

# Jonathan Edwards: *A Missionary?*

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Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) is remembered today as a saint, scholar, preacher, pastor, metaphysician, revival leader, theologian, Calvinist—the list goes on. However, ‘If there is one area of Edwards’s life that has been consistently overlooked and understated by contemporaries and scholars alike, it is his role as Indian missionary and advocate for Indian affairs.’<sup>1</sup> It is indeed hard to imagine: a white British colonial Puritan, with powdered wig and Geneva bands, as a *missionary to native American Indians*. Of course, historically, the issue is not debated. In August 1751, following a three-month trial period in the spring of the same year, Jonathan Edwards moved to the frontier mission outpost of Stockbridge where he served for nearly seven years, just prior to his death in March 1758. His role at Stockbridge was two-fold: to pastor the English congregation and to serve as missionary to the Indians.<sup>2</sup>

Stockbridge was ‘beyond the line of the frontier and a mere dot in the wilderness . . . the farthest edge of civilized America.’<sup>3</sup> It was a missionary village, set up for the twin purposes of (1) evangelising Indians by civilising them and (2) securing their allegiance for political purposes in King George’s War against the French.<sup>4</sup> The outpost consisted mainly of Mohican Indians,<sup>5</sup> but in time Mohawks started to settle there too, along with some other tribes.<sup>6</sup> The Indians were granted lots of land by the river and promised education for their children.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Letter to the Reverend Thomas Gillespie. Stockbridge, July 1, 1751,’ in Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Letters and Personal Writings* (vol. 16; ed. George S. Claghorn; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 386. Henceforth, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* will be abbreviated to *WJE*. For an overview of this period of Edwards’s life, see Ola Elizabeth Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards 1703–1758* (New York: Collier, 1940), 247–69; Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1987), 371–98; and George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 375–431.

<sup>3</sup> Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards*, 248.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed history of the Stockbridge mission, see Sarah Cabot Sedgwick and Christina Sedgwick Marquand, *Stockbridge 1739–1974* (Stockbridge: Berkshire Traveller, 1974); Patrick Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992). The mission would also secure more land for English settlers and ‘cement Massachusetts’s claims to the disputed border with New York’ (Rachel Wheeler, ‘Edwards as Missionary,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* [ed. Stephen J. Stein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 196–214).

<sup>5</sup> Also known as Mahican, Muhhakaneok, Stockbridge, Housatonic, or Housatunnuck (Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 375). The name means ‘the people of ever-flowing waters’ (Sedgwick and Marquand, *Stockbridge*, 5).

<sup>6</sup> These included Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Tuscaroras, Senecas (Sedgwick and Marquand, *Stockbridge*, 5).

<sup>7</sup> Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 375–76.

### 1. Was Stockbridge a 'Quiet Retreat' or 'Forced Exile'?

Jonathan Edwards served for seven years at the Stockbridge mission station (1751–1758). Prior Edwards's scholarship has given short shrift to these Stockbridge years. Since the earliest biographers, some have viewed his move to Stockbridge as 'a quiet retreat . . . where he had a better opportunity to pursue and finish the work God had for him to do.'<sup>8</sup> It was a time of 'retirement and leisure' to prepare 'four of the ablest and most valuable works which the church of Christ has in its possession.'<sup>9</sup> David Levin has called it an 'isolated assignment [that] freed him to write.'<sup>10</sup>

For others, the Stockbridge period was an 'exile,' implying that Edwards was 'out of the place' to where he would rather be.<sup>11</sup> For McGiffert, 'Edwards' position as a missionary was an incident in a career primarily devoted to other interests.'<sup>12</sup> Tracey too implies that Edwards's time as a missionary was 'accidental': 'Lacking other vocational options, Edwards became a missionary to an Indian settlement on the western frontier of Massachusetts at Stockbridge . . . he became an Intellectual by default.'<sup>13</sup> Tracey summarises Edwards's period at Stockbridge as labouring 'in his study for eight [*sic*] years,'<sup>14</sup> until he was called to the presidency of Princeton University.

In sum, whether a 'retreat' or an 'exile,' all are agreed that Edwards used these seven years for doing what he loved to do: write. In rather crass fashion, Winslow concludes, 'In the wilderness of Stockbridge

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<sup>8</sup> Samuel Hopkins, *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, in *Jonathan Edwards* (ed. David Levin; New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 74.

<sup>9</sup> Sereno Dwight, 'Memoirs of Jonathan Edwards, A. M.,' in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (ed. Edward Hickman; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1834), cxxvii. Dwight is referring to the four major treatises Edwards wrote at Stockbridge: *Freedom of the Will*, *Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*, *The Nature of True Virtue*, and *Original Sin*. After arriving in Stockbridge, Edwards also published *Misrepresentations Corrected, and Truth Vindicated, in a Reply to the Rev. Mr. Solomon Williams's Book* (1752).

<sup>10</sup> David Levin, ed., *Jonathan Edwards: A Profile* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), xx. Similar also, Alexander V. G. Allen, *Life and Writings of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1889), 273–74, and Sedgwick and Marquand, *Stockbridge*, 57.

<sup>11</sup> So Henry Bamford Parkes, *Jonathan Edwards: The Fiery Puritan* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1930), 189–248; Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards*, 268–69; Arthur Cushman McGiffert Jr., *Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), 139; Andrew F. Walls, 'Missions and Historical Memory: Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd,' in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons* (eds. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 250; M. X. Lesser, 'An Honor Too Great: Jonathan Edwards in Print Abroad,' in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons* (ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 17; Patricia J. Tracey, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor: Religion and Society in Eighteenth Century Northampton* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), 180; and Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 369.

<sup>12</sup> McGiffert, *Jonathan Edwards*, 141.

<sup>13</sup> Tracey, *Jonathan Edwards*, 8. Tracey seems to contradict herself, as later in her work she notes that Edwards did have other options before moving to Stockbridge (181). Walls also thinks that Edwards became a missionary 'largely by default' ('Missions and Historical Memory,' 250); and most recently, Wheeler has referred to Edwards as an 'accidental missionary' (*To Live upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* [London: Cornell University Press, 2008], 175).

<sup>14</sup> Tracey, *Jonathan Edwards*, 181.

he could preach old sermons to a handful of Indians and a smaller handful of whites, close the door of his four-by-eight-foot study, and make up his mind about the freedom of the will.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Was Edwards a 'Default' Missionary?

This analysis of Edwards's time as a 'default' missionary is not without good grounds. First, none dispute that his move to Stockbridge came about largely as a result of his dismissal from his Northampton pastorate. Edwards held to a strict view concerning admission to communion in contrast to the open policy of his predecessor, Solomon Stoddard.<sup>16</sup> In June 1750 the controversy came to a boil: the congregation voted Edwards out of his pastorate, which he had held for twenty-two years (1729–1750).<sup>17</sup> He wrote to a friend, 'But I am now as it were thrown upon the wide ocean of the world, and know not what will become of me and my numerous and chargeable family; nor have I any particular door in view, that I depend upon to be opened for my future serviceableness.'<sup>18</sup> Clearly Stockbridge was not a change in service Edwards *initiated* himself; he was unemployed and needed another job.

Second, Edwards's personality and manner did not lend him to being a 'natural' choice for a missionary. He was 'reclusive and somewhat obsessive.'<sup>19</sup> When Ephraim Williams, the moderator of the mission outpost, heard of his possible appointment, he opined to a friend concerning Edwards, 'I am sorry that a head so full of divinity should be so empty of politics.'<sup>20</sup> According to Williams, Edwards was completely unsuitable for the task: he was 'not sociable' and therefore 'not apt to teach'; a 'very great Bigot'; 'old' and therefore not capable of learning the Indian language<sup>21</sup>; and his writings were too hard to

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>16</sup> Affectionately known as the 'Pope of the Connecticut River' (Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 11). He was also Edwards's grandfather.

<sup>17</sup> For Edwards's own perspective on communion, see his *An Humble Inquiry into the Rules of The Word of God, Concerning the Qualifications Requisite to a Complete Standing and Full Communion in the Visible Christian Church*, in *WJE: Ecclesiastical Writings* (vol. 12; ed. David D. Hall; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 167–348. For Edwards's own account of the whole controversy, see his *Misrepresentations Corrected, and Truth Vindicated*, and *Narrative of Communion Controversy* both in *WJE: Ecclesiastical Writings*, 12:359–506 and 12:507–619, respectively. For a full discussion of this issue and the controversy surrounding Edwards's dismissal, see David Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *WJE: Ecclesiastical Writings*, 12:1–90, and Peter Y. De Jong, *The Covenant Idea in New England Theology, 1620–1847* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945), ch. 7. For a conservative evangelical perspective on the controversy, see Mark Dever, 'How Jonathan Edwards Got Fired, and Why It's Important for Us Today,' in *A God Entranced Vision of All Things* (ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor; Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 129–44. Different opinions exist as to the undercurrents that brought about Edwards's removal from Northampton. See Tracey, *Jonathan Edwards*, 183–94, for a helpful analysis. Cf. also Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 370.

