Orderly But Not Ordinary:
Jonathan Edwards's Evangelical Ecclesiology

by

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CERTIFICATIONS

Candidate

I certify that the substance of this thesis of approximately 100,000 words (excluding the bibliography and any appendices), has not previously been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree. I also certify that any assistance received in conducting the research embodied in the thesis, and all quotations and the sources of significant ideas and paraphrases, have been acknowledged in the text or notes.

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to demonstrate the development of the ecclesiology of Edwards from the writings of his youth until his Stockbridge treatises, setting this within the context of Reformation and Puritan debates, and in response to his experience of the revivals during his Northampton ministry. My basic contention is that Edwards repristinates an ossified New England ecclesiology, by acknowledging the church's dynamic relationship with the created order, history and the nations, and by advocating renewal in ecclesial life through revivals, itinerancy, Concerts of Prayer, missionary initiatives outside of the local congregation, and doctrinal clarification.

Edwards accommodates the Christendom model of ecclesiology to the new philosophical, political and social realities of the mid-eighteenth century British Atlantic world. He is prepared to relinquish an understanding of the church, in which the clergy primarily serves the wider community and the national interests of New England, but also distances himself from separatist ecclesiology, which draws strong lines of demarcation between the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of Christ. His ecclesiology can be aptly summarised as *prophetic*, in as far as the church makes identification with its social context, while yet providing an alternative millennial vision for human flourishing. He embeds a revivalist ecclesiology within a traditional ecclesiology of nurture and institutional order.

I maintain therefore that Edwards's dismissal is not the result of reactionary attempts to reinstitute the prevailing conditions of an earlier vision of the church, nor can he be accused of reneging on progressive views of the church after the revivals have subsided. Edwards's Gospel is preached within a larger vision of transformed society and the glory of God, for whom the church is an orderly but not ordinary instrument to promote visible union between believers and Christ.

This thesis is dedicated to President Josiah (Jed) Bartlet,
who has made Jonathan Edwards a household name.

1.1 THE DISORDERED EDWARDS: HIS MISUNDERSTOOD ECCLESIOLOGY

Ah paradise! Edwards,
I would be afraid
to meet you there as a shade.
We move in different circles.[1]

Whether in poetry, prose, or the public imagination, Jonathan Edwards (1703 -1758) has often been misrepresented. As a philosopher, theologian, revivalist, and pastor, he easily eludes facile categorisation. Perhaps, having lived on the distant side of the American Revolution in colonial America, wearing a wig and gown, his understanding of society and politics appears quaint and distant, easily distorted. Perhaps, by virtue of his Reformed convictions, he was painted in a pejorative light after the American Civil War, when his brand of theological reflection seemed destined for ignominy in contrast with more convenient Arminian notions. Perhaps, in today's world where Christian faith has been marginalised and hopes for revival are dim, his preaching of heaven and hell as realities to confront seems intolerant or embittered.[2] Certainly, his often anthologised but less often appreciated sermon 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' draws together themes of his ministry with virulent voices of disapproval.[3]

The twentieth century has witnessed, however, attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of Edwards, understanding him on his own eighteenth century terms, as well as within the bigger picture of American history, and beyond. The Neo-Orthodox saw in Edwards's doctrine of original sin an antidote to naïve approaches to evil.[4] Perry Miller encouraged him to lie on the Procrustean bed of modernity, albeit a little uncomfortably.[5] Yale University Press has produced a letterpress edition of his works, totally twenty-six volumes, giving academic respectability and copious material to begin construction of a more nuanced Edwards. Fresh questions concerning family and gender, Empire and communication, slavery and freedom, experience and rhetoric have led scholars and students alike to search out Edwards's mind and ministry

[1] Robert Lowell, 'Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts,' in *Life Studies* and *For the Union Dead* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 41.
[2] Mark Twain, with a measure of predictable hyperbole, described Edwards as a 'drunken lunatic.' See Philip F. Gura, 'Edwards and American Literature,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. J. Stein; Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 266.
[3] See Wilson H. Kimnach, Caleb J. D. Maskell and Kenneth P. Minkema, *Jonathan Edwards's Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God: A Casebook* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010) for examples of the history of reception of the sermon.
[4] Stephen D. Crocco, 'Edwards's Intellectual Legacy,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. J. Stein; Cambridge: University Press, 2007), especially 310-313.
[5] Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

for clues concerning the present state of religion, politics and evangelical faith, and ways forward when the path is otherwise dim.[6] Max Lesser's bibliographic work attests the proliferation of studies on Edwards.[7]

It is therefore surprising to note that when it comes to Edwards's explicit and systematic understanding of the church, very little commentary has been attempted.[8] There have been, of course, studies on Edwards's position in the Communion controversy of 1750, or his attitude towards itinerancy.[9] Much has been written on his place in discussions of the Puritan covenant ideal, or millennial assumptions concerning the church and the world.[10] These, however, easily atomise the debates, and distort the representation of his convictions through connection with only a select range of doctrinal foci. Not unfrequently one meets the opinion that Edwards actually did not have a settled ecclesiology, or that his concern for the revivals must necessarily have eclipsed any residual concern for the church, its structures, life, and ministry. Bainton summarises just such an assumption when he states that due to 'his preoccupation with individual conversion Edwards appeared at times to have lost sight of the divine community.'[11] Likewise, Hart suggests that 'in so striving for a gauge to heart religion, the church for Edwards becomes superfluous.'[12] It is just such assumptions that this thesis seeks to refute.

When faced with the tumultuous circumstances of the rebirth of vital piety on a large scale in eighteenth century America, one might in the end be forgiven for focussing on the foreground of *individual* experience. Bainton or Hart may have succumbed to just such a myopic

[6] See Stephen J. Stein, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) for such topics as these addressed.
[7] Max X. Lesser, *Reading Jonathan Edwards: An Annotated Bibliography in Three Parts, 1729-2005* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).
[8] Notable exceptions, though written fifty years apart: Thomas A. Schafer, 'Jonathan Edwards' Conception of the Church,' *Church History* 24/1 (1955): 51-66, and Douglas A. Sweeney, 'The Church,' in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. H. Lee; Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 167-189.
[9] For example, see: Alan D. Strange, 'Jonathan Edwards on Visible Sainthood: The Communion Controversy in Northampton,' *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 14 (2003): 97-138; William J. Danaher, 'By Sensible Signs Represented: Jonathan Edwards' Sermons on the Lord's Supper,' *Pro Ecclesia* 7/3 (1998): 261-287; Timothy D. Hall, *Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial American Religious World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).
[10] For example, see Carl W. Bogue, 'Jonathan Edwards on the Covenant of Grace,' in *Soli Deo Gloria: Essays in Reformed Theology: Festschrift for John H. Gerstner* (ed. R. C. Sproul; Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976); Gerald R. McDermott, 'Jonathan Edwards and the National Covenant: Was He Right?' in *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition* (ed. D. G. Hart, S. M. Lucas, S. J. Nichols; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Brandon G. Withrow, 'A Future of Hope: Jonathan Edwards and Millennial Expectations,' *Trinity Journal* 22/1 (2001): 75-98.
[11] Roland H. Bainton, *Yale and the Ministry: A History of Education for the Christian Ministry at Yale from the Founding in 1701* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 31.
[12] Denis G. Hart, 'The Church in Evangelical Theologies, Past and Future,' in *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (eds. M. Husbands and D. J. Treier; Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 31.

distortion in the case of Jonathan Edwards. However, while it is palpably evident that Edwards did act as midwife to scores of individual rebirths, this by no means necessitates the view that he had marginal concern for the nurture of corporate Christian maturity. In fact, it is my contention that Edwards's ecclesiology must be viewed as an essential coordinating principle in his response to the vicissitudes of revival. In this thesis, I shall track the development of his ecclesiological commitments, establishing their substantial connection with other major theological themes, and arguing for the ways in which Edwards's depiction of the Lord's Supper is consonant with these broader concerns.

Edwards's doctrine of the church and its place in God's economy were not merely an amorphous shadow cast by the bright fires of spiritual ardour, or a knee-jerk reaction to the pressures of revival, but rather was itself a compass by which he was enabled to navigate the currents and reefs of the revivals' waters. It is not impossible for an evangelist to be an ecclesiologist at the same time. It is not unreasonable to look for some deeper ordering of Edwards's thoughts in matters of the church. He was, after all, the legatee of just such a Puritan search for order in the century before him. Even those suspicious of his teaching acknowledge the rigours of his intellect and his capacity to unify ideas:

> White wig and black coat,
> all cut from one cloth,
> and designed
> like your mind![13]

It is my contention that the flow of evangelical piety from the eighteenth century onwards can contain a high view of the church within its banks.

[13] Lowell, 'Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts,' 42.

1.2 THE GOSPEL, REFORMATIONS AND PURITANS: THE UNSTABLE CHURCH

Jonathan Edwards stood within the flow of debates concerning the church which had threatened to burst their banks since the Reformations of the sixteenth century. Indeed, these debates were themselves an attempt at resolving concerns expressed over the nature of church in the late medieval period, which had arrived at some degree of ecclesiological pluriformity within the Augustinian conception of the church's essential unity. Debates about the relationship between church and state, refracted through dangerous appeals to church councils to initiate reform, set against the travesty of rival papacies, with the rise of millennial aspirations turning into apocalyptic critique of the Pope as Antichrist, were altogether a combustible mix when Luther lit the spark of sacramental controversy.[1]

Luther focussed ecclesiological debates on his understanding of the Gospel, which would become for him an instrument of leverage to remove the great weight of medieval excess and corruption. In his Ninety-Five Theses, he could state that 'The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.'[2] As well as an anti-indulgence polemic, Luther intended here to focus the centre of the church's life on an account of God's character expressed in terms of God's movement towards human beings for their salvation.[3] The objective reality of the enfleshed Son of God and a passion for the uncluttered purity of the Gospel gave Luther's ecclesiology a Christological core.[4] His own existential trials in desperately seeking a gracious God, coupled with practices of penance which were pastorally unable to secure assurance of sins forgiven, led him to configure the Gospel in terms of Christ as Saviour, a sharp soteriological offer and demand. Luther gave momentum to the later devotional intensity of Puritanism:

> Puritanism was a variety of Protestantism, and Puritans were heirs of the Reformation inaugurated by Martin Luther's seminal re-reading of Christianity's foundational texts ... Like Luther, they [the Puritans] were intensely

[1] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine; Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 38, 68, 81, 104, 127.
[2] John Dillenberger, 'The Ninety-Five Theses,' in *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings* (ed. J. Dillenberger; Garden City: Anchor Books, 1961), 496.
[3] Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma*, 128.
[4] Paul D. L. Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 3, 13.

> preoccupied with personal salvation, and convinced that God pardoned sinners in response to simple faith in Christ's redeeming sacrifice on the Cross.[5]

Indeed, Luther's espousal of the apostolic message of the Gospel as the *norma normans* of the church became a way of reconciling the unity, holiness and catholicity of the church which had been debated in the medieval period.[6]

While the second generation reformers, like Melanchthon and Calvin, built on Luther's foundations, they nevertheless conceived their doctrine of the church within a slightly different set of architectonics. Assuming this Christological core, they nevertheless gave more attention to organising the whole biblical narrative around that Christological focus, which coordinated nature and grace, or law and Gospel, and lent new seriousness to attempts to reform the structures and ministries of the church.[7] These second generation reformers were concerned about the 'purity of the *church*,' and Christ's authority to reform it according to his Word,[8] 'with a consistency and a rigor that went considerably beyond Luther.'[9] The rule of Christ through his Word gave deliberate shape to the church, and set the church within an eschatological framework in as far as it represented the coming Kingdom. Calvin insisted that:

> since the church is Christ's Kingdom, and he reigns by his Word alone, will it not be clear to any man that those are lying words by which the Kingdom of Christ is imagined to exist apart from his sceptre (that is, his most holy Word)?[10]

Such leaders also developed a more *transformative* expectation of the church's relationship with secular authority, regarding which Luther had never been forced to take anything other than a *conservative* position.[11] Calvin understood the Gospel as God's purposes for the world centred in Christ, which generates not just individual conversions, but the very foundation of the church itself.[12] Calvin's developed doctrine of predestination reinforced this framework, for human beings have been

[5] John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, 'Introduction,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (eds. J. Coffey and P. C. H. Lim; Cambridge: University Press, 2008), 2.
[6] Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma*, 110.
[7] Robert Doyle, 'The Search for Theological Models: The Christian in his Society in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Nineteenth Centuries,' in *Christians in Society* (Explorations 3; ed. B. G. Webb; Homebush West: Lancer, 1988), 36, 41. Likewise, Edwards sought to reintegrate the orders of grace and nature, in reaction to the Enlightenment disenchantment of the world: Avihu Zakai, 'Jonathan Edwards, the Enlightenment, and the Formation of Protestant Tradition in America,' in *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (eds. E. Mancke and C. Shammas; Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 193.
[8] Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers*, 13, 33. Emphasis mine.
[9] Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma*, 186.
[10] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. F. L. Battles (The Library of Christian Classics; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), IV/ii/4. In this thesis, I adopt the convention of quoting the section number from the *Institutes*, and not the page number.
[11] Coffey and Lim, 'Introduction,' 3.
[12] G. S. M. Walker, 'Calvin and the Church,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 16/4 (1963): 371-389, especially 376-377.

elected in Christ, who is the Head of the body, which is the church. Doctrines concerning predestination focus on individual privilege and responsibility, which has necessary expression within the Body. The church is understood in relation to God's past decree and to the purposes for which it was formed (Eph 1:22-23). It is said of Calvin, that '[h]is entire object was to bring human life in its totality under common obedience to God in Christ,'[13] of which the church is an essential means.

A new concern for the circumference of the church, its membership and extent, was demonstrated in the application of godly discipline, though Calvin did not formally make such discipline a mark of the church.[14] His Anabaptist contemporaries, however, reconfigured ecclesiological discussion by promoting as essential to church life baptism (as a believing adult) as the front door to church life, and the ban (disciplinary exclusion from the godly fellowship) as the back door.[15] It was their contention that deferring to princes or town councils, as the magisterial reformers did, could not bring substantial reform to the church, nor was such deference modelled in the New Testament. They rejected coercion as a compromised model of participation in the life of the church, and worked to establish a voluntary system of membership, in which unforced accountability would most likely secure congregational purity. This ethical vision was itself implicitly an eschatological vision as well, and one which served as a 'device for passing judgment on contemporary society.'[16] Their separatist inclinations, therefore, were unlikely to be graciously received. Such an ecclesiologically radicalising narrative could either inspire or destabilise further attempts at Protestant church reform, according to the prevailing social and political conditions in which they were held.

