THY KINGDOM COME:
THE MISSIONARY THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

By
Ronald S. Baines

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THESIS ADVISOR: ________________________________
Dr. Don Fortson

RTS/VIRTUAL PRESIDENT: ________________________________
Dr. Andrew J. Peterson

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ABSTRACT
Thy Kingdom Come: The Missionary Theology and Practice of Jonathan Edwards
Ronald S. Baines

This paper grew out of a growing awareness over 20 years of reading Jonathan Edwards and numerous secondary sources explaining and interacting with Edwards. It slowly but surely became apparent that, in spite of the numerous works coming from the presses regarding almost everything Edwardsean, that his missionary labors were rarely explored in more than a cursor fashion. It was clear there was room for work in this field of Edwards studies.

The Introduction explores some of the ways that Edwards’s missionary labors and influence have frequently been dismissed, misunderstood, or under-rated. The thesis then proceeds to consider Edwards missionary endeavors over seven Chapters in two Parts. His major writings prior to Stockbridge are assessed in Part One for the missionary principles and practices explicated within them and then his actual missionary labors in Stockbridge are assessed in Part Two, particularly the practices of civilizing, educating and evangelizing the Indians. Some concluding remarks indicate some directions further research might explore more fully to further develop the missionary theology of this great American theologian and pastor.
To Joan
In this world:
Eighth from Jonathan and Sarah
First in my Heart
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Jonathan Edwards’s missionary energies spanned the seven most mature years of his life (1751-1758), yet his missionary thought and labors have been given minimal scholarly attention. This stands in spite of the fact that, as Perry Miller admitted, “this period is the most completely documented portion of his career.”1 It may be, as Stephen Nichols indicates, that many failed to view Edwards’s labors as a missionary seriously and have simply considered the nature and extent of his literary output during those seven years.2 The missionary theology and practice of Edwards warrant further study. This need is evidenced in a number of ways.

First, one is confronted by the paucity of published material on the Stockbridge mission work of Edwards compared to the plethora of studies on other aspects of his life and thought.3 The limited number of doctoral dissertations devoted to the missionary life and

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1 Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 232. This is a reprint of Miller’s ground breaking biography of 1949. Miller is representative of those who hold similar views.

2 Stephen Nichols, “Last of the Mohican Missionaries: Jonathan Edwards at Stockbridge” in Hart, D.G., Lucas, Michael Sean, Stephen J. Nichols, ed., *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards; American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 50. Even here, however, there is cause to question the conventional assessment of Edwards Stockbridge years as a place where more time could be devoted to his writing projects. A casual review of Edwards’s literary output from 1740 to 1750 reveals that his last years at Northampton saw more literary fruit than his literary labors in Stockbridge.

labors of Edwards is a second indicator of scholarly inattention.4

Third, some earlier Edwards’s biographers and scholars believed Stockbridge largely afforded leisurely pastoral labors giving time to study and writing. This belief led to an undervaluing of Edwards as a missionary. Ola Winslow exemplifies this position; “Stockbridge also seemed to promise leisure for writing, and twenty-five years of study and thought were waiting harvest.”5 It is even immortalized in verse:

I love you faded,
old, exiled and afraid
to leave your last flock, a dozen


4The most thorough analysis of Edwards as a missionary remains that of Ronald Edwin Davies, “Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord: The Missiological Thought of Jonathan Edwards,” (PhD Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1989). My dependence upon Davies is most evident in his review of Edwards’s pre-Stockbridge years theologically for Edwards the missionary. Because of this dependence, there are structural similarities between this thesis and Davies’s dissertation. I stand squarely on his shoulders. Rachel Wheeler gives further analysis of Edwards as a missionary as part of her larger work on missions to the Mahicans in, “Living Upon Hope: Mahicans and Missionaries, 1730 - 1760,” (PhD diss., Yale University 1999), see 133 - 211. One additional resource regarding Edwards’s missiology is found in Sidney H. Rooy, The Theology of Missions in the Puritan Tradition (Delft, 1965). However, Rooy only covers Edwards’s History of the Work of Redemption and devotes only twenty-five pages to its assessment.

5Ola Elizabeth Winslow, Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758, (New York: Collier Books, 1961), 243. I call this an older view because recent scholars seem to be more aware of the importance of Stockbridge, or at least the somewhat illegitimate assessments of earlier scholars with respect to the Stockbridge years. Not all present day scholars, however, have abandoned the older view, as is evidenced by Mark Knoll’s assessment of Edwards’s Stockbridge years in the following way; “he chose to move to the frontier town of Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and minister to two small congregations, one white and one Native American. The change of scene allowed Edwards the personal leisure to complete several important treatises before he died in 1758, just weeks after assuming the presidency of the College of New Jersey in Princeton.” in The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2003), p.179.
Houssatonic Indian children;

afraid to leave
all your writing, writing, writing,
denying the Freedom of the Will.
You were afraid to be president⁶

To view Stockbridge as merely a place of writing and leisure could hardly have given motivation for detailed scholarly analysis of Edwards as a theologian of missions and as a missionary practitioner.

Fourth, the publication history of Edwards’s sermon corpus reflects the limited attention given to his missionary years. Michael A. G. Haykin notes that “Clear evidence from a literary perspective that his missionary life in Stockbridge has not been appreciated is the fact that up until 1999, not one of the sermons that he preached to the Stockbridge Indians had been published.”⁷

Fifth, the view that the Stockbridge sermons were merely rehashed Northampton sermons, “relying mainly on old notes,”⁸ contributed to the view that Stockbridge was rich for Edwards’s literary output but of little value beyond that. But Edwards took his missionary labors seriously,⁹ especially his sermon preparation. Rachel Wheeler has done

⁸Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 232. This is a reprint of Miller’s ground breaking biography of 1949. Miller is only representative of those who hold similar views.
much too credibly counter the “rehashed sermon” view of Winslow, Miller, and others. She has shown that Edwards may have re-preached old sermons to the English congregants in Stockbridge, but the statistical majority of his Indian sermons were new constructions. These Indian sermons need more detailed analysis.

Sixth, another factor that reflects the need to look at Edwards more closely as a missionary was his influence on the missionary explosion that began with William Carey as the recognized “Father of Modern Missions.” The movement began less than a generation after Edwards’s death and was deeply influenced by him both theologically and practically. In fact, Ronal Davies believes that Edwards should be considered not simply America’s most noted theologian, but also the “Grandfather of Modern Missions.”

Finally, there were more open pulpits to Edwards after his dismissal from Northampton than some have acknowledged, countering the idea that Edwards’s retreated to Stockbridge rather than seeing him as pursuing a genuine missionary endeavor. Ola Winslow indicates that there was at least one in New England (not counting a possible establishment of a second work in Northampton itself which came to naught), another in the southern colonies and an opportunity to cross the Atlantic to minister in Scotland. Stephen Nichols

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10 Rachel Wheeler, “‘Friends to Your Souls’: Jonathan Edwards’s Indian Pastorate and the Doctrine of Original Sin” (Church History, 72:4, Dec. 2003): 736 - 765. A further hint that Edwards did not choose a place of leisure is the fact that fully half of the extent correspondence from Edwards’s life comes from these last 7 years. Many of these letters were written in an attempt to protect the interests of the Indians to whom he was a missionary; see Jonathan Edwards, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998), vol. 16, Letters and Personal Writings, ed. George S. Claghorn.


articulates the slow but changing scholarly focus on Edwards’s Stockbridge years when he insists that “it would be mistaken to view Stockbridge as Edwards’s consolation prize or exile after Northampton.”

In essence, past scholarship has tended to view his labors as a frontier pastor and missionary to the Stockbridge Indians as incidental to his more significant labors as a scholar, philosopher and theologian. What is hard to fathom, however, is why Edwards’s Stockbridge years were so mischaracterized by previous scholars. Whatever the case, Edwards’s missionary heart, thought and life have been undervalued and warrant further study.

In light of these factors, this thesis explores Edwards’s missionary theology and practice. We will show that Edwards’s writings, letters, meditations and deepest longings for the expansion of the work of Christ on earth culminated in a robust missionary spirit and that his move to Stockbridge was the fruit of years of sober reflection and the practical outworking of his pursuit of Christ’s kingdom through missions.

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Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), vol. 25, Sermons and Discourses, 1743-1758, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach, 23-24. The move to Scotland was discouraged by Edwards for very practical reasons; “but as to my removing with my numerous family over the Atlantic, it is, I acknowledge, attended with many difficulties that I shrink at.” Letter to Rev. John Erskine dated July 5, 1750, only 2 weeks after his dismissal from Northampton, Works, 16:355. That Edwards seriously entertained this option and did not summarily dismiss it out of hand is evidenced later in the same letter when he indicates “My own country is not so dear to me, but that if there were an evident prospect of being more serviceable to Zion’s interests elsewhere, I could forsake it. And I think my wife is fully of this disposition.” 356.


14See further Wheeler, Living Upon Hope, 136.

We begin with the background of Edwards’s life and labors prior to Stockbridge; particularly his major Northampton works from 1739-1750. In Chapter Two we will explore the *History of the Work of Redemption* as it exemplifies Biblical and Redemptive-Historical Theology culminating in expanded missionary activity at home and abroad. In Chapter Three we shall review three works that more properly exemplify Systematic Theology: *Religious Affections*, *The Humble Attempt* and *Freedom of the Will*.16 In each of these works missiological principles will be noted as they reflect Edwards’s missionary thought as he took up labors in Stockbridge. We shall explore Edwards’s Practical Theology in Chapter Four by reviewing his *Life of David Brainerd*; a work that likely had a missionary impact on Edwards and that includes a number of practical missiological considerations. We will also look briefly at Edwards’s personal and pastoral involvement with missions in general, and Stockbridge in particular, during the Northampton years in Chapter Five. In these ways Edwards’s missiology will be reviewed theologically, historically, practically, and personally prior to his actual arrival in Stockbridge.

The actual missionary labors of Jonathan Edwards in Stockbridge will then be considered in order to see the missionary theologian as the missionary practitioner. Three particular areas will be assessed: the missionary focus on civilizing the Indians in Chapter Six, the missionary emphasis on educating the Indians in Chapter Seven, and the missionary practice of evangelizing the Indians in Chapter Eight. In each of these cases, we will explore the general practice in colonial missions and Edwards’s own expression of them in Stockbridge as the means to the expansion of Christ’s kingdom on earth.

16 *Freedom of the Will* will be considered here for reasons that will be detailed later.
PART ONE: THE THEOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL BACKGROUND TO
JONATHAN EDWARDS’S MISSIONARY LABORS 1739-1750
CHAPTER 2
JONATHAN EDWARDS AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

It would be unwise to consider the missionary theology and practice of Jonathan Edwards in isolation from his years of labor in Northampton. It was during these years that the theological foundation established under the pastoral and educational leadership of his father, Timothy Edwards, and his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, came to maturity. Therefore, the published writings of Jonathan Edwards from the years 1739 - 1750 provide the basis of this theological analysis. The works reviewed in these first three chapters are *A History of the Work of Redemption*, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, *A Humble Attempt*, and *The Freedom of the Will*.

Edwards’s *A History of the Work of Redemption* outlines the unfolding plan of God’s redemption from creation to consummation and includes material pertaining to missions. *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, published in 1746, reflects Edwards’s most mature thought on revival and true and genuine saving faith in distinction from the excesses of enthusiasm and the vacuousness of rationalism. Missionaries would

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18 The *History* was not actually published until 1774, well after Edwards’s death, but it was the substance of thirty sermons preached in 1739. Further, although they were delivered as sermons, they more properly could be called lectures, and appear to have been the basis of a proposed more substantial publication. See John F. Wilson’s Introduction to this text in Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), vol. 9, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, ed. John F. Wilson.
need to reflect maturely on genuine saving faith and be able to distinguish it from counterfeit faith. The *Humble Attempt*, published in 1747, presents Edwards’s appeal for prayer for revival and also contains an extended presentation of the spread of the Gospel worldwide, including the spread of missions as part of a larger eschatological framework. *The Freedom of the Will*, published in 1754, is also considered. The reason for its inclusion at this point is that it work was actually begun and then set aside during his Northampton years. The first interruption was due to Edwards’s publication of *The Life of David Brainerd*. A second interruption occurred when the communion controversy arose leaving the work unfinished until Edwards’s Stockbridge years. The Treatise contains material pertinent to missions and was instrumental in the spread of missions in the latter part of the 18th century. The theological perspectives outlined in these works were clearly part of Edwards’s larger theological framework prior to commencing his own missionary labors.

**Biblical/Historical Theology - A History of the Work of Redemption**

In drawing implications from the study of Edwards’s *History of the Work of Redemption*, Stephen Clark notes, “First, it should already be clear that Edwards anticipates

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20 Davies, *Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord*, addresses Edwards theologically in a more synthetic fashion than I have chosen here. He gives a sustained analysis of the *History of the Work of Redemption* referencing the other works and notebooks of Edwards as they fit theologically into the point or points being stressed. Thus, Davies references these other three works tangentially, but there is no sustained analysis or assessment of each of these three works individually. I have chosen to deal with them independently and individually but not exhaustively. The aim in what follows is missiologically narrow.

the biblical-theological approach. His 1739 *History of the Work of Redemption* sermons articulate a historical principle of treatment that appears fifty years before Johann Philip Gabler,\(^2^2\) and a full two centuries before Geerhardus Vos’ classical Reformed treatment. Vos’ ‘Introduction: The Nature and Method of Biblical Theology would make the perfect preface to Edwards’s *History of the Work of Redemption.*’\(^2^3\) For this reason we are warranted in looking at this work of Edwards under the general theological framework of Biblical Theology.\(^2^4\)

Edwards understood the distinct nature of this work as indicated in the well known letter of October 19, 1757, to the trustees of the New College of New Jersey (later Princeton University):

> I have had on my mind and heart (which I long ago began, not with any view to publication), a great work, which I call a *History of the Work of Redemption*, a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown in to the form of a history; considering the affair of Christian Theology, as the whole of it, in each part, stands in reference to the great work of redemption


\(^2^4\)While the *History of the Work of Redemption* is a precursor to Biblical Theology as indicated above, Clark also sees its affinity to Historical Theology in certain respects. “The essential ingredient is the development of doctrine as it takes place in and through redemptive history. As that history progresses so does God’s revelation, so that Edwards is always discovering with greater clarity who God is, the person and work of Christ, the nature of the gospel, the structure of the church and its offices, or the purpose and authority of Scripture.” “Jonathan Edwards,” 48. The aspects of Historical Theology referenced here will not be covered in the overview of the *History of the Work of Redemption* that follows.
by Jesus Christ; which I suppose is to be the grand design of all God’s
designs, and the sumnum and ultimum of all the divine operations and
degrees; particularly considering all parts of the grand scheme in their
historical order. The order of their existence, or their being brought forth to
view, in the course of divine dispensations, or the wonderful series of
successive acts and events; beginning from eternity, and descending from
thence to the great work and successive dispensations of the infinitely wise
God, in time, considering the chief events coming to pass in the church of
God, and revolutions in the world of mankind, affecting the state of the church
and the affair of redemption, which we have an account of in history or
prophecy; till at last we come to the general resurrection, last judgment, and
consummation of all things; when it shall be said, “It is done. I am Alpha and
Omega, the Beginning and the End [Rev. 22:13]. Concluding my work, with
the consideration of that perfect state of things, which shall be finally settled,
to last for eternity.26

This work was not to come to publication until more than fifteen years after Edwards’s death,
having never been reworked as he had hoped.27

The History of the Work of Redemption began, as many of Edwards’s writings, in
his Miscellanies, notebooks and sermons. He worked on this material in the 1730's
eventually bringing it together in twelve booklets.28 Edwards preached the substance of his
studies over a six month period in thirty sermons to his Northampton congregation in 1739.
But even at that, they were not really sermons per se. John F. Wilson calls them “sermon-
lectures” and references Wilson Kimnach’s work showing they did not fully conform to
sermonic construction although they reflected evidences that they were intended to be

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25 The letter differs slightly in word order and punctuation in the Hickman edition and the word
decree stands in the place of “degrees” recorded in the Yale edition. See Edward Hickman ed., The Works of
vol. 16, Letters and Personal Writings, ed. George S. Claghorn, 727-728.
was not published until 1774 and that in Scotland at the hand of his friend John Erskine. It would be a number
of years before an American edition would be forthcoming. See John Wilson’s introduction to the Yale edition
for further details on the publication of this work.
preached. The overall conclusion seems to be that they were compiled more as a complete work than as individual sermons.

Additionally, Wilson shows that Edwards continued to make notes and preparation for re-working the entire material into a fuller manuscript, but was prohibited from doing so by his appointment to the presidency of the New College and his death soon after. The present *History of the Work of Redemption* is certainly less extensive than Edwards’s over-all plan but was, nevertheless, the basic foundation of that fuller work.29

The Structure of the History of the Work of Redemption

The overall structure of the *History of the Work of Redemption* is clearly delineated within the sermons themselves.30 Edwards’s first sermon provides an overview of the entire series both structurally and doctrinally; in this way Sermon One acts as a general introduction to the whole work. In it he begins in typical Puritan fashion to expound his foundational text for the entire series, Isaiah 51:8, “For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.” He then proceeds to delineate the principle Doctrine to which the text is addressed, “The Work of Redemption is a work that God carries on from the fall of

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29This is clearly stated by Edwards in the letter to the trustees quoted above.
man to the end of the world.” He also provides a definition of Redemption and some general observations respecting the whole.

From this point forward, the work comprises three major sections. Sermon Two begins the first major section and covers the period “from the fall of man to Christ’s incarnation.” This section concludes with Sermon Thirteen. The second major section covers the period “from Christ’s incarnation till his resurrection, or the whole time of Christ’s humiliation.” The third and final major section comprises Sermon Eighteen through Sermon Thirty and covers all subsequent history; “from thence [the resurrection] to the end of the world.” Thus the entire scope of Biblical and Church history is assessed.

The Theological Assessment of the History of the Work of Redemption

It is necessary, further, to assess the History of the Work of Redemption from a theological perspective in order to understand its place in the missiological thought of Edwards. We shall see the dual thrust of history and Scripture come under the organizing theological construct of Christocentrism. It will show that Edwards encompassed both the

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33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 The 1838 reprint of *The History of the Work of Redemption* (American Tract Society) subtitles this work as *An Outline of Church History*.
36 Davies, *Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord*, assesses Edwards’s *History of the Work of Redemption* in greater detail. Davies interrelates the *History of the Work of Redemption* to most of Edwards’s other major works and notebooks. I have chosen to look at the *History of the Work of Redemption* as it stands alone. Partly for its unique expression of Edwards “Biblical Theology” and its “Redemptive-Historical” approach, but also because the future use of this volume by missionaries seeking principles to follow would mirror this approach.
37 Stephen Nichols, *Jonathan Edwards, A Guided Tour*, 143. Knight rightly remarks, “And in the thirty sermons that compose A History of the Work of Redemption, he traced God’s providential design not only in traditional biblical chronicles but also in such events as the English Civil War. Though Scripture (continued…)
Work of God in Creation and Providence as directed toward the consummation of the kingdom to the glory of Christ under this larger organizing theme. Every aspect of creation and every minute expression of divine providence expresses the unfolding of God’s redemptive purpose and plan. It is for this reason that some consider the Stockbridge Treatise on *The End for Which God Created the World* to be a sort of prolegomena to this, his larger “body of divinity.”

The Definition of Redemption

Edwards begins the *History of the Work of Redemption* by carefully defining the word “redemption” and explains his use of the term. He distinguishes between different
legitimate senses of the term, starting with the valid but “limited” sense narrowly

encompassing the active and passive obedience of Christ:

And here it may be observed, that the Work of Redemption is sometimes understood in a more limited sense for the purchase of salvation. For so the word strictly signifies, a purchase of deliverance. And if we take the word in this restricted sense, the Work of Redemption was not so long a-doing but it was begun and finished with Christ’s humiliation, or it was all wrought while Christ was upon earth. It was begun with Christ’s incarnation and carried on through Christ’s life and finished with his death, or the time of his remaining under the power of death which ended in his resurrection. And so we say that the day of Christ’s resurrection is the day when Christ finished the work of our redemption, i.e. then the purchase was finished and the work itself and all that appertained to it was virtually done and finished, but not actually.42

Edwards affirmed the standard reformed and puritan view of the atonement.43 But, this larger definition also encompasses his more narrow definition:44

But then sometimes the work of redemption is taken more largely, including all that God works or accomplishes tending to this end, not only the purchasing of redemption, but also all God’s works that were properly preparatory to the purchase, or as applying the purchase and accomplishing the success of it. So the whole dispensation, as it includes the preparation and the purchase, and the application and success of Christ’s redemption, is here called the work of redemption. All that Christ does in this great affair as mediator, in any of his offices, either of prophet, priest, or king, either when he was in this world, in his human nature, or before, or since, and not only what Christ the mediator has done, but also what the Father, or the Holy Ghost, has done, as united or confederated in this design of redeeming sinful men.45

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42 Works, 9:117.
44 For a perspective that views the larger definition of redemption in history being another expression of his more narrow definition, see William J. Scheick, “The Grand Design: Jonathan Edwards’s History of the Work of Redemption” Eighteenth-Century Studies 8 (Spring, 1975), 300-314. Scheick, 305, states “Edwards intended, in short, to portray, through identical imagery, a correspondence between Christ’s covenant of redemption with regard to history (including the church, which exists in and fulfills time) and His covenant of grace with regard to the individual elect soul.”
45 Edwards also explained the temporal aspects of this grand design in his letter to the Trustees quoted above as, eternity past, human history and eternity future which also encompass “three worlds, heaven, earth and hell.” On this aspect of Edwards “metanarrative” see further Harry S. Stout, “Jonathan Edwards Tri-World (continued…)}
Or, in one word, all that is wrought in the execution of the eternal covenant of redemption, this is what I call the work of redemption in the doctrine. For it is all but one work, one design. The various dispensations or works that belong to it, are but the several parts of one scheme. It is but one design that is formed, to which all the offices of Christ do directly tend, and in which all the persons of the Trinity do conspire, and all the various dispensations that belong to it are united. The several wheels are one machine, to answer one end, and produce one effect.46

The Application of Redemption

The breadth and depth of this definition must not be underestimated. It encompasses each member of the Trinity in their several relations and works as well as the entire scope of creation and providence. Because of its expansive nature, it not only envelops Biblical history and revelation, but also brings all human history into focus as the unfolding of God’s purpose and plan. Thus, as Edwards examines the history of the Church in part three, his understanding of missions in God’s redemptive plan unfolds with it:

This work is carried on in the former respect that has been mentioned, viz., the effect on the souls of particular persons that are redeemed by its being an effect that is common to all ages. The work is carried on in this latter respect, viz. as it [has] respect to the church of God or the grand design in general. It is carried on not only by that which is common to all ages [but] by successive works wrought in different ages, all parts of one whole or one great scheme whereby one work is brought about by various steps, one step in each age and another in another. And ‘tis the carrying on of the Work of Redemption chiefly that I shall insist upon, though not excluding the former, for one necessarily supposes the other.47

The Unfolding of Redemption

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46 Works, 9:117-118.
47 Ibid., 122.
With the definition clearly in place we will assess some particular sections of Part Three of Edwards History of the Work of Redemption. This will bring together his presentation of God’s unfolding plan and the spread of the Gospel to the heathen as the missionary enterprise to which he was a party in Stockbridge.

Edwards saw Christian history subsequent to Jesus’ resurrection in four great parts, or movements, interconnected and yet distinct. As he notes, “The setting up of the kingdom of Christ is chiefly accomplished by four successive great events, each of which is in Scripture called ‘Christ’s coming in his kingdom.’ The whole success of Christ’s redemption is comprehended in one word, viz. his setting up his kingdom. This is chiefly done by four great successive dispensations of providence, and every one of them is represented in Scripture as Christ’s coming in his kingdom.”

The first of the four events or stages begins with the resurrection of Christ and ends with the Fall of Jerusalem. The second stage sees its fruition in the days of Constantine and the destruction of the heathen Roman Empire. The third stage ends with the fall of Antichrist and his destruction; the fourth stage encompasses the future kingdom or millennium. No stage is a mere replication of the previous one, but is rather an unfolding in greater degrees than that stage which passed before it. Each stage follows the same pattern, but does not reflect the same results. In each stage the Work expands and progresses.

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48 Works, 9:351. This is from Sermon Eighteen which begins Edwards’s exposition of the third stage of Redemptive History. For Edwards’s “parallel” view of historic epochs, see Stout’s quotation from Edwards’s notebook titled, “Things to Be Particularly Inquired Into and Written Upon” and his comments respecting this view in “Preface to the Period”, part of the critical introduction to Works, 22:7-9.

Edwards viewed himself as living during the third stage of Part Three of God’s great work of redemption. But even this third “coming” of Christ further divides into distinct historical “parts” or periods:

And therefore in taking a view of this period I would take notice of events that may be referred to either of these heads, viz. either to the head of Satan’s opposition to the success of Christ’s redemption, or to the head of the success of Christ’s redemption; and for the more orderly considering of the events of this period I would divide it into these four parts. The first reaching from the destruction of the heathen empire to the rise of Antichrist, the second from the rise of Antichrist to the reformation in Luther’s time, the third from thence to the present time, the fourth from the present time, until Antichrist is fallen, and Satan’s visible kingdom on earth is destroyed.\(^{50}\)

Edwards regarded his Northampton congregation in 1739 to be at the confluence of the third and fourth parts of the third stage of the Third Great Part of human history as delineated in the *History of the Work of Redemption*. It is precisely at this historic crossroad that history ceases to be a guiding resource and Edwards, looking forward, must turn to prophesy as his only guide. As he candidly confesses,

the success of Christ’s redemption will be carried through the fourth and last part of this space, viz. That part which is from the present time till Antichrist is fallen and Satan’s visible kingdom on earth is destroyed. And with respect to this space of time, we have nothing to guide us but the prophecies of Scripture. Through most of the time from the fall of man to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans we had Scripture history to guide us, and from thence to the present time we had prophecy together with the accomplishment of it in providence, as related in human histories. But henceforward we have only prophecy to guide us. And here I would pass by those things that are only conjectural, or that are supposed by some from those prophecies that are doubtful in their interpretation, and shall insist only on those things which are more clear and evident. We know not what particular events are to come to pass before that glorious work of God’s Spirit begins, by which Satan’s kingdom is to be overthrown.\(^{51}\)

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\(^{50}\)Ibid., 404.