<sup>18</sup> 'Letter to the Reverend John Erskine. Northampton, July 5, 1750,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:355.

<sup>19</sup> Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> 'Letter to Jonathan Ashley of Deerfield, May 2, 1751,' cited in Sedgwick and Marquand, *Stockbridge*, 61–62.

<sup>21</sup> Edwards actually refused to learn the language, though he did give some thought-out reasons (*WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:562).

understand.<sup>22</sup> Sedgwick and Marquand comment, ‘there was truth in [Ephraim’s] catalogue of Edwards’s defects for a position of missionary.’<sup>23</sup>

Third, Edwards’s study patterns amply support the view that Stockbridge was a writing retreat. According to his daughter Esther, he spent thirteen hours a day in his study.<sup>24</sup> Edwards even wrote of himself, ‘I am fitted for no other business but study.’<sup>25</sup> Hopkins said of him that he was ‘too settled in scholastic ways to make a successful missionary.’<sup>26</sup>

Finally, in early October 1757, Edwards received a call to be President of the College of New Jersey. His reply adds weight to the perspective that Stockbridge was more a ‘writing retreat’ than a ‘missionary endeavour.’ In Edwards’s mind, there were two chief difficulties in ‘accepting this important and arduous office’: (1) his health was poor, and (2) his writing projects would suffer:

My heart is so much in these studies, that I cannot find it in my heart to be willing to put myself into an incapacity to pursue them any more, in the future part of my life, to such a degree as I must, if I undertake to go through the same course of employ, in the office of a president.<sup>27</sup>

Edwards, ‘much at a loss’ to know what to decide, wrote that he would willingly submit the matter to a ‘wise, friendly, and faithful’ council.<sup>28</sup> On January 4, 1758, the council’s decision for Edwards to move to Princeton reduced him to tears.<sup>29</sup> Given the fact that in his letter to the Trustees he never mentioned his devotion to the Indians,<sup>30</sup> Edwards’s tears seem not to have been shed for them. For Marsden, ‘more likely, he was overwhelmed by the sense of loss at maybe never getting to his projected great works,’ since he had mentioned several times in his letter to the trustees how deeply ‘my heart is . . . in these studies.’<sup>31</sup>

### ***3. A New Approach to the Stockbridge Years***

When all these factors are taken together, viewing the Stockbridge years as a ‘retreat’ or ‘exile’ seems more than reasonable. However, upon closer examination of Edwards’s diary, letters, sermons, and

<sup>22</sup> Here Williams is referring to *An Humble Inquiry* (1749) in which Edwards defended his view of a strict admission for communion.

<sup>23</sup> *Stockbridge*, 62.

<sup>24</sup> Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 121.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Letter to the Reverend John Erskine, Northampton, July 5, 1750,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings* 16:355. This was following his expulsion from Northampton.

<sup>26</sup> Hopkins, *Jonathan Edwards*, 108.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Letter to the Trustees of the College of New Jersey. Stockbridge, October 19, 1757,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:725–30.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 16:729.

<sup>29</sup> Hopkins, *Jonathan Edwards*, 78; ‘Letter to the Reverend Gideon Hawley. Stockbridge, January 14, 1758,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:737.

<sup>30</sup> Nor in his later letter to his daughter Esther Edwards Burr (‘Stockbridge, November 20, 1757,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:731).

<sup>31</sup> Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 431.

writings, as well as his social context in Stockbridge, such a conclusion becomes too reductionist.<sup>32</sup> Approaching Jonathan Edwards's Stockbridge years with a methodology that seeks to hold both intellectual and social history together—allowing possible vectors of influence between the two—yields great rewards in assessing Edwards as a missionary.<sup>33</sup> This methodological manoeuvre does not deny or ignore that in Stockbridge Edwards reached his intellectual writing peak—the treatises produced in these seven years speak for themselves; nor even that Stockbridge was brought about mainly by Edwards's dismissal—the foregoing has made that clear.<sup>34</sup> Rather, this approach guards us from reducing Edward's time at Stockbridge to *merely* a writing 'retreat' or 'exile,' as some historians have previously proposed, and instead makes transparent his missionary perspective, interest, and service to the Indians as preacher and pastor, administrator and defender, educator and theologian—something that is often lost through the 'retreat' or 'exile' lens.

Using the primary sources already mentioned, we assess a number of areas of Edwards's missionary service: (1) his long time interest in missions; (2) his publication of *The Life of David Brainerd*; (3) his own perspective on moving to Stockbridge; (4) his Stockbridge Indian sermons; (5) his administration and defence of Indian affairs; (6) his innovative teaching methods for Indian children; and finally (7) the place of missions within his theological framework.

### 3.1. Edwards's Long-time Interest in Missions

Early on in his ministry, during his first pastorate in New York (1722–1723), Edwards recalls having 'great longings for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world; and my secret prayer used to be, in large part, taken up in praying for it.'<sup>35</sup> In 1727 in his 'Catalogue,' Edwards noted that he wanted to read Millar's *History of the Propagation of Christianity*, which gave an account of Christian missions from the apostles up to the time of writing.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, this is one of the few books he took with him when 'travelling light' on horseback to Princeton in 1758.<sup>37</sup>

Edwards's interest in mission was not merely passive. He was part of the committee that set up Stockbridge in 1734, serving also as the person who would receive and disburse the funds given for the Stockbridge boarding school.<sup>38</sup> It may also reasonably be argued that Edwards was a 'missionary trainer' of sorts. Various missionaries over the years lodged with him to receive theological training: Job Strong,<sup>39</sup> Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins, both key players in developing the missionary movement

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<sup>32</sup>In support: Claghorn, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:17.

<sup>33</sup>In support: Rachel Wheeler, 'Edwards as Missionary,' 196.

<sup>34</sup>I also concur with Wheeler that 'At the time that the *Life of Brainerd* was published in 1749, Edwards likely had never contemplated becoming a missionary himself' ('Edwards as Missionary,' 198).

<sup>35</sup>'Personal Narrative,' written in 1939 (*WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:797). This was written to resolve questions raised from his diary (*WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:748).

<sup>36</sup>Ronald E. Davies, 'Jonathan Edwards: Missionary Biographer, Theologian, Strategist, Administrator, Advocate—and Missionary,' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21:1 (1997): 60.

<sup>37</sup>Ronald E. Davies, *A Heart For Mission: Five Pioneer Thinkers* (Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 2002), 83.

<sup>38</sup>Claghorn, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:18n9.

<sup>39</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *WJE: Apocalyptic Writings and an Humble Attempt* (vol. 5; ed. Norman Pettit; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 286.

in America later in the century; and Gideon Hawley, who went out from Stockbridge as a missionary to the Onohquagas.<sup>40</sup>

In 1747, Edwards was further at work in promoting the advancement of God's kingdom across the world.<sup>41</sup> His publication of *An Humble Attempt* served to promote and encourage a concert of prayer that had originated in Scotland.<sup>42</sup> Using Zechariah 8:20–22 as his main text, Edwards believed that the future advancement of the church would be inaugurated 'by great multitudes in different towns and countries taking up a *joint resolution*, and coming into an express and visible *agreement*, that they will, by united and extraordinary *prayer*, seek to God that he would come and manifest himself, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence.'<sup>43</sup> Such advancement would include *all* families of the earth (Gen 12:3), *all* nations (Isa 2:2; Jer 3:17), *all* flesh (Isa 40:5; Ps 65:2).<sup>44</sup> Edwards presented a geographical overview of 'late remarkable religious awakenings' throughout the world, and included 'a very great awakening and reformation of many of the Indians, in the Jerseys, and Pennsylvania, even among such as never embraced Christianity before.'<sup>45</sup> This serves as a nice segue into the influence of David Brainerd on Edwards.

