the Fortune [she] had met with, and would be of Opinion, that, all the Kindness of his future Life would hardly be a sufficient Reward for [her] Virtue, and make [her] Amends” for what she had suffered (376). Mr. B. is no longer a man consumed by selfishness and indifferent to religious considerations; as a result of “the unsearchable Wisdom of God,” his plots and contrivances have failed and from this very failure he has been led, progressively and in sight of Pamela’s own developing maturity and strength, to admit his wrongdoing and escape in time the consequences of the hardness of heart so evident in Richardson’s later portrayal of Lovelace.
The Ways of Providence and the Reward of Virtue

Traveling to Bedfordshire, Pamela sees her present journey as a delightful contrast "to that which, so contrary to all" her "Wishes, and so much to" her "Apprehensions, carry'd" her "hence to the Lincolnshire House" (377). Moreover, her arrival in Bedfordshire causes her to view the dangers she has escaped and the happiness she now feels upon returning "a joyful Wife" as the direct result of the "Favour and Mercies of God Almighty" (397). The time of testing and reconciliation in Lincolnshire is over, and what follows is the restoration of the well-ordered Bedfordshire household.

“what God has done”: The Final Theme of Pamela

During Pamela's first meeting with Mrs. Jervis after her return, she tells the housekeeper that she does not yet know "what God has done" and remarks, “... what an ingrateful Creature should I be, who have receiv'd so many Mercies at the Hand of God, if I attributed them not to his Divine Goodness, but assumed to myself insolent Airs upon them” (378). She hopes instead to “be more and more thankful” as she is “more and more blest”—and “more humble, as God, the Author of all my Happiness, shall more distinguish me” (378). And when the steward, Longman, says to her a short time later, “God bless you, my sweet Lady... as now, God be praised, I may call you. Did I not tell you... that Providence would find you out” (378), his words hardly can be viewed as a stock greeting, or as another way of saying “How lucky you have been,” but rather are additional proof not only of his own faith, but also of what Pamela herself and all those influenced by her actually have seen to have happened. As the previous turmoil of the Bedfordshire household is replaced by peace and joy, the presentation of the servants one by one to their new mistress seems reminiscent of the first letter and the passing on of the responsibilities of stewardship by Lady B. to her son. Having willfully shrunk from the assumption of those responsibilities, Mr. B.'s exposure to the example of Pamela's steadfastness now allows him to countenance an order previously shunned by him and to stand by supportively as she says to the wayward John Arnold, “... forget every thing that's past, John!—Your dear good Master will, and so will I. For God has won-
derfully brought about all these Things, by the very Means I once thought most grievous” (384).11

Although Mr. B. is not yet brought to a complete participation in the duties of a Christian,12 he at least can express to Pamela (speaking from his own recent experience) his prayer that “the God” Whom she delights “to serve” will “bless . . . more and more” his “dear Angel,” and the hope that “after” her “sweet Example,” he “shall be better and better” (385). After giving her his mother’s possessions (385) and preparing the Bedfordshire gentry for her appearance among them (388–90), he closes their meeting with Miss Goodwin (offspring of his seduction of Sally Godfrey) by joining Pamela’s thankfulness over his reformation with his own:

Well, my Dear . . . and I bless God for it too!—I do most sincerely!—And ’tis my greater Pleasure, because I have, as I hope, seen my Error so early; and that, with such a Stock of Youth and Health of my Side, in all Appearance, I can truly abhor my past Liberties, and pity poor Sally Godfrey, from the same Motives that I admire my Pamela’s Virtues; and resolve, by the Grace of God, to make myself as worthy of them as possible: And I will hope, my Dear, your Prayers for my Pardon and Perseverance, will be of no small Efficacy on this Occasion (399).13

Their appearance at church, amid the general amazement and joy occasioned by the story of one who (as even the rakish Squire Martin acknowledges) stands as an ornament to her sex, an honor to her spouse, and a credit to religion (401), is followed by Pamela’s dispensing charity to the poor and the ordering of his earthly affairs by a Mr. B. who now, leading his wife by the hand from the very “Summer-house” in which he first attempted her innocence, can state that “all Nature, methinks, blooms around me, when I have my Pamela by my Side” (405). Showing the depth of understanding gained from the trial and exercise of her own virtue and religious

11. For, as George Stanhope urges: “Blessed be that admirable Management and Skill, which turns even the Obstinacy of Wicked Men, and their Attempts against Religion, into Means of Promoting and securing it” (Gospels, 2:498).

12. It is not until late in the sequel that Mr. B. is brought to a full realization of what it means to follow “RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATIONS” in his everyday life—see pp. 422–23.