The ideological interplay between these various ecclesiological agendas was clearly in evidence within the Puritan movement, initially nestled within the Church in England but spilling over into independent structures and reflecting distinctive existential commitments and an emphasis on the Holy Spirit from the late sixteenth century.[17] Such

[13] Walker, 'Calvin and the Church,' 371.
[14] Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers*, 35.
[15] It should be pointed out that Martin Bucer also maintained the necessity of the ban, though not coupled with the rejection of paedobaptism. See Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers,* 45.
[16] See F. H. Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 51.
[17] Coffey and Lim, 'Introduction,' 3-7. See also Jerald C. Brauer, 'The Nature of English Puritanism: Three Interpretations,' *Church History* 23/2 (1954): 99-108, especially 101-102.

factionalism was expressed in the Admonition to the Parliament in 1572 by John Field and Thomas Wilcox requesting further purifying reform of the church, as well as during conflict between King and Commons over episcopacy and Arminianism during the reigns of James I (1603-1625) and Charles I (1625-1649). This antagonism played out militarily in the Civil Wars of 1642-1649, which impacted all the British Isles, and ideologically shaped the British colonies in North America. Internecine ecclesiological instability was brought to its constitutional end with the downfall of the Independent, Oliver Cromwell, and his Interregnum, the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 under Charles II, the consequent Ejection of Puritan clergy in 1662, and the imposition of a revised Book of Common Prayer in the same year. The Puritan Bible Commonwealths in New England, though sequestered by distance and ideology, were nevertheless conversation partners in these disputes, and the history of New England, at least until the time of the American Revolution, would reflect the competing aims of comprehension or establishment, and separation or purity, which were contested in the first few generations of sixteenth century European reformers and beyond.[18] Interaction with each of these polarities shaped developments in ecclesiology in early New England settlement.[19]

Jonathan Edwards inherits these debates in the early eighteenth century. While unreflective attention might divorce the revivals from antecedent ecclesiological instability, it has recently been cogently argued that the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s cannot be understood without ecclesiology in the foreground. James F. Cooper, using the often neglected records of individual Massachusetts Congregationalist churches, argues that the revivals of the eighteenth century are attributable in large part to the tensions existing within the ecclesiological order of New England from its earliest days, rather than to sociological developments of the eighteenth century alone:

> Rather than the democratising turning point that historians have described, Massachusetts's Great Awakening is better understood as an event whose onset reflected ongoing tensions within the colony's religious life and whose consequences accelerated changes in both Congregationalism and the larger culture that had long been under way.[20]

[18] Calvin too attempted in Geneva to unify these ideals. See Walker, 'Calvin and the Church,' 382.
[19] Ecclesiological debate was not restricted to Anglo-Saxon contexts. The Dutch Further Reformation, and the concern to anchor the theological enterprise in simplified forms, appealing to the deductivist epistemology of Petrus Ramus, was very influential: Petrus van Mastricht, William Ames, Francis Turretin might be included in this school. In their ecclesiology, however, they 'stand for no great fundamental variations of thought.' See John T. McNeill, 'The Church in Post-Reformation Reformed Theology,' *The Journal of Religion* 24/2 (1944): 96-107, especially 98.
[20] James F. Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties: The Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts* (Religion in America Series; Oxford: University Press, 1999), 198.

He goes even further to suggest that, just as ecclesiology was at the heart of the Great Migration of the 1630s and 1640s,[21] so the second and third generation of New England men and women maintained a conversation with their forebears in as far as they modified or defended the ecclesiological principles espoused through the language of covenant.[22] The genius of appeal to the covenant is clarified when we understand that this flexible terminology provides both individual assurance in the face of an inscrutable God, and reasons to believe that the Lord is not only committed to an individual believer, but has intra-historical intentions for churches and nations as well.[23]

The merits of this intergenerational discourse as a framework for interpretation are themselves a significant scholarly debate. Delbanco argues, for example, that because the first Puritans were somewhat bewildered in the New World, they could not resolve ecclesiological tensions easily, leaving it to their children to provide an adjusted sense of ecclesiological purpose.[24] Conversely, some have argued that the late seventeenth century saw a declension in piety amongst the children and grandchildren of the plantation's founders.[25] The very terms under which such putative declension was debated extended the ecclesiological debates of the earliest period. Conversations concerning the Half-Way Covenant (1662), the Reforming Synod (1679), and the Saybrook Platform (1708), to list but a few, may have been exacerbated in part by non-ecclesiological pressures, but resulted in decisions which had profound ecclesiological impact. Stephen Foster helpfully defines Puritanism and leads the case for this multigenerational model of meaning:

> Two notions fundamental to this study are ... the sense of Puritanism as a 'movement' – a congruence (more than an alliance) of progressive Protestants ... thrown up by the fortuitous circumstance that England's official Reformation took root unevenly. The second follows directly from the first: a commitment

[21] Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties*, 11.
[22] Avihu Zakai furthermore maintains that this conversation had begun a significant time before the migrations. He holds the position that their origins are to be discovered not merely in a sense of 'crisis' in the seventeenth century but as the result of longer-term social and political trends in Britain. See Avihu Zakai, 'The Gospel of Reformation: The Origins of the Great Puritan Migration,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 37/4 (1986): 584-602, and especially 585. The 'Exodus' model of migration, precipitated by the desire to escape oppressive powers, is suggested by Zakai as the leading paradigm for understanding Puritan migration. See Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America* (Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History; Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 9.
[23] Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma*, 240-241, 371.
[24] Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 116.
[25] This thesis of declension is primarily attributable to Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1953), where even his section headings build on this language. More recently, this thesis has been contested in Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), who has argued that rather than limiting the preaching of early New England to those sermons given on public occasions like election-days, fast-days, and military remembrances, often known as jeremiads, a more balanced reading takes into account pastoral sermons preached on Sundays, where the declension of the colonies is not in the foreground.

> to establishment was native to English Puritanism ... This understanding of the English Puritan movement endows the New Englanders, even in 1630, with a vital, evolving culture, one based on long practice and developed institutions ... *Accordingly, further change in America in the later seventeenth century merely continues a long story.*[26]

While the 'long argument' was certainly integral to the development of the churches in New England in the seventeenth century, this concern must not necessarily take as its starting-point the allegedly perfect and settled ecclesiology of either the Pilgrim Fathers or the Puritan founders of Massachusetts Bay. American history might have a date, or dates, as its discrete starting-point, but the ideological concerns which generated the migrations pre-date and post-date stepping onto any rock. Puritanism in the Old World as much as in the New continued the 'duality between the insular and the comprehensive that had always been at the heart of the movement.'[27]

Patricia Bonomi has also repudiated the declension theory as the guiding narrative on the first century of British American life. It cannot be denied that the ideals set by the earliest migrants were so high that they were unlikely to be easily reached, but she makes clear that church attendance was still a valued part of social life, and that clerical training and status occupied an increasingly significant social role. It suited, however, later denominational history writing to advance the thesis that the earlier forms were inevitably ill-suited to New World conditions, for which later arrivals, such as the Baptists and the Methodists, were better prepared.[28] There were indeed 'tensions generated by territorial and demographic growth,' and the seventeenth century may accurately be viewed as 'a time of strain and conflict,' but the conclusion that these reflected a falling away from an ordered pristine beginning is inadequate, since it is 'unlikely that by about 1650 the colonists possessed sufficiently stable church establishments from which to decline.'[29] Religious confusion was more the order of the day.

Debates concerning the church, which the Reformations generated and which Edwards inherited, are more substantially debates

[26] Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570-1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), xiii. Emphasis mine.
[27] Foster, *The Long Argument,* 27. Plantinga Pauw has most recently made this same point, suggesting that the Puritans, drawing on Calvin and shaping Edwards, struggle to maintain the 'persistent tension between the ideals of inclusiveness and holiness,' and often resort to the use of the imagery of mother and bride respectively to resolve the tension. Amy Plantinga Pauw, 'Practical Ecclesiology in John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards,' in *John Calvin's American Legacy* (ed. Thomas J. Davis; Oxford: University Press, 2010), 92, 97.
[28] Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (Updated ed.; Oxford: University Press, 2003), xix.
[29] Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 8, 15.

concerning the nature of the Gospel, its authority and its scope. Concerning authority, if the church has primacy over the Gospel, as Roman Catholicism espoused, reform was made difficult and access to salvation was only to be found within the structures and sacramental ministry of that church. If, on the other hand, the Word of the Gospel is understood as the progenitor of the church, persistent appeal to that Word enables ongoing reform, and access to salvation is to be found through means of grace, themselves dependent on that Word. It thus became a maxim in Protestant thought that the Gospel had the preeminent authority to create, shape, and reform the life of the church.

However, the scope of the Gospel's content was not yet settled amongst Protestants, with Lutheran emphasis on individual forgiveness and salvation for example, and Reformed emphasis on divine purposes for communal life.[30] The Puritan Gospel straddled this debate. It made much of sin and atonement, but situated this within a more comprehensive vision of Scriptural priorities: 'Gospel preaching centres always upon the theme of man's relationship to God, but around that centre it must range throughout the whole sphere of revealed truth.'[31] Puritanism wove together variegated sources of doctrinal emphasis, within an English context coloured by internationalist experience and concerns, producing a labile ecclesiological mix. It will be critically germane to our thesis not merely to describe the development and determinations of Edwards's doctrine of the church, but to locate Edwards's understanding of the church in its historical flow, as well as to locate the Gospel which Edwards preached in its relationship with the church. Not only did Edwards face the challenge of providing for the already conflicted Puritan church in New England renewed clarity, stability, and unity, he had to do this in the midst of revivalist fervour and new fissures within the received polity. His ecclesiological recalibration was a timely work.

[30] Calvin says that the Gospel is 'the clear manifestation of the mystery of Christ,' or 'the proclamation of the grace manifested in Christ' and sets these within the perspective of the progressive revelation of the Kingdom. He grants that there is a 'broad sense' in which forgiveness under the Law might be understood as the Gospel, but wants to draw our attention to a 'higher sense' which focuses on Christ and God's ultimate purposes. See Calvin, *Institutes,* II/ix/2. See also Walker, 'Calvin and the Church,' 379.

[31] James I. Packer, 'The Puritan View of Preaching the Gospel,' in *How Shall They Hear? A Symposium of Papers Read at the Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, December 1959* (London: Evangelical Magazine, 1960), 17.

1.3 PARTIES, POLITY AND PURPOSE: THE CHURCH IN NEW ENGLAND

Edwards was an eighteenth century New England interlocutor with, and ultimately a New World leading voice in, Puritan ecclesiological debate. While the broadest *historical* connections between the late medieval, Reformation, and Puritan periods in their relationship to ecclesiology have been traced in the preceding chapter, it is my intention here to provide a brief survey of particular *theological* issues supporting those reflections in *New England*. While ecclesiology is commonly approached through the application of word studies, a better foundation upon which to build a doctrine of the church is more exacting and therefore challenging because it involves the process of coordinating other doctrines. If, for example, we are the body of Christ, debates concerning *Christology* will have profound impact on our expectations of church, as will debates concerning *eschatology*, because the purposes for which God made this world will at some level be reflected in the ways in which the church promotes God's good plans. As the concrete expression of both Christ's body and mission, the doctrine of church has both fixed and flexible elements, and is at the intersection of the mind of God, the life of God, and the benefits of God bestowed on the people of God. Ecclesiology is necessarily a cumulative and synthetic doctrine.

This section purports neither to be an exhaustive treatment of colonial America, nor a survey of all Puritan theological enterprise, but an introduction to ecclesiological concerns as they impacted Edwards. He had to navigate between competing Puritan parties, diverse approaches to ministerial authority, and questions concerning the ultimate social role of the gathered Christian community. The church's philosophical grounding within the Puritan period, understood here through the Aristotelian vocabulary of causation, forms the structure of this section.

The Church and God's Relationship to the Creation

God's relationship to the material order, and by implication whether the church is expendable or necessary to divine rule and involvement in the world, lies at the heart of much theological disputation.[1] One of the most fundamental theological questions

[1] See Dennis L. Okholm, 'The Fundamental Dispensation of Evangelical Ecclesiology,' in *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (eds. M. Husbands and D. J. Treier;

concerns the relationship between God's power and will, relative to his love and design, which has an ecclesiological entailment. A traditional theological debate between those who would speak of God primarily in terms of transcendent power and freedom and the contingency of the creation (known as voluntarists), and those who would espouse God's self-imposed restraint, highlighting not his freedom but his design, and the pursuant necessity for him to act consistently within the world (known as realists) was reprised in early New England's debates concerning salvation and the church. In seventeenth century terms, if God is more like a constitutional monarch, ruling through the conventions of law, than a capricious dictator, ruling by divine fiat, then the church too has a more permanent and dignified role in fulfilling God's purposes for the world.[2] This might be described as a debate concerning the *formal* cause of ecclesiology, as it is the most fundamental *principle* by which any understanding of the church is made intelligible. Puritans in New England belonged to informal parties taking up differing position on this issue.

While it might be easy to assume monolithic ecclesiological agreement between the Pilgrim Fathers of 1620 and the audacious leaders of the Puritan Great Migration of the 1630s,[3] this position is increasingly seen as a construct of Whiggish nationalist ideology,[4] rather than the result of detailed and discriminating historical research. Janice Knight, for example, in conscious though nuanced distinction from the book by Perry Miller of almost the same name,[5] argues that not only did the Plymouth Fathers maintain a separatist ecclesiology in distinction from the non-separating Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but even these non-separating Puritans in Boston disagreed amongst themselves concerning God's attributes and relationship to the world.[6] God might approach the world through command or through promise.[7] The cosmological constitution of this world has a bearing on the formal cause of the church.

Downers Grove: I.V.P., 2005), 44-45, for a contemporary discussion of this point between evangelicals and dispensationalists.

[2] Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2000), 100.

[3] See Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (Rev. ed.; Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995), chapter 3.

[4] See Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal,* 215-218, where he suggests for example that the work of Perry Miller, Sacvan Bercovitch, Daniel Webster and Sidney Lanier has distorted Puritan motivations.

[5] Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts 1630-1650* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959).

[6] See Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[7] Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Leicester: Apollos, 1994), 40-42, 151.

One school of thought, shaped by William Perkins (1558-1602) and William Ames (1576-1633), stressed the transcendence of God, his unknowability and even unpredictability, the nature of sin as the positive presence of evil which needs to be progressively eradicated, and God's condescension in the form of covenants to give beggarly human beings some confidence in his mercy towards them. While covenants had previously been attempts to encourage accountability and godly living, in the mind of Ames they became 'nothing less than the essential core of the church.'[8] Just as God had in past covenants with Israel limited his power for the sake of his chosen, so now God would invite those in whom his grace was preveniently stirring to commit themselves to a life of discipleship, by striving for moral improvement and owning God's covenant offer for themselves.[9] Drawing on medical paradigms of the day, the purgation of sin required exertion on the behalf of those committed to overcoming its effects.[10] Paradoxically, this position, which stresses God's majesty and consequent inapproachability, encourages the human activity of *preparation* for the reception of salvation,[11] which would be at work within the structures of the human soul gradually and reasonably, as Perry Miller explains:

> What he [Perkins] did contribute was an energetic evangelical emphasis; he set out to arouse and inflame his hearers. Consequently, one of his constant refrains was that the minutest, most microscopic element of faith in the soul is sufficient to be accounted the work of God's spirit. Man can start the labor of regeneration as soon as he begins to feel the merest desire to be saved. Instead of conceiving grace as some cataclysmic, soul-transforming experience, he whittles it down almost, but not quite, to the vanishing point; he says that it is a tiny seed planted in the soul, that it is up to the soul to water and cultivate it, to nourish it into growth.[12]

An alternative position, espoused by Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) and John Cotton (1585–1652), acknowledged the sovereignty of God and desperation of sinners, but emphasised 'divine benevolence over his power,' the Augustinian conception of sin as a privation of the good, and the necessity of God filling the individual with grace, this experience perhaps being described in apocalyptic terms.[13] There is nothing the individual can do but wait passively on God, praying for such an

[8] Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 227.
[9] In Brauer's estimation, the genius of the covenant was its ability to hold together 'the emotional and the rational, the subjective and the objective,' though this framework 'constantly threatened to separate and finally did.' See Brauer, 'The Nature of English Puritanism,' especially 104.
[10] Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal,* 81-82.
[11] Human preparation, or cultivation of the moral life, was a strategy to combat the seductions of Antinomianism and thereby social degeneration, as well as to encourage prosperity and stability within the covenanted nation. See Thomas A. Schafer, 'Solomon Stoddard and the Theology of the Revival,' in *A Miscellany of American Christianity: Essays in Honor of H. Shelton Smith* (ed. S. C. Henry; Durham: Duke University Press, 1963), 338-339.
[12] Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 57-58.
[13] Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 3.

endowment of grace. While the former position gravitated towards forensic fine distinctions and explanations, this latter view drew heavily upon organic metaphors of the relationship between God and the individual in salvation. Sibbes's anti-preparationism exemplifies this model.[14] Rather than an appreciation of the continuities between the structures of this world and the appropriation of salvation, this school would emphasise the radical discontinuities experienced in the nature of conversion.[15] Miller, representing an earlier generation of scholarship, would smooth out the differences between these schools,[16] while Francis Bremer more recently acknowledges their subtle distinctions:

> Within the mainstream of Puritanism there were varying emphases – there was unity but not uniformity. The Puritan belief regarding salvation spanned a spectrum that stretched between a works-centred Arminianism on one extreme and a spiritist-centred hyper-Calvinism at the other end. Along the span some were closer to one extreme than the other, some emphasizing with Thomas Hooker the importance of human behavior while others such as John Cotton focused on the sensations of grace.[17]

As much as these positions appear to lie quite close to each other, they nevertheless occasioned a significant breach of the peace in the very earliest settlement of New England. The Antinomian Crisis (1636-38), as it became known, pitted the defenders of preparationist piety against Anne and William Hutchinson, who, along with the Reverend John Wheelwright (Anne Hutchinson's brother-in-law), Henry Vane, and William Coddington, argued that the notion of cultivating grace within one's own experience was tantamount to performing works as a condition of salvation.[18] This is certainly the danger when one stresses the performance of the provisions of the covenant as a means of owning salvation. For their part, the prosecutors of those dubbed 'Antinomian' presented the extreme position of these 'Hutchinsonians' as equivalent to denying the need for obedience to the law in the life of faith. Anne Hutchinson and her party were subsequently banished by the Massachusetts General court for their 'heresy,' after which they founded new colonies in Exeter, Portsmouth, and Newport. While the preparationist party had been in the minority in England, in the colonies its leadership was determined not to waste an opportunity for

[14] Knight takes the view that Sibbes, contrary to much traditional scholarship, was not essentially a preparationist, in as far as he refused to believe that the capacity to prepare for salvation betokened election. See Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts,* 111-112, 131.
[15] See Norman S. Fiering, 'Will and Intellect in the New England Mind,' *William and Mary Quarterly* 29/4 (1972): 515-558, for a discussion of these schools of thought in relation to the faculty psychology of the seventeenth century.
[16] See for example Miller, *Errand,* 59-60.
[17] Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 22.
[18] This crisis may have had the further sociological explanation that there was disorganisation and a shortage of clergy in the earliest settlement, encouraging women to be more actively involved in leadership. See Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven,* 18-19.

ascendancy.[19] Their later expectation of a narrative of grace in the process of applying for membership of the covenant community reinforced linear and predictable patterns concerning salvation.