### 3.2. Edwards's *The Life of David Brainerd*

In 1748, David Brainerd was dying of tuberculosis and spent the remaining months of his life in Edwards's home, 'no doubt providing ample opportunity for Edwards to discuss mission work with Brainerd.'<sup>46</sup> Following his death, Edwards chose to lay aside his important work in the freedom of the will and edit Brainerd's diary.<sup>47</sup>

Pettit has argued that Edwards 'was not so much interested in the young man's mission to the Indians as in his commitment to a holy cause.'<sup>48</sup> Such an analysis, however, draws too sharp a dichotomy between Edwards's interest in Brainerd's life and his mission to the Indians.<sup>49</sup> For Edwards, the two were

<sup>40</sup> Davies, 'Jonathan Edwards: Missionary Biographer,' 60n5.

<sup>41</sup> *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-Primes and Prophecies Concerning the Last Time* (1747) (*WJE: Apocalyptic Writings and an Humble Attempt*, 5:309–436).

<sup>42</sup> For the background behind Edwards's paper, see *WJE: Apocalyptic Writings and an Humble Attempt*, 5:29–47.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:314 (emphasis original).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:329–41. Edwards presents a biblical theology of texts on the all-inclusive nature of Christ's future kingdom.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:363–64. Here Edwards had in mind the successes of David Brainerd at Crossweeksung in New Jersey and at the Forks of Delaware in Pennsylvania. See Brainerd's account of the former in *WJE: The Life of David Brainerd* (vol. 7; ed. Norman Pettit; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 253–97.

<sup>46</sup> Wheeler, 'Edwards as Missionary,' 197.

<sup>47</sup> 'Letter to Reverend John Erskine. Northampton, August 31, 1748,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:249.

<sup>48</sup> Pettit, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *WJE: The Life of David Brainerd*, 7:13. In support: Wheeler, 'Edwards as Missionary,' 198; and Walls, 'Missions and Historical Memory,' 256.

<sup>49</sup> His earlier work *Religious Affections* (1746) had been written to explain, defend, and critique the previous 'awakenings' of the Spirit in 1734–1735 and 1740–1742 (*WJE: Religious Affections* [vol. 2; ed. John E. Smith;

integrally connected. True, Edwards saw the Spirit's work in bringing about genuine religious affections in Brainerd's life, *but also in converting the heathen*. In his appendix to Brainerd's diary, Edwards draws out various lessons from Brainerd's life, one of which is that "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."<sup>50</sup> Brainerd set more than just an example for prayer; his life gave impetus to God's people for accomplishing the conversion of the Indians.<sup>51</sup> Edwards believed that Brainerd's success among the Indians was 'a forerunner of something yet much more glorious and extensive of that kind; . . . and this may justly be an encouragement to . . . promote the spreading of the Gospel among them.'<sup>52</sup> Given such statements it is hard to imagine that Edwards had no, or little, intention of promoting missions through Brainerd's life.

### 3.3. Edwards's Perspective on His Move to Stockbridge

Stockbridge was not Edwards's only option following his dismissal from Northampton; he may have had a call from Canaan, Connecticut soon after.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, there was a faction in Northampton that wanted Edwards to start a new church plant in the town.<sup>54</sup> But Edwards vehemently opposed it: 'I had no inclination or desire to settle over these few at Northampton, but a very great opposition in my mind to it . . . . It was much more agreeable to my inclination to settle at Stockbridge.'<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Edwards had received an offer to relocate his family to Scotland, where he might pastor a Presbyterian church.<sup>56</sup> In addition to these offers, soon after relocating to Stockbridge, Edwards received another call from a church in Virginia.<sup>57</sup> In this light, Tracey's contention that Edwards became a missionary due to

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New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959]). For Edwards, true revival, and therefore advancing Christ's kingdom on earth, were integrally connected to producing religious affections in the converted. Brainerd's successes among the Indians, coupled with his godly piety, were signs of God's kingdom advancing. Pettit has perhaps failed to make these connections and thus has a diminished view of Edwards's interest in Brainerd's mission to the Indians.

<sup>50</sup> WJE: *The Life of David Brainerd*, 7:531–32 (emphasis added).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:533.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* See also 'Letter to a Correspondent in Scotland, November 1745,' in WJE: *Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:185. Cf. 'Luke 14:16–24, Lecture before Sacrament, April 1746. On Occasion of the News of Mr Brainerd's Success among the Indians,' in WJE: *Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758* (vol. 25; ed. Wilson H. Kimnach; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 727.

<sup>53</sup> Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards*, 264. A number of sermons from August 1750 (Ps 45:3–5; John 14:27) and September 1750 (Luke 15:10) are marked that they were preached at 'Canaan'; the latter at 'Canaan/Westfield/Ipswich' (WJE: *Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:738).

<sup>54</sup> Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 364–65.

<sup>55</sup> 'Letter to Major Joseph Hawley. Stockbridge, November 18, 1754,' in WJE: *Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:651.

<sup>56</sup> 'Letter to the Reverend John Erskine. Northampton, July 5, 1750,' in WJE: *Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:356.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 16:492. The invite came to Edwards in a letter dated March 2, 1752.

lack of opportunities is untenable.<sup>58</sup> Minkema's remark seems more accurate: 'Edwards trolled for a new pastorate . . . [b]ut he had his eye on the Stockbridge post.'<sup>59</sup>

In addition, various letters that Edwards sent to correspondents just prior to his relocation to Stockbridge provide a window into his perspective on this new chapter of his life. He had 'undertaken the business of a missionary to the Indians' and requested prayer for 'the new important business.'<sup>60</sup> An 'open door' had been set before him in a place where 'There are some things remarkable in divine providence, that afford a prospect of good things to be accomplished here for the Indians.'<sup>61</sup> He spoke frankly about his decision, but his resolutions, which he tried to read over once a week,<sup>62</sup> reveal that this would not have been a decision he undertook lightly: 'Resolved, that I will live so as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.'<sup>63</sup> The sundial, which now marks the site of his homestead in Stockbridge, aptly summarises his outlook: 'My times are in thy hand.'<sup>64</sup>

Edwards's willing orientation towards service at Stockbridge was displayed to the Indians as well. In possibly Edwards's first sermon to the Indians in Stockbridge during his trial period in January 1751, he preached on Peter and Cornelius (Acts 11:12–13).<sup>65</sup> Cornelius was from a 'heathen' nation but was 'willing to be instructed' and had prayed to be 'brought into the light.'<sup>66</sup> After explaining how Cornelius and his family were converted through Peter's preaching, Edwards proclaimed, '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.'<sup>67</sup> Edwards clearly saw himself as part of the 'advancement' of the gospel to the heathen.

At the pivotal Mohawk Treaty, August 16, 1751, when agreement was made for Mohawks to come and live at Stockbridge,<sup>68</sup> Edwards expressed similar sentiments: 'But you have been neglected long enough. 'Tis now high time . . . that you may be really brought into the clear light.'<sup>69</sup> The temporal reference should not be skirted over. Edwards believed that the Stockbridge treaty with the Mohawks

<sup>58</sup> Tracey, *Jonathan Edwards*, 8.

<sup>59</sup> Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards—A Theological Life,' in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. San Hyun Lee; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 12.

<sup>60</sup> 'Letter to the Reverend John Erskine. Stockbridge, June 28, 1751,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:380. In his 'Letter to the Reverend Thomas Gillespie, Stockbridge, July 1, 1751,' Edwards refers to his Stockbridge move as 'the important service I have undertaken in this place' (*WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:387).

<sup>61</sup> 'Letter to Mr. William Hogg, Edinburgh. Stockbridge, July 13, 1751,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:392. Cf. also 'Letter to the Reverend Thomas Gillespie. Stockbridge, July 1, 1751,' in *ibid.*, 16:387.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 16:753.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 16:754.

<sup>64</sup> Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards*, 268.

<sup>65</sup> 'Acts 11:12–13, The Things that Belong to True Religion. Stockbridge, January, 1751,' in *WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:570–74.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:571.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:571.

<sup>68</sup> Dwight, 'Memoirs of Jonathan Edwards, A. M.,' cxxxv.