\(^{51}\)Works, 9:456.
Aside from the merely prophetic, what characteristics did Edwards see at the end of the third period and foreshadowing that yet future period known only by “Scripture prophecy?” He delineates three elements that marked time from the Reformation to his day and which were harbingers of the fourth part yet to come. These are the successes of a “reformation in doctrine and worship”, the “propagation of the gospel among the heathen,” and a “revival of religion in the power and practice of it.”

Edwards and his congregation had had a foretaste of these events and anticipated, according to prophecy, a yet greater outpouring in the same.

The propagation of the gospel figures large in Edwards’s missiological thought. Edwards outlined the history of the work among the heathen, of which the American Indians were considered to be a part, over several pages. He showed how the rise of global navigation opened the way for the entire North and South American continents, previously unknown and being held in Satan’s grip, to have exposure to the Gospel. But, according to Edwards, this was only the beginning:

And however small the propagation of the gospel among the heathen here in America has been hitherto, yet I think we may well look upon the discovery of so great a part of the world as America, and bringing the gospel into it, as one thing by which divine Providence is preparing the way for the future glorious times of the church, when Satan’s kingdom shall be overthrown, not only throughout the Roman empire, but throughout the whole habitable globe, on every side, and on all its continents. When those times come, then doubtless the gospel, which is already brought over into America, shall have glorious success, and all the inhabitants of this new discovered world shall become subjects of the kingdom of Christ, as well as all the other ends of the earth. And in all probability Providence has so ordered it, that the mariner’s compass, which is an invention of later times, whereby men are enabled to sail over the widest ocean, when before they durst not venture far from land, should prove a preparation for what God intends to bring to pass in the glorious times of the church,

52 Ibid., 432-433.
53 One wonders at this point if Edwards does not have his grandfather’s sermon in the back of his mind. Stoddard, Solomon, Question whether God is not Angry with the Country for doing so little towards the Conversion of the Indians? (Boston: Green for Gerrish, 1723).
viz. the sending forth the gospel wherever any of the children of men dwell, how far soever off, and however separated by wide oceans from those parts of the world which are already Christianized.54

The Expectation of Redemption

Edwards went on to unfold the dawning of a new stage of glorious gospel progress in the last four sermons of the *History of Redemption*. If we remember that Edwards believed the fourth and final part of stage three would topple Antichrist at the dawn of the great millennium, then how would the downfall of Antichrist proceed? While Edwards held that this would be according to prophecy, he did not look for some catastrophic or cataclysmic event. Rather, the progress, though accelerated, would be by the same means of the progress between the time of the Reformation and his own day:

[Y]et all will not be accomplished at once, as by some great miracle, as the resurrection of the dead at the end of the world will be all at once. But this is a work which will be accomplished by means, by the preaching of the gospel, and the use of the ordinary means of grace, and so shall be gradually brought to pass. Some shall be converted and be the means of other’s conversion; God’s Spirit shall be poured out, first to raise up instruments, and then those instruments shall be improved and succeeded.55

Regardless of eschatological frameworks, Edwards could see the spread of the Gospel beginning to flourish in new and substantial ways; first the North American continent, and then, like waves across the sea, it would spread throughout the globe. The process by which this would happen would be through the normal means of grace already present in the church.

55 Ibid., 458-459.
of Jesus Christ, namely the proclamation of the Gospel by those who themselves had heard, believed, and been called forth.

**Missiological Conclusions Drawn from *History of the Work of Redemption***

From the *History of the Work of Redemption* we can see that the dawn of the missionary age had been orchestrated according to the grand design and providence of God. The church was expanding slowly but progressively. What had been the case for some 1700 years was to continue along the same lines until Antichrist should fall and the glorious final age be ushered in.

Some concluding missiological principles can be drawn from this brief survey. First, God is working to bring glory to His name, and the means by which he has chosen to do so, is the establishing and expanding of the church until it should fill the globe. Missions is at the heart of God’s grand design to glorify His name only in-so-much as it progresses to the grand end of the establishment of the church to the glory of God world-wide. Missions must not lose sight of this grand end or it can degenerate into social, political or moral ends, rather than the end for which it has been ordained by God. Missions must be focused on the establishment and strengthening of churches wherein the true knowledge of God is proclaimed, the true worship of God is pursued and the true presence of God in revival is manifested in genuine repentance and saving faith.

Second, the grand unfolding work of redemption redounds to the glory of God. Since God is utterly God-centered, the Father glorying in the Son and the Son glorifying the Father, the *God-centeredness* of God is discovered in the all encompassing work of the
Triune God. The great work of redemption, as Edwards saw it, is ultimately the finished work of Christ, purposed by the Father before time began and unfurled in history as the Holy Spirit applies that grand work to individuals in redemption. As Amy Plantinga Pauw indicates, “The ‘supreme harmony’ of the Trinity was more in evidence in the complex work of redemption than anywhere else.” Missions must be as God-centered as the Trinity.

Third, God has chosen the means by which His great end should be accomplished. These means are the normal means of grace to be found in the pursuit of God’s worship and the church’s practice. The preaching of the Gospel attended by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the church at home and abroad is the God-ordained means by which the grand end is realized. The work of missions is primarily a task of dependent proclamation.

Fourth, the theological bent of those pursuing missions is critical. In the spread of the gospel in the period leading up to the fall of Antichrist and the dawn of the millennium, it is not just the winning of the heathen to Christ that is in view. The glorious work would be evangelical, proclamational and doctrinal. The work of missions is to propagate the Gospel and seek the purity of the church. From this perspective, it is clear that a well-educated and theologically-equipped ministry is requisite to missions. Reductionism as to the task of missions would not further its grand end. In addition, the theological perspective of the

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56 Edwards applies the whole discourse very profitably in Sermon Thirty, see Works, 9:515-528. The conclusions here are my own assessments that apply specifically to the task of missions.
missionaries needs to be that of evangelical Calvinism. Mission work theologically unsound will leave much to be re-done in its wake. The Christian religion may prosper outwardly, but a lack of vital, vibrant spiritual life will ultimately stagnate the work. Missions then, is not merely seeking converts, but the winning of genuine Christians, and Evangelical Calvinism is vital to that end.

Fifth, eschatological systems are no substantial inhibition to the missionary endeavor. No future eschatological event needed to occur before this grand task can be pursued. Any eschatological scheme that discouraged missions is, therefore, incorrect in its assessment. Missions must not be shackled by illegitimate inferences or tenuous conclusions drawn from eschatology. What is commanded as the means of the great end must not be negated by other subservient theological threads; the part must fit the whole. Missions is a theologically integrated task, and the work of redemption, as more broadly defined by Edwards, is its organizing principle.

The theological background to Edwards’s missionary labors has been explored relative to the discipline of Biblical Theology. The History of the Work of Redemption not only encouraged missions but saw them as absolutely necessary to the global expansion of Christianity. Edwards’s heart for missions evidences itself deeply in this treatise, bolstering the premise that the work of missions was a significant factor in his overall theological and

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60 This point will be reviewed in further detail when we consider the Humble Attempt and its impact on missions below.

61 Clark sees this “organizing motif” as a clear and necessary conclusion to the whole series of sermons. See Stephen Clark, “Jonathan Edwards: The History of the Work of Redemption,” 58.
practical framework. We will turn to those works which exemplify systematic theology and their implications for missions in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

JONATHAN EDWARDS AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Jonathan Edwards never penned a formal systematic theology. However, he published three works in particular that exemplify systematic theology: Religious Affections, A Humble Attempt, and Freedom of the Will. While the division between these works is not absolute, they reveal specific aspects of Edwards’s theology more according to the loci of systematic theology than as exemplars of Biblical Theology. They are not full expressions of any one of these loci but do fit within specific “branches” of systematic theology. Additionally, I do not intend to give a full introduction or explication of each of these works theologically; that would be beyond the scope of this thesis. What I will do is highlight aspects of each of these works that contributed, not only to Edwards’s missionary theology, but also to the development of missions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

True Conversion - A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections

During 1734-1735 the Northampton Church experienced a work not present since Solomon Stoddard’s pastoral leadership many years previous. Revival fires began to burn. What began as a fairly localized revival, substantially limited to the Connecticut River valley, was to thrust Edwards onto the ecclesiastical stage both at home and abroad, as a leading theologian of revival. The means whereby this rise to international recognition was to be accomplished was the pen. Edwards had written a letter to Boston pastor Benjamin
Coleman the fruit of which issued ultimately, and in expanded form, in the publication of the Faithful Narrative in London in 1737. This was followed by two further works which wrestled with the theological and practical implications of revival, particularly with the arrival of the Great Awakening in 1741 fueled, in part, by George Whitefield’s preaching tour of America. The two works are the Distinguishing Marks and Some Thoughts.

The revivals brought with them excesses and reactions, and the theological landscape quickly polarized. There were “Old Lights” who seemed to crystallize around Charles Chauncy and his opposition to the revivals in their entirety. There were enthusiasts, exemplified chiefly by James Davenport who was deemed non compos mentis, (mentally incompetent) by the court in Massachusetts and the Connecticut court claimed he was “disturbed in the rational faculties of his mind.” Davenport would come to his senses following a frenzied book burning in New Haven, but not before his excesses had seriously damaged the work at hand. Edwards attempted to lead the pro-revival “New Lights” in a

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63 Edwards was displeased with many errors in this edition and saw his own edition through the press in America in 1738. See Johnson, The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards for further publication details.  
64 Including a weekend stop in Northampton where he preached to the Edwards family as well as the Northampton Church.  
65 The definitive edition of these can also be found in Works, 4, unless otherwise specified this edition is referred to throughout.  
66 Chauncy’s opposition was preached as a sermon and then published as Enthusiasm described and caution’d against: a sermon preach’d at the Old Brick Meeting-House in Boston, the Lord’s Day After Commencement, 1742 : with a letter to the reverend Mr. James Davenport/ by Charles Chauncy D. D. on of the pastors of the First Church in said town, (Boston: Printed by J. Draper for S. Eliot in Cornhill, and J. Blanchard at the Bible and Crown on Dock Square, 1742).  
middle path between the rationalism of Charles Chauncy and the enthusiasm of Davenport.  

In taking this middle path Edwards anticipated objections from both the right and the left:

Many will probably be hurt in their spirits, to find so much that appertains to religious affection here condemned: and perhaps indignation and contempt will be excited in others, by finding so much here justified and approved. And it may be, some will be ready to charge me with inconsistence with myself, in so much approving some things, and so much condemning others; as I have found, this has always been objected to me by some, ever since the beginning of our late controversies about religion. ‘Tis a hard thing to be a hearty zealous friend of what has been good and glorious, in the late extraordinary appearances, and to rejoice much in it; and at the same time, to see the evil and pernicious tendency of what has been bad, and earnestly to oppose that. But yet, I am humbly but fully persuaded, we shall never be in the way of truth, a way acceptable to God, and tending to the advancement of Christ’s kingdom, till we do so. There is indeed something very mysterious in it, that so much good, and so much bad, should be mixed together in the church of God: as ‘tis a mysterious thing, and what has puzzled and amazed many a good Christian, that there should be that which is so divine and precious, as the saving grace of God, and the new and divine nature, dwelling in the same heart, with so much corruption, hypocrisy, and iniquity, in a particular saint.

For Edwards, the ultimate question lay in the nature of true saving faith. What marks one as genuinely redeemed, and how does one distinguish this from delusion on the one hand and enthusiasm on the other? His most mature thoughts on this subject would be published in his 1746 work called *Religious Affections*.  

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70 The full title is, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, in Three Parts*. The short title as given by Lesser, *Jonathan Edwards a Reference Guide*, ix, is *Religious Affections* which is used throughout. That it was not a new theological venture for Edwards is indicated by him in the preface to the printed work, “The consideration of these things has long engaged me to attend to this matter with the utmost diligence and care, and all the exactness of search and inquiry of which I have been capable. It is a subject on which my mind has been peculiarly intent, ever since I first entered on the study of divinity.” *Works*, 2:84.
The Structure of Religious Affections

The structure of Edwards’s *Treatise* is clearly laid out. There are three main sections, or “Parts”, which follow a short Preface. They are Part I. Concerning the Nature of the Affections and Their Importance in Religion, Part II. Shewing what are no certain Signs that religious Affections are gracious, or that they are no, and Part III. Shewing what are distinguishing Signs of truly gracious and holy Affections.\(^71\)

The Theological Assessment of Religious Affections

In reviewing Edwards’s *Religious Affections*, we shall follow its internal structure and outline. We shall first summarize his definition of true and gracious affections, then look at those signs which give no certain evidence of saving faith, and follow up with those distinguishing characteristics of genuine saving faith. We will, finally, draw some missiological conclusions from the whole.

Theological Definition - The Nature of the Affections

Part I of *Religious Affections* is devoted to three pursuits. First, to distilling a definition for religious affections showing “that true religion lies in the affections.”\(^72\) Second, to showing those evidences that prove this is the case. Finally, to drawing three inferences from the definition and the proofs offered.

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\(^71\)Ibid., v.
\(^72\)Ibid., 96.
Edwards begins his treatise by providing a careful explanation and definition of what he means by religious affections. In doing so, he distinguishes between two characteristics of the soul (the physical body is wholly excluded form the definition as the soul has these capacities apart from the physical body). Edwards places the seat of the affections in the mind, or soul. The two faculties of the soul are the understanding, “that by which it is capable of perception and speculation,” and the inclination toward or against things. This bi-directional inclination, having varying degrees of intensity, Edwards calls the “will” when actions flow from it, and “the mind as regards the exercise of this faculty is called the heart.” He finally draws this together saying “And it is to be noted, that they are the more vigorous and sensible exercises of this faculty, that are called the affections.”

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73 Scheick, “The Grand Design,” sees Edwards’s definitions of individual redemption and the entire work of redemption as essentially the same in many ways; “History, particularly as reflected in the progress of the church, possesses a collective self-or Edwards it was most evident in New England Puritan tradition-akin to the inner self of the saint. They are mutually aligned.” P. 305. If Scheick’s understanding of Edwards is correct, and it has considerable merit, then there is ultimately a correspondence between the Work of Redemption and Religious Affections, the first as it respects the redemption of the Church throughout time and space and the second as it respects the genuine conversion of the individual in time and space; two distinct but never separate concerns.

74 Edwards notes that “an unbodied spirit may be as capable of love and hatred....as one that is united to a body.” Works, 2:98.

75 Ibid., 96.


77 Ibid., 97.
This somewhat complex definition stems from Edwards’s attempts to distinguish without separating the various “faculties,” as he calls them. His definition is summarized by Oliphint,

Edwards’s understanding of the faculties looks something like this: Man has two faculties of his soul, speculative knowledge (understanding) and sensible knowledge (the heart). Speculative knowledge in and of itself can perceive, speculate, discern, view, and judge certain things. Such actions can be, according to Edwards, disinclined or inclined. His example of one’s perception of a square or triangle illustrates an act of perception that is relatively disinclined. The other faculty, sensible knowledge, is also called by Edwards the inclination, will, mind, or heart. This is the faculty in man’s soul that appropriates the notions of the understanding and applies them to its own disposition. This, in summary form, is what Edwards is setting forth as a biblical faculty psychology.

If this is a bit lacking in clarity Edwards recognized this possible short coming, but it was not because he lacked definition. Rather, it was because the church of his day, like the church of our own day, lacked specificity in these categories. As John E. Smith points out in his critical introduction to the Yale edition of Religious Affections, “The point almost invariably missed is that in Edwards’s view the inclination (the faculty initially distinguished from the understanding) involves both the will and the mind. When inclination receives overt expression in action it is most commonly called the ‘will,’ and when inclination is expressed through the mind alone it is called the ‘heart.’ The latter relationship is central to the Affections.”

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78 Michael A. G. Haykin, Jonathan Edwards: The Holy Spirit in Revival, (Webster: Evangelical Press, 2005), 124, credits Scott Oliphint for this analysis. John E. Smith makes a similar point when he says that these “two elements can be distinguished, as he shows, but they need not be opposed.” (italics are the author’s)


80 Works, 2:13. The italics are the original authors. For Smith’s concession to the complexity of Edwards at this point see 14.
What we have then from Edwards is not a separation between heart and head, but a wonderful coming together of the mind and heart in approving and being drawn toward God. “By explaining the affections in this way, Edwards is thus able to avoid any sort of opposition between the understanding and the heart. There can be no strong exercise of the will, that is, affections, without the understanding being involved.” As he himself stated in his “Doctr[ine] True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.”

Edwards also takes care to distinguish the affections from the passions, or emotions: The affections and passions are frequently spoken of as the same; and yet, in the more common use of speech, there is in some respect a difference; and affection is a word that in its ordinary signification, seems to be something more extensive than passion; being used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination; but passion for

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81 Both Oliphint, 171-173 and Nichols, Jonathan Edwards, 111-112 stress this point well.
82 Michael A. G. Haykin, Jonathan Edwards: The Holy Spirit in Revival (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2005), 125. In fact, the bifurcation of head and heart was, according to Norm Fiering, at the core of the Awakening controversy. Put somewhat simplistically, the Old Lights opted for the head while the New Lights enthusiasts opted for the heart. Jonathan Edwards opted for the ultimate necessity of both. Interestingly enough, Fiering posits that this is what ultimately led Edwards to disagree with his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, over communion. In essence, Stoddard opted for the intellect, as the will was a blind faculty always following the direction of the understanding. See Norm Fiering, “Will and Intellect in the New England Mind” The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd. Ser., 29(Oct. 1972), 515-558. Ava Chamberlain also sees Edwards as correcting some of the miss notions received under Stoddard’s ministry which led some of the Northampton parishioners to have a false assurance of their salvation; “Self-Deception as a Theological Problem in Jonathan Edwards’s ‘Treatise concerning Religious Affections” Church History, 63 (Dec. 1994), 544.
83 Works, 2:95.
84 Stephen R. Holmes actually equates the two in assessing Edwards Religious Affections in “Religious Affections by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)” in Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason, ed., The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 290. In commenting on Edwards’s exposition of his text, 1 Peter 1:8, he states, “This text describes the purified essence of true religion and it suggests that there are two parts to that; love to Christ and joy in Christ. Both are emotions - ‘affections’ is the common eighteenth-century term.” He later qualifies this by asserting that they, in fact, are “only a rough equivalent.” Unfortunately, the word emotion almost never carries with it the sense of “will” or “inclination” and so Holmes rough equivalence may be, at best, unhelpful and at worst, misleading to the twenty-first century reader. Especially since Edwards’s distinction is not between the presence or absence of will for it is present in both passions and affections. See also Mark R. Talbot, “Godly Emotions (Religious Affections)” in John Piper and Justin Taylor gen. Eds., A God Entranced Vision of All Things: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), 230-256.
those that are more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command.85

With this definition in place, Edwards proceeds to marshal ten evidences that it is valid. He brings Scripture to bear in many ways, especially as it shows the place of hope, holy joy, gratitude, godly sorrow and the like as confirming his definition of religion as consisting in holy affections. He singles out love86 as the highest form of religious affection in his fifth evidence as follows: “The Scriptures do represent true religion, as being summarily comprehended in love, the chief of the affections, and a fountain of all other affections.”87

Edwards ends his first part with some inferences. Central to his whole theological presentation are the errors of those who would see true religion as consisting only in affections and those who would see true religion as existing without heartfelt affection for God:

As there is no true religion where there is nothing else but affection, so there is no true religion where there is no religious affection. As on the one hand, there must be light in the understanding, as well as an affected fervent heart; where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart; so on the other hand, where there is a kind of light without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light, that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart.88

85Works, 2:98.
87Works, 2:108. Notice Edwards’s reliance on the Westminster Shorter Catechism questions 41 and 42. Question 41: Where is the moral law summarily comprehended? Answer: The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments. Question 42: What is the sum of the ten commandments? Answer: The sum of the ten commandments is, To love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.
88Works, 2:120.
Having provided this careful definition for the affections which guards against rationalism and emotionalism, Edwards goes on to explore ways in which true religious affections for God are manifest. He examines experiences which provide no evidence of religious affections and then examines evidences of true and gracious affections.

Practical Clarification: Negatively - What Are No Certain Signs

Edwards introduces this second part of *Religious Affections* by defining his intent: “I would mention some things, which are no signs one way of the other, either that affections are such as true religion consists in, or that they are otherwise; that we may be guarded against judging of affections by false signs.” In so proceeding, Edwards is countering the excesses of the Great Awakening, especially the tendency to judge true and saving faith by outward signs and ill-advised means.

By listing these twelve signs, he provides a frame of reference by which one may examine their own heart to see if they trust in things that are untrustworthy. He is attempting to give a series of tests which will minimize “counterfeits.” He desires to expose hypocrites. Hypocrites were individuals within the church who thought they were genuine believers but were, in fact, deluded by trusting in some outward sign, rather than by looking to the heart. As Nichols indicates, “How can you identify a hypocrite? How can you be discerning about your own experiences? These two questions comprise the deepest concerns of the Puritans.

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89 Haykin sees Edwards correcting Charles Chauncy’s pitfall. Chauncy was assuming that religious affections and emotionalism are, in essence, the same thing. *Jonathan Edwards, The Holy Spirit in Revival*, 125.  
90 *Works*, 2:127.
Hypocrisy and self-deception stand next to Arminianism and deism as the Puritan’s most feared challenges. Edwards addresses these two concerns through the backdoor by pointing out that what we often take to be genuine affections do not in fact guarantee genuine religious affections.\textsuperscript{92}

By reviewing these signs, one sees Edwards not just as the controversialist, countering the abuses of those who followed in the footsteps of James Davenport, but also as the pastor, genuinely seeking to aid those who felt stirrings as part of the Great Awakening by giving them tools for self-examination. His desire was not for a movement or outward reforms and experiences, but he desired to see the lost come to genuine saving faith. To come close, or near, and yet to come short of genuine saving faith would be tragic.

Practical Clarification: Positively - \textit{What Are Distinguishing Signs}

Edwards follows Part II and its twelve signs which give no certain evidence of saving faith with Part III and the explanation of twelve\textsuperscript{93} distinguishing signs which give good evidence and strong hope of a true work of God in conversion. The balance here cannot be missed.

One is always in danger of oversimplification in attempting to summarize what amounts to two-thirds of the entire treatise. But noting that danger, we will give a brief and cautious assessment. It appears that the twelve signs were intended to give evidence of two

\textsuperscript{91}For an excellent overview of the controversies attending the Great Awakening and the Edwards/Chauncy positions see George M. Marsden, \textit{Jonathan Edwards, A Life} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 268-290.
\textsuperscript{92}Nichols, \textit{Jonathan Edwards}, 114.
fundamental concerns: the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of the genuine believer in regeneration,\(^9^4\) and the work of the Holy Spirit in the genuine believer evidenced in sanctification. The indwelling Holy Spirit in regeneration causes individuals to see themselves and God differently.\(^9^5\) God becomes glorious and lovely in and of Himself as He is. The believer is also now keenly aware of his utter dependence upon God. A transformed view of both God and of self becomes the reality. This new view gives a new perspective for approaching God. Instead of looking to God as a benefactor, as one who bestows gifts (i.e. eternal life), the new believer has a love for God in and of Himself. Divine things having “the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency is the first beginning and spring of all holy affections.”\(^9^6\) This only comes as a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit in regeneration.

But the Holy Spirit who has taken up his abode in regeneration cannot leave that abode, the new believer, as He found him or her. A new work begins: the work of growth in grace and holiness known as sanctification. The twelfth sign, “Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice”\(^9^7\) becomes the capstone of the previous eleven signs. And the fruit of these true affections are not for a season. If they are real, they persevere to the “end of life” itself. It is the fruitfulness in Christian practice that Michael Haykin calls “the acid test.”\(^9^8\)

\(^9^3\) As above, dealing in detail with the twelve signs would be beyond the scope of this overview. For a good review of these twelve signs see the Introduction to the Yale edition by John E. Smith, \textit{Works}, 2:24-43.
\(^9^6\) Third distinguishing sign, see \textit{Works}, 2:253-266.
\(^9^7\) \textit{Works}, 2:383.
In essence, what Edwards has described by these twelve distinguishing signs is not twelve possible clues, but twelve facets of the same thing. The believer cannot look for one or the other sign to satisfy the conscience that they are genuinely redeemed, they must look for evidences of all of them. They hang together or not at all. Such is the true character of saving faith.

Conclusion - Missiological Considerations

Having reviewed *Religious Affections* briefly, we must now seek to consider its missiological impact. What principles are present in this treatise that applied to Edwards’s own mission labors in Stockbridge and the labors of those who looked to him for guidance as they themselves went to the nations with the Gospel?

The first and most obvious missiological implication of *Religious Affections* is the necessity of the missionary’s own regeneration. Only converted men will do. Gilbert Tennent had already preached in 1740 about “The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry.”\(^9^9\) Despite its somewhat caustic nature, the sermon highlighted a very real danger. It would be a grave mistake to propagate this danger in the pursuit of missions. Missionaries must be redeemed; they must have the indwelling Holy Spirit in regeneration and the fruit of that indwelt Sovereign in sanctification. In essence, they must be visible saints in the ways dictated by Scripture.

The second use of Edwards’s *Religious Affections* is as an aide in judging new converts. The tendency to look only at surface issues could make the missionary work appear to be progressing when it was not. The capacity to discern genuine saving faith was important to the missionary endeavor. As Edwards would reiterate in adding a preface to Joseph Bellamy’s *True Religion Delineated*,

The remarkable things that have come to pass in late times respecting the state of religion, I think, will give every wise observer great reason to determine that the counterfeits of the grace of God’s spirit are many more than have been generally taken notice of heretofore; and that, therefore, we stand in great need of having the certain and distinguishing nature and marks of genuine religion more clearly and distinctly set forth than has been usual; so that the difference between that and everything that is spurious may be more plainly and surely discerned, and safely determined.

In concluding his First Part he gives three inferences, the second of which has application here. “If it be so, that true religion lies much in the affections, hence we may infer, that such means are to be desired, as have much of a tendency to move the affections. Such books, and such a way of preaching the Word, and administration of ordinances, and such a way of worshipping God in prayer, and singing praises, is much to be desired, as has a tendency deeply to affect the hearts of those who attend these means.” Edwards articulates here a third principle that is critical to the missionary endeavor. The missionary must keep in mind that if true conversion is to be sought then those means that tend toward religious affections must be used. In other words, the advance against Antichrist and the toppling of his reign would only come through revival as true and gracious affections take root in the hearts of

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100 Edwards wrote this only six weeks after his dismissal from the Church in Northampton. One cannot help but suppose that the condition of many of those in the Church were readily on his mind.