In this model, the discipline which it was expected such individuals would exercise in their combat against sin and in their pursuit of holiness and fulfilment of the dream of congregational purity, had its ecclesiological reflex in the increase of ministerial authority, through oversight of the 'incremental process of spiritual reformation that always fell short of consummation."[20] Furthermore, obsessive focus on the experience of stages of grace in the individual (the *ordo salutis*) could obscure a vision for God's international purposes.[21] Such a millenarian mindset had earlier developed with Luther's critique of the papacy as the Antichrist, as well as amongst Puritans. English Calvinists, because of persecution, had been exiled to the continent during Mary Tudor's reign (1553-1558), and continental Reformed scholars like Bucer (1548-1551) and Peter Martyr (1548-1553) had found refuge in Cambridge and Oxford respectively during the reign of Edward VI, cross-pollinating such views.[22] Knight points out that those of the party of Sibbes and Cotton (dubbed by her the 'Spiritual Brethren') perpetuated such *internationalist* and *providentialist* concerns, though this attraction to the millenarian purposes of God was not equally shared with the 'Intellectual Fathers' (the school of Perkins and Ames), who were more concerned with doctrinal and personal purity in the *local* congregation where sin could be more easily 'contained and controlled."[23] Sibbes and Preston, Cotton and Davenport, known as the Cambridge Circle,

> focused intensely on the Christian's duty to work for the world church and formulated specific practical programs for change. Insisting that the "common good is to be preferred before private good," they consistently expanded the sphere of Christian concern, from the personal to the congregational, the national to the international church. And in the current crisis of international, indeed cosmic proportions, action rather than lamentation or retreat was the only adequate response ... Far more than their preparationist counterparts, the Brethren read the signs of the times, prayed for the millennial dawn, and worked on its behalf. Rather than conceiving of the Kingdom as the product of cataclysm or the shattering of the natural world, they believed in the unfolding of the Kingdom on earth and in time.[24]

Delbanco makes the further connection that the preparationist model of piety, in which divine contracts with individuals (often with covenantal

[19] See Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 69.
[20] Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 3, 52-53, 80.
[21] See Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 42.
[22] Jeffrey K. Jue, 'Puritan Millenarianism in Old and New England,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (eds. J. Coffey and P. C. H. Lim; Cambridge: University Press, 2008), 260-263.
[23] Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 166, 179.
[24] Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 50, 154.

legalism as the result) reflect the insidious pressures of emergent capitalism, keenly felt but not always welcomed by the Puritan middle-classes:

> The doctrine of preparation ... was as much a response to the threat of disorder as were the poor rates and the laws of settlement. It was an endorsement of regularity in the itinerary of the soul as well as in the household and the street.[25]

In his analysis, the migration to the New World was therefore for some a flight from encroaching insecurity and from temptations to worldly pride as much as it was a 'confident journey towards the millennium' to found a church with a transnational agenda.[26]

These fundamental debates concerning sin, salvation, and service were continuing issues in Edwards's own day. Though the Great Awakening was an intrusive movement or 'surprising work' for the recrudescence of vital piety, it played out amongst debates concerning God's relationship with the world, and the degree to which God might use the regular and the natural to achieve his ends. It fell to Edwards to explain how this outpouring of the Holy Spirit received as a fresh experience of grace was both an interruption within individual experience as well as subordinated to the shape and order of clerical ministrations and eschatological expectations. The church was an integral part of God's design for human flourishing, even when God chose to put his mark on human experience in this world in irregular ways.[27]

The Church and its Means of Grace

Secondly, Edwards is heir to a more specialised debate concerning the *means* used by God to promote the Gospel of grace in human experience, and the polity which would best defend it. The nature of Christian leadership and ecclesiastical organisation, the role of the sermon and sacraments, and the responsibilities and pious affections of lay church members, all provide ways into understanding divine intentions through secondary causation in the world. The language of the *body of Christ* is helpfully used as a metaphor to coordinate the various means of divine operation, by giving the opportunity to speak of head, members, organs, growth, and nurture. It also has the possible entailment of legal or mystical union with Christ as the universal foundation of the church, for any connection with the head raises questions concerning

[25] Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal*, 51.
[26] Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal*, 80.
[27] Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal,* 236, 249.

absorption within or distinction from divinity. This debate may be summarised by speaking of the *efficient* cause of the church, for here we discuss the ways in which God's rule is mediated in the life of the church.

While the prosecution and defence of Anne Hutchinson in the Antinomian Crisis centred on her claims to direct spiritual *illumination*,[28] this episode opened up further *ecclesiological* fault-lines in New England, which concerned the authority of the church, the place of clerical leadership in the colonies, and the responsibilities of members of the congregations to provide correction to their teachers if need arose.[29] Anne Hutchinson is a particularly celebrated example not only because of the passion of her prophesyings, but also because she was a woman, married, articulate, and teaching men.[30] Such challenges had not been anticipated in the Bible Commonwealth. It had seemed self-evident to both Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay believers wherein God's authority was instituted: they came to the New World clear about the corruptions of church authority from which they were fleeing, and armed with the Scriptures to guide them in new application of the minutiae of church faith and order. Cooper outlines their attitudes:

> [T]hough from the outset Massachusetts ministers agreed on larger principles of church order such as free consent and sola scriptura, the early settlers apparently came equipped only with these general outlines of the Congregational Way ... The founders, perhaps naively, did not expect the principle of Congregational autonomy to create significant difficulties. The Scriptures, Puritan divines repeated, contained a perfect, practical system of church government. While in some areas the Bible might seem diffuse or even contradictory, in matters of church government the Scriptures would, upon careful study, *prove perfectly clear*.[31]

The 1640s saw particular developments within England and the colonies which necessitated further elaboration of issues of polity. The Civil Wars in Britain between the Roundheads, or Parliamentary forces, and Charles I, over the prerogatives of the King in Parliament and his *rapprochement* with Roman Catholic powers, notably Spain, exposed the migrants to the accusation that they were shirking their duties by remaining in New England and not returning to Europe to fight for the grand cause (the removal of episcopacy and the limitation of monarchy). Some did indeed return to England, which left those remaining even more vulnerable to the charge that they 'had abandoned the purpose for which

[28] Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 69.
[29] Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal*, 171.
[30] It is however Cooper's thesis that lay-clerical relations were in the background of the Antinomian Crisis, and that this crisis did nothing immediately to change the balance of these responsibilities within the churches of the Bay Colony. See Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties,* chapter 3.
[31] Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties,* 18-19. Emphasis mine.

they had come.'[32] The purity of the congregational polity and their commitment to its preservation and extension was called into question.

Furthermore, the new systematisation of beliefs and structures through the deliberations of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, called in 1643, caused friction amongst the *émigrés* who were divided amongst themselves on the issue of Presbyterianism and feared its imposition in Congregational New England. The Cambridge Platform (1648) was the response to these challenges, outlining the commitment of the New Englanders to the *doctrine* of the Westminster Confession of Faith, though they diverged from its clauses on polity. The New England Way was to be congregational,[33] appealing to the malleable language of covenant to provide the mechanism whereby the responsibilities of God, minister, and people were coordinated,[34] with checks and balances provided by five different offices of leadership.[35] Most significantly, the innovation of a 'relation of conversion,' or a personal testimony of faith, for those wishing to become members of the fellowship, was formalised:

> Perhaps the most notable contribution New England made to the Puritan movement was the restriction they placed on church membership ... In New England the Puritan clergy applied their knowledge of the conversion progress to the development of new standards for admission to the church. To the normal criteria for membership in any religious group – knowledge of and belief in the doctrines of the faith, and an upright life – New Englanders added the insistence that the candidate offer proof of his election ... What occurred in New England was not a radical shift in belief, but rather the extension of that line of thought in different circumstances.[36]

This attempt to close the gap between the visible and the invisible church was one mechanism for quality control, and the beginnings of association between a 'highly developed morphology of conversion with an ecclesiastical institution.'[37] It is Bushman's contention that essential to the Puritan experiment in the new world was its transformation from 'an instrument of rebellion [in England] to one of control.'[38] Indeed, the

[32] Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal,* 202. See also the demographic and ideological analysis of remigration in Susan Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims: New World Settlers and the Call of Home* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).
[33] See the relevant sections of the Cambridge Platform in Alden T. Vaughan, ed. *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620-1730* (Rev. ed.; Hanover: University Press of New England, 1972), 107, 111.
[34] E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 41-42.
[35] Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 108.
[36] Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 106.
[37] Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Ideal* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 77. More recently, describing the requirement of a 'relation of conversion' as innovative has been challenged: see Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture; Cambridge: University Press, 1983), where she outlines the cases for and against incremental or radical shifts in the nature of membership hurdles in the New World (especially pages 83-86).
[38] Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 147.

Cambridge Platform (Chapter X, §3) does explicitly acknowledge the limitations of authority from below:

> [The] government of the church ... is a mixed government ... in respect of Christ, the Head and King of the church, and the sovereign power residing in Him and exercised by Him, it is a monarchy; in respect of the holy brotherhood of the church, and power from Christ granted unto them ... it resembles a democracy; in respect of the presbytery and power committed unto them, it is an aristocracy.[39]

Restrictions on membership may well have served the interests of the clergy and the colonies in the 1640s and 1650s, but it proved less amenable to the developing demographics of New England in the 1660s.[40] Dispersed settlement, shortage of clergy, the allure of a pervasive proto-capitalist economy, the failure of the Puritan Commonwealth under Cromwell, the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, and the palpable presence of those like Quakers not subscribing to orthodox Christian ways, all led to a reflexive anxiety in New England. The 'sub-apostolic' generation, not having endured the crucible of Stuart and Laudian oppression, nor the terrors of migration and settlement, did not maintain their parents' spiritual fervour. The high standard for entry into the church may have kept many away from accessing full-membership, though these same children, now become parents, were still sufficiently respectful of the church to request the sacrament of baptism for their own offspring.[41] New England's Half-Way Covenant, formalised in 1662 on the recommendations of a ministerial advisory convention of 1657, was the resulting compromise, allowing the grand-children of regenerate members to be presented for baptism, while not yet permitting the parents of the baptisands, who had no testimony of grace to recount, to partake of the Lord's Supper or to vote in church matters.

This recalibration of ecclesiological norms was achieved within one generation of settlement. While H. Richard Niebuhr could describe this as a 'transition from a movement toward the future into an order conserving the past,'[42] such a dramatic development must not simply be seen as conservative or reactionary, for the new arrangement engendered a renewed social vision. The Half-Way Covenant registered a new missiological phase in the development of ecclesiology in New England,

[39] Vaughan, ed. *The Puritan Tradition*, 105.
[40] See the detailed description of Connecticut's own demographic development in Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee,* chapter 10.
[41] See the summary of conditions impacting those of 'tender conscience' in Joseph A. Conforti, *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America* (Regional Perspectives on Early America; Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 100-103.
[42] As quoted in James T. Meigs, 'The Half-Way Covenant: A Study in Religious Transition,' *Foundations* 13/2 (1970): 142-158.

allowing greater authority to the clergy. To give those who were not full members of the church access to sermons and sacrament demonstrated a commitment to reach out through a programme for Christian education and pastoral evangelism, in which the church was viewed as a training ground for the gradual equipment of the saints.[43] This trajectory reached its zenith in the ministry of Solomon Stoddard in Northampton, who even opened up participation in the Lord's Supper to those who could not give a relation of faith, as he saw the sacraments as 'converting ordinances.'[44] While the New England Way traditionally highlighted the dignity of the laity in church polity, by the end of the seventeenth century the power of some clergy was increasing, perhaps fostered by frontier conditions, but more likely as a reflection of the desire to mimic cosmopolitan fashions and trends, which itself positioned them as players on an international field.[45] Morgan highlights clerical aspirations:

> Historically the magnification of the minister's office has often gone hand-in-hand with a comprehensive policy of church membership, while a limited membership, emphasizing purity, has been associated with a restriction of clerical authority ... [A]s ministers become independent of the laity, they tend to magnify the importance of their own role in the process of redemption and to feel a keener obligation to the unconverted. The clergy of New England follow this pattern.[46]

Conversely, the Half-Way Covenant generated in some minds a degree of social instability, in as far as the ostensibly settled relationship between clergy and laity needed redefinition.[47] Order within the churches was meant to secure the channels of grace to God's people, but confusion resulting from changes to the status of the ministry had its concomitant impact on confusion over the status of the laity. Doubt about the means of grace affected assurance of the experience of grace. A polity dominated by the purity of the membership runs the risk of losing the objectivity of grace, represented by a settled clerical caste, but serves to highlight greater dignity for the laity. Cooper points out how the Half-Way Covenant had the potential, despite the development of the status of the clergy, to ennoble concomitantly the laity and its self-confident assertion:

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[43] Meigs, 'Half-Way Covenant', 151-152.
[44] Perry Miller, 'Solomon Stoddard, 1643-1729,' *Harvard Theological Review* 34/4 (1941): 277-320. Stoddard effectively makes observance of the sacrament part of preparation for conversion, and not a means of sanctification: W. Reginald Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 284. See also Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven,* 62.
[45] Cosmopolitanism was the social and intellectual movement, spawned by the Enlightenment, which held that thinkers and writers outside of the metropolis were nevertheless active participants in the Enlightenment project and not merely passive observers from a distance, thereby functioning as a model opposed to provincialism. See Ned C. Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture, 1680-1760* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 62-63.
[46] Morgan, *Visible Saints,* 143.
[47] Miller, 'Solomon Stoddard,' 308-311. The Halfway Covenant had less impact on the churches in the Connecticut River valley than in eastern Massachusetts where provisions for membership had been historically stricter (especially since the decision of the colony of New Haven to amalgamate with the more relaxed arrangements of the Hartford churches).

> In this context, the Halfway Covenant generated a crisis in Massachusetts that surpassed all others in the seventeenth century in its breadth and lasting consequences. For the first time in the Bay's brief history, the Massachusetts clergy was significantly and publicly divided over vital issues of church order. This loss of unanimity permanently eroded clerical authority in church affairs, forcing a more active role in government upon ordinary churchgoers. The controversy also undermined the intellectual foundations of Congregationalism ... The struggle over the Halfway Covenant, in sum, set into motion currents that would continue to reshape Congregationalism and lay-clerical relations for the rest of the colonial era.[48]

Division amongst the clergy undermined their social prestige.[49] The head and its members need each other for healthy life.