<sup>69</sup> '2 Peter 1:19, to the Mohawks at the Treaty. Stockbridge, August, 1751,' in *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader* (ed. Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 108.

was possibly ‘God in his providence . . . opening the door for introducing the light of the gospel among these nations, more than ever [he] has done before. And if we, the English, don’t fail in our [part], there is prospect of great things being done . . . And probably this present season is our *now* or *never*.’<sup>70</sup>

Writing a year later to Isaac Hollis, Edwards reported that ‘many’ members of the Onohquaga tribe ‘that used to be notorious drunkards and blood-thirsty warriors, have of late strangely had their *dispositions* and manners changed through some wonderful influence on their minds,’ having ‘a *disposition* to religion and a thirst after instruction.’<sup>71</sup> Edwards’s vocabulary is suggestive and nearly identical to his ‘willing’ language in the Cornelius sermon. In *Religious Affections* Edwards used ‘disposition’ and ‘inclination’ synonymously and in the context of Spirit-inspired revival. Such language indicates Edwards’s belief that the Spirit was at work among these Indians.<sup>72</sup> ‘Edwards apparently pondered these things in his heart and deduced that the Indians have a glorious future in the work of redemption.’<sup>73</sup>

If Marsden is correct that Edwards ‘characteristically saw himself as involved in grand historical moments,’<sup>74</sup> then such comments by Edwards at the beginning of his Stockbridge ministry must, at the very least, restrain us from viewing these seven years as, in Edwards’s mind, merely a ‘retreat’ or ‘exile.’ In the light of Edwards’s correspondence and sermons, it is hard to draw such a conclusion; it was, rather, an ‘important work’ that was timely in God’s advancing his kingdom among the heathen. Moreover, in all of Edwards’s letters there is no mention of his desire to *just* write. Edwards went to Stockbridge with the clear purpose of serving as missionary to the Indians, albeit with more time to write.

### 3.4. Edwards as Missionary Preacher and Pastor

‘The Stockbridge sermons have been assumed to be little more than simple Sunday school lessons, often recycled from the body of Northampton sermons.’<sup>75</sup> Some have even stated that he just preached old sermons.<sup>76</sup> A closer look at the long-neglected body of sermons from the Stockbridge years however, yields some valuable fruit in assessing Edwards’s missionary credentials. Much can be learned from the *number* of new sermons from Stockbridge, as well as their *form* and *content*. I will look at each of these in turn.

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<sup>70</sup> ‘Letter to Thomas Hubbard, speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Stockbridge, August 31, 1751,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:399.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Letter to the Reverend Isaac Hollis. Stockbridge, July 17, 1752,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:499.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. also ‘Letter to Secretary Andrew Oliver. Stockbridge, April 12, 1753,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:583.

<sup>73</sup> Gerald R. McDermott, ‘Missions and Native Americans,’ in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. Sang Hyun Lee; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 264.

<sup>74</sup> Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 387. Given both the way that Edwards wrote about the ‘awakenings’ in New England that he had been a part of and his involvement in the international prayer concert, we must surely conclude that he did.

<sup>75</sup> Rachel Wheeler, ‘“Friends to Your Souls”: Jonathan Edwards’ Indian Pastorate and the Doctrine of Original Sin,’ *Church History* 72:4 (2003): 748.

<sup>76</sup> For example, Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards*, (1940, 223); Tracey, *Jonathan Edwards*, 182n32, and Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (Toronto: William Sloane, 1949), 232.

### 3.4.1. *The Number of Edwards's New Sermons at Stockbridge*

Of the approximately 1,200 sermons of Jonathan Edwards, Wheeler calculates that between 1751 and 1758 Edwards preached about 233 sermons to the Stockbridge Indians and 165 sermons to the English congregation at Stockbridge.<sup>77</sup> According to her calculations, approximately 190 of the Indian sermons were original compositions. Even though later Indian sermons of this period reveal that as time progressed Edwards began outlining more and more,<sup>78</sup> the number of new sermons to the Indians contrasts starkly with the 29 original compositions preached to the English congregation. There are no extant sermons for 1757, though 29 Northampton sermons are marked as having been re-preached that year.<sup>79</sup> Whether these were preached to the Indian congregation as well as to the English congregation is unclear. Given Edwards's general practice at Stockbridge for sermon preparation to the Indians (see below), it seems hard to conceive that during this year he simply recycled old sermons for his Indian audience. However, this can remain only at the level of conjecture.

In sum, although 1757 is exceptional for extant sermon records and although Edwards's sermon productivity to the Indians was on a slow decline in 1756,<sup>80</sup> there is enough evidence from previous years to counter the commonly held view that Edwards wrote virtually no new sermons while in Stockbridge. This is made even clearer when the form and content of Edwards's Stockbridge sermons are taken into consideration. As Kinnach notes, Edwards's becoming a missionary occasioned 'the most dramatic modification' of his homiletic practice, one which demanded 'a new kind of preaching.'<sup>81</sup>

To the Indians, Edwards favoured NT to OT texts by a ratio of five to three, whereas with the English there was almost equal balance.<sup>82</sup> Edwards chose texts mainly from Matthew and Luke, particularly the parables. Such texts are concomitant with Edwards's heightened use of imagery and metaphors in his Indian sermons, which leads to our second observation.

### 3.4.2. *The Form of Edwards's New Sermons at Stockbridge*

The *form* of Edwards's sermons changed. *Externally*, the Indian sermons took on a renewed simplicity. The length was obviously shorter to allow for his audience's attention span and the interpretation of John Wauwampequunaunt (to the Mahicans)<sup>83</sup> and Rebecca Ashley (to the Mohawks).<sup>84</sup> But there was also

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<sup>77</sup> Wheeler, 'Edwards as Missionary,' 204, 213n44, n48 (cf. *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:504–9). Wheeler draws her numbers from an analysis of the finding aid to the Jonathan Edwards Collection Gen MSS 151, by Elizabeth A. Bolton, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 1995. Wheeler states that the numbers should be taken as approximate, since some sermon manuscripts that Edwards marked with 'St. Ind.' are not identified in the index as Indian sermons. For further, see 'Appendix: Dates Sermons, January 1743–February 1758, Undated Sermons, and Sermon Fragment,' in *WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:739–54.

<sup>78</sup> Wilson H. Kinnach, 'Preface to the Period,' in *WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:41.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:36.

<sup>80</sup> Perhaps due to the dwindling of numbers as a result of malfeasance and infighting among the English mission officers (*ibid.*, 25:41).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:40.

<sup>82</sup> Rachel Wheeler, "Friends to Your Souls," 750.

<sup>83</sup> John Wauwampequunaunt was one of Edwards's reasons for not learning Mohican (Frazier, *The Mohicans*, 94).

<sup>84</sup> Kinnach, 'Preface to the Period,' in *WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:30.

a change in the external form on paper. Edwards 'modified his customary form by removing numbered heads and division titles while preserving the form's aesthetic and logical structure.'<sup>85</sup>

*Internally*, Edwards's sermons included a heightened use of imagery and substituting narrative for exegesis. For example, preaching on Ps 1:3, Edwards employs captivating imagery to convey his chief doctrine: 'Christ is to the Heart of a true saint like a River to the Roots of a tree that is planted by it':

As the waters of a river run easily and freely so the love of Christ. [He] freely came into the world, laid down his life and endured those dreadful sufferings. His blood was freely shed. Blood flowed as freely from his wounds as water from a spring. All the good things that Christ bestows on his saints come to 'em as freely as water runs down in a river. . . . There is an abundance of Water. Christ is like a river in the great plenty and abundance of love and grace. . . . The tree that spreads out its roots by a river has water enough—no need of rain or any other water. So the true saint finds enough in Christ. Great plenty of water enough to supply a great multitude of persons with drink to satisfy all their thirst, to supply the roots of a multitude of trees.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, while Edwards chose not to learn the Indian language, there is clear evidence that he deployed the English language in such a way as to be understood by his hearers. The power of imagery, story, and metaphor was always present in Edwards's preaching—one needs to only recall the spider dangling over the flames of hell.<sup>87</sup> But it became accentuated in his Stockbridge sermons to the Indians because it was freed from Edwards's first person commentary. For instance: in a sermon on Matt 13:7 to the English congregation in Northampton, Edwards commenced, 'when it is said in the text that some of the seed fell among thorns it is as much as to say that some fell on uncultivated unplowed land; . . . from this text I would speak to these two Propositions.'<sup>88</sup> On the same text to his Indian congregation, Edwards no longer intruded into the sermon to narrate the journey for his hearers: 'some that have the word preached . . . are like ground that was never planted/all over run with thorns.'<sup>89</sup> 'He attempted so much as possible to let the power of imagery and story carry the weight of his message.'<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Wilson H. Kimnach, 'Edwards as Preacher,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 120. Compare Appendix 1 with Appendix 2.

<sup>86</sup> *WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:602–604.

<sup>87</sup> In *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. For the whole sermon, see *WJE: Sermons and Discourses, 1739–1742* (vol. 22; eds. Harry S. Stout, Nathan O. Hatch, and Kyle P. Farley; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 404–35. On Edwards's use of imagery in general, see 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1720–1723* (vol. 10; ed. Wilson H. Kimnach; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 213–27.