102 *Works*, 2:121.
individuals, anything short of this would only sound the retreat. True revival is evidenced in religious affections and advanced by the means of grace given to the missionary. Edwards emphasized this when he indicated the critical need to distinguishing between false and true affections. “But yet I am humbly but fully persuaded, we shall never be in the way of truth, a way acceptable to God, and tending to the advancement of Christ’s kingdom, till we do so.”

Edwards reflects this practical application in his own life. It is well-known that the Great Awakening brought with it a changing perspective on Edwards’s part with respect to the task of preaching. He sought to become more free in the pulpit and less tied woodenly to his sermon manuscript:

By December 1740 unmistakable evidence appears in Edwards’s manuscript sermons that he had begun to experiment with and perfect his own revival rhetoric in Whitefieldean directions. If Edwards’s greatest growth as a preacher occurred earlier in the 1730s, his growth as a revivalist specializing in the New Birth came now [1739-1740]. His Sermon Notebook “45,” begun in 1739, is the largest of three extant and marks a shift in style that reflects both the effect of Whitefield’s revivals and Edwards’s own turbulent relationship with his congregation. For his part, Edwards increasingly outlined his sermons in order to achieve the appearance of Whitefield’s extemporaneity.

Edwards was not simply parroting George Whitefield. He was clearly and sincerely attempting to adjust to a growing awareness of the need to practice the very principle he

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103 Ibid., 85.
105 To assume that the only influence here is George Whitefield is to assume too little. In fact Edwards’s “inference” in the Religious Affections sounds very much like something his own father, Timothy Edwards, had published in 1732. “Let us labour in a very particular, convincing and awakening manner to dispense the Word of God; so to speak as tends most to reach and pierce the Hearts and Consciences, and humble the Souls of them that hear us...” Quoted in Wilson H. Kimnach, “The Sermon, Concept and (continued…)}
would lay down in the *Religious Affections*: to preach with a view to bringing his hearers to the threshold of true religion, waiting for God to work in their souls by the external means of the effective preaching of the Word, and the internal means of the work of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{106}

This change would also be reflected in the sermons he would later preach to the Stockbridge Indians. This displays Edwards’s taking to heart his own missionary principle laid before his audience in *Religious Affection*. The sermons of Edwards during the Stockbridge years will be reviewed in greater detail below. For now it is sufficient to point out that, with language and imagery, Edwards sought to preach to the Indians in an affecting manner. This is certainly a principle that every missionary could draw upon.

**Expectant Prayer - The Humble Attempt**

By 1747 the revivals were a distant memory. In writing to a correspondent in Scotland in 1745 Edwards confided “the day is so dark here in New England...”\textsuperscript{107} But Edwards still longed for the furtherance of the kingdom and with the church in such a cold and lifeless state the only hope lay in humbly attending to prayer.\textsuperscript{108} To this end Edwards became an avid supporter of a practice recently begun in Scotland which came to be called Concerts of Prayer. In the letter just quoted he states, “Now how fit it is that God’s people,
under such circumstances, should go to God by prayer, and give themselves more than ordinarily to that duty, and be uniting with one another in it, agreeing together touching what they shall ask, taking some proper course to act in it with visible union, tending to promote their offering up their cries with one heart, and, as it were, with one voice."\(^{109}\)

With this in mind Edwards did two related things. First, he promoted Scotland’s call for Concerts of Prayer within his own congregation and among the ministers he knew who were favorably inclined to the revivals. The “Memorial” notice sent to him from his correspondent in Scotland via an unnamed minister in Boston he distributed and in some instances he looked to friends to help further the distribution.\(^{110}\) The second thing Edwards did was to produce a work for the press that would incorporate the “Memorial” and be a concerted plea, both theologically and practically, for the advancement of the Concerts of Prayer in America.

The work that Edwards prepared for the press was printed in 1747 under the full title, “An Humble Attempt To promote Explicit Agreement and Visible UNION of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer, For the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on earth, pursuant to Scripture-Promises and Prophecies concerning the

\(^{108}\)This was not a new thought to Edwards for, as Davies points out, Edwards had suggested the practice of prayer for revival in his earlier work of 1742, Some Thoughts, Ronald E. Davies, Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord, 174-175.

\(^{109}\)Works, 16:181.

\(^{110}\)For instance he looked to Joseph Bellamy, a former student and house guest and now minister of the church in Bethlehem, Connecticut, to further distribute the “Memorials.” In a letter dated January 15, 1746/7 he enlists Bellamy’s help with these words, “I have very lately received a packet from Scotland, with several copies of a Memorial, for continuing and propagating an agreement for joint prayer for general revival of religion; three of which I here send you, desiring you to dispose of two of ‘em where they will be most serviceable.” Ibid., 217-218.
last Time."\textsuperscript{111} It is this *Humble Attempt\textsuperscript{112} that we shall consider next with respect to Edwards missiology.

The Structure of the *Humble Attempt*

The work has a Preface signed by five Boston ministers encouraging the call for concerted prayer put forward in the *Humble Attempt*. The work itself is divided into three parts.

Part One contains an exposition of the main text, Zechariah 8:20-22. The exposition is then followed with a brief historical introduction to the Concerts of Prayer in Scotland, their rise in October 1744, the weekly times as set for Saturday evening or Sunday morning, and the quarterly days set at the first Tuesday of each quarter with the proposal to continue for a two year trial period. The proposed trial period ended in November, 1746. The success of the endeavor was an encouragement in England, Wales and Scotland. It was further deemed profitable to enlist the cooperation of the brethren in America to join them in continuing this concert of extraordinary prayer for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom. To this end, the Scottish brethren published a *Memorial* to be sent to America to solicit support and cooperation. Edwards includes the *Memorial* in this first part of the work.

Part Two provides a series of nine “motives” to induce the American brethren to join in the concerts of extraordinary prayer. Finally, Part Three attempts to answer

\textsuperscript{112}This is the short title according to Lesser, *Jonathan Edwards, A Reference Guide*, x.
objections to such a proposal for extraordinary and united prayer for the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on earth.

The Theological Assessment of the *Humble Attempt*

The *Humble Attempt* is a theological work. This is confirmed by Ian Murray,

“While Edwards’s aim was to promote earnest prayer he handles this practical duty in a theological framework. The kingdom of God, he argues, advances by the power of the Holy Spirit accompanying the gospel. And that kingdom has by no means yet reached its world-embracing scope for ‘a very great part of the world is but lately discovered and much remains undiscovered to this day.’” In reviewing the *Humble Attempt* for the purpose of gleaning theological principles that apply to Edwards’s view of missions, we will largely limit ourselves to two theological considerations; the place of eschatology in Edwards’s view of missions and the place of prayer in the advance of the Gospel through missions.

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114 The *Humble Attempt* has been under-rated (one could almost say ignored) by many Edwards scholars. Stein, in the critical Introduction to the Yale edition of Edwards’s *Works*, 5:88-89, notes that Sereno E. Dwight looked upon it with great admiration but follows this fact with the a broader review of its acceptance.

Most of Edwards’s biographers have not been so complimentary to the work. Samuel Hopkins relegated all reference to the *Humble Attempt* to the list of Edwards’s publications, a pattern followed by Ola Winslow. Alexander V. G. Allen gave space to the treatise, but he judged it “a book of less interest and value” than the other writings of Edwards. Perry Miller called it “a piece of propaganda,” and Alfred O. Aldridge suggested it was a “pamphlet, which now has value only as a curiosity.” By contrast, Alan Heimert made the *Humble Attempt* a crucial document in his controversial hypothesis concerning the role of evangelicalism in the formation of the American nation. In recent years the only other praise for it has come from the twentieth-century representatives of conservative Protestantism. Even this review reflects the interesting fact that the *Humble Attempt* has gotten press from outside of “conservative Protestantism,” to use Stein’s classification, almost solely because of Edwards’s millennialism. The concept of prayer seems to have little attraction for those whose interest in Edwards seems largely (continued…)
The Place of Prophecy for the Advance of the Gospel in the *Humble Attempt*

Edwards Eschatology

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a number of global shifts politically and religiously, all of which were rich fodder for eschatological speculation. The English Puritans, to whom Edwards stands as a clear successor, were no strangers to the temptation to see these events in the unfolding eschatological expectation of the Old and New Testament. To view the Pope as “the Antichrist” was common among those who followed in the footsteps of Luther and Calvin. Additionally, their “historicist” interpretations of
Biblical prophecy fueled the combining of historical events with stages and places in Biblical prophecy. Edwards was among these historicists believing the Pope, or at least the papacy to be Antichrist. According to this view, this Antichrist must fall before the glorious millennial reign of Christ would commence.

In addition to his views on the Antichrist, it is clear that Edwards was a post-millennialist. He saw the need of the gospel to yet spread throughout the world as the means of toppling Antichrist one nation at a time which would then inaugurate the glorious millennial kingdom of Christ. An additional element in this spread of the gospel world-wide is the salvation of the Jews as a nation. Only then would the world be truly Christian according to Scripture prophecies and promises and only then would the fall of Antichrist and the glorious thousand year kingdom of God begin. Edwards saw this one thousand years

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the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof: but is that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself, in the Church, against Christ and all that is called God.” Chapter 25 Art., 6. The Savoy Declaration declares, “There is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God, whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” Chapter 26, Art., 4.


119 Murray, Jonathan Edwards; A New Biography, 299. As John F. Wilson notes, respecting Edwards’ millennial speculations, “They were, and this is the important point, scarcely new in his time or to him. They lie at the heart of English Independency of the seventeenth century and are an expression of the impulse to visible sainthood so central to New England Puritanism. Jonathan Edwards may have put them forward, in the context of the Awakening, with a greater clarity than did earlier writers, but I do not think that the substance of his claims with respect to a purer age for the church was so markedly innovative.” “History, Redemption, and the Millennium” in Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout ed., Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 139.


as the final stage in creation spanning seven thousand years. He also likened the first six thousand years to the six days of labor and the seventh thousand, the millennium, as the last one thousand years of rest, patterned after the days of creation and the principle of the fourth commandment.123

Edwards did not state with absolute certainty the time of the fall of Antichrist and the coming of the kingdom. However, he did speculate it could be as early as 1866. This date was arrived at through calculations beginning with the pope’s being seated in 606 AD, from this time the 42 months of Revelation 11:2 and 13:5 (actually 42 months of years or 42 x 30 = 1260 years) would commence, ending 1260 years later in 1866. He also conceded that the fall of Antichrist might not be complete until the year 2000.124

Edwards Use of Eschatology in the Humble Attempt

While Edwards’s eschatology could be explored in more detail,125 it is important for the study at hand to consider the use Edwards makes of eschatology in the *Humble Attempt*. We must first acknowledge that eschatology, though occupying a significant amount of space in the *Humble Attempt*, does not occupy a paradigmatic place. Should Edwards’s eschatology be unacceptable to some, the plea for united extraordinary prayer still stands. He as much as says so in the work itself:

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123 Ibid., 129-130 and 135.
124 *Works*, 5:129.
If the fall of mystical Babylon, and the work of God’s Spirit that shall bring it to pass, be at several hundred years distance; yet, it follows not that there will be no happy revivals of religion before that time, that shall be richly worth the most diligent, earnest, and constant praying for.126

The reality that Edwards’s eschatology was not a hinge pin of the Biblical duty to extraordinary prayer for the outpouring of God’s Spirit and the global advancement of the church on earth, is evidenced additionally by the fact that the five Boston ministers who added the preface to the original work, saw it as not inconsistent to disagree with Edwards on this theological nuance and yet not lose sight of the value and necessity for prayer in this manner:

As to the author’s ingenious observation on the prophecies, we entirely leave them to the reader’s judgment: with only observing, though it is the apprehension of many learned men, that there is to be a very general slaughter of the witnesses of Christ about the time of their finishing their testimony to the pure worship and truths of the gospel, about 3 or 4 years before the seventh angel sounds his trumpet for the ruin of Antichrist [Rev. 11:3-15]; yet we cannot see that this is any just objection against our joint and earnest prayers for the glorious age succeeding, or for the hastening of it.127

If Edwards’s eschatology held less than critical importance to the overall design of the Humble Attempt, why was it included in the work at all? There are a number of possible answers to this question. At this juncture we will only venture to provide two. First, Edwards sought to stave off possible discouragement and to give hope of God’s blessing on the endeavor, to the end of the expansion of the Church on earth and the hastening of the fall

126 Works, 5:427.
127 This statement was signed approvingly by Joseph Sewall, Thomas Prince, John Webb, Thomas Foxcroft and Joshua Gee, Works, 5:310. The Humble Attempt was also republished in England in 1789 by one of the men associated with the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society, John Sutcliff. In the preface to that edition he also distances himself from Edwards’s eschatology while putting forward the overall usefulness of the work and the call for extraordinary prayer. John Sutcliff, Preface to An Humble Attempt, Northampton, England, T. Dicey, 1789), vii-x.
of Antichrist. Edwards devoted considerable space to prophecy to counter the tendency to be discouraged from prayer because of what he viewed as faulty eschatology. “If people expect no other, than that the more the glorious times of Christ’s kingdom are hastened, the sooner will come this dreadful time, wherein the generality of God’s people must suffer so extremely, and the church of Christ be almost distinguished, and blotted out from under heaven; how can it be otherwise, than a great damp to their hope, courage and activity, in praying for, and reaching after the speedy introduction of those glorious promised times?”

That this endeavor was effective was evidenced by William Carey who used the *Humble Attempt* to counter anti-mission sentiment in his famous work *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Mean for the Conversion of the Heathens.*

Eschatological pessimism, according to Edwards, would discourage missions and was theologically unwarranted.

The second reason Edwards included eschatology in this work was to show that his integration of all theology was as a means to an end. The very prophecies of Scripture exhort and admonish prayer for revival, these two things must hold together; they may be distinct but cannot be viewed as entirely separate or unrelated. The text Edwards chose as

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130 Edwards is quoted approvingly on page 12.
131 On the overall impact of eschatology on missions in general and Edwards eschatology in brief but particular ways see J. A. De Jong, *As The Waters Cover the Sea, Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions, 1640-1810* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1970). He notes well the interaction between eschatology and the awakening when he states, “It would be quite wrong, however, to attempt to explain either the awakening or millennialism solely in terms of the other. As we have seen in the previous section, revivals deserve a much more complex and basic explanation. And millennialism has a history in the Anglo-American tradition that predates talk of revival as an outpouring of the Spirit. That they were not only compatible but mutually advantageous is undeniable, however;” 119.
the *locus classicus* for this work was Zechariah 8:20-22. In it there is a prophecy about the rise of prayer. Edwards outlines the coming together of these two points in the text:

> From the representation made in the prophecy, it appears rational to suppose, that it will be fulfilled something after this manner; first, that there shall be given much of a spirit of prayer to God’s people, in many places, disposing them to come into an express agreement, unitedly to pray to God in an extraordinary manner, that he would appear for the help of his church, and in mercy to mankind, and pour out his Spirit, revive his work, and advance his spiritual kingdom in the world, as he has promised; and that this disposition to such prayer, and union in it, will gradually spread more and more, and increase to greater degrees; with which at length will gradually be introduced a revival of religion, and a disposition to greater engagedness in the worship and service of God, amongst his professing people; that this being observed, will be the means of awakening others, making them sensible of the wants of their souls, and exciting in them a great concern for their spiritual and everlasting good, and putting them upon earnestly crying to God for spiritual mercies, and disposing them to join with God’s people in that extraordinary seeking and serving of God, which they shall see them engaged in; and that, in this manner religion shall be propagated, till the awakening reaches those that are in the highest stations, and till whole nations be awakened, and there be at length an accession of many of the chief nations of the world to the church of God.\(^{132}\)

In this way, the extraordinary prayer of God’s people is both the substance of the prophecy, and, according to that very prophecy, the means to its fulfillment. It would be more difficult for one to account for Edwards’s failure to address the prophetic element in the Concerts of Prayer than to seek to justify its presence. In the Prefaces referenced above it was obvious that the men who were unwilling to acquiesce to Edwards’s postmillennial understanding of Biblical prophecy were nonetheless willing to allow prophecy a place in the discussion.

**The Place of Prayer for the Advance of the Gospel in the *Humble Attempt***

While prayer for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom was inextricably connected to prophecies foretelling the advancement and ultimate triumph of Christ’s kingdom, the two
are not indistinguishable. For this reason it is necessary to look closer at Edwards’s *Humble Attempt* to discern what principles it elucidates respecting prayer and the missionary endeavor. We shall look at two major aspects of prayer that Edwards underscores in the *Humble Attempt*: prayer as a means to an end, and prayer as an end in itself.

**Prayer - A Means to an End**

Edwards knew well the Calvinist expression that the “Gospel ordinances” were a “means” to the end of our spiritual good. God uses means and prayer was one of those “gospel ordinances,” those “means.” But Edwards was not a theologically confused Calvinist here. He also knew that prayer was not for the purpose of informing an otherwise unaware or disinterested deity. Man is utterly dependent upon the sovereign God for any and all spiritual good. “As there is much in the present state of things to show us our great need of this mercy, and to cause us to desire it; so there is very much to convince us, that God alone can bestow it; and show us our entire and absolute dependence on him for it. The insufficiency of human abilities to bring to pass any such happy change in the world as is foretold, or to afford any remedy to mankind from such miseries as have been mentioned, does now remarkably appear.” God’s sovereignty was no inducement to despair or idleness, instead, the sovereign God of the universe has not only ordained the end, that the church would expand and that Christ’s kingdom would come in glory and power, but also the means by which this glorious end would be brought to fulfillment - through prayer.

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133 Ibid., 322.
134 Ibid., 359.
The expressions of these things in the *Humble Attempt* are many, but we will only cite a few passages to illustrate the point. “The Scriptures don’t only abundantly manifest it to be the duty of God’s people to be much in prayer for this great mercy, but it also abounds with manifold considerations to encourage ‘em in it, and animate ‘em with hopes of success.”\(^{135}\) In other words, the duty is not bare but is attended with many promises such that, as we obey God in praying for the propagation of the gospel and the advancement of Christ’s kingdom, we have good reason to hope that he who ordained the means shall also bless the same to that end.

Edwards goes on to emphasize further the point that God uses the means of the prayers of his people to the end of the expansion of the church and the coming of the kingdom. “God has respect to the prayers of his saints in all his government of the world....,”\(^{136}\) and “God, in wonderful grace, is pleased to represent himself, as it were, at the command of his people with regard to mercies of this nature, so as to be ready to bestow them whenever they shall earnestly pray for them...”\(^{137}\) Finally, “God speaks of himself as standing ready to be gracious to his church, and to appear for its restoration, and only waiting for such an opportunity to bestow this mercy, when he shall hear the cries of his people for it, that he may bestow it in answer to their prayers.”\(^{138}\) It is obvious from these things that, in Edwards understanding, the sovereign God has chosen to be moved by the prayers of His

\(^{135}\) Ibid., 351.
\(^{136}\) Ibid., 352.
\(^{137}\) Ibid., 353.
\(^{138}\) Ibid., 354.
saints to bring about the fulfillment of His eternal plans. Thus it should encourage us to pray, and especially to pray for missions.\textsuperscript{139}

Prayer as a means has not only the propagation of the Gospel as its end, but also the blessing of the union of God’s people. Gathering together for such extraordinary times of prayer for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom, breaks down denominational and geographical barriers between Christians. It promotes union in the church of Jesus Christ which can only lead to its good:

Such an union in prayer for the general outpouring of the Spirit of God, would not only be beautiful, but profitable too. It would tend very much to promote union and charity between distant members of the church of Christ, to promote public spirit, love to the church of God, and concern for the interest of Zion; as well as be an amiable exercise and manifestation of such a spirit. Union in religious duties, especially in the duty of prayer, in praying one with and for another, and jointly for their common welfare, above almost all other things, tends to promote mutual affection and endearment. And if ministers and people should, by particular agreement and joint resolution, set themselves, in a solemn and extraordinary manner, from time to time, to pray for the revival of religion in the world, it would naturally tend more to awaken in them a concern about things of this nature, and more of a desire after such a mercy.\textsuperscript{140}

It is hard to miss the almost prophetic nature of Edwards’s words as the history of missions in general and the Baptist Missionary Society in particular would evidence. As already noted, William Carey referenced Edwards’s \textit{Humble Attempt} in his famous work “An Enquiry.” John Sutcliff republished this work as the Particular Baptists of England recovered from high Calvinism and set themselves to pursuing the propagation of the Gospel to the heathen. Carey left for India and became the “Father of Modern Missions,” but not

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{139} Edwards’s view of prayer was typical of the Puritan view of prayer in this way. See Michael A. G. Haykin, \textit{Jonathan Edwards}, 138- 140 and also Stephen J. Nichols, \textit{Jonathan Edwards}, 205-218.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Works}, 5:366.}
without having sat at the feet of Edwards with many others that formed the Baptist Missionary Society. As Ian Murray summarizes it,

Edwards believed beforehand in the great missionary advance and saw, by faith, the gospel of Christ ‘throughout all parts of Africa, Asia, America and Terra Australis’ (2.306). It is arguable that no such tract on the hidden source of all true evangelistic success, namely, prayer for the Spirit of God, has ever been so widely used as this one. In the 1820’s, over seventy years later, when for the first time world-wide missionary endeavour was becoming a reality, S. E. Dwight could speak of his grandfather’s book as having, ‘through the Divine blessing… exerted an influence, singularly powerful, in rousing the church of Christ’. Unquestionably Edwards’s words were used to implant his own faith in the world-wide success of the gospel in others, and this conviction, Dwight could say, ‘has been a prime cause of the present concentrated movement of the whole church of God to hasten forward the reign of the Messiah’ (1.xciii).

Prayer - An End in Itself

Finally, it is important to see that prayer is not only a means to an end, but, according to Edwards, it is an end in itself. As such, it is valuable for missions in that it is to the good of the soul of those who are involved in missions. Evidence of prayer as an end in itself is given by Edwards who explains the nature of seeking God in prayer:

But certainly that expression of seeking the Lord, is very commonly used to signify something more; it implies that God himself is the great good desired and sought after; that the blessings pursued are God’s gracious presence, the blessed manifestations of him, union and intercourse with him; or, in short, God’s manifestations and communications of himself by his Holy Spirit. Thus the psalmist desired God, thirsted after him, and sought him…. If the expression in the text be

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141 For an excellent and full review of these men and their times see Michael A. G. Haykin, One Heart and One Soul; John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994). For a look at the Baptist Missionary Society in particular and Edwards’s influence upon them in missions see Johannes Van Den Berg, Constrained by Jesus Love, An Inquiry Into the Motives of the Missionary Awakening in Great Britain in the Period Between 1698 and 1815 (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1956), 126-128; David W. Bebbington, “Remembered around the World: The International Scope of Edwards’s Legacy” and Stuart Piggin, “The Expanding Knowledge of God: Jonathan Edwards’s Influence on Missionary Thinking and Promotion” both in David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney, Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 183-184, and 272-279 respectively and especially see the references on page 273, n.50.

142 Murray, Jonathan Edwards, 299-300.
understood agreeably to this sense, then by seeking the Lord of hosts, we must understand a seeking, that God who had withdrawn, or as it were hid himself for a long time, would return to his church, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence, and those blessed communications of his Spirit to his people, and to mankind on earth, which he had often promised, and which his church had long waited for.  

But this “seeking God” is ultimately evidenced in the fullness of the indwelling Spirit who is the expression of God and the ultimate blessing in prayer to God. “The Spirit of God is the chief of blessings, for it is the sum of all spiritual blessings; which we need infinitely more than others, and wherein our true and eternal happiness consists. That which is the sum of the blessings Christ purchased, is the sum of the blessings Christians have to pray for; but that, as was observed before, is the Holy Spirit.”

In conclusion, then, these two particular missiological points come through with clarity from this work; not only is the missionary endeavor enhanced and furthered by prayer as a means to an end, but those involved in the missionary endeavor through prayer are themselves revived and refreshed and invigorated for the task that is before them. Prayer is a fundamental part of the work of missions.

**The Free Offer of the Gospel - The Freedom of the Will**

On May 28, 1747 an event occurred within Edwards’s life that would have far ranging consequences; David Brainerd arrived ravished by the effects of tuberculosis. Time would show that these to be his final days. Brainerd died on October 9, 1747, leaving his

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143 *Works*, 5:315.
144 Ibid., 346.
145 It was not certain that this would be his final stop as the doctors were divided on this subject. See Edwards letter to Bellamy of June 1747, *Works*, 16:223.
journals and papers with Edwards and giving him permission to do what he felt was profitable with most of them and special instruction to destroy others. We shall look at Edwards’s work on the *Life and Diary of David Brainerd* later, but the death of Brainerd and the desire to publish something of his life and labors interrupted more than Edwards’s home, they interrupted his study and at least one other planned publication.

One particular publication that was interrupted was eventually published in 1754 under the title; *A careful and strict Enquiry Into The modern prevailing notions Of That Freedom of Will, Which is supposed to be essential To Moral Agency, Vertue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame.*

Edwards’s correspondence proves this planned publication was set aside to pursue Brainerd’s *Life*. For instance, in January of 1747 he communicated with Joseph Bellamy in Connecticut on several issues not the least of which was his working through Daniel Whitby on this very topic. “I have been reading Whitby, which has engaged me pretty thoroughly in the study of the Arminian controversy; and I have writ considerably upon it in my private papers.” Despite this, by December he was in communication with David’s brother John, having already committed to publishing his *Life*. “I have read through your deceased brother’s papers, containing his life, and have determined to publish an abstract of them.” In August of 1748 he indicated to his Scottish friend John Erskine that the *Freedom of the Will*

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147 *Works*, 16:217. Claghorn, in a footnote to this letter, indicates that the work Edwards was reviewing was Whitby’s *A Discourse Concerning I. The True Import of the Words Election and Reprobation. II. The Extent of Christ’s redemption. III. The Grace of God. IV. The Liberty of the Will. V. The Perseverance or Defectability of the Saints*, (London: 1710).

148 Ibid., 241.
Will had been temporarily set aside so as to pursue the Life. “I have for the present been diverted from the design I hinted to you, of publishing something against some of the Arminian tenets, by something else that divine providence unexpectedly laid in my way, and seemed to render unavoidable, viz. Publishing Mr. [David] Brainerd’s Life, of which the enclosed paper of proposals gives some account.”