It was therefore no great wonder that a church fearing disorder in an Empire already shaken by political innovations could fall prey to the rhetoric of those influenced by Enlightenment categories, who advocated the benefits of centralised authority to be found within the Anglican polity. The New England Way had been challenged *from within* during the Antinomian Crisis, and also *from without* given redefinitions of covenant and clergy, which left serious questions concerning its long-term viability. A new *modus vivendi* was reached during the turmoil of the Great Awakening, when revivals prompted a re-evaluation of lay and clerical responsibility, experience of the covenant, and the propriety of sacramental means. Edwards had to provide not merely theological clarity, but stability in the forms of ministry available, while resisting corrupting influences from abroad.

The Church and the Future of the World

Thirdly, Edwards inherits a conversation concerning the purpose of the church within the world, its identity, independence, and *goal*; and to what degree it may be assimilated to the cultural conditions in which it is set. The contingencies of the church's *Sitz im Leben* suggest pneumatological and eschatological themes, for these are doctrines which explore the ways in which God makes his grace particular to individuals' lives as well as to corporate experience, and also perfects his purposes for the creation.[50] If Christ as Lord universalises the purposes of God beyond their Jewish origins, then the Holy Spirit localises the designs of God in time and space, and brings them to completion. We deal here with the *final* cause of ecclesiology, the teleology of the church, and its role in the divine economy. This whole schema of course presupposes the church's

[48] Cooper, *Tenacious of their Liberties*, 89.
[49] Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 165.
[50] Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History: Comparative Ecclesiology* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 7, 54.

existence *sine qua non* as a local assembly of God's people, and pre-empts later discussion of the church's trinitarian shape.

Significant models of corporate life, which had guided New England since its foundation, reflected questions of the place of Christians within the broader culture. Whether it was the language of 'an errand into the wilderness' or the 'city on the hill,' it was not just the relationship between God and an individual believer, nor the relationship between the clergy and the laity, which defined the parameters of the earliest Puritans' ecclesiology. It was also the relationship between the church and the watching and often warring world, which powerfully formed their assertions concerning the church. As Roger Haight suggests, an ecclesiology from below, recognising the contingencies and provisionality of the situation in which the church finds itself, usefully reminds us that the church is necessarily creaturely, and does not yet entirely conform to the perfect will of God for his people.[51]

Picking up on the language of 'errand into the wilderness,' Perry Miller made the case that the first Puritans wanted to establish an exemplary ecclesiological model by taking their message and ministry into a new world. He saw them leaving England behind in order to purify the church's structures in the New World. Basing his view on the sermon preached by John Winthrop in 1630 aboard the *Arbella*, entitled 'A Modell of Christian Charity,' the duty of those first Puritan quasi-secessionists was to create a godly order which might both transform the wilderness, and give fresh impetus for reform of the church at home:

> This errand was being run for the sake of Reformed Christianity; and while the first aim was indeed to realize in America the due form of government, both civil and ecclesiastical, the aim behind that aim was to vindicate the most rigorous ideal of the Reformation, so that ultimately all Europe would imitate New England.[52]

This view has been contested more recently by amongst others Andrew Delbanco who, in his provocative work *The Puritan Ordeal*, wants to argue that the Puritans were fleeing something at home as much as they were looking forward to something new on the other side of the ocean.[53] Furthermore, the language of the 'light on the hill' in its context

[51] Haight, *Christian Community in History*, 25-36.
[52] Miller, *Errand,* 12.
[53] In Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal,* we are reminded that their migration was a 'flight from chaos,' 80, 93, though a clear delineation of an enemy could be transformed in time into a more positive agenda, 59. This position is taken up also by Bozeman, who argues that Winthrop's sermon is not as focussed on futurity as the incidental image of the 'city on a hill' might suggest, but rather is an anti-triumphalist preachment, warning of the dangers of their new lives and encouraging 'primitivist-archetypal' enjoyment of pure ordinances with the background of 'avoidance, flight

allowed not only for the new settlement to provide hope to others still in darkness, but also reminded those travelling that, such was their visibility, their cause could bring great dishonour to God if it failed:

> For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and byword through the world. [54]

In either case, whether the reading is simple or more nuanced, of fundamental concern to the earliest settlers was their relationship to the world around them. They deliberately appropriated the model of Israel in the wilderness as the type of which they were the antitype, crossing the waters, facing foes in the land, owning the covenant, and beginning a nation.[55] The earlier settlement at Plymouth, consisting of those who had separated from the Church of England first at Scrooby in Nottinghamshire and then who sojourned at Leyden in the Netherlands, had no such rhetoric as part of their holy cause.[56]

While the non-separating Puritans may have had personal or economic motives for migration as well as theological, there could be no doubt that the contingencies which they faced upon disembarkation made their most robust hopes seem more fragile. The welcome they received from indigenous North Americans was initially mixed: both aid and aggression. Conversely, their own dreams of evangelising the Amerindians, suggested in the seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in which the English are bidden 'to come over and help,' was both pious yearning and naïve missiology, contaminated by their own importation of diseases, against which the Indians had no immunity.[57] Congregationalism, which assumed the Christian commonwealth it had inherited from the late Middle Ages, had yet no structures for sending missionaries, because it assumed a sedentary ministry of one parson to one parish.[58] A turning-point came in the King Philip's War (1675-1678), when a coalition of Indian tribes, led by Philip or Metacom, asserted their military capacity to win back territory lost to the invading Englishmen. The Puritan terms of engagement with Amerindians changed dramatically hereafter, as the indigenous were increasingly seen

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and asylum.' See Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 113, 111.
[54] John Winthrop, 'A Modell of Christian Charity,' in *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620-1730* (ed. A. T. Vaughan; Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1972), 146.
[55] Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal,* chapter 3.
[56] Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 31-32.
[57] Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, 24-28.
[58] Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 202.

as a 'race apart,'[59] and Puritan efforts to reach them by and large faltered, though the ministry of John Eliot and his Praying Towns and later David Brainerd proved exceptions to the rule.[60] It is therefore indeed remarkable that Eliot translated the Scriptures into the Algonquian tongue before 1663!

Agricultural arrangements also impacted the ways of the church. Though the New Haven colony, for example, had initially sought to make every landholder's entitlement contiguous with the central Green and its church, thus providing unfettered access for farmers to connect with church and central authority, or conversely for the town council to keep watch over outlying farms, this provision proved too cumbersome within a generation.[61] The shape of the farm proved inefficient for farming and for subdivision; children wanted their own holdings which parents could only with difficulty under this model provide, and prospects for autonomy and prosperity in other newly settled areas proved too attractive for the churches to retain all their members within the parish bounds. Social mobility militated against the sedentary models of Old England and the Puritan polity, as did the very topography and demographics of the colonies:

> The covenant doctrine preached on the *Arbella* had been formulated in England, where land was not to be had for the taking; its adherents had been utterly oblivious of what the fact of a frontier would do for an imported order, let alone for a European mentality.[62]

Adaptation to the new land had political ramifications as well. The first Puritans had arrived under the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company, which unified them through their participation in a commercial joint stock company: governance was structured through investors. This gave them adequate funds for survival, though not adequate accountability for life in such a difficult environment. It was to John Winthrop's great credit that he reorganised the company charter to provide for a broader franchise, such that it was not just members of the company who could elect assistants, but also all freeholders, who were nevertheless also required to be church members.[63] The assumptions of standardised polity had also to be revisited, as it became evident that in the seventeenth century Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island

[59] Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 205.
[60] See John B. Carpenter, 'New England Puritans: The Grandparents of Modern Protestant Missions,' *Missiology: An International Review* 30/4 (2002): 519-532, for the place of the Puritans in the development of the modern missions movement.
[61] Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*, 54.
[62] Miller, *Errand,* 9.
[63] Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, 55.

were established in different ways and defined their franchise differently.[64]

One of the greatest external threats to the New England Way in the seventeenth century was the revocation by James II of the Massachusetts Bay Charter in 1684, upon which Joseph Dudley was appointed acting Governor of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine, and then Sir Edmund Andros was appointed governor of the newly formed Dominion of New England in 1686, eliminating the popular basis for government in the colonies, previously so highly prized. The voice of the people was ignored, with the exception of those who had returned to England due to their dissatisfaction with colonial order: their outspoken views at the English court had since 1660 created bad sentiment towards the American colonies.[65] After 1685 James increased intolerance towards all Protestant dissent, both at home and abroad. There were increasing attempts at imperial integration, even ecclesiastical Anglicisation, of the colonies, and a kind of political centralisation anathema to the founding Puritan vision. Though the Glorious Revolution (1689) and the accession of William and Mary as co-regents put a halt to this previous totalising pressure, their politics of toleration still affected the Puritans of New England, but in a different way. The New Englanders were no longer subject to persecution, but neither could they make a claim for hegemony, either political or ecclesiological, in New England life. Their purity of polity seemed part of an older fading world.[66] Such cultural pressures on the Puritan experiment severely tested the boundaries of distinctiveness at the heart of their reasons for migration.

While agricultural and political pressures are readily observable, or at least identifiable, it was a less obvious epistemological pressure, which in the end perniciously impacted the identity of the Congregationalist churches in the New World. It was the growth of deist thought in England, generated for instance by Sir Isaac Newton's discoveries of 'Nature viewed as matter in motion, governed by laws capable of

[64] Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, 52.
[65] See Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal,* 184-214 for a substantial report on the often neglected issues of remigration.
[66] The changes to Puritan conceptualising of faith and polity are exemplified in the demise of marital imagery in Puritan preaching, which had stressed covenanted, corporate and organic frameworks. Voluntary and contractual relationships between autonomous individuals undermined the power of images of union, though this transformation occurred later in the colonies than in Britain itself. See Michael P. Winship, 'Behold the Bridegroom Cometh! Marital Imagery in Massachusetts Preaching, 1630-1730,' *Early American Literature* 27/3 (1992): 170-184, especially 178-180.

mathematical expression,'[67] and the philosophy of Locke, who argued that all knowledge of the world was to be derived inductively from the senses, which in time created ruptures in the Congregational Way. Unlike the animosity expressed towards the church by philosophers in France, these thinkers were confessedly Christian. As Porter explains, 'Enlightenment in Britain took place within, rather than against, Protestantism.'[68] The Enlightened proclivity in England to work within and through the structures of the world and the church made for a more 'reasonable' faith. Indeed, the independence of Congregational churches was increasingly interpreted as 'disorderly' in a world dominated by Anglican and Latitudinarian conceptions of 'order.'[69] In the long term, the Enlightenment project undermined still further the already unstable order of Puritan ecclesiology by forcing apart options for renewal. At the same time, however, the Enlightenment did give new tools for describing, propagating and experiencing the Christian Gospel, which came to expression in the revivals.[70]

The Congregational churches of New England began their 'mission' in the New World at a time in Western history when many of the ecclesiological assumptions taken for granted for so long were coming unravelled. Despite painful disagreements with the established Church of England, the churches of New England were born with the expectation that they too would monopolise the polity of the new territory. They were ill prepared not just for the contingencies they would meet, but also for the political and cultural changes soon to overtake them *and* the land from which they had fled, though such were not easy to anticipate. Their very *raison d'être* would be distorted, causing them to ask fundamental questions of God's purpose for them and for the church beyond New England, and how they might better serve God's intentions within history. The purpose of the church as a prophetic contrast with the world, or as a more meagre aspiration to house and protect those rejected by the world, was at issue.

In all these ways, the century preceding Jonathan Edwards's birth saw an extraordinary ecclesiological recalibration, the results of which he

[67] Porter, *Enlightenment,* 138.
[68] Porter, *Enlightenment,* 99.
[69] Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials*, 107.
[70] See David W. Bebbington, 'Evangelical Christianity and the Enlightenment,' in *The Gospel in the Modern World: A Tribute to John Stott* (ed. M. Eden, David F. Wells; Leicester: IVP, 1991), Gerald R. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths* (Oxford: University Press, 2000), and Josh Moody, *Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment: Knowing the Presence of God* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005).

managed and adapted in his own ministries in New Haven, New York, Northampton, Stockbridge and Princeton. The 'light on the hill' appeared to have been eclipsed by the 'candle-light of human reason,' or perhaps was in danger of being smothered altogether. The mission of the church was to be redefined in Edwards's teaching given the breakdown of assumptions concerning Christendom. The purposes of history in relation to the church were likewise to be clarified by him, as he renewed his vision for Christian community by first engaging with the debates from within his own family concerning faith, conversion, and covenant ownership. The disputed place of Edwards himself in these debates becomes the burden of the following section.

2.1 CHURCH OF EARLY EXPERIENCE: NEGOTIATING FAMILY AND FAITH

Sometimes Mr Smith and I walked there together, to converse of … the glorious things that God would accomplish for his church in the latter days. (*WJE* 16: 797)

Edwards had to decide in his earliest years how to appropriate the gift of his New England ecclesiological heritage, how to nail his own theological colours to the mast, without damaging or disowning thanklessly the patrimony preserved for him. First of all, he had to come to terms with the impact of his own immediate family, especially Timothy his father and Esther his mother, on his formation and nurture:

> 46. Resolved, never to allow the least measure of any fretting uneasiness at my father or mother. Resolved to suffer no effects of it, so much as in the least alteration of speech, or motion of my eye: and to be especially careful of it, with respect to any of our family.[1]

Then, he had to confront the long shadow of his maternal grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, whose own ecclesiological innovations and revered reputation, amongst other authority figures in a world of hierarchical deference, were no less intimidating.[2] He resolved to pursue independence of mind:

> Monday, Sept. 23. [1723] I observe that old men seldom have any advantage of new discoveries, because they are beside a way of thinking, they have been so long used to. Resolved, if ever I live to years, that I will be impartial to hear the reasons of all pretended discoveries, and receive them if rational, how long so ever I have been used to another way of thinking.[3]

In effect, Jonathan had to renegotiate spiritual allegiances with members of his own family in order to begin his ecclesiological journey of discovery. The angst of an earnest young man coming to terms with his own familial and social context in his 'Resolutions' and 'Diary' sets up his ecclesiological deliberations.