<sup>88</sup> 'Matthew 13:7, November 1740,' box 6, folder 469, Jonathan Edwards General Collection (hereafter JEC), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, cited in Wheeler, "Friends to Your Souls," 750. Other examples include: '1 Corinthians 10:17, January, 1751,' box 14, folder 1104, JEC, preached to the English congregation at Stockbridge where Edwards commented, 'in the Text four things may be observed.' On James 2:19: 'I shall mention two or three further reasons, or arguments of the truth of this doctrine' (*WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:608; December 1746; re-preached September 28, 1752).

<sup>89</sup> 'Matthew 13:7, March 1752,' box 6, folder 470, JEC, cited in Wheeler, "Friends to Your Souls," 750.

<sup>90</sup> Wheeler, "Friends to Your Souls," 750–51.

### 3.4.3. *The Content of Edwards's New Sermons at Stockbridge*

The *content* of Edwards's early sermons at Stockbridge are also revealing. A subtle biblical theology reminiscent of Paul at Mars Hill (cf. Acts 17) is present in Edwards's first few sermons. Utilising the metaphors of light and darkness, Edwards expounds on human nature and the fall. In the beginning, 'man,' to use Edwards's term, was created in God's image with 'a principle of holiness in his heart,' and 'his mind was full of Light.'<sup>91</sup> But 'when man sinned against God he lost his Holiness and then the Light that was in his mind was put out. Sin and the devil came in and took possession of his heart, and his mind was full of darkness.'<sup>92</sup> Having lost the divine light humankind turned to idolatry, worshipping 'sun and moon and stars'; still others worshipped the devil.<sup>93</sup> But God pitied humankind 'and gave 'em the holy Scriptures to teach men and to be in this world as a light shining in a dark place.' God's revelation was progressive:

[He] first made known himself to Moses and other prophets, and directed them to write a part of the Bible. And after many ages, he sent his own Son into the world to die for sinners and more fully to instruct the world. This was about 1750 years ago. And then Christ directed his apostles to write the Word in a more clear manner, and so the Bible was finished.<sup>94</sup>

Those nations that have the Scriptures 'enjoy Light,' while those that do not 'live in darkness and the devil . . . reigns over 'em.'<sup>95</sup> In just a few sermons, Edwards had outlined the history of creation, fall, and progressive revelation right up to the close of the canon!

This change in approach, nevertheless did not dampen his Calvinistic doctrine, even if it was distilled somewhat. He continued to preach to the Indians of their inherent sinfulness, their need of divine light, and of the eternal fires of hell. Indians were 'in darkness' and 'If you never have this light shine into the heart, you must dwell forever in darkness, in another world, with the devil, the prince of darkness, in hell.'<sup>96</sup> Reminiscent of his world-famous *Sinners* sermon, Edwards warned his Indian audience, 'He knows you are a poor miserable creature ready to drop into Hell . . . . You deserve that [God] should hate you and trample you under foot.'<sup>97</sup> Sinners will be 'cast into a furnace of fire' and 'their bodies will be full of fire as within and without as ever a red hot iron was in the midst of a fierce fire.'<sup>98</sup>

Edwards taught that the Indians were no worse than the English. He assured them that 'we are no better than you,' that Christ died for 'some of all nations,' and that Christ 'shall save his people from their

<sup>91</sup> 'Genesis 1:27, August 9, 1751,' in *WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:741.

<sup>92</sup> '2 Peter 1:19, To the Mohawks at the Treaty. Stockbridge, August, 1751,' in Kimnach *et al*, *The Sermons*, 105.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>97</sup> 'Revelation 3:20, Stockbridge. February, 1751,' in *WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:740.

<sup>98</sup> '2 Corinthians 4:18, August, 1751,' box 14, folder 1110, JEC, cited in Wheeler, "Friends to Your Souls," 755.

sins.’<sup>99</sup> ‘There is forgiveness offered to all nations,’ for Christ ‘did not die only for one nation’ but wished for other nations to be his people, even those that ‘had been Heathens.’<sup>100</sup> Nor was there any sin that could keep them from relationship with God: ‘the great Saviour the King of Heaven and Earth’ is now ‘come to your door,’ so ‘let Him in.’<sup>101</sup> Those who did would ‘have this God to be their Friend.’<sup>102</sup>

‘In their simplicity, the Stockbridge sermons represent a distillation of Edwards’ theology.’<sup>103</sup> Although the essence of his Calvinism did not change, to English and Indians alike Edwards applied his sermons differently: ‘to the Indians he was a plain and practical preacher; upon no occasion did he display any metaphysical knowledge in the pulpit. His sentences were concise and full of meaning; and his delivery, grave and natural.’<sup>104</sup> Edwards also preached to the Indians in a gentler manner compared to his English sermons. He exhorted them to be ‘friends to your souls,’ to ‘forsake wickedness and seek after Holiness,’ and not to ‘act the part of Enemies of Enemies [*sic*] to your soul.’<sup>105</sup> Such a sermon could scarcely have been more different than a sermon Edwards preached a month earlier to his English congregation, in which he lambasted them for lack of response to his preaching. He would ‘rather go to into Sodom and preach to the men of Sodom than preach to you and should have a great deal more hopes of success.’<sup>106</sup> The difference in tone and application is palpable. The difference is also understandable: any preacher of Edwards’s time in New England believed the sermon should be tailored to suit the audience. ‘But the unique circumstances of his Indian congregation and the particular trials they faced prompted Edwards to search for different lessons within the same Calvinist doctrines.’<sup>107</sup> For Edwards, the English had had the benefits of centuries of gospel preaching, so they should have shown more signs of spiritual life than their Indian brethren.

This assessment of Edwards’s long-neglected Stockbridge sermons serves as a corrective to the view that at Stockbridge he simply re-preached old Northampton sermons to the Indians. Rather, this survey reveals Edwards was a true missionary preacher and pastor, adapting new sermons to his audience in a way that ensured effective communication and pastoral sensitivity.

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<sup>99</sup> ‘2 Peter 1:19, To the Mohawks at the Treaty. Stockbridge, August, 1751,’ in Kinnach *et al*, *The Sermons*, 105.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Luke 24:47, October 1751,’ box 14, folder 1078, JEC, cited in Wheeler, “‘Friends to Your Souls,’” 757.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Revelation 3:20, Stockbridge. February 1751,’ in *WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:740.

<sup>102</sup> ‘Job 9:4, Stockbridge. January 1753,’ in *WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 25:643–45.

<sup>103</sup> Wheeler, “‘Friends to Your Souls,’” 759.

<sup>104</sup> Gideon Hawley, ‘A Letter from Rev. Gideon Hawley of Marshpee, Containing an Account of His Services among the Indian,’ in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (1<sup>st</sup> ser., 4. Boston, 1794), 51, cited in Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 393.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Proverb 19:8, June 1756,’ box 13, folder 985 JEC, cited in Wheeler, “‘Friends to Your Souls,’” 736.

<sup>106</sup> Matt 13:3–4, 1740, re-preached May 1756, box 6, folder 463, JEC, cited in Wheeler, “‘Friends to Your Souls,’” 736.

<sup>107</sup> Wheeler, “‘Friends to Your Souls,’” 737. Here we see the possible influence of Edwards’s social context on his intellectual and theological perspective.

### 3.5. Edwards as Administrator and Defender of Indian Affairs

Far from Stockbridge being a quiet retreat, it initially turned out to be a ‘living hell’ for Edwards.<sup>108</sup> The bane of Edwards’s life in Stockbridge came from the Williams’s clan, relatives of whom had opposed him in Northampton.<sup>109</sup> Colonel Ephraim Williams had moved his family to Stockbridge in 1737 and soon acquired the position of village moderator.<sup>110</sup> His daughter, Abigail, married John Sergeant, the first missionary to Stockbridge, in 1739, and took on some of the leadership of the mission with him.

Edwards was not the only one who had problems with this family: the Indians frequently complained of Williams’ treatment of them, particularly in relation to land allocation.<sup>111</sup> Edwards reported to the Commissioners in Boston that the Indians ‘have a very ill opinion of Colonel Williams and the deepest prejudice against him, he having often molested ’em with respect to their lands and other affairs.’<sup>112</sup> According to Edwards, Abigail was also guilty of financial mismanagement.<sup>113</sup> At one point Edwards commented to a friend, ‘it is enough to make one sick.’<sup>114</sup> Through all this Edwards became an efficient administrator of Indians affairs and advocate for them. His letters to Isaac Hollis, Andrew Oliver, Joseph Paice, Thomas Foxcroft, and Thomas Hubbard<sup>115</sup>—too many to recount in detail here—demonstrate that Edwards diligently defended Indian rights.