Edwards finished Brainerd’s Life in December of 1748 and almost simultaneous with its publication the communion controversy descended upon him. The result of these “providences” was that the Freedom of the Will would not see publication for another five years. While not published until after Edwards settled in Stockbridge, this work warrants our attention in this pre-Stockbridge account of Edwards’s theology precisely because it contains his theological position prior to arriving in Stockbridge.

The Structure of the Freedom of the Will

Freedom of the Will contains four major parts of unequal length. In Part I, Edwards reviews various terms used by different authors in dealing with this controversial topic such as Necessity, Inability, Contingence, and the “Notion of Liberty, and of Moral Agency.” He also deals with the concept of the determination of the Will.

Part II starts to explore Arminian notions of freedom of the will and whether they can properly exist in their own right. It is in this part that Edwards shows that all exercises of the will must have a “cause” and that the supposed Arminian insistence upon some sort of

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149Ibid., 249.
“indifference” cannot be maintained. He also addresses the Arminian use of the foreknowledge of God in their argumentation.

Part III examines the Arminians insistence upon the liberty of the will as actually necessary to moral agency. In other words, can one be morally responsible if one is not morally free to choose either good or evil. Edwards shows that no such moral liberty is found in God and yet this lack of liberty in no way detracts from God. Therefore, Arminianism fails, and its application to men is theologically unsound. Finally in Part IV he refutes various Arminian arguments respecting free will.

The Theological Assessment of the Freedom of the Will

Theological struggles with the sovereignty of God were not new for Edwards. He had known of them in a personal way in his boyhood days in East Windsor. When he finally came to experience saving grace, he also became settled in his mind and heart on the struggle with this great doctrine. In his Personal Narrative he recorded this conflict and his eventual triumph over objections to God’s sovereignty:

From my childhood up, my mind had been wont to be full of objections against the doctrine of God’s sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. But never could give an account, how, or by what means, I was thus convinced; not in the least imagining, in the time of it, nor a long time after, that there was any extraordinary influence of God’s Spirit in it; but only that now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it. However, my mind rested in it; and it put an end to all those cavils and objections, that had till then abode with me, all the preceding part of my life. And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, with respect to the doctrine of God’s sovereignty, from that day to this; so that I scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an
objection against God’s sovereignty, in the most absolute sense, in showing mercy to whom he will show mercy, and hardening whom he will. God’s absolute sovereignty and justice, with respect to salvation and damnation, is what my mind seems to rest assured of, as much as of any thing that I see with my eyes; at least it is so at times. But I have oftentimes since that first conviction, had quite another kind of sense of God’s sovereignty, than I had then. I have often since, not only had a conviction, but a delightful conviction. The doctrine of God’s sovereignty has very often appeared an exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet doctrine to me: and absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. But my first conviction was not with this.150

Edwards had become a Calvinist, a theological perspective that would define him the rest of his days. In this he was squarely a successor to his father, his grandfather, and the English Puritans in general. His first published work was a fine display of his ability to articulate this Calvinism before the ministers of Boston as he proclaimed “God Glorified in the Work of Redemption, By the Greatness of Man’s Dependence upon Him, in the Whole of it.”151 But he was no Calvinist in the sense of merely following a man or a system of thought. He was a Calvinist because he saw this theological framework to be the clearest and most accurate representation of the Biblical teaching respecting God, man, and salvation. He was unequivocal on this point even in the Preface to his work on Freedom of the Will. “However the term ‘Calvinist’ is in these days, among most, a term of greater reproach than the term ‘Arminian:’ yet I should not take it at all amiss, to be called a Calvinist, for distinction’s sake: though I utterly disclaim a dependence on Calvin, or believing the doctrines which I hold, because he believed and taught them; and cannot justly be charged with believing in everything just as he taught.”152

150 Works, 16:791-792.
151 The short title is “God Glorifies in Man’s Dependence.” It was preached July 8, 1731 and published the same year. For the critical edition of the sermon with a brief introduction see Works, 17:196-216.
152 Works, 1:131.
Freedom of the Will strikes at the very heart of the Arminian - Calvinist controversy, the question regarding the freedom of man to choose either good or evil and man’s moral responsibility for the choices he makes. Arminianism was on the rise and Edwards sought to provide a frontal assault upon its upsurge\textsuperscript{153} by dealing, not so much with the classic definitions of the freedom of the will, but with specific application to the publications and arguments of his own day, including the work of Daniel Whitby.\textsuperscript{154}

The Freedom of the Will and Moral Ability/Inability

It would be beyond the scope of this thesis to assess the theology of the Freedom of the Will in detail.\textsuperscript{155} Rather, we shall look at a small aspect of it that had significant missiological implications for the next generation, especially the English Particular Baptists. The particular aspect of Edwards’s work that we shall consider is his distinctions between natural and moral ability.

\textsuperscript{153} Storms notes, respecting the Freedom of the Will that “[t]he proximate cause for the writing of Freedom of the Will is to be found in Edwards’s constant fear of the Arminian threat and its consequences on the Christian faith if left unchecked. As mentioned earlier, Edwards was fully convinced that the crucial point in the dispute between Arminians and Calvinists was the doctrine of the will....” C. Samuel Storms, “Jonathan Edwards On the Freedom of the Will” Trinity Journal, 3 (Fall 1982), 133. For the larger historical context regarding the rise of Arminianism in colonial America see Richard L. Bushman, From Puritan to Yankee; Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765, (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1967).

\textsuperscript{154} For an overview of Edwards’s antagonists in the Freedom of the Will, see the critical Introduction to the Yale edition, Works, 1:65-118.
The Definitions of Moral and Natural Inability

Edwards spends considerable time carefully defining terms. In these definitions is seen Edwards’s connection to some of these same terms in *Religious Affections*. However, for the sake of brevity, we will look at only a narrow portion of Edwards’s overall labor with definitions. He defines the will itself: “And, therefore, I observe, that the will (without any metaphysical refining) is plainly, that by which the mind chooses anything. The faculty of the will is that faculty or power or principle of mind by which it is capable of choosing: an act of the will is the same as an act of choosing or choice.” But if this be the case, what is the motive that causes one to choose? Edwards answers this question, “And therefore it must be true, in some sense, that the will is as the greatest apparent good is.” By “good” he means what is agreeable or desirable. In this way we could summarize Edwards as saying that the will always acts according to the greatest desire.

Crucial to Edwards’s defense of Calvinism is not only his definition of the will, but his distinction between natural and moral ability. How is it that man is unable to do a thing, like believe in Christ apart from an initial work of God’s Spirit in the heart, yet at the same time be responsible for not believing as God commands? To untie this Gordian knot,

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156 This connection is noted by Townsend when he indicates that “If a reader of the *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* lays down his copy and turns at once to the *Freedom of the Will* he must perceive that the subject matter of the two is one continuous doctrine. In the second of these Edwards is still exploring the difference between the understanding and the will.” H. G. Townsend, “The Will and Understanding in the Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards” *Church History*, 16 (Dec. 1947), p.215. Townsend may read Edwards a bit too much through the eye of the philosopher, but his point regarding the connection between these works is well made.
157 *Works*, 1:137.
158 Ibid., 142.
Edwards distinguishes between what one cannot do because of natural inability, such as flying, and what one cannot do because of moral inability, such as believing. The former cannot be done even if one willed to, the latter cannot be done because one cannot not will to do so. He words it thus,

We are said to be naturally unable to do a thing, when we cannot do it if we will, because what is most commonly called nature don’t allow of it, or because of some impeding defect or obstacle that is extrinsic to the will; either in the faculty of understanding, constitution of body, or external objects. Moral inability consists not in any of these things; but either in the want of inclination; or the strength of a contrary inclination; or the want of sufficient motives in view, to induce and excite the act of the will, or the strength of apparent motives to the contrary.\(^{160}\)

What Edwards points out is the inability of the unbeliever to savingly repent and believe in Christ is not due to a natural inability, since there is nothing external stopping him from doing what he might otherwise will to do. Rather, the inability to believe is found to reside in his moral constitution - his nature. As a sinner, he has not the inclination or desire to believe, and therefore refuses to do so; he is morally unable to believe.

The importance of this distinction is directly related to the sinner’s personal responsibility for his sin. The unbeliever may be held responsible for not believing because the inability is bound up in his own fallen nature and he chooses not to believe. Stephen Nichols summarizes this argument: “This moral inability, or what Paul refers to as the sin nature, governs the will. In this sense the will acts according to its determination; it chooses and acts upon the nature that underlies it. The will is free, but only so far as it acts according to its own nature. Edwards concedes that we have the natural inability to will and then do

\(^{159}\) For further explanation and analysis of Edwards’s definition of the will see C. Samuel Storms, “Jonathan Edwards On the Freedom of the Will” \emph{Trinity Journal}, 3 (Fall 1982), 135-142.

\(^{160}\) \emph{Works}, 1:158.
many things, but because of sin, we have moral inability and this moral inability governs the
will."161

The Implications of Moral and Natural Inability

What Edwards did by defining moral and natural inability in these ways was pivotal. When Edwards posited that, in Allen Guelzo’s words “We possess natural ability when we have the literal physical ability to carry out our volitions; moral ability describes the possession of the moral wherewithal to carry them out, since one might be in full possession of all the natural ability to perform an action, but lack the moral ability, due to the power of depraved habits and inclinations, to raise a finger.”162 He certified the absolute responsibility of moral agents for the actions they choose. Man is not relieved of his responsibility by his moral inability. Edwards expresses it himself in these terms in his conclusion to the treatise:

The things which have been said, obviate some of the chief objections of Arminians against the Calvinistic doctrine of the total depravity and corruption of man’s nature, whereby his heart is wholly under the power of sin, and he is utterly unable, without the interposition of sovereign grace, savingly to love God, believe in Christ, or do anything that is truly good and acceptable in God’s sight. For the main objection against this doctrine, that it is inconsistent with the freedom of man’s will, consisting in indifference and self-determining power. Because it supposes man to be under a necessity of sinning, and that God requires things of him, in order to his avoiding eternal damnation, which he is unable to do and that this doctrine is wholly inconsistent with the sincerity of counsels, invitations, etc. Now, this doctrine supposes no other necessity of sinning, than a moral necessity, which, as has been shown, does not at all excuse sin. And [it] supposes no other inability to obey any command, or perform any duty, even the most spiritual and exalted. But a moral inability, which, as has been proved, does not excuse persons in the non-performance

Thus, Calvinism is not a hindrance to the gospel and its proper proclamation must lay before men their responsibility to repent and believe while recognizing their moral inability to do so. In fact, as Edwards shows in the conclusion to *Freedom of the Will*, the five points of Calvinism are not inconsistent but wonderfully express the Biblical doctrines in their fullest and richest form. The rationalism of Arminianism was as inconsistent with Biblical Christianity as was the radical enthusiasm expressed by some during the revivals. Only Biblical Christianity, expressed in evangelical Calvinism, can chart the path between these extremes. Only evangelical Calvinism can truly spread the Gospel by the right means, by proper “counsels and invitations,” and so advance the church worldwide in preparation for the coming of the kingdom. This is a missiological principal that was to be of historic importance in the next generation.

The Freedom of the Will, Hyper-Calvinism, And Missions

Oddly enough, while the impact of *Freedom of the Will* both at home and abroad has been well-noted, one of its most important missiological impacts has been largely overlooked. *Freedom of the Will* did not just counter Arminianism, but also corrected hyper- or high-Calvinism.

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This is wonderfully evidenced by the English Particular Baptists later in the eighteenth-century. The early part of the century saw the General Baptists drift almost entirely into Unitarianism while the particular Baptists retreated within and moved theologically toward hyper-Calvinism, remaining aloof from participation in the revivals known as the Great Awakening. Beginning in the 1770's God began to move among the Particular Baptists respecting their Hyper-Calvinism. Edwards was a principle help in correcting their errors. We will look briefly at a prominent Particular Baptist as an exemplar of this shift under Edwards’s tutelage, Rev. Andrew Fuller.

Andrew Fuller was born February 5, 1754 into a family that had embraced Baptist principles of the high, or hyper, Calvinist type. At the age of twenty, Fuller began a pastoral ministry over the Particular Baptist congregation at Soham, having been formally installed as pastor in May of 1775. Fuller was an avid reader, and a number of books were given to him that had a significant impact upon his theology. In his reading, he began to detect a difference between seventeenth-century authors with respect to the free offer of the gospel and the eighteenth-century authors he had studied to this time. He says, in a letter dated November, 1809,

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165 The terms “General Baptist” and “Particular Baptist” signify those who are largely Arminian, holding to a view of general atonement, and those who are Calvinistic, holding to a doctrine of particular or limited atonement, respectively. For more on the general history of the Baptists see Leon H. McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Pub., 1987).

The principle writings with which I was first acquainted were those of Bunyan, Gill and Brine. I had read pretty much of Dr. Gill’s *Body of Divinity*, and from many parts of it had received considerable instruction. I perceived, however, that the system of Bunyan was not the same with his; for that, while he maintained the doctrines of election and predestination, he, nevertheless, held with the free offer of salvation to sinners, without distinction. These were things which I then could not reconcile, and, therefore, supposed that Bunyan, though a great and good man, was not so clear in his views of the doctrines of the gospel, as the writers who succeeded him. I found, indeed, the same things in all the old writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that came in my way. They all dealt as Bunyan did, in free invitations to sinners to come to Christ and be saved; the consistency of which with personal election I could not understand.167

Fuller was wrestling with what came to be known as “The Modern Question.” It revolved around the obligation of the unregenerate to repent of sin and believe in Christ and whether the gospel minister was under obligation to preach in such a way as to call the unbeliever to repent and believe. Fuller had been taught that there was no obligation on the part of the unbeliever to repent, because he was not of the elect, nor was the preacher to offer the gospel freely to sinners. What the preacher needed was some assurance that an individual was of the elect before urging them to repent. The doctrinal foundation for this position, at least for Fuller, was found in John Gill’s *Body of Divinity* which he mentioned in the November 1809 letter. Gill taught a thoroughly orthodox doctrine of justification in the application of redemption to the sinner, but he also taught a doctrinal known as “eternal justification.”169

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168The question was not limited to Particular Baptists but was more broadly a problem among English Calvinists as a whole, see Nettles, *op. cit.* The same issue had rocked Scottish Presbyterianism earlier in the century as the “Marrow Men” (as they came to be known), approved of the free offer of the Gospel. Thomas Boston was one of these “marrow men.” For a brief introduction to the Marrow Controversy see the article by the same name in Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 7:207.
169Gill words it thus, “Justification is by many divines distinguished into active and passive. Active justification is the act of God; it is God that justifies. Passive justification is the act of God, terminating on the conscience of a believer, commonly called a transient act, passing upon an external object. It is not of this I shall now treat, but of the former; which is an act internal and eternal, taken up in the divine mind from eternity, (continued…)
From this perspective the elect are justified before and apart from faith in the eternal decree of God. The implications of this teaching left the non-elect under no obligation to repent and believe.

The practical implications of Gill’s doctrine for pastoral ministry had been worked out by John Brine. As Nettles well articulates,

What began with Joseph Hussey, a Congregational minister, in *God's Operations of Grace but No Offers of His Grace* (1707) and was reinforced by Lewis Wayman in *A Further Enquiry after Truth*, came into Baptist life principally through John Brine. He contended that the divine word give no warrant for unregenerate men to consider repentance from sin and faith in Christ as their duty. As a corollary, no minister had warrant to call on the unregenerate to repent and believe. ‘This becomes duty of Men,’ he explained, ‘when they have Warrant from the divine Word, to consider God as their Redeemer in Christ, which no unregenerate Men have any Warrant to do.’ A sinner must know he is elect before he has warrant to believe.170

The effects of this ministerial paradigm were evangelically chilling to the eighteenth-century Particular Baptists. Robert Hall recommended a volume to Fuller that brought about major shift in Fuller’s thinking. Hall traveled seventy miles to attend Fuller’s ordination in Soham, and in the process of discussing with Fuller the previous pastor’s falling out with the Soham congregation, recommended Jonathan Edwards on the *Freedom of the Will*. Fuller’s later recounting of this event provides a bit of humor: “Not being much acquainted with books, at that time, I confounded the work of Dr. John Edwards, of Cambridge, an Episcopalian

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Calvinist, entitled, *Veritas Redux*, with that of Jonathan Edwards of New England. I read the former, and thought it a good book; but it did not seem exactly to answer Mr. Hall’s recommendation. Nor was it till the year 1777, that I discovered my mistake.\(^{171}\)

Fuller soon received a call to pastor the Baptist church in Kettering, Northamptonshire and faithfully discharged his pastoral labors within this congregation the rest of his life. In gaining closer association with several principle Baptist men within the Northamptonshire Association of ministers, he found the confusion and dilemma he suffered regarding hyper-Calvinism to be far from unique.\(^{172}\)

Fuller’s closest ministerial friends imbibed Edwards. These included John Sutcliff, John Ryland Jr., Samuel Peirce, and William Carey (all would become founding members of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792).\(^{173}\) As Nettles notes, “Fuller and his entire circle of friends found the key to their perplexity [over the Modern Question] within the writings of Jonathan Edwards that were available to them.”\(^{174}\) It was especially Edwards’s *Freedom of the Will* that set the tone for evangelical Calvinism in the context of robust gospel preaching and missionary endeavors. Fuller published a work called “*The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*” in which he delineated the doctrinal position of evangelical Calvinism; the position which he came to embrace over against the hyper-Calvinism. In Fuller’s own

\(^{171}\)Ryland, 23.

\(^{172}\)Fuller called his doctrinal position high-Calvinism at first and after being freed from its doctrinal errors he referred to it as hyper-Calvinism. See Ryland, 22. As to whether John Gill should be rightly called a Hyper-Calvinist or a High-Calvinist and the distinctions between the two, see Tomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and For His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 73-107. Nettles opts for the designation of High-Calvinism with respect to Gill.

\(^{173}\)For an excellent work showing the interdependence of these men theologically on each other and the far reaching implications of their friendships with one another see Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994).
words, speaking of himself in the third person singular, he records the importance of Edwards:

He had also read and considered, as well as he was able, President Edwards’s *Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will*, with some other performances on the difference between natural and moral inability. He found much satisfaction in this distinction; as it appeared to him to carry with it its own evidence—to be clearly and fully contained in the Scriptures—and calculated to disburden the Calvinistic system of a number of calumnies with which its enemies have loaded it, as well as to afford clear and honourable [sic] conceptions of Divine government. If it were not the duty of unconverted sinners to believe in Christ, and that because of their inability, he supposed this inability must be natural, or something which did not arise from an evil disposition; but the more he examined the Scriptures, the more he was convinced that all the inability ascribed to man, with respect to believing, arises from the aversion of his heart. They will not come to Christ that they may have life; will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely; will not seek after God; and desire not the knowledge of his ways.¹⁷⁵

In other words, what Edwards’s writings had done, *Freedom of the Will* in particular, was to show these Northamptonshire pastors that it was not in any way inconsistent or insincere of God to demand that men repent and believe the Gospel insomuch as their inability was a moral inability. Edwards’s own conclusions quoted above stated as much. Historically what this did was to theologically pave the way for the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society and the dawn of modern missions as we know it. The free offer of the Gospel was at the heart of missions and in perfect agreement with a robust evangelical Calvinism.

**Conclusion**

From the brief review of these three principle works of Edwards, it can be seen that there are a number of points covered which fall under the umbrella of systematic theology.

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¹⁷⁴Nettles, “Andrew Fuller (1754-1815)”, 118.
Additionally, these works not only present the theological position of Edwards as an evangelical Calvinist, but either directly, or by necessary implication, delineate a number of missiological principles that would prove effective in Edwards’s own pursuit of missions in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. These missiological principles also proved effective in the beginning of the modern missionary movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that Edwards hoped for but never saw. The theological foundation established in these writings show Edwards to be a pastor with a heart for missions. We shall next consider the practical theology of Edwards exemplified in the Life of David Brainerd and its implications for missions.

CHAPTER 4

JONATHAN EDWARDS AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Having reviewed Edwards’s works encompassing Biblical/Historical Theology and Systematic Theology, the final work that we shall review as background to Edwards’s missionary labors and as expressive of his missiological thought fits more into the category of Practical Theology - *The Life of David Brainerd*. ¹⁷⁶

The Background to the *Life of Brainerd*

David Brainerd was born in Haddam, Connecticut on April 20, 1718. Both of his parents died by the time he was in his early teens and he struggled spiritually for a number of years. It was not until sometime in 1739, after much inner turmoil and anguish, that the young man, somewhat prone to melancholy, finally came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Soon after he entered Yale and apparently took to his studies with distinction until the divisions fostered by the excesses of the Great Awakening plagued New Haven. Largely because of the excesses of James Davenport (a Long Island New Light enthusiast minister

pursuing a controversial itinerant ministry in New Haven), Yale, under the stern leadership of
Thomas Clap, had taken a stand against the revivals. Brainerd in a moment of youthful
indiscretion had made a private but disparaging remark about one of the tutors at the school.
Clap found out about it in a rather clandestine way and demanded a retraction and public
confession from Brainerd. Brainerd retracted his statement as required. However, he felt
that a statement made in private and communicated to school authorities by one who had
neither heard it first hand nor had certainty that Brainerd had made it, was more than
Scripture or prudence warranted. In spite of pleas to the contrary, and even the interposition
of others such as Jonathan Edwards, Clap would not reinstate him. Brainerd was summarily
dismissed from Yale in his senior year and prohibited from graduating with his class.

Devastated by the dismissal, Brainerd was eventually taken under the wing of
Ebenezer Pemberton and licensed to preach by the “Association of ministers belonging to the
eastern district of the county of Fairfield”177 in 1742. He was appointed as missionary to the
Indians by the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK)178
and ordained by the New Light presbytery in New York to that end in 1744.179

Brainerd initially labored among the Husatonic Indians in New York. Soon after,
the Society deemed it better for him to work among the Indians in New Jersey and Delaware.

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178 For an introduction to the Society in Scotland and its missionary endeavors from 1730-1775 see
Frederick V. Mills, Sr., “The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge in British North
179 For a brief historical overview of the founding of this presbytery see Robert Hastings Nichols, “The
First Synod of New York, 1745-1758 and Its Permanent Effects” Church History, 14 (Dec., 1945), 239-255.
Ebenezer Pemberton, who preached Brainerd’s ordination sermon, was influential in the founding of this New
Light synod (along with Dickinson and Aaron Burr), he was an influential New Light, a pastor in New York
and a member of the New York presbytery as well, which was a part of that synod.
Brainerd had a difficult time wrestling with the elements of nature and fears of attack along with the struggle for holiness and vital spirituality. Nevertheless, the Lord smiled upon the work and a number of Indians came to saving faith to the degree that Brainerd was able to gather a church.

By 1747 the toll on his body became too much and, exhausted from his labors and suffering the effects of tuberculosis, he arrived at the Edwards’s parsonage in Northampton seriously ill. The doctors gave mixed assessments as to his hopes of recovery but the disease took its course and David Brainerd died in Edwards’s home on October 9, 1747 at the age of 29.

The immediate impact of Brainerd’s life was profound but limited. With present day focus on size and numbers he would be considered a failure. But the greatest impact Brainerd had on the world came as a result of leaving his journals, diaries, and papers with Jonathan Edwards, granting him permission to use them as he deemed best to the glory of God and the furtherance of His kingdom. Edwards quickly saw the value of them and put aside other projects to compile the work now known as the *Life of Brainerd*. It came to publication in 1749, only two years before Edwards himself would embark on mission work among the Indians.\(^{180}\)

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**The Structure of the *Life of Brainerd* Error! Bookmark not defined.**

\(^{180}\)For the general details of Brainerd’s life I have relied on the *Life of Brainerd* itself, *Works*, 7.
The overall structure of the *Life of Brainerd* is rather basic. It opens with a Preface by Edwards, introducing the work and addressing some of the uses and concerns, particularly the proneness of Brainerd to excess melancholy and introspection. Following the Preface, the work is divided into eight parts each reflecting a specific period in Brainerd’s life. It closes with some further “Remains” of Brainerd and an “Appendix” containing Edwards’s “reflections” and “observations” on the *Life of Brainerd*.\(^{181}\)

**The Missiological Use of the *Life of Brainerd***

While the *Life of Brainerd* is a valuable and edifying volume in its own right, it is ultimately the work of Brainerd and not Edwards.\(^{182}\) The subsequent history of missions would evidence the rich missiological value of the *Life of Brainerd*, but this richness is reflected not only in seeing Brainerd as a missionary - his hopes, his fears, his struggles and his successes - but also in the appendix where Edwards added his own of “reflections” and “observations” on Brainerd’s life and labors. Because this thesis focuses upon the missiological thought of Edwards and not David Brainerd, we will limit the discussion of missiological principles almost entirely to Edwards’s appendix.

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\(^{181}\) The Yale edition has a number of further documents which were not included in Edwards’s 1749 publication. These include the funeral sermon, which was published separately prior to the publication of the *Life of Brainerd*, as well as some valuable “Related Correspondence” of Edwards, David Brainerd and David’s brother John Brainerd. Additionally, it may be worth noting that the Society in Scotland had published two parts of Brainerd’s Journal which Edwards did not include in the *Life of Brainerd* for size and cost reasons. The two parts were published as *Mirabilia Dei inter Indicos, or The Rise and Progress of a Remarkable Work of Grace Amongst a Number of the Indians in the Province of New Jersey and Pennsylvania* and *Divine Grace Displayed, or The Continuance and Progress of a Remarkable Work of Grace among Some of the Indians Belonging in the Provinces of New Jersey and Pennsylvania* and covered the period from June 19 to November 4, 1745 and from November 5, 1745 to June 19, 1746 respectively. They were incorporated into later editions of the *Life of Brainerd* by other editors. For a history of the publication see Norm Pettit’s critical introduction to the Yale edition, *Works*, 7:71-79.