Upbringing and the Challenge of Ecclesiology

There was sufficient of the new and the old within his immediate family to make this process of discernment an onerous task. Edwards was born into the manse, with his father, Timothy Edwards (1669-1758), a clergyman of rigorous and intelligent stamp. Serving in East Windsor for 64 years and having overseen a number of periods of revival in his

[1] Jonathan Edwards, 'Resolutions,' in *Letters and Personal Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 16; ed. G. S. Claghorn; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 756. This resolution was drafted early in 1723.
[2] See Ralph J. Coffman, *Solomon Stoddard* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978) for a substantial biography.
[3] Edwards, 'Diary,' *WJE* 16: 781. It should be noted that throughout this thesis I refer to Edwards's writings using the abbreviated title (*WJE*) of the volume from the Yale edition after the first appearance, followed by the volume number and page number being cited, and only provide the name of the actual piece of writing when a volume contains multiple pieces.

congregation, he had lived and worked in a near-wilderness setting, with responsibilities for erecting palisades against Indian incursions, farming, and local politics; and educating his eleven children, of whom Jonathan was the fifth, and the only boy. Being prepared for pastoral leadership from his earliest days was, not surprisingly, Jonathan's lot. Timothy was from an established Puritan family of Welsh extraction, was trained for the ministry at Harvard under the prevailing philosophical deductivism of Petrus Ramus,[4] graduating in 1691, and held fast to the traditions as handed down to him both in his family and in his education. Agreeing that God's grace was uncontrollable, he simplified the steps of preparation which a seeker might be expected to travel to find grace to just three: conviction, humiliation, then regeneration.[5] He had, however, exacting views of the requirements for admission to the Lord's Supper, and maintained the traditional New England defence of local church autonomy.[6] His bias was towards preserving *purity of church membership*, even while loosening, to some degree, the pattern for preparation for grace.[7]

Solomon Stoddard, on the other hand, who occupied the pulpit of the Congregational church in Northampton, Massachusetts, from 1672 to 1729,[8] and who had proved himself to be a giant in matters ecclesiastical along the Connecticut River valley, was an irascible defender of the preparationist model of salvation, although on his own terms.[9] Stoddard held that stages in conversion *were* indeed necessary, in order to rid those seeking faith of any belief that their own efforts were meritorious. Jones reminds us that '[p]reparation was a safeguard against presumption in a most presumptuous age. It was not a guarantee of salvation but a purely negative doctrine that taught men not to trust their own works.'[10] He upheld the remarkable position that the Lord's Supper should function

[4] William Sparkes Morris, *The Young Jonathan Edwards: A Reconstruction* (The Jonathan Edwards Classic Studies Series; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 70.
[5] George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 26-28.
[6] Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards: A Theological Life,' in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. H. Lee; Princeton: University Press, 2005), 1-2.
[7] Zakai notes that even with three steps distinguished, this morphology of conversion was distinct from the original Lutheran model, which could be reduced to two, namely a repentant response to law, and a believing response to grace. See Avihu Zakai, 'The Conversion of Jonathan Edwards,' *Journal of Presbyterian History* 76/2 (1998): 127-138, especially 133.
[8] Jonathan's father Timothy had married Esther, the first child of Stoddard to Esther Mather Stoddard, in 1694. She was the widow of the first minister of Northampton, Eleazer Mather.
[9] Stoddard 'never doubted the truth of the preparationist, step-by-step description of conversion; he did doubt that any reliable procedure for distinguishing true faith from its imitations could be constructed on the basis of that description.' See David Laurence, 'Jonathan Edwards, Solomon Stoddard, and the Preparationist Model of Conversion,' *Harvard Theological Review* 72/3-4 (1979): 267-283, especially 267.
[10] James W. Jones, *The Shattered Synthesis: New England Puritanism before the Great Awakening* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), 119.

not merely as an affirmation and seal of conversion already won, but also as an opportunity to receive grace at the beginning of the Christian walk. During the period of preparation for salvation, the sacraments ought to be open to any who shunned a scandalous life and were credally sound.[11] Stoddard privileged the *pursuit of conversion* over the provisions for *purity of church membership*.[12] His oversight of five 'harvests' in Northampton, spiritual seasons of intensified and revived commitment to the claims of Christ, encouraged by 'hell-fire preaching,' appeared to validate his approach.[13]

Secondly, such a diluted view of church membership was further supported by Stoddard's view of leadership, which stressed the advantages of top-down authority and which marginalised the Congregationalist commitment to the participation of the laity in the affairs of the church.[14] The incipient Presbyterianism of Connecticut's Saybrook Platform (1708) was more congenial to Stoddard as a framework for the rights and responsibilities of the leadership of the fellowship. Essentially, a *national covenant*, designed to secure God's providential blessing, was of greater importance to Stoddard than protecting the purity of the local congregation, guaranteed through *representative leadership*.[15] Indeed, Stoddard was of the view that the people of the frontier were not able to govern responsibly in church affairs due to a critical lack of education and time.[16] His geographical context shaped his 'instrumental ecclesiology' greatly.[17] He countenanced the expectation that God would act in this world using *means* to form a people for himself albeit gradually,[18] and that the best *means* to promote the Gospel was to form something like a *national church*, drawing on Old Testament models.[19] While sharply worded, Miller makes a not unhelpful contrast between western and eastern Massachusetts:

> Frontier individualism, common-sense and contempt for tradition resulted in benevolent despotism, while loyalty to the past and sophistical speculation in

[11] Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 284.
[12] Minkema, 'A Theological Life,' 2.
[13] Edwards, like his grandfather, saw the value of awakening sinners through the preaching of hell-fire. See Schafer, 'Solomon Stoddard,' 330, 341.
[14] Cotton Mather with other contemporaries in Boston were particularly aggrieved by this innovation and the threat that it represented to the New England Way, expressing his concern through veiled allusions in his work *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702). See Miller, 'Solomon Stoddard,' 294-302.
[15] Schafer, 'Solomon Stoddard,' 332, 339.
[16] Miller, 'Solomon Stoddard,' 310-312.
[17] Meigs, 'Half-Way Covenant,' 150.
[18] Meigs, 'Half-Way Covenant,' 151-152.
[19] Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening,* 285. Marsden points out that Stoddard increasingly affirms Old Testament conceptualities, while others like Timothy Edwards made efforts to create purity in the congregation, drawing on significant New Testament themes. See Marsden, *A Life,* 31.

> Boston resulted in a defence of personal freedom and the liberty of the covenant.[20]

Giving further weight to his already high view of the authority of the clerical caste as God's messengers, Stoddard viewed the divine covenant, focussed in his ministerial representative, as necessary to mitigate the potentially capricious power of God.[21] In his discourse of 1687 entitled *The Safety of Appearing at the Day of Judgment in the Righteousness of Christ*, the themes of preparatory humiliation, grace and covenant were outlined,[22] and membership of the covenant community was, in the words of De Jong, 'completely externalised.'[23] A covenantal ministry of Word and sacraments, mediated by the clergy, was adequate without tightly circumscribed criteria for congregational membership to provide both objective and subjective assurance of divine benevolence for individual Christians.[24] Signs of regenerating grace in an individual's life were neither required nor sufficient for assurance when confronting either the limited epistemological capacity of human beings or the absolute and naked power of God.[25] If clerical authority in New England had traditionally been based on received prestige, then in Solomon Stoddard we see a new stage, in which aristocratic control and professional expertise or success are added to the established measures.[26] His epithet of 'Pope of the Connecticut River Valley' reflected his social position. Stoddard promoted both *national* and *individual* covenants, while demoting the significance of covenant with the *local church*.[27] It was puzzling to Stoddard, therefore, that despite his openness to more indiscriminate participation in communion, there were still many in Northampton who declined to participate in the Lord's Supper.[28]

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[20] Miller, 'Solomon Stoddard,' 311.
[21] Miller, 'Solomon Stoddard,' 287-288.
[22] Holifield, *Theology in America,* 66-68.
[23] Peter Y. De Jong, *The Covenant Idea in New England Theology: 1620-1847* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945), 130.
[24] Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, 228.
[25] Holifield, *Theology in America,* 34-42. The case is made here for the connection in traditional Reformed thought between the doctrine of divine accommodation or condescension, and the appeal to the doctrine of the covenant, which allows for apparently divergent doctrines to be reconciled through use of the flexible term of covenant, in this case the absolute power of God and the moral responsibility of human beings.
[26] J. William T. Youngs, *God's Messengers: Religious Leadership in Colonial New England, 1700-1750* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 138.
[27] Schafer, 'Solomon Stoddard,' 358.
[28] David D. Hall, 'The New England Background,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. J. Stein; Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 71. The declension theory of religious commitment in Puritan New England does not adequately deal with the possibility that a decrease in the numbers of communicant members is the result of increased religious scrupulosity.

The stakes were high for Jonathan.[29] He would have had to make a decision between the different ecclesiological approaches espoused by his father and grandfather, even if he had not been invited in 1726 to work alongside his grandfather in the congregation at Northampton, and to be prepared as Elisha to take over the mantle from Elijah.[30] It is from his 'Personal Narrative,'[31] an extended autobiographical reflection describing events and attitudes from the early 1720s, in particular his conversion, that shifting allegiances within his wider family can be plotted, and his later desire to demonstrate independence of mind from an early age can be traced.[32] In Puritan New England, any revision in understanding of conversion had ecclesiological ramifications, for 'conversion was the means whereby the purity of the church and the stability of the state were to be maintained,' though in the course of the Great Awakening 'conversion became the religious source to express an intense dissatisfaction with the religious and the social status quo.'[33] Either way, Edwards's reflections on his conversion would have serious consequences for his understanding of the church.

Conversion and a Decision for Ecclesiology

Purportedly written by Edwards at the behest of his future son-in-law Aaron Burr to provide some kind of relation of his own conversion, the 'Personal Narrative' was brought to print in 1765 by Samuel Hopkins, a later disciple of Edwards.[34] It is a narrative, in which Edwards describes his devout childhood, irresolute adolescence and formative college years from the perspective of his own experiences of saving grace; indeed, it first had the title (provided by others) 'An Account of his Conversion, Experiences and Religious Exercises, Given by Himself,' then 'The Conversion of President Edwards,' both of which suggest more distinctly than the title 'Personal Narrative' its character as a document intended

[29] While the immediate circle of Edwards's family was pursuing a ministry of practical divinity, Jonathan's earliest extant writings were not chiefly concerned with theology narrowly defined but with topics current in trans-Atlantic natural philosophy, for example the discourse 'Of Insects' in 1719, then 'Of the Rainbow,' 'Of Light Rays,' 'Of Atoms,' and 'Of Being' during 1721, reflecting a precocious mind and keen powers of scientific observation. See Jonathan Edwards, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 6. Edited by Wallace E. Anderson; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980) for suggestions of other interests and distractions.
[30] At Stoddard's funeral, William Williams makes this very comparison. See Schafer, 'Solomon Stoddard,' 332.
[31] Edwards, 'Personal Narrative,' *WJE* 16: 790-804.
[32] It should be noted that this narrative was written substantially later, in December 1740, even though it treats early incidents in his life.
[33] Jerald C. Brauer, 'Conversion: From Puritanism to Revivalism,' *The Journal of Religion* 58/3 (1978): 227-243, especially 238.
[34] W. Clark Gilpin, '"Inward, Sweet Delight in God": Solitude in the Career of Jonathan Edwards,' *Journal of Religion* 82/4 (2002): 523-538.

for public consumption.[35] The account of two personal 'seasons of awakening' and the ultimate discovery of a 'new sense of things,' appealing judiciously to the Scriptures, but replete with references to, and words cognate with, 'holiness,' is the core of the narration.[36] Significantly, Edwards sets his personal awakening against the backdrop of Reformed theological debates as to the sovereignty of God and self-consciously within the realm of the material order:

> And as I was walking there [in my father's pasture], and looked up on the sky and clouds; there came into my mind, a sweet sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction: majesty and meekness joined together: it was a sweet and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness.[37]

What is most striking at first reading is the almost complete absence of any ecclesiological content at all. New insights are not received by listening to the preached Word, nor is there any reference to attending divine service or participating in the sacraments. At one place, he acknowledges that he stops on a Sunday – 'At Saybrook we went ashore to lodge on Saturday, and there kept Sabbath; where I had a sweet and refreshing season, walking alone in the fields'[38] – but makes no reference to church attendance, and deliberately remarks on being alone. Indeed, many of his most astounding experiences of God are connected to his own solitary perambulations in nature.[39] While he acknowledges that even as a boy he would chart a course towards 'secret places ... in the woods, where I used to retire by myself,' it was as an adult that he 'walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation,' and 'used to spend abundance of my time, in walking alone in the woods, and solitary places, for meditation, soliloquy and prayer, and converse with God.'[40] It almost appears at points in the narrative that nature functions quasi-sacramentally, being the material means by which God's grace is conveyed to him, obviating any Protestant suspicion that such means are generated by human activity.[41] However much these incidents

[35] Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Personal Writings,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. J. Stein; Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 49-51.
[36] The progress from self-absorption, to an acknowledgement of Christ's achievements, and climactically an appreciation of the 'divine being,' before personal appropriation of salvation, marks the suspenseful trajectory of the piece. Zakai, 'Conversion,' 129-131.
[37] Edwards, 'Personal Narrative,' *WJE* 16: 793.
[38] Edwards, 'Personal Narrative,' *WJE* 16: 798.
[39] However, unlike early New English conversion narratives, Edwards does not give precise details when he describes geographic places. See Caldwell, *Puritan Conversion Narrative,* 26. DeProspo concurs: 'What Edwards considers to have been his true conversion is related in the personal narrative without a single mention of time, place, or person. Companions and locales are associated with the false conversions that precede it.' See R. C. DeProspo, 'The "New Simple Idea" of Edwards' Personal Narrative,' *Early American Literature* 14/2 (1979): 193-204.
[40] Edwards, 'Personal Narrative,' *WJE* 16: 791, 793, 794.
[41] George S. Claghorn, 'Introduction,' in *Letters and Personal Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 16; ed. G. S. Claghorn; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 749.

are couched in language reflecting debates from the 1730s, it remains true that these experiences of aloneness were critical to the sequence of growing acceptance of divine purposes. Gilpin suggests an eschatological motif:

> Solitude gave the foretaste of heaven, not because Edwards was alone but because there he expressed his affections toward the other or the one, unimpeded.[42]

Of great ecclesiological interest to us nonetheless is the way that this account positions Edwards in the debate about preparation for salvation, in as far as he sidesteps any advocacy for a morphology of conversion.[43] He does not identify a single moment at which he might apply the soteriological transfer language of moving from death to life, or from darkness to light. Indeed, he confides in his diary from the period in a more straightforward fashion that the absence of a clear progression of experience in saving grace was for him destabilising:

> Monday morning, Aug. 12. [1723] The chief thing, that now makes me in any measure to question my good estate, is my not having experienced conversion in those particular steps, wherein the people of New England, and anciently the Dissenters of Old England, used to experience it. [44]

He had experienced intense religious emotions as a boy, and had had 'seasons of awakening' as an adolescent when God dangled him 'over the pit of hell,'[45] but even his growth towards an experience of the 'new sense' defied categorisation. He remarks that 'it never seemed to be proper to express my concern that I had, by the name of terror,' nor 'never could give an account, how, or by what means, I was thus [eventually] convinced.'[46] Remarkably, it never dawned on him that 'there was anything spiritual, or of a saving nature in this.'[47] Indeed, Edwards is quick to point out that if there were no clear steps towards conversion at the beginning of his story, nor is there towards its end:

> [I]t seems to me, that in some respects I was a far better Christian, for two or three years after my conversion, than I am now; and lived in a more constant delight and pleasure.[48]

Edwards does not experience a light, like Paul, nor does he feel tormented like Augustine or Luther, but he enjoys spiritual harmony and proportion, and reconciles with the absolute power of God: Zakai, 'Conversion,' 135.

[42] Gilpin, 'Solitude in the Career of Jonathan Edwards,' 537.

[43] In this he echoes traditional Calvinist views, in which penitence is radically displaced from first position in the *ordo salutis* and yields to faith as the primary response to grace. See Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards,* 48.

[44] Jonathan Edwards, 'Diary,' in *Letters and Personal Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 16; ed. G. S. Claghorn; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 779.

[45] Edwards, 'Personal Narrative,' *WJE* 16: 791.

[46] It is significant that Edwards uses here the language of 'terror,' known as a conversionary strategy in the preaching of Stoddard, and common to significant conversion accounts from history, which exhibit 'dramatic occurrences of supernatural power or nature's violence.' Zakai, 'Conversion,' 133.

[47] Edwards, 'Personal Narrative,' *WJE* 16: 793.

[48] Edwards, 'Personal Narrative,' *WJE* 16: 803.

Most tantalising of all is the oblique reference to a conversation with his father after arriving at his 'new sense.' Having expatiated on a new 'inward sweetness,' and on being metaphorically 'alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, far from all mankind, sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapped and swallowed up in God ... that I know not how to express,' he is able prosaically to express the account which he gave to his father 'of some things that had passed in my mind.' Concrete validation of his experience was sought, even though Timothy maintained the expectation of a more rigorous sequence. This is immediately followed up by a description of further sweet transports 'that I know not how to express.'[49] It is unclear, however, just how satisfying the conversation was, as he describes his resulting state ambiguously as 'pretty much affected by the discourse we had together."[50] I take it that it was a difficult exchange, not least because of the contrast between the warmth of Christian fellowship which he so enjoyed with the Smith family, his spiritual kin, while ministering in a Presbyterian congregation in New York, and from which he so reluctantly departed, perhaps at his father's prompting, and the experience of his return to his biological family in what was then Massachusetts:

> After I came home to Windsor, remained much in a like frame of my mind, as I had been in at New York; but only sometimes felt my heart ready to sink, with the thoughts of my friends at New York. And my refuge and support was in contemplations on the heavenly state.[51]

Kimnach most helpfully draws our attention to contemporaneous entries in Edwards's 'Diary' and 'Resolutions,' which further support the contention that Jonathan had been struggling with a significant disagreement with his father for some time over his own suitability for Christian ministry given his unorthodox progress. In Kimnach's estimation:

> On the issue of the proper morphology of conversion he [Timothy] seems to have been a liberal traditionalist, adhering to a simplified step theory while admitting the possibility of unpredictable personal variations from the norm.