Land allocation was not the only issue Edwards had to deal with. The complicated infrastructure and personnel in Stockbridge presented its own problems. John and Abigail Sergeant had established two boarding schools for boys and girls, alongside the already existing day school, supervised by Timothy Woodbridge. This led to complex funding sources for the mission. Wheeler helpfully explains, ‘The minister and schoolteacher were funded by the London-based missionary society, the New England Company, of which Elisha Williams was a commissioner,’ and the boarding school, ‘with initial funds from an English benefactor, Isaac Hollis, [were] completed under the oversight of Ephraim Williams with funds from the Province.’<sup>116</sup> In time, Hollis would also send funds for Abigail Sergeant’s girls’ boarding

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<sup>108</sup> McDermott, ‘Missions and Native Americans,’ 266, quoting Charles Chaney. McDermott provides no reference.

<sup>109</sup> Edwards was also distantly related to the Williams.

<sup>110</sup> Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 376.

<sup>111</sup> Wheeler, ‘Edwards as Missionary,’ 200n23. See Frazier, *The Mohicans*, 82–88, for an account of Indian complaints prior to Edwards’s arrival.

<sup>112</sup> ‘Letter to Secretary Andrew Oliver. Stockbridge, February 18, 1752,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:423–24. See also Frazier, *The Mohicans*, 99–100, for an overtly illegal deed of Ephraim Williams, and Edwards’s ‘Letter to the Reverend Isaac Hollis. Stockbridge, July 17, 1752,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:500–502; and again, Lion Miles, ‘The Red Man Dispossessed: The Williams Family and the Alienation of Indian Land in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, 1736–1818,’ *New England Quarterly* 67 (1994): 46–76.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Letter to Sir William Pepperrell. Stockbridge, January 30, 1753,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:556. For the fullest expression of Edwards’s objection to Abigail being head of the girls’ boarding school, see ‘Letter to Andrew Oliver. Stockbridge, April 13, 1753,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:587–92.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Letter to Secretary Andrew Oliver. Stockbridge, February 18, 1752,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:425.

<sup>115</sup> See *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*.

<sup>116</sup> Wheeler, ‘Edwards as Missionary,’ 201.

school. The Williams's interest in the missionary village had mixed motives; it was 'the means to the end of developing the town of Stockbridge, and with it the fortunes of the Williams family.'<sup>117</sup>

Early on Edwards realised the need to wrest control of the funds for the mission boarding schools.<sup>118</sup> After two years of internecine struggle, change of personnel, and numerous letters from Edwards to various key people related to the mission,<sup>119</sup> his final vindication came in February 1754 when Isaac Hollis appointed him as overseer of the boarding school. This proved too late, however, as by now most Mohawks had left the school over its mismanagement under Captain Kellogg, an appointment of the late John Sergeant.<sup>120</sup> Edwards kept the school alive with a handful of Mohican children and one Mohawk child who boarded in his own home.<sup>121</sup>

Not only does such a survey refute the position of the Stockbridge years as a 'quiet writing retreat' but it also rebuts Winslow's claim that Edwards 'had little interest in the Indians except as souls to be saved.'<sup>122</sup> In the light of the evidence, Edwards emerges as a diligent administrator and defender of Indian affairs. He was no longer aloof with his head in the clouds, as some had complained of him in Northampton. Here, in Stockbridge, the 'reclusive' pastor was involved in the nitty gritty of everyday Indian lives, and in so doing seemed 'to have developed genuine affection for his Indian congregation.'<sup>123</sup>

### 3.6. Edwards as Innovative Educator

Edwards, like most colonials, thought the Indian language 'barbarous' and 'exceeding barren and very unfit to express moral and divine things.'<sup>124</sup> But he also had problems with the methods used in the schools to teach English: the children 'only learn to make sounds on the sight of such marks, but know not the meaning of the sounds, and so have neither profit nor pleasure in reading.'<sup>125</sup> Edwards's plan was to do away with rote learning, which amounted to 'learning without understanding.'<sup>126</sup> He wished to replace it with education that was centred on understanding.<sup>127</sup> He proposed a Socratic method of

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<sup>117</sup> Sedgwick and Marquand, *Stockbridge*, 31.

<sup>118</sup> 'Letter to Sir William Pepperrell. Stockbridge, November 28, 1751,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:413.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. also, 'Letter to Secretary Andrew Oliver. Stockbridge, February 18, 1752,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:423; 'Letter to Sir William Pepperrell. Stockbridge, January 30, 1753,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:552–63; 'Letter to Andrew Oliver. Stockbridge, April 12, 1753,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:59.

<sup>120</sup> 'Letter to Secretary Josiah Willard. Stockbridge, March 8, 1754,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:626–27, and 'Letter to the Reverend Thomas Prince. Stockbridge, May 10, 1754,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:629–43.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 16:638–39.

<sup>122</sup> Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards*, 252.

<sup>123</sup> McDermott, 'Missions and Native Americans,' 203.

<sup>124</sup> 'Letter to Isaac Hollis. Stockbridge, Summer, 1751,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:389.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> 'Letter to Sir William Pepperrell. Stockbridge, November 28, 1751,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:407.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 16:408.

questions and answers.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, Edwards encouraged a narrative approach to pedagogy. Included in this would be a history of the world and the progressive spread of God's kingdom throughout the world.<sup>129</sup> For Edwards this education would be for 'girls as well as boys.'<sup>130</sup> It would include singing, since 'especially sacred music, has a powerful efficacy.'<sup>131</sup> He encouraged examination of the pupils and rewards for those who excelled.<sup>132</sup> And all of this was not just for mere education, but also ultimately to promote their salvation.<sup>133</sup>

### 3.7. Edwards as Theologian of Mission

In his letter to the Trustees of the College of New Jersey in October 1757, Edwards wrote of his latest theological project:

a great work, which I call *A History of the Work of Redemption*, a body of divinity in an entire new method, being thrown into the form of an history, considering the affair of Christian theology, as the whole of it, in each part, stands in reference to the great work of redemption of Jesus Christ; which I suppose is to be the grand design of all God's designs, and the *summum* and *ultimum* of all the grand scheme in their historical order.<sup>134</sup>

The implication of such a statement is that Edwards's previous works were viewed by him as each playing a 'part' in the whole 'affair of Christian theology,' the *summum* and *ultimum* of which was God's great work of redemption in Jesus Christ. In this respect, Edwards's theological treatises must not be seen in isolation, but ultimately as connected components to the work of redemption as displayed in history. When these theological works are dealt with as strands within the 'web' of Edwards's theology, the prominence of mission in his theological framework becomes all the more apparent. Space restricts an assessment of each of his treatises, but we will deal with at least three here.

#### 3.7.1. The End for Which God Created the World

In *The End for Which God Created the World*, Edwards argues that God's chief end in the creation of the world is glorifying himself through his creatures delighting in him forever.<sup>135</sup> And this 'chief end' is accomplished through the most preeminent of all God's works: the work of redemption. 'The work of redemption is that by which men . . . are restored to holiness and happiness.'<sup>136</sup> But the reason that Christ's redemptive work was even necessary is because of the reality of original sin.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 16:409–11.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 16:411.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Edwards made similar comments in 'Letter to Joseph Paice. Stockbridge, February 24, 1752,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:435–47.

<sup>133</sup> 'Letter to Sir William Pepperrell. Stockbridge, November 28, 1751,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:411–12.

<sup>134</sup> *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:728.

<sup>135</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from His Private Notebooks* (ed. Harvey G. Townsend; Eugene: University of Oregon, 1955), 130–33.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 130.