\(^{182}\) This is not to say that Edwards did not edit the material in any way, he certainly did. It also does not eliminate the use of editorial comments within the work itself by Edwards.
An Introduction to Edwards’s Reflections and Observations on the Life of Brainerd

The full title Edwards gave to this appendix is “An Appendix Containing Some Reflections And Observations On The Preceding Memoirs Of Mr. Brainerd.”183 The Appendix provides a rich answer to what Edwards saw in David Brainerd’s life and diary that warranted publication.184 The most common scholarly assessment is that Brainerd was the best exemplar of religious affections.185 Evidence for this is found in the “Author’s Preface” where Edwards commends Brainerd as an example worthy to be noted. Speaking of his true religious affections and his escape from enthusiasm, Edwards writes:

What has been now mentioned of Mr. Brainerd is so far from being just ground of prejudice against what is related in the following account of his life, that, if duly considered, it will render the history the more serviceable. For by his thus joining for a season with enthusiasts, he had a more full and intimate acquaintance with what belonged to that sort of religion, and so was under better advantages to judge of the difference between that, and the other, which he finally approved and strove to his utmost to promote, in opposition to it: And hereby the reader has the more to demonstrate to him that Mr. Brainerd in his testimony against it and the spirit and behavior of those that are influenced by it, speaks from impartial conviction, and not from prejudice; because therein he openly condemns his own former opinion and

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183 Works, 7:500.
184 In a letter to his Scottish friend Rev. John Erskine, Edwards called the task at hand a”divine providence” reminiscent of things he would add in Reflection eight of his Appendix. The publication of the Life of Brainerd was deemed by Edwards as “unavoidable.” Letter to the Reverend John Erskine dated August 31, 1748, Works, 16:247-250.
185 For a prominent example of this perspective see David L. Weddle, “The Melancholy Saint: Jonathan Edwards’s Interpretation of David Brainerd As a Model of Evangelical Spirituality” Harvard Theological Review, 81 (Jul., 1988), 297-381. Weddle asserts that “With deep respect for Edwards’s perception, I shall argue that the life of Brainerd is, at best, an ambiguous example of Edwards’s theology of religious experience, since Brainerd waged a life-long struggle with melancholy, manifested in morbid self-condemnation, obsessive self-interest, and the glorification of death. These elements have had a pernicious effect on the subsequent evangelical tradition, and they are out of harmony with Edwards’s own analysis of religious experience.” For a less narrowly negative assessment see Norman Pettit’s critical introduction to the Yale edition, Works, 7:5-6. Pettit calls the Life of Brainerd a “sequel” to Edwards earlier writings on revival, particularly the Religious Affections.

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conduct, on account of which he had greatly suffered from his opposers, and for
which some continued to reproach him as long as he lived.\textsuperscript{186}

These remarks show that Edwards viewed Brainerd as a prime example of religious
affections. However, to look at Brainerd as simply an exemplar of religious affections is to
assess him too narrowly.

Other scholars agree that Brainerd was more than an example of Religious
\textit{Affections} but still seem to hold too restricted a view of Brainerd in Edwards’s eyes. For
instance, Pettit insists that “Edwards, of course, was not so much interested in the young
man’s mission to the Indians as in his commitment to a holy cause - his willingness to
abandon all comfort for the sake of redeeming society. It was Brainerd’s benevolence\textsuperscript{187} to
being in general, not his benevolence to the Indians that mattered; for the mission to the
Indians was merely an example of what could be done on a larger scale for all God’s people
in America.”\textsuperscript{188} Pettit concludes by seeing Brainerd as Edwards’s real life exemplar of “\textit{the}
ethical man - he personified true virtue.”\textsuperscript{189} Whether Edwards saw Brainerd as “\textit{the} ethical
man” or not, he certainly saw him as much more than Pettit and others seem to allow as the
following considerations will prove.

Edwards’s Reflections and Observations on the \textit{Life of Brainerd}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{186}\textit{Works}, 7:94-95.
\item \textsuperscript{187}On the larger issue of Brainerd’s example of benevolence see the excellent discussion by Joseph
Evangelical Culture” \textit{Church History}, 54 (Jun., 1985), 188-201. He is especially helpful in seeing Brainerd as
more than one sided but nevertheless extremely influential in this way.
\item \textsuperscript{188}\textit{Works}, 7:13.
\item \textsuperscript{189}\textit{Ibid.}, 14. The italics are the original author’s.
\end{itemize}
Almost half the space given by Edwards to these reflections and observations is dedicated to the First Reflection. In it Edwards reflected on Brainerd as a model of true and lively evangelical spirituality. Here he contrasts him with “some pretenders” noting that Brainerd was no hypocrite in this area. This was further manifest by his continuing in those things through which he came to saving faith. He was not satisfied to sit back and rest in his salvation but kept up a lively process of spiritual growth, confession and sanctification until he died. He did not fade into coldness but flamed into adoration and service to God:

His religious affections and joys were not like those of some who have rapture and mighty emotions from time to time in company; but have very little affection in retirement and secret places. Though he was of a very sociable temper, and loved the company of saints, and delighted very much in religious conversation and in social worship; yet his warmest affections and their greatest effects on animal nature, and his sweetest joys, were in his closet devotions and solitary transactions between God and his own soul; as is very observable through his whole course, from his conversion to his death. He delighted greatly in sacred retirements; and loved to get quite away from all the world to converse with God alone in secret duties.\footnote{\textit{Works}, 7:509.}

It is evident that Edwards saw Brainerd as an excellent example of true religious affections.

In this melancholy saint he found a fitting model of his \textit{Treatise Concerning Religious Affections}. Joseph Conforti agrees when he notes that Edwards’s \textit{Life of Brainerd} “transformed an obscure, sickly, largely ineffectual young missionary into a saintly figure who embodied authentic spirituality, not simply ephemeral revivalistic enthusiasm, and who had sacrificed his life for Christianity.”\footnote{Joseph Conforti, “David Brainerd and the Nineteen Century Missionary Movement” \textit{Journal of the Early Republic}, 5 (Autumn, 1985), 310-311.}
It is important to see that this was no artificial transposition of Edwards upon Brainerd. He did not fashion him after his treatise; he found him to be an exemplar of it. This was due in part to the fact that Brainerd had imbibed Edwards’s treatise and had exhorted others to do the same. Brainerd had clearly followed his own advice as is clear from a letter he wrote to a young man he deemed a possible future candidate for ministry. He exhorts this young man to “labor to be prepared and qualified to do much for God! Read Mr. Edwards’ piece on the Affections again and again: and labor to distinguish clearly upon experiences and affections in religion, that you may make a difference between the ‘gold’ and the shining ‘dross’.” In this way the Life has the same missiological end as the Religious Affections, it provides material for the clear assessing of each and every missionary as to their own religious conversion, and the conversion of their converts.

Another area in the Life of Brainerd which Edwards considered worthy of special note in his Appendix was Brainerd’s practice of experimental Calvinism. In the Fourth

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192 Edwards confesses to a desire to remove references to his Religious Affections from The Life in the section of the work called “Further Remains”: I had at first fully intended, in publishing this and the foregoing letter, to have suppressed these passages wherein my name is mentioned, and my Discourse on Religious Affections recommended: and am sensible that by my doing otherwise, I shall bring upon me the reproach of some. But how much soever I may be pleased with the commendation of any performance of mine (and I confess, I esteem the judgment and approbation of such a person as Mr. Brainerd worthy to be valued, and look on myself as highly honoured by it), yet I can truly say, the things that governed me in altering my forementioned determination, with respect to these passages, were these two: (1) What Mr. Brainerd here says of that discourse, shows very fully and particularly what his notions were of experimental religion, and the nature of true piety, and how far he was from placing it in impressions on the imagination, or any enthusiastic impulses, and how essential in religion he esteemed holy practice, etc. For all that have read that discourse, know what sentiments are there expressed concerning those things. (2) I judged, that the approbation of so apparent and eminent a friend and example of inward vital religion, and evangelical piety in the height of it, would probably tend to make that book more serviceable; especially among some kinds of zealous persons, whose benefit was especially aimed at in the book; some of which are prejudiced against it, as written in too legal a strain, and opposing some things wherein the height of Christian experience consists, and tending to build men upon their own works.” Works, 7:497 n. 9.

This evidences Edwards desire to let Brainerd speak for himself.

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reflection he reminds his readers that prior to experiencing saving faith, Brainerd had the strongest revulsion for the doctrines of Grace and particularly God’s sovereignty in salvation. He admits “But the last thing that I quarreled with was the sovereignty of God.”\textsuperscript{194}

Brainerd’s saving experience brought a complete reversal to this Calvinist aversion:

The preceding history serves to confirm those doctrines usually called the doctrines of grace. For if it be allowed that there is truth, substance, or value in the main of Mr. Brainerd’s religion, it will undoubtedy follow, that those doctrines are divine: since it is evident, that the whole of it, from beginning to end, is according to that scheme of things; all built on those apprehensions, notions, and views, that are produced and established in the mind of those doctrines. He was brought by doctrines of this kind to his awakening and deep concern about things of a spiritual and eternal nature; and by these doctrines his convictions were maintained and carried on; and his conversion was evidently altogether agreeable to this scheme, but by no means agreeing with the contrary, and utterly inconsistent with the Arminian notion of conversion or repentance. His conversion was plainly founded in a clear strong conviction, and undoubting persuasion of the truth of those things appertaining to these doctrines, against which Arminians most object, and about which his own mind had contended most.\textsuperscript{195}

Just as in the \textit{Freedom of the Will}, there is not only a place for the doctrines of grace in the individual man, but also a necessity for them in the work of the ministry. The tenants of Calvinism were not hindrances to missionary work; they are at the very heart of the work of a missionary. It is not hyper- or high-Calvinism, but evangelical Calvinism that recognizes and uses the means of the preaching of the Gospel to God’s sovereign end. Edwards records this missiological point well.

And here is worthy to be considered the effect of Calvinistical doctrines (as they are called) not only on Mr. Brainerd himself, but also on others, whom he taught. It is abundantly pretended and asserted of late, that these doctrines tend to undermine the very foundations of all religion and morality, and to enervate and vacate all reasonable motives to the exercise and practice of them, and lay invincible stumbling-blocks before infidels, to hinder their embracing Christianity; and that the contrary

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 495.
\item \textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 124.
\item \textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 522.
\end{itemize}
doctrines are the fruitful principles of virtue and goodness, set religion on its right basis, represent it in an amiable light, give its motives their full force, and recommend it to the reason and common sense of mankind. — But where can they find an instance of so great and signal an effect of their doctrines, in bringing infidels, who were at such a distance from all that is civil, sober, rational, and Christian, and so full of inveterate prejudices against these things, to such a degree of humanity, civility, exercise of reason, self-denial, and Christian virtue?196

Not only must the missionary be personally acquainted with vital evangelical faith, but he must be an experimental Calvinist theologically and practically to be best fit for missionary labors. Only then will he pursue missions from the right perspective.

In Edwards’s Fifth Reflection, he underscores a further use of Brainerd’s Life missiologically - as a tool to teach prospective ministers of the Gospel the appropriate sobriety in approaching their divine calling. Brainerd was a model of single devotion to his appointed calling. Ministers ought to be such and the Life of Brainerd would prove a useful textbook for candidates to the ministry and the missionary task. In the Life, prospective missionaries would be confronted with the real life experiences of one who pursued his duty, his prayers, and his labors with diligence all the while clearly aware “of his own insufficiency for this work; and how great was his dependence on God’s sufficiency.”197 The Life of Brainerd was a rare opportunity to see these details in action.

The Seventh Reflection of Edwards on the Life of Brainerd concentrates missiologically the missionary’s life of prayer. It is not just prayer in general, but prayer for the advancement of the kingdom:

There is much in the preceding account to excite and encourage God’s people to earnest prayers and endeavors for the advancement and enlargement of the kingdom of Christ in the world. Mr. Brainerd set us an excellent example in this respect; he

196Ibid., 526.
197Ibid., 530.
sought the prosperity of Zion with all his might; he preferred Jerusalem above his chief joy.\textsuperscript{198}

In reflecting on Brainerd’s wonderful example of prayer, it is noticeable that Brainerd’s prayer life was largely according to the dictates and encouragements published in Edwards’s \textit{Humble Attempt}. Brainerd was a model of how the prayer advocated in the \textit{Humble Attempt} would be carried out in the private and public life of the missionary. Edwards is hopeful respecting the effect of the means of prayer pursued by Brainerd when he states,

\begin{quote}
I confess that God giving so much of a spirit of prayer for this mercy to so eminent a servant of his, and exciting him in so extraordinary a manner, and with such vehement thirstings of soul, to agonize in prayer for it from time to time, through the course of his life, is one thing, among others, which gives me great hope, that God has a design of accomplishing something very glorious for the interest of his church before long. One such instance as this, I conceive, gives more encouragement, than the common, cold, formal prayers of thousands. As Mr. Brainerd’s desires and prayers for the coming of Christ’s kingdom, were very special and extraordinary; so, I think, we may reasonably hope, that the God who excited those desires and prayers, will answer them with something special and extraordinary.\textsuperscript{199}
\end{quote}

Brainerd actually exemplifies in a practical way two fruits of Edwards’s theology. He wonderfully exemplifies the heart of one praying for the expansion of Christ’s church on earth and the coming of the great kingdom of Christ yet future, both of which Edwards presented in his \textit{Humble Attempt}. But he also illustrates a yearning for the kingdom in hope; he was expectant not pessimistic. He saw the dawning of the kingdom as, in essence, the next stage in God’s unfolding plan of redemption. In other words, Brainerd was a man who exemplified in practical ways the basic theological framework outlined in Edwards’s \textit{History of the Work of Redemption}. 

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{198}Ibid., 531-532.  
\textsuperscript{199}Ibid., 532.
\end{flushleft}
Another very practical principle advocated by Edwards in this Seventh Reflection which is often noted by scholars is Edwards’s advocacy for sending missionaries out in pairs. This would apply especially when sending men into wilderness situations where loneliness and melancholy may be exacerbated by solitude.

Conclusion

From the reflections Edwards appended to the Life of Brainerd it is evident that there are a number of principles that apply to the arena of practical theology. In reading this work, young men preparing for ministry as missionaries (and settled ministers for that matter) would find a rich storehouse of examples on how to pursue the Gospel ministry, either at home or abroad. Missiologically, it contains the most detailed expressions of Edwards’s theology of missions. When the actual use of the Life of Brainerd is reviewed historically it had an expansive missiological impact.200 It was a missionary handbook of sorts used by Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist and Presbyterians missionaries for years after its initial publication and its influence in missions is still being felt to this day.

PART TWO: JONATHAN EDWARDS’S MISSIONARY LABORS 1750-1758
CHAPTER 5
JONATHAN EDWARDS AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY

The Transition from Northampton to Stockbridge

Edwards was dismissed from his Northampton congregation on June 22, 1750. He had begun preaching in Stockbridge in the fall of that year and was called to settle there on February 22, 1751. Except for a matter of a few weeks in Princeton, New Jersey, most of which were spent dealing with illness, this was to be his home for the remainder of his life. The pastor had now become the missionary, the theologian was now the practitioner.

The previous three chapters have given ample evidence showing that missions were very near to the heart of this pastor and theologian. Relocating to Stockbridge was a positive choice, and not just a pragmatic option for Edwards. As one writer has noted; “while arguments will continue about Edwards’ demise from Northampton and his motives in moving to Stockbridge, there can be no denial of the fact that this move was thoroughly consistent with all that he asserted about the obligations of God’s people in the work of missions. When the popular acclaim associated with the various Awakenings of his early ministry had subsided and the wounds of deposition from Northampton were still fresh, this
theologian of mission became the practitioner of mission in the very best of Reformed Puritan tradition.”

Leaving the only home Jonathan and Sarah had known together and traveling some forty miles almost due west, to the edge of the New England frontier, was a huge move for the Edwards physically, but it seems to have been a much smaller step theologically. In fact, one wonders if the footnote penned in consideration of David Brainerd taking on a life of mission work was not in some measure autobiographical:

By the invitations Mr. Brainerd had lately received, it appears that it was not from necessity, or for want of opportunities to settle in the ministry amongst the English, notwithstanding the disgrace he had been laid under at college, that he was determined to forsake all the outward comforts to be enjoyed in the English settlements, to go and spend his life among the brutish savages, and endure the difficulties and self-denials of an Indian mission. He had, just as he was leaving Kaunaumeek, had an earnest invitation to a settlement at East Hampton on Long Island….Besides the invitation he had to Millington; which was near his native town, and in the midst of his friends. Nor did Mr. Brainerd choose the business of a missionary to the Indians, rather than accept of those invitations, because he was unacquainted with the difficulties and sufferings which attended such a service: for he had had experience of these difficulties in summer and winter; having spent about a twelvemonth in a lonely desert among these savages, where he had gone through extreme hardships, and been the subject of a train of outward and inward sorrows, which were now fresh in his mind. Notwithstanding all these things, he chose still to go on with this business; and that although the place he was now going to, was at a still much greater distance from most of his friends, acquaintance, and native land.

Granted, there were significant differences between what Brainerd and Edwards each looked forward to. Stockbridge, Edwards’s destination had been a settled mission for more than a decade. There was a house available for him and his family, a bit smaller than they were accustomed to, but a house nonetheless. There were two congregations, one white and the

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other Indian, already gathered and in need of pastoral oversight. The mission was not without fellow-laborers either as Timothy Woodbridge, who would become a trusted ally and friend, was the mission school teacher.

But there were significant comparisons as well. This was not a safe and secure place; it was the frontier. During the French and Indian War, which broke out while Edwards was in Stockbridge, he would know the reality of brutal murders\textsuperscript{203} and the burden of feeding and caring for British troops sent to protect the citizens from such Indian raids.\textsuperscript{204} In addition to security issues there was the chore and challenge of reaching the lost for Christ cross-culturally. There were also struggles that awaited him in holding the ever-ubiquitous English at bay. Although he did not arrive with his family until June of 1751, he had been preaching and teaching for several months. He could not have been ignorant of the changes that needed to be put in place to further the work of the mission rather than the interests of some of the white settlers in Stockbridge, most of whom where his own relatives - the Williams clan.\textsuperscript{205}


\textsuperscript{203}One such occurrence came while he was preaching on the Lord's day, Indians had murdered some of the Chamberlain family of Stockbridge that Sabbath Day morning, the news of which disrupted the service. In this case, there was evidence that the murders were retaliatory for two white settlers had murdered two Indians in cold blood with little to no judicial repercussions. See Sarah Cabot Sedgwick, and Christina Sedgwick Marquand, \textit{Stockbridge 1739-1939, A Chronicle}, (Great Barrington: The Berkshire Courier, 1939).

\textsuperscript{204}Sedgwick and Marquand list the practical burden at “800 meals of victuals, pasturing 150 horses, and 7 gal. of good West Indian rum.” Ibid., 75.

\textsuperscript{205}On the history of the Williams family and their powerful influence in western Massachusetts see Kevin Michael Sweeney, “River Gods and Related minor Deities: The Williams family and the Connecticut River Valley, 1637-1790,” (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1986). He deals with the conflicts between Edwards and the Williams’ on pages 413-495.
This family connection had been a bone of contention for Edwards in Northampton and he was aware of the fact that the strife awaited him in Stockbridge.206

**The Historical Introduction to Edwards’s Missionary Labors**

Since the first settlers came to the America from England, there had been the declared interest in evangelizing the Indians.207 The recorded voyages of several individuals during the sixteenth century, including Captain John Davis, Captain George Best, Humphrey Gilbert and Richard Hakluyt, all reflect at least a stated interest in propagating the gospel amongst the Indians inhabiting North America.208

This interest was further codified by Charles I in none other than the *Charter for the Massachusetts Bay Colony* in 1629, and repeated when that charter was reissued. It reads in part,

> whereby our said People, Inhabitants there, may be soe religiously, peaceablie, and civilly governed, as their good Life and orderlie Conversacon, maie wynn and incite the Natives of Country, to the KnowIedg and Obedience of the onlie true God and Saulor of Mankinde, and the Christian Fayth, which in our Royall Intencon, and the Adventurers free Profession, is the principall Ende of this Plantacion.209

Even the seal of Massachusetts reflects this interest, picturing an Indian issuing the Macedonian call, “Come and help us.” While the interest in missions was not so eagerly

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206 One of the Williams family had openly expressed his negative opinion of Edwards and communicated them to him in a letter. See Wright, Wyllis, E., *Colonel Ephraim Williams, A Documentary Life*, (Pittsfield: Berkshire County Historical Society, 1970), 61-62.

207 John Winthrop, for instance, listed this goal as the first on a list of several goals of the Massachusetts Bay Company before he left England for America in 1630. See Francis Bremer, *John Winthrop, America's Forgotten Founding Father*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 157-158.

208 R. Pierce Beaver, *Church, State and the American Indian, Two and a Half Centuries of Partnership in Missions Between Protestant Churches and Government*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 7-10.
pursued as the “principall Ende” might seem to suggest, it was not altogether ignored either.\textsuperscript{210} Establishing a subsistence community took time and energy away from proposed mission work, and just living normal life was encumbered with many trials and distractions.\textsuperscript{211} Nevertheless mission work began in earnest in the 1640’s.\textsuperscript{212}

Two names most clearly connected with the substantial and, to some degree, successful rise of colonial missions are John Eliot,\textsuperscript{213} pastor of the church in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and Thomas Mayhew Jr. of Martha’s Vineyard. The reports of their work and the lobbying efforts of Edward Winslow were critical in convincing those in old England to establish an organization for the promotion of mission work in New England. The “Society for propagation of the Gospel in New England” came into existence by an act of Parliament on July 27, 1649,\textsuperscript{214} thus becoming the first mission society in the English

\textsuperscript{210}Nor was it pursued with the vigor intoned by Joseph Tracy’s “the spirit of missions was as general then as now...” quoted in Beaver, op. Cit., 25. For a general discussion of Puritan-Indian relations see Charles M. Segal and David C. Stineback, \textit{Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny}, (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1977), as well as Alden T. Vaughan, \textit{New England Frontier, Puritans and Indians 1620-1675}, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).
\textsuperscript{211}For an excellent overview of life in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in its first twenty years, see Francis J. Bremer, \textit{John Winthrop, America’s Forgotten Founding Father}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
\textsuperscript{213}On the life and labors of John Eliot, see Ola Elizabeth Winslow, \textit{John Eliot “Apostle to the Indians,”} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company 1968), and Vaughan cited above.
\textsuperscript{214} \textit{An Act For the promoting and propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England}, (London: Printed for Edward Husband, Printer to the Parliament of England, and to be sold at his Shop in Fleetstreet, at the Sign of the Golden Dragon, nere the Inner temple, 1649), 2.
speaking world. The mission at Stockbridge was funded largely through the work of this society, later known as the New England Corporation, which by Edwards’s day was into its second century.215

Colonial missions to the Indians stagnated considerably after King Philip’s War in 1675, but missionary interest began to rise again as the eighteenth century dawned. This interest is evidenced within Jonathan Edwards’s own family in at least four ways. First, Jonathan Edwards’s father, Timothy Edwards, had studied at Harvard under Cotton Mather, one of the Boston Commissioners for the New England Company. Mather also influenced the senior Edwards through his many publications. Mather’s interest in missions is clearly manifest in a work called *India Christiana* in which he encourages support and further interest in missions to the Indians both in American and in the West Indies.216 In this publication Mather called the work of missions “a Good Work, whereto our Invitations are still Forcible, as they were, when the Seal of the Colony was, a Poor Indian haveing a Label from his Lips, expressing the Cry, Come Over and Help Us!”217 Given Mather’s influence on the senior Edwards, it is likely that Jonathan was familiar with this work.218

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216 Cotton Mather, *India Christiana. A Discourse Delivered unto the Commissioners, for the Propagation of the Gospel among the American Indians. Which is Accompanied with several Instruments relating to the Glorious Design of propping our Holy Religion, in the Eastern as well as the Western Indies. An Entertainment which they that are Waiting for the Kingdom of God will receive as Good News from a far Country*, (Boston: Printed by B. Green. 1721).

217 Mather, *Indiana*, 27. The capitalization and italics are the original author’s.

218 On the place of Mather in Timothy Edwards’s life see Kenneth Pieter Minkema, “The Edwardses: A ministerial family in eighteenth-century New England,” (PhD dissertation, The University of Connecticut, 1988). Minkema is likely on the right track when he indicates that the influence of the Mather’s, both Increase and Cotton, is likely more pervasive in Jonathan Edwards’s life through his father and his father’s library then is often considered.
Second, Solomon Stoddard printed a 1723 sermon asking the important question “Whether God is not Angry with the Country for doing so little towards Conversion of the Indians?” In this work Stoddard reminded the colonists that the “principal design” of the original settlers was being ignored and the labors of men like Eliot and Mayhew were left to languish out of lack of concern for the souls of these “neighbors.” It is hard to imagine that Jonathan Edwards, who became Stoddard’s assistant only three years later, would have been unfamiliar with this work; or that Stoddard would not have laid the groundwork in the Northampton congregation for an interest in missions to the Indians.

Third, Jonathan’s uncle and Solomon Stoddard’s son, Col. John Stoddard, was the most influential colonist in the Connecticut River valley respecting Indian affairs and was intimately involved in the founding of Stockbridge as a mission and later as a town. Col. Stoddard lived in Northampton, attended Edwards’s church, and had a very close life-long relationship with him. The two must often have discussed Indian affairs and the need for mission work to prosper among them.

Finally, Jonathan Edwards’s brother-in-law, Samuel Hopkins, was at the heart of the founding of Stockbridge. He had been a minister in Springfield (now West Springfield) and, along with John Stoddard, Nehemiah Bull of Westfield and Solomon Williams of Longmeadow, made contact with the Indians and heard of their interest in having a

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219 Solomon Stoddard, Question whether God is not Angry with the Country for doing so little towards the Conversion of the Indians?, (Boston: Green for Gerrish, 1723).

220 Examples of thematic unity between Edwards and his grandfather are the principle reasons for making the Edwards’s familiarity with the sermon most likely. In addition to the hints above, Edwards, preaching to the Mohawks in 1751 even states that the whites had seriously neglected their duty to bring the Gospel to the Indians and that “this has been a shameful neglect of the white people, by which the Great God has undoubtedly been made very angry.” Wilson H. Kinnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney, ed., The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards; A Reader, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 107.
missionary settle among them. These men sought out the first missionary, John Sergeant, and communicated regularly with the Boston commissioners for Indian affairs, including then Gov. Jonathan Belcher. Samuel Hopkins also compiled the first history of the founding of Stockbridge after Sergeant’s death.222

The Personal Introduction to Edwards’s Missionary Labors

The interest in missions was not to remain among family members alone, however. Well before Edwards arrived in Stockbridge to pursue missionary labors, he had a heart for missions in general and was involved in the mission work in Stockbridge in particular. He recorded in his Personal Narrative how, while pastoring in New York in the early 1720's, he would long for and pray for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom on earth:

I had great longings for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom in the world. My secret prayer used to be in great part taken up in praying for it. If I heard the least hint of anything that happened in any part of the world, that appeared to me, in some respect or other, to have a favorable aspect on the interests of Christ’s kingdom, my soul eagerly caught at it; and it would much animate and refresh me. I used to be earnest to read public news-letters, mainly for that end; to see if I could not find some news favorable to the interest of religion in the world.