[49] Edwards, 'Personal Narrative,' WJE 16: 793.
[50] Though the language describing his meeting with his father is restrained in contrast to the descriptions around it, and though that conversation is summarised as a *discourse* with quasi-technical precision, Morris merely asserts that Jonathan met with his father to have 'confirmed the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit.' See Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards,* 553. My reading suggests that the encounter was less cordial than Morris believes. DeProspo highlights the independence of Jonathan's divine dependence from his filial one: DeProspo, "'New Simple Idea,'" 200. Grabo comments briefly that the reference to the Smiths and to Timothy Edwards functions as a narratival strategy of intensification: Norman S. Grabo, 'Jonathan Edwards' *Personal Narrative*: Dynamic Stasis,' *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 2/3 (1969): 141-148. Zakai takes a more positive reading: Zakai, 'Conversion,' 131-132.
[51] Edwards, 'Personal Narrative,' *WJE* 16: 798. The church in New York in which Edwards served as supply preacher was a small house fellowship resulting from a church split (rather than a formally instituted congregation), enabling a particularly intense experience of Christian fellowship. See Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons and Discourses 1720-1723* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 10. Edited by Wilson H. Kimnach; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 262.

> Perhaps his distinguishing trait, however, was an intense desire for personal oversight and control ... he probably tended to dominance, if not manipulation ... there is little to support the notion of Timothy Edwards' being either very tolerant of the unconventional or particularly responsive to idiosyncratic approaches to spirituality, especially in the case of his own dear son whom he was carefully molding to fill the expectations of family and the profession of the Puritan ministry.[52]

Jonathan hesitates to adopt the kind of relation of grace, which had been expected by his father in East Windsor, a relation which assumed an experience that could be described with certitude and confidence. Even if grace was not controllable, in this model it was definable. Demonstrating his aversion, when he writes the 'Personal Narrative,' his recital of early spiritual developments is expressed in the philosophical vernacular of the eighteenth century, appealing to 'sense' and with a caution concerning the adequacy of words. Though expression of a relation of grace before acceptance into full membership was essentially crossing a *narratival threshold*, he self-consciously contrasts his relation of grace to that upheld by his father through *narratival summation,* written not to win *new entry* to the church but to confirm *new morphology*. This artifice made the distinction from his father's ecclesiology all the more powerful.[53]

Furthermore, a less personal and more theological antipathy towards precision in conversionist morphology is expressed by Edwards in other writings from the 1720s. In 'Misc.' 317,[54] headed 'The Work of Humiliation,' Edwards affirms some level of self-conscious decision on behalf of the seeker to move towards owning Christ, for 'it is necessary for the soul to suppose that he can't be his own savior and that he deserves ruin, when he actually receives Christ and his salvation as a free gift. 'Tis impossible to receive him as a free gift without supposing so at the same time.' However, Edwards is not persuaded that individuals are 'always brought to a conviction of the insufficiency of their own strength and righteousness by their own experience of its ineffectualness, as in the multitudes that were in a few hours converted by the preaching of the

[52] Wilson H. Kimnach, 'Preface to the New York Period,' in *Sermons and Discourses 1720-1723* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 10; ed. W. H. Kimnach; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 271-272, 275.
[53] Such a pastoral narrative, as distinct from larger grand narratives or narratives to demonstrate the relation of grace, allows for personal disorientation, provisional conclusions, and slow achievements, making a significant statement concerning his ultimate position. See Amy P. Pauw, 'Edwards as American Theologian: Grand Narratives and Personal Narratives,' in *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Tercentenary of his Birth* (eds. H. S. Stout, K. P. Minkema and C. J. D. Maskell; Lanham: University Press of America, 2005), 18.
[54] I follow in this thesis the citation system for miscellanies which is adopted by Sang Hyun Lee: see Sang Hyun Lee, ed. *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton: University Press, 2005), xxi.

apostles."[55] Indeed, God may choose to bring a sense of conviction to an individual using their 'rational consideration' as much as by appealing to 'lively strong imaginations of misery and danger,' for in such cases 'God don't make so much use of the imagination as he does in others; they ben't so disposed to it, neither is there that need of it."[56] He sits loose to monomaniacal methods of ecclesiological incorporation.

Preparation, Purity and Ecclesiological Principle

It appears that Edwards is making a most delicate ecclesiological case in his early writings and in the 'Personal Narrative.' He is distancing himself from his grandfather's preparationist model of conversion, dependent on the preaching of terror to invoke contrition, which relied on *traditional means* of grace, such as sermons, sacraments and clerical ministrations, to enable the possibility of ownership of a social as much as spiritual covenant.[57] On the other hand, he appears only on the surface to be endorsing the alternative frame of reference of his father, distancing himself from Timothy's expectations of a more *traditional experience and relation* of grace.[58] As Jonathan later wrote in his preface to *Freedom of the Will*, he was beholden to no one in formulating his own views, not even those closest to him.[59] Effectively, he had navigated himself towards an ecclesiological position akin to the minority Puritan party of seventeenth century New England, in which neither preparation nor narrative were sufficient indicators of true religion.

Edwards's view of God permits of surprising intrusions of grace into individuals' lives, potentially marginalising the church, which it appears had played little formal role in discretely mediating grace to him, while lacking confidence in the divine work in his experience. While he never dismissed out of hand God's capacity and desire to use means to appointed ends, such predictable channels were not constitutive of the shape of grace. *Grace* could be unpredictable in its effusion, but it confirmed for Edwards his exalted and yet dependent place within the

[55] 'Misc.' 317, Jonathan Edwards, *The "Miscellanies" (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 13. Edited by Thomas A. Schafer; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 398.
[56] 'Misc.' 325, *WJE* 13: 405. A similar point is made in the sermon 'True Repentance Required,' where Edwards writes: 'I do not say that a true penitent's thoughts always run exactly in this order, but I say that they are of this nature, and do arise from this principle.' See Edwards, *WJE* 10: 514.
[57] It is nevertheless true that in preaching to his New York congregation, Edwards was prepared to advocate the traditional means of grace, though warning against their observance with no inward reality. See Edwards, *WJE* 10: 335, 367, 375.
[58] Minkema, 'A Theological Life,' 2-3.
[59] See Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 1. Edited by Paul Ramsey; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957), 131.

natural order, which served as a venue to glorify God's immanence.[60] In traditional language, grace served to perfect nature and not destroy it. Edwards ignored neither the theological nor the ecclesiological debates which preceded him, pretending that he could, in primitivist fashion, reconstruct the nature of the church from scratch, based on either biblical or pragmatic considerations. Rather he takes both a principled and moderating stance in an attempt to resolve the most recent debates endangering both delicate New England ecclesiological stability and responsibilities to filial piety. Church neither channels nor controls the mediation of grace, but, as we shall see, conscripts such an experience into larger redemptive purposes for the world.[61]

[60] Zakai, 'Conversion,' 136.
[61] Zakai, 'Conversion,' 135.

2.2 CHURCH IN TWO WORLDS: RECONCILING PROVIDENCE AND APOCALYPSE

Here is represented the glorious increase of the church: that whereas during the times of tribulation in its suffering state, it was confined ... only to the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, now in its state of liberty and triumph, it shall consist of all nations. (*WJE* 5: 161)

Jonathan Edwards's conversion in the summer of 1721 almost immediately began to recalibrate his thought. He acknowledged that he had developed an appreciation for the sovereignty of God which formerly was lacking. He added to his interest in scientific reflection concern for philosophical questions concerning the mind, being, and the nature of knowledge. While at Yale as an undergraduate (1716-1720), then as a graduate student (1720-1722), he began to defend Reformed teaching, not least the doctrines of justification and post-mortem judgement which occupy him in his Masters defence in 1723, as well as pursuing opportunities for a ministry of the Word in New York (1722-1723), Bolton (1723-1724), and at Yale as a tutor (1724-1726). His apprenticeship under Solomon Stoddard (1727-1729), before taking on sole responsibilities in the Northampton church upon Stoddard's death in 1729, was to be his chief venue for sermonic instruction. What is most striking in his earliest sermons before 1729, however, is the almost complete absence of preaching on the topic of ecclesiology itself, or reference to eschatology beyond questions of individual retribution or bliss, perhaps due to the fact that he has not yet been faced with sustained leadership challenges in an institutional setting. The corporate nature of salvation could easily be overlooked in the writings of Edwards from the 1720s.

Indeed, the material containing some of the most helpful early explanations of the role of the church in the world appears in Edwards's apocalyptic writings, notably 'The Notes on the Apocalypse,'[1] begun in October 1723. It is of great significance then that the 'Apocalypse'[2] has

[1] The section in the Yale edition entitled 'Notes on the Apocalypse' contains several smaller units: a brief exposition of the book of Revelation chapter by chapter, a sequence of ninety-three notes on particular exegetical issues from the book of Revelation known as the 'Apocalypse Series,' a ninety-fourth entry consisting entirely of quotations from Moses Lowman's *Paraphrase and Notes* outlining world history and its connection to Revelation, a brief essay critiquing Lowman called 'Remarks,' a scrapbook or 'apocalyptic ledger' composed after 1747 listing events which may be confirmed through the book of Revelation called prosaically 'An Account of Events Probably Fulfilling the Sixth Vial on the River Euphrates, the News of which was Received since October 16, 1747,' a list of events describing evangelical successes called 'Events of an Hopeful Aspect on the State of Religion,' and finally a 'Tractate on Revelation 16:12.' The final section of this volume contains 'An Humble Attempt,' to be dealt with elsewhere in this work. See Jonathan Edwards, *Apocalyptic Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 5. Edited by Stephen J. Stein; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 95-305.

[2] Note that I shall use the title 'Apocalypse' in quotation marks to identify this notebook of Edwards; otherwise, without quotation marks the Apocalypse refers to the Book of Revelation, the last book of the canonical Scriptures.

been published by the Yale Works of Jonathan Edwards in 1977 after being virtually unknown, and in substance unquarried, for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[3] The only Scriptural book to have its own dedicated notebook in Edwards's corpus, the Revelation to St John plays a significant part in Edwards's attempts to combat the 'desacralisation' of history, which had been promoted through Enlightenment historiography, itself espousing a vision of *historia humana*.[4] He also wanted to reposition New England in Puritan apocalyptic speculation, by reinterpreting the elements of the Apocalypse and distancing himself from seventeenth century assumptions concerning the particularism of the New World project. Of note is the fact that, as a private repository of thoughts, Edwards confided in the 'Apocalypse' notebook in ways he was not prepared to do through sermons. This notebook, alongside the sequence of theological commonplaces known as the 'Miscellanies,' of which those composed before the death of Solomon Stoddard in 1729 are numbered a-z, aa-zz, 1-386,[5] function as initial ruminations on themes which were to be made public and used more systematically later in his writing or preaching, containing for our purposes several which expound apocalyptic themes.

The 'Apocalypse' contains significant ecclesiological content because, like his predecessors in New England, Edwards affirms that stream of historical interpretation which views the book of Revelation as a confirmation of the centrality of the sixteenth century Reformation to church history, and which consequently attests the significance of the ongoing struggle between the Protestant interest[6] and Roman Catholic nations' grasp at international hegemony. His guiding hermeneutic is the identity of papal authority with the counterfeit ministry of the Antichrist,[7] and his approach to Revelation is to assume that the first half presents a broad perspective on world history, while the second half is concerned more narrowly with the fate of the church within it.[8] Edwards writes:

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[3] Stephen J. Stein, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *Apocalyptic Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 5; ed. S. J. Stein; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 79-82.
[4] Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History: The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton: University Press, 2003), 141.
[5] Edwards, *WJE* 13: 95-305.
[6] See Thomas S. Kidd, *The Protestant Interest: New England after Puritanism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), which describes the process in New England of creating a pan-Protestant interest after the emasculation of Puritan categories of identity formation.
[7] Stein, 'Editor's Introduction,' 12.
[8] This is the model developed by Joseph Mede (1586-1639), who argued that the 'little scroll' of Revelation 10:2 provides the content for the latter half of the book of Revelation. See James West

> For the method of these visions is first, to give a more general representation of things, and then afterwards, a more distinct description of the particular changes and revolutions that are the subjects of them. Thus in this chapter [eleven], things are more generally spoken to and run over, even the last overthrow of the enemies of the kingdom of Christ. But in the next chapter, things that were before but generally touched upon, are resumed, and we have a more particular description: the church's warfare with and conquest of heathenism, and Satan's ejection out of his kingdom.[9]

Edwards takes an historicist reading of the text,[10] which sees its prophecies corresponding to events within history, and significantly equates the *prophecy* of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3) with the Waldenses and the Albigenses,[11] and the *resurrection and ascension* of the two witnesses after persecution (Revelation 11:11-12) with the Reformation of the sixteenth century:

> They are now got forever out of the reach of their enemies. Antichrist will never be able again to quell Christianity, and conquer the Reformation, do what he will.[12]

Under Edwards's schema, the vials or bowls of God's wrath (Revelation 15-17) are poured out on the Roman Catholic church beginning most recently with the triumphs 'in Wicliff's, Hus's, and Jerome of Prague's days' followed by the second vial 'at and after Luther's days."[13] The third vial corresponded to the drying up of the rivers of Roman Catholic teaching and teachers, in essence calamities upon the Kingdom of France as a 'source' of popery, which Edwards may have understood to be contemporaneous with his writing.[14] Though Edwards had cause to adjust the schedule of the vials in the course of later writing, intimating that his own day witnessed the fulfilment of the prophecy of the *sixth* vial,[15] either way the impact of his case was most significant. The power of antichristian opposition to the Gospel was being undermined with every vial poured, the most treacherous days of the church lay in the past, the life of the church must shortly prosper, and any future tribulations for the pilgrim people of God in this world must surely be interpreted as the darkness immediately before the dawn, or the increasing travails of a woman about to give birth.[16] In Edwards's

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Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 46.

[9] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 106-107.

[10] Such an approach to the book of Revelation contrasts with a preterist or a futurist reading, which place its substance in the past or the future respectively. See Clarence C. Goen, 'Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology,' *Church History* 28/1 (1959): 25-40.

[11] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 137.

[12] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 105.

[13] Edwards, *WJE* 13: 196.

[14] Edwards, *WJE* 13: 196.

[15] See Edwards, 'Account of Events Probably Fulfilling the Sixth Vial,' in *WJE* 5: 253-284, compiled after 1747. Moses Lowman held that all but the last two vials had been poured out: see Edwards, *WJE* 5: 202.

[16] See also Edwards, 'Misc.' 356, *WJE* 13: 429, where the picture is drawn of the sun returning seasonally from its southernmost latitude, though the weather in the north grow yet colder.

estimation, it is the Protestant Reformation and the impending Millennium which are the parameters constraining any understanding of the life of the church in his own day.

Edwards writes several topical entries about the church, both in the 'Apocalypse' and in the 'Miscellanies.' He describes the importance of the clerical ministry to teaching and the administration of the sacraments,[17] the propriety of quasi-synodical courts of appeal in matters of dispute,[18] the necessity of aspiring to be a visible Christian to qualify for admission to the Lord's Supper,[19] and the love of Christ which is expressed towards his spouse, the church.[20] We learn further that the strength and joy of the church is foreshadowed in the ministry of Deborah as prophetess,[21] that the book of Revelation is 'dedicated to the church of Christ in all ages,'[22] that the church was born not on the day of Pentecost, but existed from the time of Adam,[23] and that the Antichrist is Christ's rival 'for the same spouse, even the church."[24] Even a cursory reading attests the presence of ecclesiological topics in Edwards's early mind.