13. Admonitions to an early piety and repentance are numerous in the sermon literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—for example, see Tillotson’s “Of the Advantages of an Early Piety” (Works, 3: Sermon 54).
education, Pamela, reflecting on these words and actions of her former tempter, presently states:

Oh! what a poor thing is human Life in its best Enjoyments!—subjected to imaginary Evils, when it has no real ones to disturb it! and that can be made as effectually unhappy by its Apprehensions of remote Contingencies [thoughts of Mr. B.'s future death brought on by his recent "Disposition" of his earthly "Affairs"], as if it was struggling with the Pangs of a present Distress! This, duly reflected upon, methinks, should convince every one, that this World is not a Place for the immortal Mind to be confined to; and that there must be an Hereafter, where the whole Soul shall be satisfy'd (406).

Fearing that she "shall get out of her Depth," however, and that her "shallow Mind cannot comprehend, as it ought, these weighty Subjects," she nevertheless prays to be enabled to make "a grateful Use of God's Mercies here," so that she "may, with her dear Benefactor, rejoice in that happy State, where is no Mixture, no Unsatisfiedness; and where all is Joy, and Peace, and Love for evermore!" (407). Following a visit by "almost all the neighboring Gentry, and their good Ladies," and in a letter far different in tone from her first one with its naïve trust and tacit belief that "God will not let [her] want," she summarizes the essence of her story and delineates the terms of her new responsibility thus:

All that I value myself upon, is, that God has raised me to a Condition to be useful in my Generation, to better Persons than myself. This is my Pride: And I hope this will be all my Pride. For what was I of myself!—All the Good I can do, is but a poor third-hand Good; for my dearest Master himself is but the Second-hand. God, the All-gracious, the All-good, the All-bountiful, the All-mighty, the All-merciful God, is the First: To him, therefore, be all the Glory! (407).

Pamela: "its most material Incidents"

Commenting upon events after the completion of her journal, Richardson himself states of Pamela that she "was look'd upon as the
Mirror of her Age and Sex," of Mr. B. that "he made her the best and fondest of Husbands," becoming "after her Example . . . remarkable for Piety, Virtue, and all the Social Duties of a Man and a Christian," and, together, that "they charm'd every one within the Circle of their Acquaintance, by the Sweetness of their Manners, the regular Order and Oeconomy of their Household; by their cheerful Hospitality, and a diffusive Charity to all worthy Objects within the Compass of their Knowledge" (409). Moreover, in the "few brief Observations" he repeatedly stresses the significance of providence in the novel. Commenting on Mr. Williams, he urges that "good CLERGYMEN" see that "whatever Displeasure the doing of their Duty may give, for a Time, to their proud Patrons, Providence will, at last, reward their Piety, and turn their Distresses to Triumph" (410). Referring to Pamela's parents, he advises, "... let those, who are reduced to a low Estate, see, that Providence never fails to reward their Honesty and Integrity; and that God will, in his own good Time, extricate them, by means unforeseen, out of their present Difficulties, and reward them with Benefits unhop'd for" (410). Summing up the meaning of Pamela's trials, he urges:

Let the desponding Heart be comforted by the happy Issue which the Troubles and Trials of the lovely PAMELA met with, when they see, in her Case, that no Danger nor Distress, however inevitable or deep to their Apprehensions, can be out of the Power of Providence to obviate or relieve; and which, as in various Instances in her Story, can turn the most seemingly grievous Things to its own Glory, and the Reward of suffering Innocence; and that, too, at a Time when all human Prospects seem to fail (410–11).

Pamela's steadfastness throughout the tests and trials of her virtue and the reward of that steadfastness with the concurrent reclamation of Mr. B. and the reestablishment of the order of his estates are meaningful only in the context of a world over which it is believed that providence rules. The knowledge and subsequent strength which Pamela herself acquires from isolation and those times "when all human Prospects" seemed "to fail" are based upon a growing and tested awareness that no one indeed is tempted beyond what they can bear and that, in Isaac Barrow's words, "God is not unconcerned," especially "when innocence is grossly abused, or sorely beset; when
piety is fiercely opposed, or cunningly undermined." Moreover, those times in the novel when Pamela is saved, dissuaded from suicide or protected from rape, however improbable, fantastic, or silly these may seem to the casual reader, are in fact fictive counterparts, thematic mirrorings, of that providential rule and order which Richardson himself, along with the theologians and divines of his age, believed they saw evidenced in the events of everyday life. For, much as *Robinson Crusoe* was written to "justify and honour the wisdom of Providence," Richardson, as his own words testify, undertook *Pamela* with a design to demonstrate "the Reward which often, even in this Life, a protecting Providence bestows on Goodness."
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