I very frequently used to retire into a solitary place, on the banks of Hudson’s River, at some distance from the city, for contemplation on divine things, and secret converse with God; and had many sweet hours there. Sometimes Mr. Smith and I walked there together, to converse on the things of God; and our conversation used much to turn on the advancement of Christ’s kingdom in the world, and the glorious things that God would accomplish for his church in the latter days.223

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221 Not to be confused with Jonathan Edwards’s close friend by the same name.
Edwards never lost this insatiable desire for the advancement of Christ’s interest on earth. His reading of magazines and newspapers searching for tidbits in this vein are legendary. His *Work of Redemption* was simply the theological outflow of this desire, and his plan to rework and reissue the treatise, as indicated in the letter to the trustees of the College of New Jersey, show that it was part and parcel of his heart and thought to the close of his life.\textsuperscript{224}

Edwards also had a particular interest in the work of the Stockbridge mission. This was evidenced first, as Edwards took leadership within his own congregation in supporting the Stockbridge mission. In the Introduction to the publication of Yale’s *Sermon Reader*, the editors indicate that the Northampton church, being of some means, was often called upon by Edwards to support charitable works. The inclusion of the Stockbridge mission in that list of charities dates into the 1730's.\textsuperscript{225}

Second, in a 1743 letter from John Sergeant to Dr. Benjamin Coleman of Boston (a minister of the Brattle Street Church and a beloved friend to missions among the Indians), it was proposed that a boarding school for the education of the Indian children be established at Stockbridge. The school would pursue the education of the children in both labor and learning. It was an ambitious project and required careful planning and considerable financial support. In addressing the plan to Dr. Coleman, Sergeant had already established a group of individuals to act as a board to receive and disburse funds in the interest of the boarding school. The list consisted of “the Hon. Col. Stoddard, and Col. Porter, the Rev. Mr. Edwards

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\item \textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 725-730.
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of Northampton, Major Williams, and Col. Oliver Partridge, Edwards’s interest here is accentuated by the fact that he is the only minister whose name appears in the list.

However, Edwards was not satisfied to be simply an overseer for the receipt and disbursement of funds. He also led the Northampton congregation to expand its support of the work financially. Eleazar Wheelock, who had often been in Edwards’s home and preached in his pulpit, was beginning to educate Indians in Connecticut. In soliciting funds for the furtherance of the work and the support of those Indians willing to stay with him, his mind naturally turned to Edwards, a further evidence of Edwards’s known interest in missions. Edwards’s response on July 13, 1744 reads, in part,

As to the Indian which you are instructing, such are the present circumstances of our people, that I have not courage to set forward any collection for him among them. They have been moved to many contributions of late, and they have now one in consideration for the promoting a free boarding school for the Indians at Housatonic, which it is supposed will cost at the beginning at least £3,000. And it is a time of greatest scarcity of money among them, and they have late been in the most unhappy frame that I have known them ever to be in.

Edwards was not disinterested in missions. His denial was clearly because of competing missions’ needs in a congregation with limited financial resources.

**Conclusion**

It is obvious that the involvement of Edwards in the mission work in Stockbridge was neither new nor unusual. What occurred in 1751 was, however, a shift from the support

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226 Hopkins, *Historical Memoirs*, 101. Recounting the design and correspondence relating to the boarding school begins at page 93.

227 One wonders if this single Indian might have been Samson Occam, one for whom Wheelock sought financial support.

228 *Works*, 16:146.
of a pro-missions pastor to the direct work of missions on the frontier of Massachusetts. Edwards Biblical Theology, Systematic Theology and Practical Theology are in perfect tune with his own personal and pastoral leadership in the work of missions. Stockbridge, was not a oddity, but rather, an obvious step.

The remainder of this thesis will explore Edwards’s actual labors in Stockbridge as a missionary. We shall consider three aspects of the work of missions in colonial America in general and in Stockbridge in particularly; the practices of civilizing the Indians, educating the Indians and evangelizing the Indians.
CHAPTER 6

THE MISSIONARY PRACTICE OF CIVILIZING THE INDIANS

The Practice in Colonial New England Missions

From the earliest references to Christianizing the American Indians it is clear that the English, at least, saw the practice of civilizing them as integral to the overall missionary endeavor. As R. Pierce Beaver has well noted:

The salvation of souls was the grand subject, but evangelism was directed equally to the establishment of churches in which the converts would be nourished and sustained in Christian faith and practice. The individual and community together were to be nourished by worship centered in the sermon, by sacraments, pastoral care, and strict discipline. In order to protect the Christian from bad influence of pagan Indians, and evil white men, the converts were, so far as possible, segregated into Christian towns and villages. There they were to be conformed to the model of the Puritan churchman, the Puritan church, and English civilization, all of these being identified with fundamental Christian faith... “Evangelization” and “civilization” were to remain the twin emphases in the mission both among the Indians and overseas until Rufus Anderson challenged that assumption.229

The practice, or at least the concept, appears to have stemmed from the English endeavors to tame the Irish. James Axtell notes that the phrase “reduce them to civilitie” became current as a result of Sir Thomas Smith, who in 1577 “declared that the primary aim of the adventures in Ireland was ‘to reduce that country to civilitie and the manners of the

The fact remains that the concept and practice were part of the English mindset and the missionary methodology of colonial American missions. This is evident throughout the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth century.

Interestingly enough, Norman Pettit claims that the practice of civilizing the Indians had been substantially abandoned by the time Edwards began his missionary labors in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. The evidence seems to warrant a closer look at this premise however.

The principle of civilizing the Indians as a means of Christianizing them goes back to the very start of the colonial efforts to reach the natives of the Americas. The earliest missionary endeavors in the English colonies are marked by two principle aspects, the missionaries on the American side of the Atlantic Ocean and the English support on the other side. The early American mission efforts centered around two prominent men, Thomas Mayhew Jr. on Martha’s Vineyard and John Eliot, pastor of the church in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Both of these men made progress in reaching the Indians with the gospel in the mid to late 1640's; John Eliot so much so as to be named “the Apostle to the Indians.” But their progress, though well known, stagnated without considerable help from England. Responding to the great need for aid in the mission work the English established the first mission society.

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When the Act of Parliament which formally established the New England Company (as it came to be known\textsuperscript{232}) was passed, civilizing the natives was considered an integral part of the mission work. The Act, after reviewing the work in a small measure, states:

\begin{quote}
All which considered, we cannot but in behalf of the Nation, represent, rejoice and give glory to God, for the beginning of so glorious a propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ amongst those poor heathen, which cannot be prosecuted with that expedition and further success as is desired, unless fit instruments be encourged and maintained to pursue it, Universities, Schooles, and Nursuries of literature settled for further instructing and civilizing them, Instruments and Materials fit for labor, and clothing, with other necessaries, as encouragements for the best deserving among them, be provided, and many other things necessary for so great a work; the furnishing of all which will be a burthen too heavy for the English there (who although willing, yet unable) having in a great measure exhausted their Estates in laying the Foundations of many hopeful Towns and Colonies in a desolate Wilderness; and therefore conceive ourselves of this Nation bound to be helpful in the promoting and advancing of a work so much tending to the honor of Almighty God.\textsuperscript{233}
\end{quote}

This Act of Parliament established the mission society under which the Stockbridge mission would later be funded. The New England Company’s funding began with the founding of the mission and continued throughout Edwards’s tenure.

The concept of civilizing the heathen as a missionary method was still considered standard practice during Edwards’s own lifetime. In Cotton Mather’s address to the Commissioners of the New England Company titled \textit{India Christiana} (a work dedicated to Robert Ashurst) Mather clearly refers to the past practice of John Eliot and others and also affirms its continuing need. \textquoteleft\textquoteleft But notwithstanding all of this, we must humbly say, ‘\textit{Tis a

\textsuperscript{232}The society was officially chartered as “The President and Society for the propagation of the Gospel in New England” but has come to be known as the New England Company. See William Kellaway, \textit{The New England Company, 1649-1776; Missionary Society to the American Indians}, (London: Longmans,1961).

\textsuperscript{233}An Act For the promoting and propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England, (London: 1649). I have kept the original spelling and capitalization intact. Not all Englishmen appeared to support this view.
Day of Small things. The Indians are not yet improved so far into English Civility, and Industry, and Husbandry, as were to be desired, and as a due Improvement in Christianity would oblige them to.\textsuperscript{234}

Stoddard also saw the link between the Gospel and civility with regard to the Indians. In addressing himself to the “Question whether God is not angry with this country for doing so little towards the Conversion of the Indians?” he made the connection between the arrival of the Gospel in England and the civility by which the English were now known. “And it is very hopeful, if the Indians did once imbrace the true Religion, they would by degrees, leave off their wild and base way of living, learn Trades, improve Land, and govern themselves as civilized Nations do, they would relinquish this Savage way of living that they have been addicted unto.”\textsuperscript{235}

From these historical references it is evident that the practice of civilizing the Indians as a means of Christianizing them was still deemed integral to the missionary task in Edwards’s time.

\textbf{The Practice at the Stockbridge Mission}

\textsuperscript{234}Cotton Mather, \textit{India Christiana}, (Boston: Printed by B. Green 1721), 40. Cotton Mather was a very active member of the board of Commissioners for the New England Company.

\textsuperscript{235}Solomon Stoddard, \textit{Question whether God is not Angry with the Country for doing so little towards the Conversion of the Indians?}, (Boston: Green for Gerrish, 1723), 10-11. The original spelling and capitalization have been maintained. Edwards must certainly have known of this publication of his grandfather’s only three short years before his coming to Northampton as his assistant. The comparison of Stoddard’s sermon and Jonathan’s Sermon to the Mohawks in Albany shows many similarities that obviate this conclusion. See “To the Mohawks at the treaty, August 16, 1751” in Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, & Douglas A. Sweeney, ed., \textit{The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards; A Reader}, New Haven: Yale (continued…)
The record reveals that the Stockbridge mission also considered civilizing the Indians as fundamental to the overall practice of missions. The mission was formally established at a political conference in Deerfield, Massachusetts in August of 1735 with several Indian tribes and Governor Jonathan Belcher with his entourage gathered together to enact treaties that would substantially keep the Indians from favoring the French in confrontations between the two European nations. An additional purpose of this conference was the formal establishment of a mission among the Mohican Indians. The conference not only established the commitment to set aside land along the Housatonic River in western Massachusetts, but also concluded with the ordination of the young John Sergeant to be a missionary to these Indians at what became the town of Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Belcher, well known for his interest in the spread of the Gospel, was pleased to find a way to reach the Indians and promote the work of missions among them. This man was not only Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony but also a leader in the New England Company as one of the principle Boston Commissioners. In a letter to John Sergeant, Belcher shows his views regarding civilizing the Indians and the Stockbridge Mission’s involvement in the practice. “I have talked with Mr. Secretary Winthrop (says His Excellency) of the Disposition of the Money come from the honourable Company at Home, that it may be mostly employ’d to promote Labour among your People, by giving them...
Husbandry Tools, as Axes, Carts, Ploughs, &c. to assist in building English Houses: To *civilize* them will be a good Introduction to the *Christinaizing* of them.”

The plan which was finally settled upon for Stockbridge was to set aside a six-mile tract of land along the Housatonic River upon which to establish the settlement. Additionally, four English families were to take up residence among the Housatonics. Their purpose was to model Christian civility; something it was assumed would be attractive to the Indians - an assumption rarely realized. The Indians, not always convinced of the altruism of the English, objected to this aspect of the mission work from the start. The principle leader among the Housatonics, Umpachene, voiced that he did not mind the arrival of a missionary and the school teacher, but it was the English settling among them that caused grave concern, a concern that seems as much prophetic as it was passionate. In addressing Col. Stoddard at the unfolding of this aspect of the plan, Umpachene questioned him earnestly:

Although he confessed himself grateful to the English for all they had done in providing instruction in the gospel, and in teaching the children to read, and said that his gratitude in these things brought tears to his eyes, and he was convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, as far as he understood it, still a number of things “stumbled” him. Why had the English neglected preaching the gospel to them for so long, and why was this sudden favor toward them? Was it all love and good will? If so, he was thankful for it, but it was just possible there might be some other motive. Again, if the Christian religion was so good and so true, as he believed it was, why

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237 Quoted in Samuel Hopkins, *Historical Memoirs Relating to the Housatonic Indians*, (Boston: Kneeland, 1753), 73. This was not a new idea for Belcher. Apparently, before he left England for Massachusetts as its newly appointed Governor in 1730, he proposed a similar plan to the New England Company respecting the founding of a mission along the lines of an Indian and English settlement. The view being that the Indians “would soon be Civilized & would more easily brought into the knowledge & esteem of the true Christian Religion.” Michael C. Batinski, *Jonathan Belcher, Colonial Governor*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 69.


239 A question that seems to moderately validate Solomon Stoddard’s thesis in his “*Question*” quoted above.
were there so many vicious Christians? Also how were they, the Indians, to establish
titles to their lands? These things were not written down with them as they were with
the white man, and yet their titles were quite as good according to their own law. Finally, he wondered about this large six-mile tract which was to be given them?
Would there not, some day, arise contention between their children and the children
of the English as to the ownership of this land?

Even the Stockbridge Indian School envisioned by John Sergeant had civility in mind. In a letter to Dr. Benjamin Coleman, John Sergeant outlined a plan for a boarding school for Indian children with a view to civilizing them. He states candidly,

\[\text{What I propose therefore in general is to take such a Method in the Education of our Indian Children, as shall in the most effectual Manner change their whole Habit of thinking and acting; and raise them, as far as possible, into the Condition of a civil industrious and polish’d People; while at the same time the Principles of Virtue and Piety shall be carefully instilled into their Minds in Way, that will make the most lasting Impression; and withal to introduce the English Language among them instead of their own imperfect and barbarous Dialect.}\]

In spite of Pettit’s assertion that the practice had been largely abandoned by Edwards’s day, the evidence seems to be to the contrary. A principle method used in establishing the Stockbridge mission was to civilize the Indians as a means of Christianizing them.

\[\text{240} \text{ On the sorrowful history of the Williams family abuse of the Stockbridge Indian land rights, see}\]
\[\text{Lion G. Miles, “The Redman Dispossessed: The Williams Family and the Alienation of Indian Land in Stockbridge Massachusetts, 1736 - 1818”, The New England Quarterly, 67 (Mar. 1994), 46-76. Miles charts one way in which Umphachene’s concerns were eventually realized.}\]

\[\text{241} \text{ Sarah Cabot Sedgwick and Christina Sedgwick Marquand, Stockbridge 1739-1939, A Chronicle, (Great Barrington: The Berkshire Courier, 1939), 20-21. See also Samuel Hopkins, Historical Memoirs, 43-51. That the fear that the whites would only seek to abuse them was not a unique concern to the Stockbridge Indians can be seen from David Brainerd’s journal, Mirabilia Dei inter Indicos, or the Rise and Progress Of a Remarkable Work of Grace Among the Indians, (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by William Bradford, 1746). Brainerd reports that “when I have attempted to recommend Christianity to their Acceptance, they have sometimes objected, that the white People have come among them, have cheated them out of their Lands, driven them back to the Mountains, from the pleasant Places they used to enjoy by the Sea Side, &c. That therefore they have no Reason to think that the white People are now seeking their Welfare; but rather that they have sent me out to draw them together under pretense of Kindness to them, that they may have an Opportunity to make Slaves of them as they do of the poor Negroes, or else to ship them on Board some Vessels, and make them fight with their Enemies, &c.” 211.}\]

\[\text{242} \text{ John Sergeant, A Letter From the Rev’d Mr. Sergeant of Stockbridge, to Dr. Colman of Boston, (Boston: Printed by Rodgers and Fowle, 1743), 1.}\]
The Practice in Edwards’s Missionary Labors

The question that needs to be addressed at this point, however, is did Edwards advocate civilizing the Indians? And if he did, what evidence is there that he pursued it as a method in his missionary endeavors? Before looking into this it seems valid to consider an important relationship between “civilizing the Indians” and “Christianizing the Indians.” It is clear that some colonists thought that civilizing the Indians was actually a prerequisite to Christianizing them. But there are also colonists who saw civility as the fruit of conversion and not the ground of it. In other words, after the gospel had been at work among aboriginal peoples it would have a civilizing effect. From this latter perspective it was a secondary matter.

One such voice was Edwards’s own grandfather, Solomon Stoddard. In his “Question” to the colonists in 1723 he clearly saw civility as the fruit of conversion rather than as the ground of it:

> If they should embrace religion it would be a means to make them live more comfortably in this world. It is observable, than many Nations, when they were in their Heathenism, lived miserably as to this World. So the English, and the French, and others; But since their imbracing the Gospel, they are got into a flourishing condition. God leads them in ways of wisdom, to follow Husbandry, Trades and Merchandise, and to live honourably and plentifully. They have good Houses, handsome Clothing, and comfortable Diet; they live more like Men than they did in former Ages. It is said Christ is worthy of Riches, Rev. 5. 12. God bestows them on Christ two ways, one in giving Riches for the maintaining the ordinances of Christ; the other is in giving Riches to the Professors of the Christian Religion. And it is very hopeful, if the Indians did once imbrace the true Religion, they would by degrees, leave off their wild and base way of living; learn Trades, improve Land; and govern themselves as civilized Nations do; they would relinquish this Savage way of living that they are addicted unto.243

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243 Stoddard, Question, 10-11
Stoddard is claiming that the fruit of Christianity is cultural civility. In this light, the civility expected comes not as a missionary method so much as a missionary expectation.

The issue at hand is where Edwards may have fit into these two perspectives. The answer is not an easy one as Edwards, unlike Brainerd and Sergeant, did not begin his missionary labors in an aboriginal setting. Stockbridge was a settled town by the time Edwards came to minister to the Indians. In spite of this, it seems that there is evidence that Edwards was more in line with his grandfather Stoddard than in others of his predecessors who considered civilizing the Indians as the ground of Christianizing them.

The first evidence is found in his living arrangements. Rather than living on the hill, as most of the other white settlers did in Stockbridge, Edwards chose to place his family among the Indians in the village. While it is difficult to say with certainty what Edwards’s motives were, he does seem to have distanced himself from other whites who found the Indians too savage to live among. One who had been affected in this way was John Sergeant who lived among the Indians at first and then, after marrying Abigail Williams, was convinced it would be better to live separately as the rest of the Williams family did. A new house was constructed on the hill complete with an entryway that was brought by oxcart from Connecticut. It was there that Sergeant moved with his bride and lived out the remainder of his days somewhat removed from his charge – a move that was not lost on the Indians. 244

244 George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, a Life*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 396, references the opinion that the Indians had of John Sergeant after his marriage to Abigail Williams as turned somewhat away from the affairs of the Indians. Marsden’s reference draws from Edwards’s letter to Sec. Andrew Oliver of Feb.18, 1751/2 which states in part, “They say that Mr [John] Sergeant did very well till he (continued…)}
Edwards chose to live among the Indians in the village and in writing to his father, soon after his arrival, he notes the good effect this arrangement had. “My wife and children are well pleased with our present situation. They like the place far better than they expected. Here, at present, we live in peace; which has of long time been an unusual thing with us. The Indians seem much pleased with my family, especially my wife.”

In addition to Edwards’s choice of a dwelling place, his manner with his own children and their interaction with the Indians showed a similar perspective. Not only did he not separate his children from the Indians, but he actually gave them considerable liberty among the native villagers. Jonathan Edwards Jr., writing much later in life, remarked about this aspect of life in Stockbridge:

When I was but six years of age, my father removed with his family to Stockbridge, which at that time, was inhabited by Indians almost solely; as there were in the town but twelve families of whites or Anglo-Americans, and perhaps one hundred and fifty families of Indians. The Indians being the nearest neighbors, I constantly associated with them; their boys were my daily school mates and play fellows. Out of my father’s house, I seldom heard any language spoken, beside the Indian. By these means I acquired the knowledge of that language, and a great felicity in speaking it. It became more familiar to me than my mother tongue. I knew names of some things in Indian, which I did not know in English; even all my thoughts ran in Indian....

When I was in my tenth year, my father sent me among the six nations, with a design that I should learn their language, and thus become qualified to

married her[Abigail Williams]; but that afterwards there was a great alteration in him and he became another man. They speak of her as proud and covetous and not to be trusted; and Mr. Sergeant had much lost his interest in the esteem and affections of the Indians in the latter part of his life.” Jonathan Edwards, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), vol. 16, Letters and Personal Writings, ed. George S. Claghorn, 424.

Ibid., 420.

245 Though a small number by Jonathan Jr.’s reckoning, it was certainly far more than the four families originally presented to the Stockbridge Indians by Col. Stoddard. Evidence of whites pushing their way into the region and eventually pushing the Stockbridges out is not hard to come by.
be a missionary among them. But on account of the war with France, which then existed, I continued among them but six months. 247

The fact that Edwards chose to live in the village and as an equal in the life and every day affairs in the town show a willingness to let cultural differences remain a secondary issue. His willingness, even his desire, to have his children speak the language, play and school with the Mohican children and to have Jonathan Jr. go to the wilderness setting with Gideon Hawley reflect a view much different than some of the white colonists and the Williamses in particular. The effects, at least in a small measure, were bi-directional; though Edwards was not necessarily prepared to have his children live as Indians, he certainly was not averse to them living with Indians.

Another factor worthy of consideration is Edwards’s agreement to be a trustee for money collected for Sergeant’s free boarding school, the proposal of which was to promote both piety and civility. 248 In this agreement, Edwards certainly approved in some measure the principle design of the school to promote both piety and civility. The difficulty here is that when, in 1747, the design pressed forward after a considerable delay, both Edwards and Col. Stoddard resigned their positions as overseers and “wholly declined having any Thing more to do in that Affair.” 249 The meeting of the oversight group was set for July 20, 1747 in Hadley, just a few miles from Northampton, so certainly distance or foul weather could not be significant factors in their failing to attend. Hopkins gives no hint as to the reason for his failure to attend the meeting or for the two men withdrawing from further oversight. It may


248 For more on the free boarding school see the material in the next chapter on education in missions.
have been simply expedient; Stoddard was in his late 60's and would die the following year while Edwards was in the middle of nursing Brainerd through his final illness (Brainerd would die in October of the same year). Edwards was also busy bringing *Humble Attempt* to the press, contemplating the publication of Brainerd’s *Life*, and working on the foundations for his *Freedom of the Will* while the communion controversy was beginning to stir.

Edwards, at least, did not seem to oppose the proposal’s concept in 1743, nor did he oppose it after he came to Stockbridge upon his dismissal from Northampton. There seems little evidence his withdrawal as a trustee was on philosophical or pedagogical grounds.

While the above considerations do not have the weight of Edwards’s own words to bear on the issue, he is not entirely silent on the question of civility. In one of the many letters Edwards wrote to address the abuses the Indians suffered in the name of Christian missions at the hands of the Williams family and those closely associated with them, he references the issue of civility. The negligence of school master Captain Martin Kellogg was a regular concern and in a letter to the Rev. Isaac Hollis, a generous benefactor to the educational work at Stockbridge, he brings a complaint along these lines. When Hollis had given considerable money toward the education of the Indian children, Captain Kellogg was given this responsibility by John Sergeant, before his death, and the Williams family afterwards - a task Kellogg proved unfit to accomplish. He was, however, glad to receive Hollis’s money nonetheless. Edwards, in bringing Hollis up to date on the work, complains

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of Kellogg and his failure in these terms; “the children have been very much neglected, as to
instruction in civility and good manners.”

Another subtle indication of Edwards’s agreement, to some degree, with the concept of civility is found in his address to the Mohawks soon after his arrival in Stockbridge. He instructed them regarding the need to consider carefully the state of their souls and the darkness they now lay in. Comparing the English civilization before the arrival of the gospel to the Indians of his own day, he states,

And we do no more than our duty in it, for it was once with out forefathers as ‘tis with you. They formerly were in great darkness and knew no more than the Indians when the white people first came over here.

But God put it into the hearts of others to come and instruct the English in the Word of God, and so to bring ‘em into the light.

This good we had by the kindness of God to us, and therefore we ought to be ready to show this kindness to you.

We are no better than you in no respect, only as God made us to differ and has been pleased to give us more light. And now we are willing to give it to you.

Edwards’s point in this sermon seems to mirror the view that the substantial difference between the Indians and the English was the fruit of the Gospel. But these were not just spiritual differences. Edwards acknowledged that the differences that existed between the Indians and the English continued even though many Englishmen had rejected the gospel and lived contrary to it, though not in darkness as the heathen did. In other words, the Gospel light shines around men, presumably by having a cultural effect. It also shines within them, having a saving and spiritual effect.

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250 Works, 16:497.
252 Kimnach, Sermons of Jonathan Edwards, 106.
That the Indians knew little of this civil effect, or at least less than Edwards would have liked, is reflected in a 1754 sermon he preached to them titled *Warring with the Devil*. Wilson Kimnach asserts that Edwards was not only critical of their sins, but of their very culture and life style. According to Kimnach, Edwards “indicts the very civilization of the Indians: their hunter/gatherer, migratory culture and their traditional gender roles.”

Kimnach may be asserting too much here. The sermon itself did not indict the Indians entirely, but pointed to specific practices indicating some of them were not free of the vices common to the unbelievers. One of these vices was the misuse of alcohol, something Edwards condemned no matter which culture or people it applied to. Another area that evidenced the failure of the Gospel to take root in the heart was the idleness of some of the young men. But in this particular criticism Edwards apparently did not stand alone. He asserts “some of you don’t like it, but you durst not tell your mind.” It is hard to see Edwards condemning traditional gender roles when it appears that he was in line with the assessment of a number of the Indians themselves. Idleness was more his concern than gender roles. Finally, Edwards is accused of condemning their “hunter/gatherer, migratory culture.” But all Edwards said was that the Indians were prone to “wandering so much about.” Whether this is a reference to their migratory culture or not is never given evidence by Kimnach; it appears to be a simple assumption on his part. It may be that Edwards was critical of their culture at this point, but it also may be that he was being critical

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254 Ibid., 679.