A closer reading of such notebook entries during the 1720s yields further ecclesiological reflection.[25] It is not just that the word 'church' or description of structures for ministry constitute theologising of the church. While Edwards distances himself from a rigorous preparationism for locating the experience of conversion in a sequence, he nevertheless shows appreciation of the natural processes of history, in which the church is embedded, and which correlate the *order of nature* with the *order of grace*. His very presuppositions concerning the reading of the book of Revelation support this. Stein makes clear that Edwards's interpretation of Revelation:

> was based on the belief that God works through the historical process to achieve his will, not in spite of or apart from that process.[26]

[17] See Edwards, 'Misc.' *mm, WJE* 13: 187.
[18] See Edwards, 'Misc.' *qq, WJE* 13: 188-189.
[19] See Edwards, 'Misc.' 338, *WJE* 13: 413.
[20] See Edwards, 'Misc.' 189, *WJE* 13: 332.
[21] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 127.
[22] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 98.
[23] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 136.
[24] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 139.
[25] No doubt Edwards had also been exposed in this early period to the defence of the Anglican polity espoused by Benjamin Hoadley, Bishop of Winchester, which had appeared in the Yale library. See Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 66.
[26] Stein, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 5: 15.

Indeed, not only does God accommodate himself to the givens of time and space, within that realm the church itself is also from divine perspective the particular 'object of providential care.'[27] In 'Misc.' *ww*, entitled 'Four Beasts,' Edwards argues that the vision of Revelation 4 provides an important framework for the remainder of the book, such that after we learn about God 'the great Beginning and Ending of all,' we learn of 'the church of God, represented by the four and twenty elders, the subject of all dispensations.'[28] The second paragraph of this entry uses the word 'providence' five times, fourteen in all in the entry, making it the theme of this vision and thereby the theme of the book of Revelation itself. Stein's thesis is that 'Edwards' interpretation of the vision of the living creatures in Revelation 4 provides such an organizing focus by disclosing theological and literary order in the Apocalypse relating to the theme of providence,'[29] for through the 'concept of providence, history and prophecy formed a continuum.'[30] While Edwards is often tarred with an apocalyptic brush, suggesting a distance from this-worldly concerns, his early commitment to the doctrine of providence makes room for a positive ecclesiology as essential to his theological constructions:

> Providence relates systematically to the doctrine of creation, for it is the means whereby God brings to pass the plans he set in motion at the time of creation. Millennialism features the future eschatological moment of triumph on earth. By contrast, providence expands the scope of eschatology, bringing past, present and future into focus within the divine economy and balancing both earthly and heavenly dimensions. This fuller providential perspective is evident in Edwards' lifelong preoccupation with the fortunes of the church militant through the ages and in the present, as well as in his concern with the glories of the church triumphant, anticipated on earth and fulfilled ultimately in heaven.[31]

Consequently, Edwards is able to present the internationalist credentials of the church. It had been a common feature of the Puritan worldview to defend a particularist notion of the nation. For example, in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* the nation of England could embody the fruit of Protestant victories in the sixteenth century, or New England could be described by Brightman as a nation in covenant with God when it appeared that Laudian persecution of Puritans or the Stuart Restoration made England's Protestant status untenable.[32] The 'sacralisation' of New England at the expense of Old England drew on the 'Exodus-style' model of the people of God fleeing the persecution of

[27] Stein, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 5: 51.
[28] See Edwards, 'Misc.' *ww, WJE* 13: 192.
[29] Stephen J. Stein, 'Providence and the Apocalypse in the Early Writings of Jonathan Edwards,' *Early American Literature* 13/3 (1978): 250-267.
[30] Stein, 'Providence and the Apocalypse,' 261.
[31] Stein, 'Providence and the Apocalypse,' 263.
[32] Indeed, Brightman makes a correspondence between England and the compromised church of Laodicea in Revelation 3. See Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom,* 52.

Egypt and despite trials arriving in the Promised Land.[33] Such a mindset would undercut any possibility or desire to demonstrate the universal fellowship of believers, or the common Gospel inheritance of the church, as it was more likely to draw crisp lines of apocalyptic demarcation between those who belonged to the beast and those who belonged to the Lamb. Edwards's providentialist groundwork, on the other hand, along with changing fortunes of Protestants in English constitutional and imperial arrangements, made for new appreciation of the universal church of Christ. Localism had been transcended:

> [I]n contrast to New England Puritan historians who construed the Puritan migration to America during the seventeenth century as a great eschatological and apocalyptic event, establishing an essential gulf between the Old and New Worlds, Edwards abandoned the vision of the glorious New World in providential history. The redemptive process concerned all Protestants, regardless of their location.[34]

Edwards made this point in the sermon 'True Nobleness of Mind,' preached early in 1728, while expounding the civic responsibilities of the virtuous citizen:

> [The Christian] is concerned for the best good of mankind; he longs for the flourishing of religion in the world, for the prosperity of Jerusalem; he rejoices when he hears any such news that religion flourishes in such and such a town or land; he prays for the propagation of religion to the heathen, and has a love to mankind in general and especially to their souls ... A natural man may be concerned for the good of the country he belongs to, but a Christian is concerned for the universal church and the world of mankind, has an universal benevolence.[35]

Contrary to much popular opinion, Edwards in his earliest writings did not argue that the millennial reign of Christ was to begin in North America. His international perspective provided him with just cause to expect the coming kingdom to be centred on the Middle East:

> As the land of Canaan is the most advantageously posited of any spot of ground on the face [of the earth], to be the place from whence the truth should shine forth, and true religion spread around into all parts of the world ... Wherefore, we do believe that the most glorious part of the church will hereafter be there, at the center of the kingdom of Christ, communicating influences to all other parts.[36]

Kidd sets such a view within the broader framework of the 1720s:

> By the late 1720s, one can sense weariness among some New England observers who had long waited for the destruction of Rome and the conversion of the Jews ... But starting in the 1720s one can also see in the broad literature of provincial New England an increasing emphasis on evangelism, missions, and the expected massive conversions preceding the second coming of Christ. Not that these beliefs had been absent before, but if news from Britain and Europe encouraged less speculations about the downfall of Rome and Jewish

[33] Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom,* 9. Zakai contrasts the 'Exodus' model of migration with the 'Genesis' model, the latter stressing the pilgrimage of Abraham in response to promise, while the former focuses upon the expulsion of the Hebrews in response to threat.
[34] Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History*, 162.
[35] Jonathan Edwards, 'True Nobleness of Mind,' in *Sermons and Discourses 1723-1729* (Works of Jonathan Edwards 14; ed. K. P. Minkema; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 238.
[36] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 133-134.

> conversions, New England's religious and cultural leadership seemed more than ready to turn their attention to an internationalist, ecumenical, and evangelical vision of conversions at the end of the world.[37]

Even when Edwards uses a large canvas upon which to paint the glories of the church, his millennial expectations in the period before 1729 are relatively modest. The entries entitled 'Millennium' for this period in the 'Miscellanies' (Nos. 26, 262 and 356) contain nothing describing an historical crisis, divine judgment or apocalyptic intervention. Rather, 'Misc.' 26 relates the spread of the knowledge of God throughout the world, such that barbarous nations become 'as bright and polite as England,' 'excellent books and wonderful performances' might come from 'Terra Australis Incognita,' and disparate nations of the world 'join the forces of their minds in exploring the glories of the Creator, their hearts in loving and adoring him, their hands in serving him, and their voices in making the world to ring with his praise."[38] 'Misc.' 262 suggests a gradually increasing likeness of this world to heaven, in as far as 'those things that more directly concern the mind and religion, will be more the saints' ordinary business than now.' Secular activity will occupy less of the average person's time, because of 'a more expedite and easy and safe communication between distant regions,' for example through the invention of the mariner's compass![39] A sense of conflict is, however, suggested in 'Misc.' 356, where an illustration from geography sets out the possibility that, just as we still sense increasing cold even after the sun has begun its course northward after the winter, so also 'vice and wickedness may increase ... after knowledge and light begin to increase.'[40] Most instructively, in the 'Exposition on the Apocalypse,' under the heading of Chapter 20, no explanation of the thousand year rule is given until an amendment is made in 1746 or 1747![41]

More detail is provided in the exegetically oriented 'Apocalypse Series.' Entry No. 16, headed 'Chapters 13 and 20,' provides some calculations which suggest that Satan's kingdom will be finally overthrown around the year 2000, and the means used to fell the enemy will not be military but rather 'blowing the trumpet of the gospel and preaching the Word of God.'[42] This entry is however more concerned with establishing

[37] Kidd, *The Protestant Interest*, 157.
[38] Edwards, 'Misc.' 26, *WJE* 13: 212.
[39] Edwards, 'Misc.' 262, *WJE* 13: 369.
[40] Edwards, 'Misc.' 356, *WJE* 13: 429.
[41] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 123, note 8.
[42] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 130. See also Entry No. 50, in which a similar argument is mounted, describing the metaphoric call of the trumpet in the preaching of the Gospel at the beginning of the seven thousand years.

the correspondence between the *type* of the Sabbath rest after six days of creation and the *antitype* of the millenarian Sabbath after 6000 years of the world's labours.[43] It is surely significant that it is the world that will rest in the 'peaceable reign of the saints,'[44] rather than the church that will rest after her trials and tribulations. The work of the church, and especially her ministers, is outlined in Entry No. 21, entitled 'Chapter 20,' where the apocalyptic focus is meagre:

> So are ministers, the stewards of God's house, to labor, that they may present the church a chaste virgin to Christ ... And God makes use of his ministers to adorn and beautify souls, that they may be fit to be the spouse of Christ; that is their work.[45]

The conclusion of history will come when Christ, having ruled over the world for the sake of his church and having defeated all the enemies of his kingdom of grace, will relinquish his mediatorial rule to God the Father and enjoy union with his bride.[46] The church in this entry is so much a part of the warp and woof of the order of nature that she is entirely passive in the movement towards her consummation in glory, entirely dependent on the supernatural intervention of Christ to achieve her appointed ends.

Edwards during the 1720s was provoked to defend God's place within the order of nature, both in terms of its physical and temporal properties, because Enlightenment philosophy had attempted to describe and systematise the operations of nature without recourse to the operations of the deity. Edwards's reflections on the book of Revelation, both public and private, are a fertile ground to demonstrate his understanding of God's work in the world, of which the church is at its heart. His forays into apocalyptic exposition are indeed a major source for our understanding of Edwards's early ecclesiology, though Zakai reminds us that his 'attempts to formulate his philosophy of history went on slowly and gradually' in this period.[47] These themes will be revisited regularly in the course of this thesis as we unpack their nuanced and evolving role.

[43] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 129-130.
[44] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 129.
[45] Edwards, *WJE* 5: 131-132.
[46] Edwards, 'Misc.' 86, *WJE* 13: 250-251.
[47] Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History*, 191.

2.3 CHURCH UNDER THREAT: CONFRONTING ENLIGHTENMENT EPISTEMOLOGY

Now, indeed, darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people, but the Lord shall arise upon his church and his glory shall be seen upon her. (*WJE* 10: 545)

While any disagreement with his family would be painful, Jonathan Edwards's most significant *contretemps* during his formative years (and indeed beyond) was with those teachers, both religious and otherwise, whose commitment to Enlightenment philosophy, whether rationalist or empiricist, left no room for the supernatural, or for morality shaped by Christian convictions. The pressure to conform to the light of most recent scholarship, and to the centralising spirit of New England's new status as province of the Empire, was seductive.[1] In this section, we will have particular reason to look at sermons and discourses, where Edwards's analyses of threats to the theological life of the church are most accessible, and his capacity to respond to them most organised. The threat of Enlightened thought would jeopardise New England's convictions concerning salvation, but significantly would also have an ecclesiological reflex which Edwards presciently saw and guarded against.

Since Perry Miller's contribution to the rehabilitation of Edwards in the middle of the twentieth century, a common approach to Edwards has been to view him through the prism of the philosophy of John Locke (1632-1704), an Englishman who had most responsibility for laying the groundwork of the Enlightenment project in the seventeenth century through his treatises *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695).[2] Locke, in turn, can be described as applying to anthropology and the study of humankind the insights of Sir Isaac Newton (1643 -1727) in the realm of natural science, in whose writings varied motions of the universe were systematised to produce fixed laws and regular patterns. The analogue in the realm of human relationships would be 'general principles that could explain all of the wide variations in human behavior in diverse societies.'[3]

Locke's philosophical modesty shied away from the extreme claims of certainty found in those schemes of thought which stressed *a priori* deductivism. On the other hand, he also shunned unbridled

[1] Alongside *philosophical* adversaries, described by Edwards as Arminians, deists, free-thinkers, or Socinians, we must also reckon with the *geopolitical* adversaries of England in North America, namely the French and the Spanish.
[2] See Moody, *Edwards and Enlightenment,* 11 note 16, for a bibliographical summary of the debate.
[3] Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials*, 60-62.

scepticism: he permitted divine revelation as long as it could be supported through the exercise of reason. Locke overturned the suspicion of sense perception germane to Platonic streams of Western philosophy, and developed a fresh approach to epistemology, in which a human being is pictured as a blank slate or *tabula rasa*, passive in receiving sensory data, and yet capable of some high degree of probability in the knowledge gleaned. Simple ideas are interpreted by us through sensations from without, and are not innate to us, though we do have some capacity to organise or connect them through reasoning, creating complex ideas.[4] Let Locke's own words make their impression:

> Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say, white Paper, void of all Characters, without any *Ideas*; How comes it to be furnished? ... To this I answer, in one Word, From *Experience*: In that, all our Knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives it self. Our Observation employ'd either about *external, sensible Objects; or about the internal Operations of our Minds, perceived and reflected on by our selves, is that, which supplies our Understandings with all the materials of thinking*. (Bk II, Chapter I, §2)
>
> [Reason] stands for a Faculty in Man, That Faculty, whereby Man is supposed to be distinguished from Beasts, and wherein it is evident he much surpasses them. (Bk IV, Chapter XVII, §1)
>
> *Reason* is natural *Revelation*, whereby the eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of all Knowledge communicates to Mankind that portion of Truth, which he has laid within reach of their natural Faculties: *Revelation* is natural *Reason* enlarged by a new set of Discoveries communicated by GOD immediately, which *Reason* vouches the Truth of, by the Testimony and Proofs it gives, that they come from GOD. (Bk IV, Chapter XIX, §4)[5]

The Collegiate School founded in 1701 and later known as Yale College,[6] whether at Saybrook, Killingworth, Wethersfield, Hartford or New Haven, had developed an eclectic syllabus which early included Locke. Availability of such new ideas was due in part to the gift from Jeremiah Dummer (1681 -1739) to the nascent institution of a library including latitudinarian books, collected in London in 1712-1713, as well as due to the deliberate intention of Yale to develop skills in logic and oral exercises drawing on a variety of metaphysical and philosophical schemes.[7] Locke was studied, alongside Virgil, Burgersdijck, Ramus, Maastricht, Heereboord, and Ames.[8] That Edwards read Locke may be

[4] Porter, *Enlightenment,* 64.
[5] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 104, 668, 698.
[6] This name, and the title of Rector for its President, were deliberately chosen to create ambiguity and to avoid the scrutiny and suspicion of London, which alone could grant licences for establishing tertiary institutions.
[7] Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, 62, 101.
[8] Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards,* 65. It however remains contested whether any distinctive characteristics of Yale's syllabus are attributable to its founding in opposition to the kind of ministerial education that Harvard provided. Bainton sees Yale's founding in conservative terms, as does Harry Stout, while Morris is more circumspect. See Bainton, *Yale and the Ministry,* 1; Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards,* 66; Stout, *The New England Soul,* 220.

assumed. Famously, Hopkins could describe Edwards's praise of *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in these words:

> Taking that book into his hand, upon some occasion, not long before his death, he said to some of his select friends, who were then with him, that he was beyond expression entertain'd and pleas'd with it, when he read it in his youth at college; that he was as much engaged, and had more satisfaction and pleasure in studying it, than the most greedy miser in gathering up handfuls of silver and gold from some new discovered treasure.[9]

Though Edwards may have enjoyed reading Locke, and it might even be argued from some of Edwards's own early writings that the psychology of Locke had been appropriated by him when he drew together the language of light and of sense,[10] we must nevertheless exercise a little caution in seeing in Edwards as too reliant on Lockean empiricism. As Brown reminds us, Edwards's epistemology contained rationalist elements, and linguistic dependence might not suggest wholehearted agreement.[11]

For Edwards, then, recent philosophical developments were not in and of themselves an adversary. It is even true that he absorbed some of the method of Francisco Suárez (1548 -1617), a Spanish Counter-Reformation Jesuit, in his approach to logic.[12] Edwards's 'Catalogue of Books' (commenced in 1722 and in use the remainder of his life) contains works already completed, ordered, or desired, many of which were of contemporary philosophy, while his 'Account Book' listed, alongside references to cattle and creditors, books which he had lent out.[13] He remained abreast of recently published materials through reviews or excerpts in journals like *The Guardian*, *Republic of Letters*, *Bibliothèque Choisie*, or *Bibliothèque Universelle,*[14] where it is assumed he would have met the ideas of the Irish Anglican Bishop and philosopher George Berkeley (1685-1753) as well. Though Edwards's dependence on Locke has often been overstated, it is nevertheless true that Edwards did turn to Locke as well as to other thinkers to find forms in which he might commend true piety in an age more accustomed to tepid propositionalism:

> We thus saw that in his relations to Locke, Edwards was both critical and constructive. Though he read deeply in Locke, and was probably influenced by

[9] Samuel Hopkins, ed. *The Life and Character of the late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards, President of the College at New-Jersey, together with a Number of his Sermons* (2nd ed.; Glasgow: David Niven for James Duncan, 1785), 9.
[10] See for example Jonathan Edwards, 'Christ, the Light of the World,' in *Sermons and Discourses 1720-1723* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 10; ed. W. H. Kimnach; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 539.
[11] Robert E. Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 40.
[12] Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, 398.
[13] Peter J. Thuesen, 'Edwards' Intellectual Background,' in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. H. Lee; Princeton: University Press, 2005), 24-25. See also Jonathan Edwards, *Catalogues of Books* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 26. Edited by Peter J. Thuesen; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008).
[14] Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, 457.