### 3.7.2. Original Sin

*Original Sin* stresses the equal inability of sinners: 'All are sinners, and exposed to condemnation. This is true of persons of all constitutions, capacities, conditions, manners, opinions and educations; in all countries, climates, nations and ages; and through all the mighty changes and revolutions, which have come to pass in the habitable world.'<sup>137</sup> Arguably, Edwards's experience among the Stockbridge Indians led to his view of 'human equality forged in universal depravity.'<sup>138</sup> As Edwards surveyed the whole of humankind—North and South America, Africa and Asia—he saw that the fall had rendered all people incapable of any true religion: instead, there existed only 'the grossest ignorance, delusions, and most stupid paganism.'<sup>139</sup> Such depravity led to the need for divine revelation. Edwards portrayed such logic in his Mohawk Treaty sermon: because the Indians were in a state of darkness they were in *need* of the light of God's revelation.<sup>140</sup>

While Edwards himself made no explicit step in logic from original sin to the need for missions in his treatise,<sup>141</sup> Wheeler has suggested there is still a link:

it is important to remember that it was a related doctrine of universal applicability that underwrote New World colonization and mission efforts. If humans are naturally sinful, then all need Christ as savior, and it is therefore incumbent upon those in possession of the written revelation to bring it to those without.<sup>142</sup>

Certainly, the connections were present in Edwards's preaching: '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. And now we are willing to give it to you.'<sup>143</sup>

It is when we turn to another of Edwards's works that we see a further important thread in his theological framework.

### 3.7.3. A History of the Work of Redemption

*A History of the Work of Redemption* consists of a series of thirty lecture-sermons that Edwards preached to his Northampton congregation on a single text (Isa 51:8) between March and August 1739. Edwards divided history into three main stages: the fall to incarnation, the time of Christ's incarnation, and the period from the resurrection to end of the world.<sup>144</sup> For Edwards, the second stage

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<sup>137</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *WJE: Original Sin* (vol. 3; ed. Clyde A. Holbrook; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 124.

<sup>138</sup> Wheeler, "Friends to Your Souls," 761.

<sup>139</sup> *WJE: Original Sin*, 3:151.

<sup>140</sup> Kimnach *et al*, *The Sermons*, 105–10.

<sup>141</sup> His two main practical implications were that this doctrine would lead firstly to humility, and secondly, to mutual compassion among mankind (*WJE: Original Sin*, 3:424).

<sup>142</sup> Rachel Wheeler, 'Lessons from Stockbridge: Jonathan Edwards and the Stockbridge Indians,' in *Jonathan Edwards at 300. Essays on the Tercentenary of His Birth* (ed. Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P Minkema, and Caleb J.D. Maskell; New York: University Press of America, 2005), 135.

<sup>143</sup> '2 Peter 1:19, To the Mohawks at the Treaty. Stockbridge, August, 1751,' in Kimnach *et al*, *The Sermons*, 108.

<sup>144</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *WJE: A History of the Work of Redemption* (vol. 9; ed. John F. Wilson; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 127–293, 294–343, 344–528.

was redemption accomplished and the third redemption applied. The overarching doctrine controlling all the sermons was ‘The Work of Redemption is a work that God carries on from the fall of man to the end of the world.’<sup>145</sup>

For Edwards, the work of redemption in this third period ‘will be accomplished by means, by the preaching of the gospel . . . God’s Spirit shall be poured out, first to raise up instruments, and then those instruments shall be improved and succeeded. And doubtless one nation shall be enlightened and converted after another.’<sup>146</sup> The work of redemption through the means of gospel proclamation will ‘go on in a wonderful manner, and spread more and more . . . , the gospel shall be preached to every tongue, and kindred, and nation, and people . . . , it will soon be gloriously successful to bring in multitudes from every nation.’<sup>147</sup> Crucial to this worldwide conversion is Edwards’s view of revivals, which, for him, were millennial harbingers.<sup>148</sup> Hence, his interest in the Indian revivals under David Brainerd now becomes apparent.

Thus, when the strands of Edwards’s theological web are connected we see the prominence of missions: God is glorified when fallen creatures enjoy him forever by delighting in the communication of his love and holiness. This goal is accomplished through communicating God’s redemptive work in Christ, which is necessary in the first place because people are unable by themselves to attain knowledge of such things. The chief work of God to accomplish his chief end is the work of redemption, and this work is realised by the means of missionary preaching to all nations—native American Indians included!

Certainly Edwards’s view of mission was not void of political barnacles. To evangelise was to civilise, and overthrowing the Antichrist meant nothing other than defeating the French; and to accomplish *this*, the English needed to secure the allegiance of the Indians.<sup>149</sup> Edwards was ‘a man of his times.’<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, the driving pulse of his life was evangelising sinners, not extending the British crown.<sup>151</sup>

### 3.8. Summary

*Prima facie* Edwards’s Stockbridge years appear to have been a ‘quiet retreat’ or ‘forced exile’ in which he gave himself wholeheartedly to the studies that he loved so much. This paper contends that while Stockbridge was undeniably a productive writing period in the wilderness, it is nevertheless reductionist to conclude it was *only* that. To do so, as much prior Edwards’s scholarship has done, is not only to overlook Edward’s social and intellectual contexts—and the vectors of influence between the two—but it is to miss out on an aspect of Jonathan Edwards that has for too long been neglected:

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 9:116.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 9:459.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 9:461.

<sup>148</sup> See Harry S. Stout, ‘Edwards as Revivalist,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. Stephen J. Stein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 125–43.

<sup>149</sup> ‘Letter to Joseph Paice. Stockbridge, February 24, 1752,’ in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:441.

<sup>150</sup> George Marsden, ‘Biography,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. Stephen J. Stein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19–20.

<sup>151</sup> For example, Edwards prefaced his Sermon to the Mohawks with: ‘These honorable gentlemen treat in the name [of King George], but I in the name of Jesus Christ’ (Kinnach *et al*, *The Sermons*, 105). Ultimately for Edwards he served only one King and one cause.

that of missionary.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, to give short shrift to Edwards's Stockbridge years is to fail to understand the theological paradigm that shaped Edwards's life and actions, one in which mission was absolutely central for the glorification of God.

This paper provides credence to those who, such as Marsden, have rightly included 'missionary' in the long list of roles for which Jonathan Edwards should be remembered.<sup>153</sup> Conversely, the analysis contained herein calls into question descriptions of Edwards as an 'accidental' or 'default' missionary—adjectives that are at best unfortunate and at worst misleading, and which Edwards himself would hardly have been agreeable to given his view of God's sovereignty: Stockbridge was for him an 'open door,' where 'some things remarkable in divine providence [afforded] a prospect of good things to be accomplished here for the Indians.'<sup>154</sup>

#### 4. Concluding Reflections

To close the paper at this juncture would leave us impoverished if we did not assess in what ways Edwards speaks into the contemporary areas of scholarship, pastoral ministry, and missionary service. Among the many possible lessons, five reflections from Edwards's time at Stockbridge seem fitting. While the lessons are not novel, they still serve as helpful reminders and checkpoints.

First, while Jonathan Edwards did spend thirteen hours a day in his study, he nevertheless accepted a job that ensured he was in regular service of a local church. At Stockbridge Edwards wrote tomes that have served the church for centuries since, but he also preached regularly through an interpreter to indigenous Indians who were in the dark and in need of gospel light. D. A. Carson's contemporary exhortation is fitting:

If you are an academic, you need to put yourself into places where, as it were, you take your place with the frontline troops from time to time. This means engaging the outside world at a personal level, at an intellectual and cultural level; it means working and serving in the local church; it means engaging in evangelism. . . . My point is that by continuing in forms of pastoral ministry, even while engaging in technical scholarship, you will not only avoid some pitfalls, but you will avoid becoming a mere quartermaster.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> More recently, some scholars have gone so far as to give Edwards the title, 'grandfather of modern missions' (Ronald E. Davies, 'Jonathan Edwards, Theologian of the Missionary Awakening: Occasional Paper,' *Evangel* 17:1 [1999]: 1–8). Cf. also Walls, 'Missions and Historical Memory,' 252–53, and Stuart Piggin, 'The Expanding Knowledge of God: Jonathan Edwards' Influence on Missionary Thinking and Promotion,' in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad*, 266–96.

<sup>153</sup> Marsden writes of Edwards being remembered today as 'a theologian, a philosopher, an artist, a pastor, a preacher, an awakener, a leader of a party, a Calvinist, a Puritan, a biblicist, a millennialist, a missionary, an educator, an ascetic, a spiritual writer . . . , a colonial, an international' (George M. Marsden, 'The Quest for the Historical Edwards: The Challenge of Biography,' in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons* [ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003], 4).

<sup>154</sup> 'Letter to Mr. William Hogg, Edinburgh. Stockbridge, July 13, 1751,' in *WJE: Letters and Personal Writings*, 16:392. Cf. also 'Letter to the Reverend Thomas Gillespie. Stockbridge, July 1, 1751,' in *ibid.*, 16:387.

<sup>155</sup> D. A. Carson, 'The Scholar as Pastor,' in John Piper and D. A. Carson, *The Pastor as Scholar and The Scholar as Pastor* (Nottingham: IVP, 2011), 82–83.

