

9-21-2009

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## Recommended Citation

Chapman University Media Relations, "Chapman Salutes 300th Birthday of Samuel Johnson, Enlightenment Icon" (2009). *Chapman Press Releases 2003-2011*. Paper 75.

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## Chapman Salutes 300th Birthday of Samuel Johnson, Enlightenment Icon

**ORANGE, Calif., Sept. 18, 2009** -- Global interest in his 300th birthday shows just how important Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was as an influential English scholar, writer, poet, biographer, lexicographer, essayist, editor and reviewer. He was revered as the leading literary figure of his time – some said the most famous person of his time (high praise indeed, in an age that boasted Voltaire, Adam Smith, Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Joshua Reynolds, Samuel Goldsmith, etc.) -- and was famed as the writer and collator of the great Dictionary of the English Language (published 1755).

Chapman University – the home of an excellent permanent collection of Johnsoniana -- will present a special program celebrating the tercentenary of the birth of Johnson on Thursday, Sept. 24 at 4:30 p.m. in the Doy and Dee Henley Reading Room of the Leatherby Libraries. (Yes, we know he was really born on Sept. 18.)

O M "Skip" Brack, Jr., professor emeritus of English literature from Arizona State University and a major donor to the Leatherby Libraries of his personal library of Johnsoniana, will give a talk on “Johnson and His Dictionary: The Man Who Changed the English Language Forever.” Afterward, Professor Brack will sign his new (2009) edition of Sir John Hawkin’s Life of Samuel Johnson, published as part of the tercentenary celebrations.

The public is invited to examine rare 18th-century materials, including a first edition of Samuel Johnson's Dictionary (1755); first editions of two of the most influential biographies of Johnson: the Hawkins (1787), and the Boswell (1791); and holograph letters by Johnson and Boswell. These and other period materials have been loaned to Chapman by the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library (UCLA) and internationally renowned Johnsonian collector Loren Rothschild.

According to the official [Samuel Johnson Tercentenary](#) Web site, Johnson “usually regarded anniversaries as occasions for repentance and pious resolution. On his 72nd birthday, however, he decided that ‘some little festivity was not improper’ and ‘had a Dinner.’”

For more information, the public can call 714-532- 7742 or email [gates@chapman.edu](mailto:gates@chapman.edu).