255 Ibid.
of specific individuals who would simply wander off for a considerable period of time abandoning their domestic and spiritual duties in the process. A view that is equally plausible from the text of the sermon.

A final area where Edwards’s views on civility come to the fore is in commending the free boarding school and his vision for Indian education to Sir William Pepperrell. In his extended letter to Pepperrell on his views of missionary education he listed the side effects of the educational process to be the benefit of “civilization and refinement.”

Conclusion

It has been shown that civility was not unimportant to Edwards, it simply was not of central or primary importance. The civil effects of the Gospel were just that, effects, not causes. Even in the 1754 sermon he addressed these things as that which should have been changed by the Gospel, not those things necessary to embracing the Gospel. Edwards appears to have aligned himself with his grandfather Stoddard on this point and to have distanced himself from others who saw civility as a primary means of Christianizing the Indians. Pettit seems to say too much when he asserts that the principle had “all but vanished” by Edwards’s time. He is, however, correct in seeing Edwards in a different light than those who saw civility as primary to missions and evangelization.

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256 In fact, when the free boarding school was being promoted by Edwards in a letter to Sir William Pepperrell, civility of the natives was a positive by product of the instructional process. Works, 16:411.
CHAPTER 7
THE MISSIONARY PRACTICE OF EDUCATING THE INDIANS

The Practice in Colonial New England Missions\textsuperscript{257}

Early colonial missions placed education as a prominent feature in the work to be accomplished. This was true from John Eliot on down. In fact, it was the educational advantage that was one of the principle reasons the Indians were drawn to Eliot’s mission.\textsuperscript{258} At the heart of the Indian education was the Catechism. Eliot appears to have constructed his own catechetical work in both a larger and smaller fashion, the larger for adults and the smaller for catechizing the children.\textsuperscript{259} In addition, Eliot trained a number of native helpers to pursue the work of catechizing the natives and translating the Scriptures and other literature into the language of the people.

It is clear that a literate community was the goal of education. Literacy included teaching both men and women to read. Men were also taught basic writing and mathematical skills. In fact, according to Kathleen Bragdon, the literacy rates had reached around thirty percent by the time of King Philip’s War in 1675.\textsuperscript{260} This enabled the Indians to make use of


\textsuperscript{259}In this he appears to have mirrored but not copied the Westminster Assembly. See Ibid., 119.

\textsuperscript{260}Ibid., 118.
the Scriptures as well as the instructional and educational material that John Eliot had made available to them in translation. He even produced a *Logick Primer* for their use in building thinking skills.

Eliot was simply an historical expression of the Puritan mind-set regarding education. It predated Eliot\(^{261}\) and it certainly followed after him as well. As Jean Hankins has noted, “the missionaries’ main reason for promoting formal education was the same as it had always been for Protestants; to enable God’s children to read for themselves God’s message as revealed in the Bible. For Protestants scriptural knowledge was considered the most important of the many steps toward salvation.”\(^{262}\)

The eighteenth century differed little from the seventeenth century, education was at the very heart of Christian missions.\(^{263}\) In fact, Jaen Hankins records that there were more than two hundred twenty known individuals engaged in Indian education in New England and New York between the years of 1698 to 1775.\(^{264}\) The pursuit of education was multifaceted, but its primary focus was certainly the literacy needed to interact daily with the Word of God.\(^{265}\)


\(^{263}\) See additionally, Margaret Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988). She addresses seventeenth century endeavors on 101-128 and addresses the eighteenth century prior to the founding of Stockbridge on 173-190.


\(^{265}\) Alden Vaughan makes the point regarding the multifaceted nature of the educational process well when he asserts, “had a majority of the Indians in New England been able to read and write the language, the problems of the missionaries would have been far simpler...The motive was not entirely religious. Education of the Indian, as of the white Puritan, was aimed at improvement of the whole man, in the course of which - the (continued...)
As can be expected, education was at the very core of the Stockbridge mission from the start. Not only was John Sergeant ordained as a missionary to the Indians, but almost concurrent with his arrival, Timothy Woodbridge was selected as a teacher. The Indians had constructed a building of sorts for worship and on November 5, 1734, Sergeant opened a school for Indian children using the new structure. Sergeant was required to take a short trip to Albany and when he came back to Stockbridge, he reported that “upon my Return from Albany (which was Saturday November 30th [1734]) I found Mr. Timothy Woodbridge, a young Gentleman very well qualify’d for the Business, sent up here, to take Care of the School, and to instruct the Indians in a Catechetical Way, when I should return to my Business at College.”

As the mission grew, Woodbridge continued as the teacher and Sergeant as the minister. Other tribes in the geographical region became desirous of placing their children at the Stockbridge mission with a view to receiving the education that was available. Sergeant was convinced that a free boarding school should be established as the best means for accomplishing this wider educational objective. To this end he requested that Dr. Benjamin Colman of Boston publish a plan to bring the idea of a boarding school before the public.

New Englanders believed - the interests of religion would also be served. Thus the ties between theology and pedagogy were always strong, and education for the Indians became a cherished objective of both the laymen and the clergy in the seventeenth century New England. And most of them hoped that the early Indian graduates of the Puritan schools would become teachers or ministers of their fellow Indians.” New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 280.

266Hopkins, Historical Memoirs, 14. At this time there were about twenty students under the regular tutelage of Mr. Woodbridge, see Elects F. Jones, Stockbridge, Past and Present, or Records of An Old Mission Station, (Springfield: Samuel Bowles & Company, 1854), 44.
Dr. Colman denied Sergeant’s request and turned the responsibility back upon the younger minister. Sergeant rose to the task and forwarded a letter to Dr. Coleman outlining his plan; Coleman added a preface and published it. In the letter, Sergeant outlined the general educational philosophy implemented at the Stockbridge Mission. The educational philosophy continued unabated when Sergeant died in 1749 and Edwards took his place in 1751. Several features of the education outlined in the publication are worthy of note.

The first thing to observe is that Sergeant was not simply seeking to educate the Indian children but to transform them spiritually into Christian children very much after the fashion of white children. It wasn’t just their “thinking” but their “whole habit of thinking and acting” that he wished to effect. The educational effect would be a “civil industrious and polish’d People.” To accomplish this, two school masters were needed. One dedicated school master was to educate the Indians in the art and skills of industry, this would include the cultivating of land and raising livestock, particularly cattle. If the work, initially planned for boys alone, prospered, then the plan was to include a similar work for girls.

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267 Hopkins, *Historical Memoirs*, 96. The pivotal place Dr. Colman played in the work at Stockbridge prior to his death is not as fully laid out in more recent works as one would wish. A good sense of his interest in the mission is found in Hopkins, but even this is more by way of reference than full explanation. His letters to England on behalf of the work and his association with ministers in England (particularly Rev. Isaac Hollis and Rev. Isaac Watts) are not fully explored. For more on Dr. Colman’s place in the New England Company and the work of missions see, Ebenezer Turell, *The Life and Character of the Reverend Benjamin Colman, D. D., Late Pastor of a Church in Boston New-England, Who Deceased August 29th 1747*, (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1749).


270 Dr. Colman was especially insistent in his appendix to Sergeant’s proposal that the education of the Indians include both boys and girls. He exhorts “I must needs add, on this Head, that this proposal is a matter of absolute Necessity, wherein we are not left at Liberty either as men or Christians; for there cannot be a Propagation of Religion among any People without equal Regard to both Sexes; not only because Females are like precious Souls, form’d for God and Religion as much as Males; but also because the Care for the Souls of (continued…)
The second school master was needed to teach the Indian children the English language and to ground them in the basics of the Christian religion, especially the catechism. In this way the children would be well-versed and taught “the Principles of Vertue and Christian Knowledge.”\textsuperscript{271} The hope was that by these means the gospel would eventually spread to more distant tribes by the educated, civilized and Christianized Indians. It is interesting that Sergeant spent little time in the outline of his plan detailing the Christian aspect of their education; almost all the space is given to detailing the benefits of civilizing the Indians. This may largely be due to his earlier communication of the religious aspect of the work among to the Indian residents.\textsuperscript{272} He also had no particular intent on pursuing serious academic instruction with the Indians. It seems that he considered the common Indian less fit for the scholarly academy and it was the general Indian that he sought to instruct.\textsuperscript{273}

Finally, a small group of respectable men would be needed to receive the funds designated for the school and to disburse them as necessary. Sergeant gained the consent of

\textit{Children in Families}, and more especially in those of \textit{low Degree}, lies chiefly upon the \textit{Mothers} for the first seven or eight Years.” Sergeant, \textit{Letter}, 15.
\textsuperscript{271} Sergeant, \textit{Letter}, 4.
\textsuperscript{272} Mr. Isaac Hollis had given money to support the education of 12 boys under the tutelage of Mr. Sergeant, but apparently they were under the tutelage of Timothy Woodbridge. See Hopkins, \textit{Historical Memoirs}.
\textsuperscript{273} Sergeant as much as says this in a letter to the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge on March 18, 1749; “I would gladly have, in the projected School, all the more useful and important Parts of learning that serve in common Life, and that some, at least, may be fitted there for an Academical Education; and so be qualified to instruct others; that, in Time, by the Blessing of God, the Kingdom of Christ may spread more successfully far and wide, by their Means, among the remoter tribes.” Hopkins, \textit{Historical Memoirs}, 139. It is clear that the “Academical” instruction would not be part of the boarding school. In this Sergeant may have been reflecting the apparent shift in educational philosophy prevalent in New England in the eighteenth century. In this light the schools of New England generally, not just the Indian schools, were moving toward an education that would fit the young for service in society and family even if the Academy was not their ultimate goal. In other words, Sergeant was not demeaning or downgrading the education for the Indians but conforming to the place and understanding of education in the society at large, as it shifted toward more vocational concepts within the educational process. For further details on the shift in (continued…).
five well known men including Col. Stoddard and Jonathan Edwards. Ultimately, Stoddard and Edwards would withdraw their involvement entirely; the other men eventually suggested that the oversight be handled by the Boston Commissioners of the New England Company, something the Commissioners were not opposed to. Eventually, Sergeant managed the school affairs locally. When he died in 1749, the local oversight fell to others in Stockbridge who had less devotion to the mission then Sergeant. The local control by the Williams family resulted in significant difficulties for Edwards when he came in 1751 as Sergeant’s successor.274

Sergeant proposed a method he deemed untried in New England, or at least untried with respect to Indian missions.275 He seemed to think that the previous failures among the Indians may well have been because so comprehensive an educational plan had not been pursued. But it was not a plan wholly conceived by Sergeant. In a letter he wrote on March 18, 1749 to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in Scotland, he divulged that his educational plan was used by the English in Ireland:

The projected School is design’d much in the Manner of the Charity Schools in Ireland, which, we are told, have had wonderful good Effects: and why may not the same Methods of Education us’d here, by the Blessing of the same gracious God, have like good Effects? By sufficient Experience, I have found, that more effectual Methods of Education, than what have been us’d, especially in Respect of Manners and Industry in Business, are highly necessary for this barbarous uncultivated people.276

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274 Hopkins, Historical Memoirs, 135.
275 This view is confirmed by his biographer, Samuel Hopkins of Springfield (now West Springfield); “I look upon it [the free boarding school] as the best concerted Scheme that has ever been propos’d for the Benefit of the Indians.” Samuel Hopkins, Historical Memoirs, 108.
276 Hopkins, Historical Memoirs, 138. 

The key to the hoped-for success of the boarding school was in obtaining benefactors to bring it to realization and maintain it for a considerable period of time. Sergeant was not under the impression that the fruits would necessarily be large or rapid, and he was clear about this in his letter. The letter was specifically written to raise money for the project and the collection was slow, partly due to the outbreak of another war between England and France. Isaac Hollis, an early and regular benefactor, had given funds for twelve boys to be housed and educated at his expense. Since the building was not in place an interim step was implemented.

Twelve boys were sent to board with Martin Kellogg in Connecticut until the facilities in Stockbridge became functional. Hollis was most concerned that the education of the boys be with a view to “instill into their Minds Principles of Piety and Godliness.” In April of 1749 Kellogg brought the boys to Stockbridge consenting to remain in the capacity of schoolmaster for one year. Within three months of this move Sergeant died at the age

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277 Edwards speculated that the initial need would be somewhere around £3,000 and had been working with the Northampton congregation to support the work. *Works*, 16:146.

278 Hopkins, *Historical Memoirs*, 115. In spite of the war and the slow response on the American side of the Atlantic, the proposal was gaining wider favor in England. Isaac Watts, the famous English hymn writer, was involved in supporting the proposal and it apparently came before the Prince of Wales himself. Its progress seems to have been stymied, however, by the sour note taken towards it by an unnamed Lady and Gentleman in England. The interest of the Prince seems to have been the cause of an increase in the emphasis of the political advantage to having the Indians on the British side of the hostilities with the French as an added benefit to the work at hand.

279 These twelve boys were to be supported with respect to the design of the free boarding school and were in addition to the twelve he was already supporting within the Stockbridge community itself. Hopkins, *Historical Memoirs*, 103 and 114. The original support for twelve boys came in 1736 while this additional support from Mr. Hollis came in 1744.


of 39 and the plan and execution of the whole endeavor fell into the clutches of the
Stockbridge Williamses.

The Practice in Edwards’s Missionary Labors

Edwards saw the education of children as one of the key features of missionary labor. This was not just a key to missions, however, it was a pivotal feature of Edwards’s views of raising any and all children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He oversaw the education of his own children and had catechized many others in Northampton over the years. Seeing the school in Stockbridge as primary to the long-range success of the mission was natural to one of his background and theological mind-set. This perspective is important, especially as one delves into the history of the Stockbridge Indian schools and its ultimate collapse in 1753. Unless Edwards’s heart for educating the Indians is fully appreciated, the difficulties he encountered at Stockbridge will be perceived as an intramural power struggle between warring factions of an extended family. In closing a letter to Sir William Pepperrell regarding the vision he had for education at Stockbridge, Edwards excuses himself on account of his passion for the work. “Hoping that your excellency will excuse the particularity and minuteness into which I have unintentionally been led, on a subject, about which I cannot but fell the deepest interest.” Clearly Edwards had a passion for the mission’s educational objectives and possibilities.

When Edwards arrived in Stockbridge in 1751 the free boarding school had suffered from mismanagement. In the wake of the death of Sergeant and the delay in settling on his
replacement, the Williams family had further wrapped its tentacles around the school, appearing to be less interested in the overall goals of the mission and glad to have access to the financial benefits of their involvement and oversight. The struggle to further the educational vision of the mission would consume Edwards’s energies until 1753 when the school mysteriously burned down. Further efforts to maintain this aspect of the work were abandoned as most of the Indians who had come to Stockbridge for this purpose departed. Ultimately, the failure of the mission to bring to fruition Sergeant’s initial goal and Edwards’s admitted passion is a sad chapter in the history of colonial missions. The method was not the cause of the failure; it was the less-than-honorable actions and intentions of several professing Christians in the Stockbridge community who succeeded, for apparently rather selfish reasons, in undermining the educational mission for personal gain.²⁸³

In spite of the eventual failure of the free boarding school, there is value in assessing Edwards’s views on the practice of mission education. It certainly was a method he felt passionate about and fully engaged in prosecuting, and therefore fits into an appraisal of his missionary methods. Two documents in Edwards’s own hand give us a summary of his philosophy of education in the missionary process. One is a sermon preached to the Mohawk Indians gathered at Albany, New York in 1751 for the purpose of signing a treaty with the English. The other is the letter written to Sir William Pepperrell mentioned above.

²⁸² Works, 16:414.
While the letter gives an overview of Edwards’s educational methodology and its potential benefits to the Indians (as well as to the English crown), the sermon to the Mohawks highlights the differences between the Roman Catholic missionary practice in Canada and that envisioned by the English in New England. The purpose in reviewing these differences to the Indians was to encourage the Mohawks to bring their children to Stockbridge so that they might be educated, thereby taking advantage of the free boarding school.

In this sermon Edwards addresses one significant difference between protestant missions and Roman Catholic missions - literacy. Edwards knew that Catholic missionaries had been lax in teaching the Indians to read; in fact, he indicates that they actually desired to leave them illiterate, as reading would give the Indians the capacity to see clearly where Catholicism did not conform to the Word of God.\textsuperscript{284} He reiterated that the most important thing they could possibly possess was the knowledge of God’s Word so that they might practice the things God required of them, and this knowledge cannot come when the Word is hidden from them. He explained that when the Indians are shut up in ignorance from the Word because of their inability to read they are kept in darkness unto eternity. Edwards even warned them that the treaty they were in Albany to sign was as nothing compared to the importance of reading God’s Word.

\textsuperscript{284}Edwards is not just bashing Catholics in this sermon, he equally saw the failure of the Protestants to educate the Indians as an indicator of sin as well. According to Edwards, the English and Dutch were guilty of keeping the Indians in ignorance intentionally so they could cheat and defraud them, something history was rich with examples of over the previous 140 years.
They needed to know the Word themselves, and they also needed to pursue the education of their children for the same reason. “You love your children: therefore take care for their instruction, that they may be the children of the light, the children of God, and not the children of the Devil.” In this way Edwards revealed that the practice of education was principally to further the overall goal of the mission, the salvation of souls. To envision a thriving redeemed community apart from the fundamental ability to read and apply the Word of God was outside of Edwards’s frame of reference. It was not just unlikely, it was simply not possible.

To gain a better look at what that education should be we must turn from the sermon to the Mohawks to examine the letter written to Sir William Pepperrell dated November 28, 1751. Pepperrell became a colonial hero through the defeating the French at Louisburg, and was both an influential statesman and a friend to the Stockbridge mission. Edwards visited him in his home in Kittery (now Maine) in the spring of 1751 and was encouraged to put his thoughts on paper and forward them Pepperrell. The letter he wrote to Pepperrell gives a significant look into Edwards’s ideas for education, ideas he admitted were as yet “new and untried.” The education proposed had two main thrusts; one academic and the other practical. It is the academic proposal that Edwards describes as “new and untried.”

287 Works, 16:414.
288 If Sergeant had over-emphasized this point then Edwards under-emphasized this point, not because there was little value in it but because it was not an issue about which there was debate, Ibid., 412.
Edwards first proposed adjusting the method used to teach the children. In his opinion the present education had a defect with respect to memorization and recitation. The children could recite their lessons but tended to be ignorant of the meaning of what they were reciting. This was a defect in general educational methodology, the children failed to “understand things, as well as words.” The change Edwards proposed for furthering the mastery of “things” was largely, in the words of George Claghorn, Socratic. In other words, the teacher should converse with the students about the work and words memorized. This would give opportunity for the teacher to note the deficiencies in understanding and through conversation to explain the material more clearly. By “conversation” Edwards meant that a free and open interchange between the teacher and student, including questions with answers, giving full mastery of the subject and removing possible “doubts.”

The process, pursued with diligence and patience, would increase the students’ knowledge of the subject at hand, would be engaging and “entertaining” to the student, and would instill in them a love for learning. Additionally, it would teach the student skills by which his or her capacity for reasoning would be enhanced. “Assisting the child’s reason enables him to see the use, and end, and benefit of reading, at the same time that he takes pains from day to day to read. It is the way also to accustom the child, from infancy, to think and reflect, and to beget in it an early taste for knowledge, and a regularly increasing appetite for it.”

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289 Ibid., 408.
290 Ibid., 406.
291 Ibid., 408.
292 Ibid.
Interestingly, Edwards was not promoting an educational philosophy only for Indians; he believed these methods to be profitable for all students. He was not “dumbing down” education; but improving on what he saw as the “grossly defective”\textsuperscript{293} educational methodology throughout New England. This is evidenced by his advocacy of placing Indians and English scholars side by side in the same classroom. The educational plan would prove valuable for both boys and girls.\textsuperscript{294}

Not only did the pedagogical methodology need reworking, but, in Edwards’s view, the curriculum needed revamping. He envisioned teaching details of world and church history that significantly reflected his own historiography as exemplified in the \textit{History of the Work of Redemption}. Arithmetic, spelling, geography and the like also should be brought into the classroom to fill out the curriculum. His plan was not only new, but broader than generally prosecuted in New England schools of his day.

At this juncture in his letter Edwards turned to address the issue of language. His opinion was that English, not the native Indian tongue, should be the language of classroom. Edwards is not without reasons for preferring English to the Indian tongue. It was not simply because he was unable to speak to the Mohicans fluently in their own language, nor was he accommodating himself to his own weakness, since he was not to be the school master. His two reasons for making English the common language in the classroom were more studied than this. One was of great benefit to the teacher and the other to the students.

\textsuperscript{293} \textit{Works}, 16:409.
\textsuperscript{294} Ibid., 411, 413.
The first reason Edwards gave was the limitation of the Indian language as “ill-fitted for communicating things moral and divine, or even things speculative and abstract. In short, they are wholly unfit for a people possessed of civilization, knowledge and refinement.”

(One wonders how the English ever came to have this great capacity; after all, the English, Edwards freely admitted, were once as barbarous as the American Indians.) Irrespective of the somewhat condescending character of Edwards’s tone here, in the short term it was thought to be easier to teach young children English than to attempt to develop for them an entirely new theological and speculative vocabulary in their mother tongue. Thus, teaching in English would ease the instructional process for the teacher assigned to the school.

The second reason for advocating English was to some degree to the benefit of the Indians. In spite of Sergeant’s considerable proficiency in the Mohican language, he had had little opportunity to put literature in their own tongue into their hands. He translated some prayers, Psalms, and some of Isaac Watts’s catechism in small pamphlets for their use, but that was almost the entire extent of literature in the Mohican language. The process of translating English works into Indian languages was basically abandoned even by John Eliot after King Philip’s War. In short, to teach them to read their own language when there was next to nothing for them to read after the skills had been mastered, was of limited value to the Indians. As Edwards noted; “Besides, without their learning English, their learning to read will be in vain; for the Indians have not the Bible, nor any other book, in their own language.”

\[^{295}\text{Ibid., 413.}\]
\[^{296}\text{Ibid., 413.}\]
in the English language. So there were considerable benefits, both practical and spiritual for
the children to become proficient in English.

**Conclusion**

Edwards missionary heart could not have been more evident than when detailing the
place of mission education in Stockbridge. The ultimate failure of the school does not in any
way diminish Edwards’s missiology and the place that education held for him in its practical
pursuit. Had it not been burned down and undermined by others in Stockbridge the benefits
to the mission would have been many. The greatest educational benefit, however, was to
profitably hear the Word of God as it was preached, a profit that was both temporal and
eternal and to which we must turn next.
CHAPTER 8

Error! Bookmark not defined. THE MISSIONARY PRACTICE OF EVANGELIZING THE INDIANS

It was commonplace among early twentieth century assessments of Edwards’s Stockbridge years to view his sermons to the Indians and the sermons he preached to his white congregation as one group. The result of this is the claim that they were mostly rehashed Northampton constructions. Individually, the Indian sermons have received little attention.\(^{297}\) That not a single Indian sermon had been published prior to the Yale \textit{Sermon Reader} published in 1999 reflects the scant attention they have received.\(^{298}\) Fortunately this imbalance is being corrected.\(^{299}\)

In this overview of Edwards’s missionary evangelism we will concentrate on only two areas. First, we will consider the structure of his Indian sermons. Noting similarities to and differences from those preached to his white congregations will enable us to consider how they reveal missiological implications in Edwards’s preaching. Second, we will consider the content of some of his sermons to further assess how the vehicle for missionary evangelism is the tool of the missionary evangelist.

**Jonathan Edwards’s Indian Sermon Structure**

Wilson Kimnach has done more than any other to analyze Edwards’s sermon corpus. His extensive introduction to the initial volume of sermons in the Yale edition of Edwards’s *Works* is masterful. In that Introduction he charts the maturation and experimentation of Edwards as a preacher. Edwards’s attempts to become more extemporaneous and free from his manuscript are evident, especially after his encounter with George Whitefield at the dawn of the Great Awakening.300 Two other changes appear to take place when Edwards moved to Stockbridge, at least in his Indians sermons. Rachel Wheeler indicates that the two shifts were Edwards’s sermon “style and vocabulary.”301

Edwards came to Stockbridge in January of 1751; as a preacher he reverted back to a practice from his early New York days. He constructed a new sermon notebook using the octavo size sheets of his first notebooks. These larger sheets would preclude him palming the manuscript and eliminated the appearance of extemporaneousness in his preaching.

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300The extent of the effect of Whitefield on Edwards appears to have been less than earlier scholars intimated. See *Works*, 25:7 n. 6.
Wilson Kimnach comments that this revealed that Edwards “apparently did not care whether the Indians saw him reading from a paper.”

Whether reading from his manuscript was problematic or not, the heart of the matter was that extemporaneous preaching and preaching by means of an interpreter were, in essence, mutually exclusive. Additional aspects of the sermon manuscripts also reflect this adjustment. One of these is the fact that the Edwards’s sermons were not written out in full but were “outlinish”. Kimnach acknowledges that there are very few sermons to the Indians, especially from the later Stockbridge years, that were full enough to print in the final sermon volume of the Yale edition.

A second stylistic adjustment was necessitated by a congregation that was not accustomed to taking notes. While the traditional Puritan and Edwardsean three part structure of the sermon, Text, Doctrine and Application, remained intact, the articulation of these divisions and the numbering of smaller heads within these divisions is not present. Apparently, these numerical devises were primarily aides to those who could and would take notes during the sermon.

These manuscript modifications reflect Edwards’s clear sense that preaching to the Indians required him to adjust to their needs rather than to maintain his own “comfort zone.” In other words, even the manuscripts reflect the missionary at heart, especially since he did

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301 Wheeler, “Friends to Your Souls”, 748, n. 45.
303 Edwards’s interpreter when preaching to the Stockbridge Indians was a man named John Wauwaumpequannuauunt and when he preached to the Mohawks the sermons were customarily interpreted to them by Rebecca Ashley. Ibid., 30.
304 Ibid.
305 Ibid.
not make these functional or stylistic changes with sermons he preached to the English in Stockbridge or other venues.

One final noticeable structural difference between the Stockbridge Indian sermons and other sermons of Edwards is the sentence length and structure. The Indian sermons have shorter sentences and reflect a far less complex sentence structure than his Northampton sermons. Again, this noticeable shift is consistent with several factors reflecting the mission. The Indian interpreters would work best with short sentences and simple constructions. Longer sentences, if not seriously affected by the translation itself, would certainly be hampered by the interpreter’s ability to remember a long-sustained argument or complex grammatical construction. This further reflects the fact that Edwards made serious efforts to accommodate himself structurally to his audience’s needs and limitations.