Second, while Edwards did not choose the life of a complete scholarly recluse or academic hermit, engaging in practical ministries from school education to administrative duties in defending the rights of the local Indians, he nevertheless exhibited such a level of self-discipline that he was able to produce a significant amount of written material in those seven short years. For those in ministry who tend to be ‘introverts’ and prefer books to people—as Edwards himself did, let us be honest—the challenge from Edwards is to put ourselves in places, positions, ministries, and acts of service that ensure we are not just ‘mere quartermasters,’ but ministers and servants of *people*, people made in the image of God, many of whom he has purchased by his Son’s blood. But there is a reverse side too: those in ministry who tend to be ‘people persons’ and prefer relating to sermon writing, ought to learn from Edwards’s self-discipline. It is easy to ‘put off’ sermon preparation or writing because of the urgent needs of the church or mission, because of people who need time spent with them or administration that needs to be completed; but, if one is in some form of ministry or missionary service, there is also ‘book work’ to be undertaken, hungry souls that need to be fed with the food of God’s Word. To neglect this can also be another form of neglecting people, a failure to provide them with what they really need. While Edwards perhaps got the balance wrong, one thing he could not be accused of was sacrificing the important on the altar of the urgent. He had long-term goals and plans for writing important projects (not for his mere pleasure but because he believed the church needed such works), and he saw them through as best he could under the providence of God.

This leads, third, to Edwards’s exemplary pulpit ministry at Stockbridge. While Edwards had the opportunity to reuse his old sermons, the number of new sermons prepared at Stockbridge shows that he took his ministry to the Indians more seriously than previous scholarship has adequately demonstrated. Indeed, when the proportion of new sermons for the Indian congregation (190) is compared to those for the English congregation (29), it would not be untrue to say that Edwards gave more ministry attention to the Indians than he did to his own tribe. Edwards certainly cannot be accused of laziness in regard to contextualising and stylising his sermons for this new audience. His preaching to the Indians was therefore fresh, apropos, and powerful. His choice of narrative over epistle was sensitive to their level of understanding and educational background. His use of simple biblical-theological frameworks to those who were biblically illiterate demonstrates Pauline-like wisdom and contextualisation (cf. Acts 17).

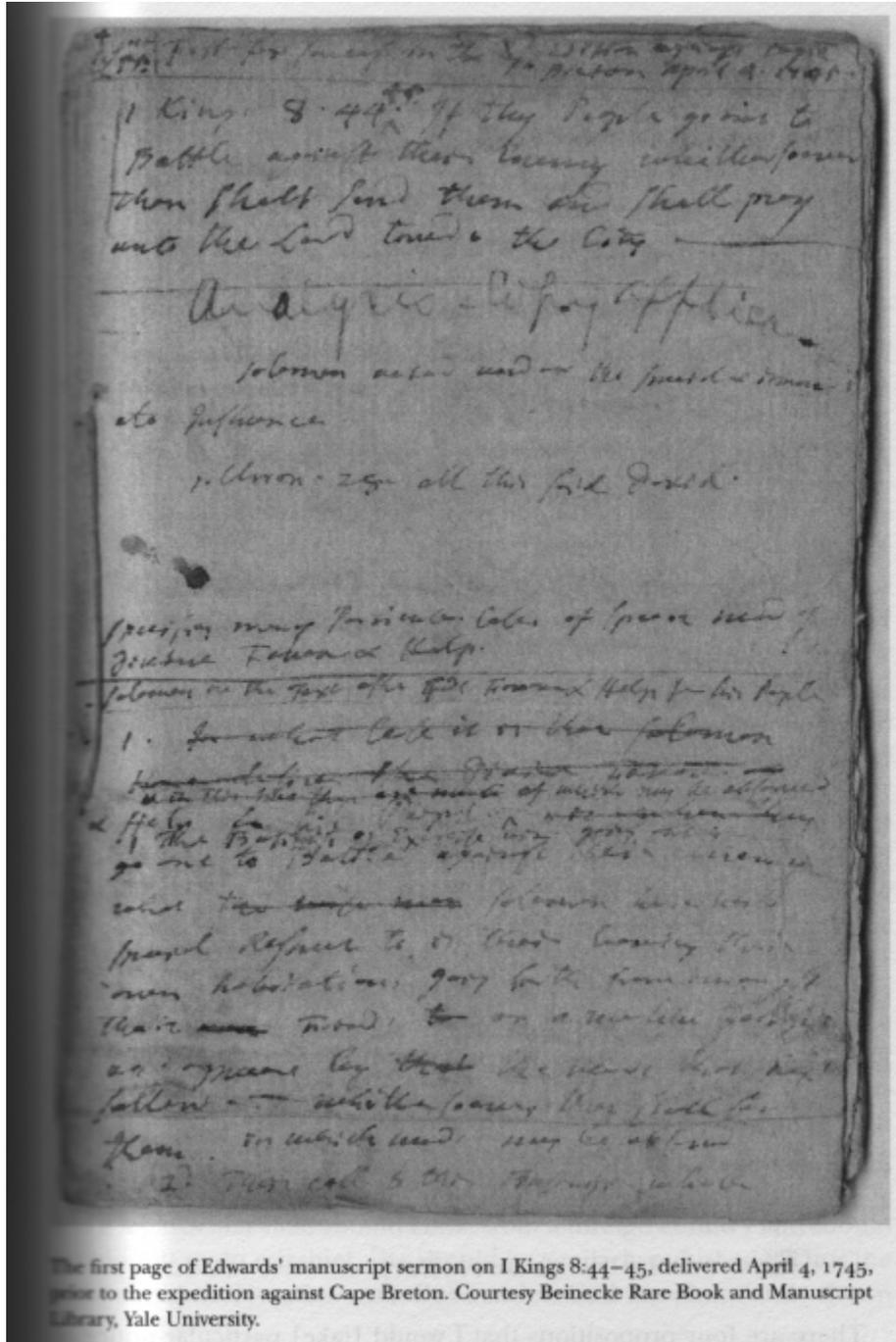
The lessons for pastors and itinerant preachers are obvious, especially in relation to reusing old sermon material. Pastors who have been in ministry for several years and have either a transitory or new congregation naturally feel tempted to simply re-preach old sermons. The temptation is real for itinerant preachers too. The problem is not in reusing material (there is nothing wrong with that) but in not spending time thinking of those to whom we will preach our sermons: who they are, their contexts, their educational backgrounds, their level of biblical literacy, the intellectual level of the sermon, the clarity and simplicity of the points, etc. For Edwards, his old sermons obviously were not fit for his new flock, so he prepared new ones. And as the survey of Edwards’s Stockbridge sermons reveals, as he did so, contextualisation, application, and packaging were never far from his mind.

Fourth, prior to his move to Stockbridge and although he pastored only white congregations, Edwards always maintained an interest in how God was at work in other parts of the globe, even so far away as Africa and Asia. Edwards did not have the Internet to keep abreast of missional advancement on these two continents, yet he took the time to read and research and ensure that he did. In this regard, he serves as a fine example for any pastor-theologian to not become so preoccupied with one’s own ‘patch’ of ministry or scholarship that one neglects to see what God is doing elsewhere in the world. As

noted earlier, it was this interest in mission that eventually served as a formative influence among others that would finally cause Edwards to decline other pastoral opportunities in New England and abroad for the mission outpost of Stockbridge. One's interest in various mission operations now may in the future lead to places and ministries one never imagined going.

Finally, connected to this, Edwards presents us with the importance of placing our own lives and ministries within the larger redemptive-historical story of God's salvation on earth. It was this 'big picture' framework that helped Edwards to situate himself, even when he felt 'thrown upon the wide ocean of the world,' and to view Stockbridge as a grand and strategic moment in the history of redemption. Discussion of Edwards's postmillennialism aside, his optimism for gospel-advancements and his sensitivity to divine acts of God in history provide us with a positive outlook for our lives and ministries, especially during hardships. For the God of Jonathan Edwards is also our God, who has caught us up into his grand story of redemption to bring salvation to the tribes and peoples of this world for his own glory—the end for which he created the world.

Appendix 1: Sermon on 1 Kings 8:44-45, Northampton, April 4, 1745<sup>156</sup>



The first page of Edwards' manuscript sermon on 1 Kings 8:44-45, delivered April 4, 1745, prior to the expedition against Cape Breton. Courtesy Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

<sup>156</sup> WJE: Sermons and Discourses 1743-1758, 25:129. Note the numbered headings.