Jonathan Edwards’s Indian Sermon Content

The most striking change in Edwards’s sermons to the Indians is, however, not their structure. There are a number of elements that are worthy of note with respect to the content and the homiletical approach Edwards took in ministering to the Indians. As with the structure, these shifts are commensurate with his arrival in Stockbridge in January of 1751.306 The overall implication of this is that Edwards was very much focused upon the task at hand and had thought through the structural and homiletical adjustments in advance of his first sermon. As with most other areas of his life, he approached the new task of mission preacher

305 Ibid., 25.
with thoughtful discipline. More than one scholar wonders how much the *Life of Brainerd* may have helped him prepare for this different venue.\textsuperscript{307} It is almost impossible that Edwards did not learn from the young dying missionary in his home and that he did not glean much in the editing of the material left to his disposal for the publication of the *Life*.\textsuperscript{308} If there is dependence here, Edwards proved to be a good student. Whatever influences the work on Brainerd’s *Life* might have made on Edwards, the shift in style and content are clearly evident. We will review Edwards’s sermons as the principle means for evangelizing the Indians.

But, in addition to the shift in style or content, there is a decided commonality to his Northampton sermons as well. Not only did Edwards’s adjust to his audience structurally, but there are important ways where he did not change, particularly with respect to doctrinal and theological content. The sermons show the same solid theologian communicating the same exalted theology in fresh and innovative ways in order to reach his new audience for Christ.

**A Kinder And Gentler Preacher**

One of the first things noticeable with respect to the Indian sermons, according to Wheeler,\textsuperscript{309} is that the tone is different from those preached to the English; he shifts to a less

\textsuperscript{307}As a representative example see Kimnach, Ibid., 40-41.
\textsuperscript{308}Kimnach calls Edwards’s view of Brainerd his “heroic image of Brainerd.” Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{309}Rachel Wheeler, “Friends to Your Souls”: Jonathan Edwards’s Indian Pastorate and the Doctrine of Original Sin, *Church History*, 72:4, (Dec. 2003), 736 - 765. Wheeler has compiled the most thorough analysis of Edwards’s missionary sermons to date. There is much work yet to be done on this portion of the Edwards corpus.
critical tone. This can be seen by comparing two sermons, one to white children and the other to Indians in Stockbridge. Wheeler sees Edwards encouraging and counseling the Indians to “take tender care of their souls,” while, in her words, he “railed at” and “demanded of” the white children under his pastoral care. While Wheeler’s language seems unnecessarily strong, there is a noticeable difference that warrants evaluation.

Examples of Edwards’s more conciliatory tone is noticeable in the Application of a sermon preached in 1751 entitled *Heaven’s Dragnet*. Addressing the fact that a dragnet collects both good and bad fish, Edwards appeals to the Indians to be sure that they were not of the bad fish. He implored them to “take heed to yourselves that you ben’t at last found some of the bad fish that be cast away. See to it that your hearts are right with God.” In the light of this need, he pleads with them “Don’t rest in outward show but get a clean heart: a holy heart that hates all sin and loves Christ, and loves all the people of Christ, and loves all the ways of God.” These appeals are far from harsh and critical.

Another sermon reflecting Edwards’s gentler handling of his Indian congregants is characterized by Kimnach as “hellfire.” *Death and Judgment*, was preached in January of

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310 It is important to note here that we are dealing with Edwards sermonic style. It would be a gross mistake to think that Edwards distinctions in his sermons effected every area of his ministry. Marsden notes well that while Edwards sermons to his white congregants may have been “stern” his other pastoral approaches to them were far from it. Mardsen gives ample evidence that he reflected a “gentle and pastoral” tone in dealing with many of his white parishioners individually. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 225-226.

311 The word “railed” seems as much to reflect content as well as delivery. The difficulty is that we know so little about Edwards’s delivery that Wheeler seems to create too strong a contrast here. Her overall point, however, remains intact, there is a discernable, at times even a remarkable, difference. Wheeler, “Friends to Your Souls,” 736.


313 Ibid., 591.
1751 to the Mohawks and again in March of 1752 to the Stockbridge Indians. One feature of this sermon is that the Doctrine section, while careful and pointed, is nonetheless couched entirely in third person statements while the Application, though having many second person pronouns, has Edwards gently appealing directly to the Indians. Comparing this awakening sermon to his most famous awakening sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, reveals Edwards treading more gently with his Indian congregation than he had done with the white Northampton and Enfield congregations in June and July 1741 respectively.

It is not that Edwards backs away from his belief in a literal hell and eternal torments; the shift is not theological. Nor does he fail to tell them sober truths so as to soften the sermon; he does not hide the truth. He covers similar ground, for instance, when he warns them that they have no certainty that they may not be in hell at any moment. “You have but little time to live: by and by, you must die and your body rot in the dust, and your soul go into another world. And you don’t know how soon. It may be before next spring.” In this, and other ways, the two sermons bear similarities.

Despite the similarities, the differences are present as well. For instance, in the Indian sermon, there is less concentration on imagery than was present in the famous Enfield sermon. Impressions of sinners hanging over the pit of hell being sustained from eternal damnation only by the grace of the God they have spurned were absent; there was no “spider

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314 Ibid., 590-599.
315 Ibid., 404-418.
316 Ibid., 598.
317 This is more striking when one considers that Edwards use of imagery became more prominent in his Indian sermons. He filled his sermons with images from nature and every day life to bring the message closer to home. For more on this aspect of Edwards’s sermons see below.
or some loathsome insect.”  Hell is eternal and a place of eternal torment, but Edwards’s extended emphasis on the wrath of God in Sinners shifted to a stronger appeal in order to consider the grace and kindness of God and to flee to Him for refuge in that great day.  He began his Application of the Indian with an appeal sounding like the sage in Proverbs, “Now, therefore, this is the counsel I give you: receive instruction, forsake all your sins, and turn to God.”  and went on to highlight that “God is willing to save sinners” and that “tis from the great kindness of God to you, that you han’t died before now in your sins and gone to hell.”  He equally urges them to seek the eternal glory with Christ in heaven;

Now, therefore, had not you better hearken to counsel and go to heaven, that world of light and joy?

Now I, as a minister of Jesus Christ, invite you to come to Christ to be saved from hell.

He is willing to accept: he says “He that comes to me I will in no wise cast out” [John 6:37].  He will forgive all your sins and will bestow heaven and all its good things upon you, if you will but hearken unto him.

Edwards is appealing, almost as a father to his children, for the Indians to heed his warning and flee to Christ.  But what is it that drew Edwards to address the Indians in these kinder and gentler ways?  Certainly there is the adjustment to the audience to whom he preached.

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319 As Marsden rightly points out, Sinners was an “awakening sermon.”  The imagery that Edwards used in this sermon was not so much used to scare people to heaven, but to awaken sluggish souls to the horrible and eventual reality of eternal damnation.  Thus awakened to the danger Edwards pointed them to the savior whose patience with them had already been infinite.  In other words, the powerful imagery was intended to awaken, not to scare.  See further George Marsden’s excellent overview of this most famous sermon, Jonathan Edwards: A Life, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 220-224.  Christopher R. Reaske, “The Devil and Jonathan Edwards” Journal of the History of Ideas, 33 (Jan. - Mar., 1972), 130, quotes Edwards’s on the distinction between scaring people to heaven and scaring them away from hell, an important distinction in this context.
320 Works, 25:598-599.
The whites had the light all around them, they had been catechized since their earliest days, they had the Scriptures in their own tongue and they had been taught to read and write. In other words, the whites in Enfield were sinning against much greater light whereas the Indians were largely in ignorance of the Gospel. This did not make them innocent, but they were potentially less hardened in their sins. It warranted a gentler hand.

It is also his presence as a missionary which causes Edwards to call the Indians to reconsider their eternal state. “You have a better opportunity than many poor Indians: you have the gospel preached to you and the way of salvation by Christ, when they know nothing about it.” It is likely that in this very sentence we see the most striking aspect of this Indian sermon of Edwards. It is here, in a very real and living way, that we see his genuine love for the Indians. Much has been made of Edwards’s attitude toward the Indian’s religion, but his heart for those lost souls and his compassion towards them seems to be, at best, under-emphasized. Stockbridge was not just a place to give minimal attention to pastoral duties in order to pursue coveted writing projects. Stockbridge was the opportunity to pursue mission work, a work that struck a deep cord in Edwards. In paternal fashion, he pleaded with them and preached to them for the good of their own souls and for the glory of the Savior of mankind. He approached them as a spiritual father to his children.

321 Ibid., 597.
323 A glimpse of Edwards as a tender and loving father counseling his children can be seen in the Journal entry his daughter Esther made on September 19, 1756 while visiting Stockbridge. She relates “Last (continued…)
This concept of ministerial care was certainly within Edwards’s understanding of the gospel ministry and was evident in his own approach to those Indian souls. In preaching the installation sermon for Samuel Buell, Edwards reflected on the nature of the gospel minister to those under his charge. He pointed out that there are several simultaneous relationships between a pastor and his flock. This was true of Christ and his church, and is also true of a minister and those over whom Christ has given him charge. Edwards asserts; “ministers are the sons of the church, and yet that they are her fathers, as the Apostle speaks of himself, as the father of the members of the church of Corinth, and also the mother of the Galatians, travailing in birth with them, Gal. 4:19.”

From the above examples, it is clear that Edwards strove to be what he preached a gospel minister ought to be, fatherly in his care and concern for those under his charge. Certainly one could not look for more in a missionary.

Images and Shadows of Created Things

Another area that is striking in reviewing Edwards’s missionary sermons is his use of illustrations from nature. He certainly made use of illustrations in his sermons to his Northampton and Stockbridge congregations, but they become more prominent and evident

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*I had some free discourse with My Father on the great things that concern my best interest - I opened my difficulties to him very freely and he as freely advised and directed. The conversation has removed some distressing doubts that discouraged me much in my Christian warfare - He gave me some excellent directions to be observed in secret that tend to keep the soul near to God, as well as others to be observed in a more public way - What a mercy that I have such a Father! Such a Guide!"* — *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757*, ed., Carol F. Karlsen and Laurie Crumpacker, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 224.

in his Indian sermons. Several examples will suffice to show Edwards striving to reach his Indian listeners through examples with which they would be familiar.  

In what may have been his very first sermon to the Indians, preached in 1751 on Acts 11:12-13, Edwards’s use of imagery and illustration shine. He unfolded how he, as a missionary, came to them in a fashion analogous to Peter going to Cornelius; “Now I am come to preach the true religion to you and to your children, as Peter did to Cornelius and his family, that you and all your children may be saved.” In this introductory sermon he addressed the need to forsake all and turn to Christ by using the image of “a child weaned from its mother’s breast, so they are weaned from all the good things of this world; they don’t set their hearts on those things.” Additionally, he pictured the Christian life like a journey. “They are a-going a journey to heaven, and though they may have a great deal of trouble and labor by the way, and may be very weary, yet heaven is their resting place.”

Edwards preached a similar introductory sermon later that year to the Mohawks in Albany. In addressing them with the basics of the Gospel, Edwards used an analogy between holiness and light and extended that imagery throughout the entire sermon. He informed them that the original creation of man was marked by holiness within that was like light, and that it went dark when sin entered God’s perfect creation. The gospel came to restore that light, but for some it only shines around them, like many English who have the gospel around them but not in them. The great need, Edwards explained, was for the gospel light to shine

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325 For Edwards’s use of illustrations in sermons to his white congregants see his sermon Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, Works, 22:404-418. This sermon certainly shows Edwards’s evident ability to illustrate divine realities from natural phenomena.
326 Works, 25:571.
within them. When it did it was compared to holding “a glass out in the light of the sun, the glass will shine with a resemblance of the sun’s brightness.” In this way it is like a spring flower. To fail to embrace the gospel is to mirror, not a glass, but a pile of dung. “It sends forth a stink, but reflects no light.”\textsuperscript{328} Certainly Edwards used a simple yet potent image that could be grasped by all present, even when communicated through an interpreter.

In a sacrament service given the same month as the Mohawk sermon above, Edwards marshaled what Wilson Kimnach calls an “imagistic tour de force.”\textsuperscript{329} Interestingly enough, in this sermon Edwards did not develop his own analogies but drew on ones already found in the text of Psalm 1:3, “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.” What Edwards did with consummate skill was to expand upon this metaphoric representation in several ways. In comparing Christ to the rivers of water he noted that, first of all, the waters run “easily and freely,” much like Christ’s “blood was freely shed.” Second, he said “Christ is like a river in the great plenty and abundance of his love and grace.” Third, the waters that flow freely and easily do not fail, they continue to run both day and night, unlike springs that flow up from the ground. “So Christ never [leaves] his saints that love him and trust him: the love of Christ never [ceases].” Fourth, the Indians heard that the tree planted by the river does not suffer from drought which causes it to dry out and lose its green, it is “never [dry].” Even so, “as the water enters into the roots [of the tree], so Christ enters the heart and soul of

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{327}{Ibid., 573.}
\footnotetext{328}{To the Mohawks at the Treaty, August 16, 1751, in Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, & Douglas A. Sweeney, ed., \textit{The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards; A Reader}, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 105-110.}
\footnotetext{329}{\textit{Works}, 25:600.}
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a godly man and dwells there.” Fifth, as “[water] refreshes; so [Christ] refreshes and satisfies [the heart], and makes it rejoice.”

Finally, in the Application, Edwards asked his Indian congregants, “Has your soul been ever like a tree planted by this river?” If so, then “their souls are like a tree digged up by the roots out of a dry, barren ground, and planted in a new place. [Their] hearts [are] taken off from this world and planted in God and Christ in heaven.” The fullness of Edwards’s doctrine of salvation in Christ is hereby wonderfully illustrated by the Biblical imagery of the tree planted by the rivers of water. The sermon overflowed with picturesque imagery which the Indians were intimately familiar with. The Housatonics (lit. River Indians) lived beside the Housatonic River and needed no help in applying this poignant metaphor from every day life to their spiritual state and condition.

From these examples, and there could be many more, we can see that Edwards’s sermons were carefully constructed to hit home with the Indians. He was ever-concerned to preach to the heart and to adapt the imagery to his mission audience so as to attain that end.

**Doing The Work of an Evangelist**

The kinder and gentler Edwards, the master of imagery and illustration, culminate in the grand purpose and design of the missionary sermon, the presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Edwards used these previous aspects as means to the great end of evangelizing the Indians to whom God had called him as a missionary. Even here Edwards’s skill as a

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330 Ibid., 602-603.
331 Ibid., 604.
preacher was evident. He may have been preaching in short, almost choppy, sentences through an interpreter, but it was the gospel that he preached. In his sermon to the Mohawks in August of 1751, Edwards carefully, clearly, and concisely outlined the basic tenants of the gospel that he would teach and preach, should they choose to come to Stockbridge and settle.

Edwards began at the beginning, so to speak; he referenced the fact that God made man happy and holy and that man fell through no fault of his Creator. Due to the fall “sin and the devil came in and took possession of his heart.” Much like the downward spiral indicated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1, Edwards revealed men sinking deeper and deeper into darkness, ensuing in idol worship and absolute ignorance of the way of salvation. However, God “took pity” upon mankind and gave them the Scriptures that they might have the knowledge of Him. First through Moses and ultimately through Christ’s Apostles this grand revelation was recorded and made available to mankind. Additionally, God sent His “Son into the world to die for sinners...” Having provided the way of salvation and the record of Divine revelation, Christ then “commanded that his word contained in the Bible should be oped to all nations, and that all should be instructed out of it.”

After giving the basics of the redemption God graciously made available to mankind through the death of his Son and revealed in His Word, Edwards now applied this particularly to the Mohawks. He listed two things they needed. First they needed to know the Word so as to receive appropriate instruction from God. Second, they needed to receive these great truths into their hearts and to live out God’s Word in their day-to-day lives.

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Though the English had been culpably remiss in their efforts to evangelize the Indians and the French had intentionally hidden these truths from them, Edwards had come to remedy this great travesty. He implored them to consider carefully what he has said and pointedly called them to “look well about you and consider what is best for yourselves and your children. There never was such an opportunity for you to be brought into the light as there is now. We invite you to come and enjoy the light of the Word of God, which is ten thousand times better than [the] light of the sun. There is such a thing as this light’s shining into the heart, as it does into the hearts of all good men. And when it does, it changes their hearts and makes ’em like unto Jesus Christ.”

We see Edwards skillfully adjusting his sermon to his audience, using imagery to bring the truth to light in a more ready fashion, shortening his sentence structure for easier interpretation, while in no way cutting out the core elements and exhortations requisite to the gospel. He was preaching evangelistically and preaching in such a way as to evangelize these particular hearers.

Give Attention to Doctrine

Finally, in assessing Edwards’s missionary sermons we must look briefly at the overall doctrinal content. In adjusting his structure, style and tone, it would be a mistake to assume that Edwards dumbed down his sermons theologically. Both Wilson Kimnach and

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333 Ibid., 109.
334 Kimnach remarks that Edwards’s Indian sermons are “essentially the same as Edwards preached to English congregations, except that the Indian mission sermon is more comprehensive and compressed as a theological statement.” Works, 25:641.
Rachel Wheeler note particularly that Edwards, though adjusting to his audience in appropriate and even masterful ways, he never shifted from his doctrinal foundation, nor did he shy away from proclaiming his theological Calvinism. He wove these great doctrines of the reformation into his sermons instructing the Indians in them regularly.335

One of the striking ways Edwards’s Calvinism was evidenced was in his view of the differences between the English and the Indians. He viewed the English as having many gospel advantages over the Indians; they lived in the light while the Indians had lived in darkness, to use his metaphor. But these advantages did not make the English different than the Indians in the inner man. In fact, the overall effect of the Gospel on society was primary among the things that accounted for the differences between the two cultures. Thus Edwards preached, “we are no better than you in no respect, only as God has made us to differ and has been pleased to give us more light.”336 In other words, total depravity metaphysically put the English and the Indians on the same spiritual footing irrespective of cultural and educational difference. All alike were in damnable darkness and desperately in need of salvation in Christ.337 But not only were they in darkness and in danger of eternal damnation, but they, like all men, were utterly helpless to affect their condition:

335Kimnach remarks about the richness of Edwards’s missionary sermons that “these sermons have a comprehensiveness of thought rarely found in his more analytical discourses to English congregants.” Introduction to Ibid., 30.
337This makes clear that whatever may have been Edwards’s view of the differences between the English and the Indians, bigotry was not at its base, they were alike before God respecting sin and salvation.
[They must see that they] deserve that God should hate 'em and should take 'em and cast 'em into hell and show 'em no mercy

In order to be good Christians, men must see what poor, miserable creatures they be, and can't help themselves, and [that] they need Christ to pity and help 'em and be their Savior.

[They] must see that they can never do anything to make satisfaction for their sins, or pay God for their sins they have committed against him, and they need Christ to make satisfaction for 'em by his precious blood.338

It would be hard to find a more succinct and plain description of total depravity and man’s inability. All men stand alike before their creator.

So what is the cure for this depravity? Edwards’s next statements reflect a clearly Calvinistic view of regeneration; “[They must have] new hearts given ‘em. And then they must have their eyes opened to see how lovely Christ is and that he is just such a Savior as such poor creatures as they need.”339 If his description of depravity is simple and clear, the same is true of his expression of conversion. Certainly regeneration precedes faith, the Indians must be given a new heart in order to see Christ as a glorious savior. If God does not open their eyes, they would remain in their blindness. Total depravity marked their natural condition, only irresistible grace could overcome their natural blindness and disinclination for God. And this comes as a sole act of God, for it could only be accomplished while they were unable to respond inwardly to the call of the gospel, they must cast themselves upon God for His mercy. “Therefore, you must every day, all of you, go alone and pray to the great God that he will enlighten your minds and give you new hearts that you may have true

religion.” Only Christ is able to save, as he reminds his mission audience in a sermon on the omnipotence of God. “[He] alone can do all things for you, [and] can give you a new heart. No other can. Here is encouragement to go to Christ to save yourself. He is able, [for] he is God as well as man. He can save you from the devil: he takes the poor soul out of the mouth of the devil as a strong man comes and takes a lamb out of the mouth of a bear.”

Even the doctrine of limited atonement is not hidden in Edwards’s sermons. Knowing that the lost were utterly unable to save themselves, their dependence could only be upon Christ. But dependence upon Christ meant upon His atoning death for them as sinners. Edwards’s terminology is particular rather than general; consistent with a thorough-going Calvinistic view of the atonement. Yet, when referencing the sufficiency of Christ, Edwards spoke in unlimited terms. This is aptly illustrated in the sermon The Calamity of Those Without the Gospel. In this August 1751 sermon to the Stockbridge Indians Edwards proclaims,

There is Help provided for poor lost sinners in Jesus Christ. [W]hen we were helpless the only way [was through] the Son of God. [W]hen He saw our mis[able] Case, He pitied [us]. He was sufficient for our Help tho[ugh] none was found sufficient [or] wise enough [He was] Strong enough [and] willing and excellent enough He came into the world and took on Him the nature of man. He laid down his Life and shed his own precious blood. Thereby [he] made full satisfaction for our sins. Pay[ed] sufficient Price to pay all the debt we owed to God, a price suffic[i]ent to purchase Heaven.

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340 Ibid., 574.
341 God is Infinitely Strong, Ibid., 645.
342 Jonathan Edwards, "The Calamity of Those Without the Gospel" (Acts 16:9), 1751, 1. Works of Jonathan Edwards Online, ed. Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema, Caleb J.D. Maskell, 2005-. http://edwards.yale.edu/ref/12872/c/p/1 I have made minor editorial changes to the online text of these sermons. The changes are limited to spelling out abbreviated words, adding limited punctuation, and supplying certain connecting words so as to make the language flow more smoothly. Where possible, these changes are enclosed in brackets.
Having addressed the all sufficiency of the atonement, Edwards was careful to ensure that his audience did not confuse that sufficiency for efficacy, it did not apply to all. The application of redemption is limited to the objects of Christ’s grand redemptive work. In other words, in spite of its infinite sufficiency, the atonement is particular. Edwards said, “He is able to bestow that Salva[tion] on sin[n]ers that he has purchased by his obedience and suffering.” The atonement of Christ is, therefore, limited to those whom he purchased on the cross.

Allusions to the great doctrine of the perseverance of the saints are not hard to find in Edwards’s preaching to the Indians, either. “‘Tis said that the good were gathered into vessels, i.e. they were preserved and kept as those that were prized and made much of. So God will save his saints and make much of them as precious to him, and as those that he dearly loves.” Edwards instructed his mission audience that their being preserved in the faith was truly a work of God. In the sacrament sermon filled with rich imagery referred to above, he reflected on the river as sustaining the tree no matter what the climate, as Christ sustains and preserves his saints. “So Christ never [leaves] his saints that love him and trust him: the love of Christ never ceases. He never leaves off to take care [of them].” And what is the means Christ uses to the great end of the perseverance of the saints? The indwelling Holy Spirit. “The grace of Christ in the heart shall always continue. Christ will never take

344 Works, 25:578.
away his Spirit from them: that inward life and comfort that Christ gives the hearts of his saints shall continue to eternity.”345

Conclusion

In this brief overview of the theology of Edwards embedded in his sermons and proclaimed to his Indian congregation, it is clear that the missionary was still every bit the Calvinist. He did not hide behind his Calvinism as an excuse for not pursuing missions, and he did not shy away from it in proclaiming the gospel to a mission audience, a gospel grounded upon and laden with his rich theological heritage. Those who might be tempted to think that full blooded Calvinism and evangelistic missions are mutually exclusive, would do well to read more of Edwards. He was always the Calvinistic theologian while simultaneously being the missionary and the evangelist.

This thorough-going Calvinism was couched in a sermonic style and illustrated with rich imagery that related directly to his mission audience. He formed his sermons so as to strike home with the old theology to which he was an heir in the Reformation and Puritan tradition.

345Ibid., 603.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The missionary theology and practices of Jonathan Edwards have been reviewed in summary fashion and several concluding remarks are warranted.

First, the writings of Jonathan Edwards have been shown to have had an enormous missionary impact in the later eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries because they are filled with theological and practical principles requisite to missions. The reality of this influence has been acknowledged, but further work needs to be done to assess more fully why and how it is that Edwards’s written works were so influential.

Second, he was a man of his times - it would not do to assess Edwards missiologically (or any other way for that matter) apart from his place in mid-eighteenth century Colonial New England. From this vantage point he was in theological conformity to his forefathers, the English Puritans, and yet was willing to be innovative in attempting to refute the errors of his day and meet the challenges of furthering the Gospel in an expanding global world. Missiologically the Stockbridge free boarding school evidenced in more obvious ways that he saw himself as an Englishman. His view of the Indian language as ill fitted to the finer points of theological formulation is just one example of his being such. Additionally, his view of the Indians was not missiologically idealistic nor was he without typical English social and political concerns which seemed to tug him in two directions at once. To hide these factors would be to alter the real Edwards; to make too much of them would be to distort the historical Edwards.
Third, he was a man whose system of theology culminated in a deep and passionate
desire to see the Church furthered and the Kingdom of Christ inaugurated. What he preached
in the History of the Work of Redemption he longed to see fulfilled in history, and sought to
be a part of that grand process and privilege. Missions were pivotal to that end.

Fourth, he did not go to Stockbridge because other options were not available or
were unsuitable to him. In fact, Stockbridge seems to be the least suited place for Edwards.
Instead, he had a genuine passion for the work of the mission in its larger theological and
historical context. It was not simply a place to find leisure time to read and to write. His
writing was delayed while he was in Stockbridge due to the priority of missionary labors. It
was not until after the mission school burned down in 1753 and many of the Mohawks and
others Indians departed, that he had more time to focus on his writing projects. And some of
them were still waiting to be addressed when his life as a missionary ended and he left for
Princeton. Edwards went to Stockbridge because he had a passion for God, a passion for
souls and a passion for the inauguration of the glorious kingdom of Christ. It was a full
orbed missionary focus that spurred him to relocate to the frontier of western Massachusetts
to devote his most mature years to the work of missions.

All in all, there is much work to be yet to be done on Edwards as a missionary. Most
notably, a more complete assessment of his Indian sermons is needed; only the surface has
been scratched. The appreciation of Edwards as a missionary is just beginning to come to
hold a place alongside his other accomplishments. The missionary life and labors of this
“Grandfather of Modern Missions” is certainly worthy of more deep and prolonged study.
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