> him more than by any other thinker, past or present, he used him mainly as a point of departure for his own thinking, rather than as a master in whose footsteps he would willingly follow. Edwards always approached the Lockean epistemology from a wider context than that which Locke himself was willing to allow.[15]
>
> It is better to picture the Enlightenment as Edwards' springboard, than as Edwards' data source. Edwards does make substantial withdrawals from the Enlightenment bank, particularly the proto-Enlightenment of Locke and Newton, but only to invest in his own, essentially Biblical, view of reality.[16]

It was not so much the Enlightenment project itself that Edwards regarded as an adversary, as the use to which it was put by those radical thinkers who wanted to displace supernatural religion through their own deistic schemes. Such a naturalistic process tended to separate morality from its religious, more particularly Christian, validation, and was strenuously resisted. If those dubbed 'Arminian' or 'Latitudinarian' were prone to collapse the transcendent into the immanent without remainder, and to marginalise the ability of divine grace to intrude upon an individual's life, then Edwards would relentlessly rail against such leaders and their promotion of works-righteousness through his sermons, discourses and miscellanies, which defended justification by grace, the righteousness of Christ, and the sovereign work of the Spirit.[17] The issue had become most pertinent for him, because the Rector of Yale, Timothy Cutler, and tutors Johnson and Browne, had on October 16, 1722 declared their intention to join the Church of England, associated in many minds with incipient Arminianism,[18] for which their employment at Yale was not surprisingly abruptly terminated.[19] New England's Congregationalist leaders saw this incident 'as a threat to international Protestantism from popery."[20] A sermon preached in New York during the fall of 1722 contains a significant statement of Edwards's anti-Arminian position:

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[15] Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards*, 576.
[16] Moody, *Edwards and Enlightenment*, 7.
[17] Minkema summarises the Arminian challenge in New England thus: 'Arminianism was named after the sixteenth-century Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius. Originally, it was narrowly understood as a repudiation of John Calvin's supralapsarianism, but by the early eighteenth century the term came to encompass a broad spectrum of theologians, including the majority of the Anglican clergy, who emphasized good works over right doctrine and maintained the free will of humankind to accept or reject the grace of God.' See Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Preface to the Period,' in *Sermons and Discourses 1723-1729* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 14; ed. K. P. Minkema; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 17. It ought to be added that antipathy towards Roman Catholic expressions of works-righteousness had been a consistent theme in Puritan preaching before the eighteenth century, which Edwards continued to address.
[18] Anglicanism was particularly obnoxious to New England Puritans: 'In ecclesiology the Puritans argued that congregational government was more biblical and less prone to corruption than prelacy. They also accused the Latitudinarian movement in Anglicanism of feeding the increased authority given to reason at Harvard. In Puritan vocabulary, Arminianism, Latitudinarianism, and Prelacy were synonymous with heresy, and Anglicanism possessed all three.' See George G. Levesque, 'Quaestio: Peccator non Iustificatur Coram Deo Nisi per Iustitiam Christi Fide Apprehensam,' in *Sermons and Discourses 1723-1729* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 14; ed. K. P. Minkema; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 50 note 5.
[19] Kimnach, 'Preface to the New York Period,' *WJE* 10: 287.
[20] Kidd, *The Protestant Interest*, 128.

> There are some, that hope to be saved quite in another way than ever the gospel proposed; that is, by their own righteousness, by being good and doing so well, as that God shall take their goodness as sufficient to counterbalance their sin, that they have committed, and thereby they make their own goodness to equal value with Christ's blood. This conceit is very apt to creep into the proud heart of man. Some openly profess to be able to merit salvation, as papists. Others hold that they are able to prepare and fit themselves for salvation already merited, or at least are able to do something towards it of themselves.[21]

Edwards's own M.A. oral defence in Latin, known as the *Quæstio*, presented a year later in September 1723, responded boldly to the theological challenge of Arminianism which had convulsed Yale in 1722:

> We assert, therefore, that a sinner is justified in the sight of God neither totally nor in part because of the goodness of such obedience, or of any works at all, but only on account of what Christ did and suffered, received by faith. We maintain that Christ is the complete Savior and not merely the partial author of our eternal salvation. Because of these considerations we deny that a sinner is his own redeemer and mediator.[22]

Of a piece with such theological *Zeitgeist*, Edwards finds himself during the 1720s preaching to defend first the divinity of Christ against latter-day Socinians, then the atonement against Arminians for whom the radical rupture between grace and nature was unacceptable, and to promote the sovereignty of the Spirit which so ably protects the priority of grace:

> In the latter times of the nation, there has arisen a new sect of infidels that call themselves Deists, and Freethinkers, that cast off all religion and despise the restraints of it. They don't directly deny the being of a God. Formerly, all that pretended to deny the gospel or called in question the truth of Christian religion, they also denied the being of a God; they never imagined that there was any medium between Christianity and atheism ... But these Deists imagine that they have found out a medium. They deny the gospel, ridicule the story about Jesus Christ, and deny the Scripture and all revealed religion, and pretend to own the being of a God, and believe what they will about his will or his designs with respect to the future disposal of mankind ... There is but little left of that strict and hearty religion, but little of a zeal for God and godliness. Vital religion is a thing but little talked on, except it be a little in the pulpit ... and there is not only not much of the truth of it, but there is scare the appearance of it. There are some: God has a church.[23]

> There are those that deny that Christ's active obedience to God's law is imputed to believers, or that it is any way available to their justification any otherwise than as a necessary qualification in order to render his sacrifice available.[24]

> How vain and childish is the thought that men entertain, that such a price as they have to offer God is sufficient to purchase such things. Alas, the great God is not about to set forth his love to sale to the highest bidder, nor will he offer his converting grace or his Holy Spirit or his eternal glory for such poor pelf as men's own goodness, their poor prayers and a few tears of carnal affection, and their poor meditations and seekings, which are performed from no respect to anybody, but themselves.[25]

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[21] Edwards, 'Glorious Grace,' *WJE* 10: 397.
[22] Jonathan Edwards, 'A Sinner is not Justified in the Sight of God except through the Righteousness of Christ Obtained by Faith,' in *Sermons and Discourses 1723-1729* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 14; ed. K. P. Minkema; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 61.
[23] In jeremiad-like way, this sermon for a fast day gives important insights into spiritual trajectories in the land: Jonathan Edwards, 'Sin and Wickedness Bring Calamity and Misery on a People,' in *Sermons and Discourses 1723-1729* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 14; ed. K. P. Minkema; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 498-499.
[24] Edwards, 'Threefold Work,' *WJE* 14: 396.
[25] Edwards, 'None are Saved,' *WJE* 14: 350-351.

The theological tendency of the early eighteenth century towards deist innovations had begun to threaten the purity of the church. The infiltration of Enlightenment ideas into New England reflected first of all on the impossibility of Puritan life remaining sealed from the outside world. Indeed, since 1707 the very structure of English life itself had changed with the birth of the unified Kingdom of Great Britain in the merging of the parliaments of Scotland and England. Politically, the British Isles and their dependencies had become increasingly centralised, and this development found philosophical support in the rationalising and ordering which the Newtonian system made available to science and sociology. The anarchy of the Civil Wars, Commonwealth and Protectorate encouraged many to long for a less chaotic and more settled Christian polity, which was achieved in the Restoration of 1660. Though not driven to armed interventions in the New World, the labile nature of the Congregationalist model, the desire by some for Presbyterian polity, and the increasing attraction of English mores, all led to a greater tolerance of Anglican design, as the defection of the Yale teaching staff in the early 1720s attested. Youngs comments:

> Ironically, within less than a century of the Puritan flight from Anglican persecution, the New England clergymen were increasingly attracted to an Anglican conception of clerical legitimacy. This development is most apparent in the evolution of the ordination ceremony ... ministers began to claim that clerical status was bestowed by the ordination ceremony, rather than by the people's election ... In sanctifying the position of men whose real qualification for the ministry was educational preparation, it was natural for the ministers to believe that God's movement in the world was rational and predictable.[26]

Edwards responded to the Arminians not just because their views were a threat to the Protestant priority of divine grace in salvation, but also because he saw, more ominously, that these views represented a challenge to the authority of the local congregation and hence its purity. Authority would be dangerously relocated:

> The appeal of Latitudinarians in American was extremely broad ... In the provinces, where a dominant church hierarchy was lacking everywhere, it had a wide resonance, appealing both to the dissenting majorities in most northern colonies and to the gentry-dominated, Low Church establishments in the south. ... Another reason for the Latitudinarians' appeal ... was to locate the ultimate authority in religion not in the church but in the mind of the individual ... In attempting to demonstrate the conformity of religion to the natural order, they assumed that hearers were to judge for themselves rather than take the pronouncements of the church for granted.[27]

Though Edwards has little of explicit ecclesiological deliberation in the sermons and discourses of the 1720s, his soteriological arrows were nevertheless pointed at an ultimately ecclesiological target. Edwards

[26] Youngs, *God's Messengers,* 30, 32, 78-79.
[27] Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials*, 66.

found in the movement towards Arminianism in New England cause for alarm and adversaries to refute. The battle would be joined until the last years of his life.

2.4 SHAPE OF THE CHURCH: FORMULATING TRINITARIAN DYNAMISM WITH DESIGN

Christ is divine wisdom, so that the world is made to gratify divine love as exercised by Christ, or to gratify the love that is in Christ's heart, or to provide a spouse for Christ. (*WJE* 21: 142)

Edwards acceded to sole leadership of the church in Northampton on February 11, 1729 upon the death of Solomon Stoddard. A year after this new beginning, he had begun to draft the 'Discourse on the Trinity,' drawing on formulations from earlier 'Miscellanies,' subsequently being revised for both private and public purposes until the mid 1740s.[1] The 'Discourse' demonstrates Edwards's innovative defence of traditional trinitarian orthodoxy against the increasingly assertive claims of deist or rationalist opponents, who wanted to leave behind fissiparous or disordering debates of earlier periods, and for whom the doctrine of the Trinity represented obscurantist and superstitious dogma. Amongst such adversaries were neo-Arians on the one hand (for example the New England divine Jonathan Mayhew), who would undermine the *deity* of the Son and the Spirit, or subordinate their ontological status to God the Father. On the other hand, Edwards writes against those of Arminian or perhaps Socinian persuasion (for example the Archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson), who by virtue of their positive view of the human contribution to salvation would demote the *work* of the Son and the Spirit. Both heterodox approaches rendered the Son and the Spirit marginal to the plan of salvation, and elevated moralism based on the laws of nature to the quintessence of Christian faith.[2] As Lee summarises, 'Arminianism was fundamentally anti-trinitarian.'[3]

From an ecclesiological perspective, Edwards's theological adversaries were a danger not just to the integrity of individual salvation but also to *corporate* expressions of faith, because their liberalising agenda strengthened the authority and ultimately the autonomy of the *individual*, and consequently weakened or relativised the authority of the *church* in the world.[4] Edwards's trinitarian discourse provides a bulwark against such assaults (even while carefully using Enlightenment categories for his own ends). Such trinitarian reflection serves not just apologetic ends, but

[1] Jonathan Edwards, 'Discourse on the Trinity,' in *Writings on the Trinity, Grace and Faith* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 21; ed. S. H. Lee; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003).
[2] Porter, *Enlightenment,* 102-104.
[3] Sang Hyun Lee, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 21; ed. S. H. Lee; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 4.
[4] Some thinkers attributed blame to the clergy for all the ills of society, and thereby undermined the church's moral and political authority. See Porter, *Enlightenment,* 102.

implicitly provides a constructive model for the church as a relational community to *imitate*, with the Trinity itself as the ultimate life in which the church is invited to *participate*. The dynamic life of the Trinity does not create imbalance or instability for the church, but rather the relations between Father, Son, and Spirit are ordered and so bequeath organic growth with design to our experience of fellowship within the church.[5]

A Model for the Life of the Church: God's Complexity with Consistency

Edwards's 'Discourse' is of ecclesiological significance because it provides a window into his overall theological trajectory, broadly aligning him with the 'Spiritual Brethren' rather than the 'Intellectual Fathers' in the taxonomy of Janice Knight. In her schema, Knight describes the circle of Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), the teaching of which highlighted the unmediated work of God in an individual's life and consequently the derivative role of the church as ordering and sustaining such regeneration. With this she contrasts the school of William Ames (1576-1633), which stressed the power of God, the importance of incremental change in the life of the seeker through the discipline of preparation, and consequently the authority of the church in mediating grace.[6] She mounts the case that Edwards belongs to the former grouping. God's direct involvement in the world is nevertheless to be understood expressed through the *agency* of the Son and the Spirit, with the church as the secondary *instrument*.

Edwards's views can usefully be contrasted with those found in Ames's *Marrow of Theology*. After three chapters on theological

[5] Recent commentators have pointed out the dangers in Edwards's trinitarian formulations. While Steve Studebaker makes the case that Edwards is essentially an Augustinian theologian, who affirms the doctrine of inseparable external acts and appeals to the mutual love model of trinitarianism, this often remains camouflaged by the dominant language of *social relations*: Steve Studebaker, 'Jonathan Edwards's Social *Augustinian* Trinitarianism: An Alternative to a Recent Trend,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56/3 (2003): 268-285. Amy Plantinga Pauw, on the other hand, wants to point out the ways in which Edwards appropriates both Cappadocian/Victorine themes of social trinitarianism, and Augustinian psychological tropes. She is, however, keen to leave unresolved in Edwards this attempt at a fusion between two classical models, which Edwards made to serve pastoral or polemical ends, and which she claims creates an unstable mix. Amy P. Pauw, *"The Supreme Harmony of All": The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). Danaher is much more positive concerning the constructive synthesis achieved in Edwards's trinitarian thought, particularly as it relates to an ethical vision, and so adjudicates between the former scholars: William J. Danaher, *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* (Columbia Series in Reformed Theology; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004).

[6] Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts,* 1-4. While Knight's contrast does provide fruitful spheres of association amongst earlier Puritans, there is also a case for demurring, as for example when we read not of Ames's presentation of God's rule but of God's love: 'for in the old covenant God expressed his wise and just counsel in the form of sovereignty – but in the new there is only mercy.' William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. J. E. Eusden (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 151. Amy Plantinga Pauw likewise cautions against the starkness of Knight's contrast, though she holds that Edwards's echoes of the Sibbesian party are a useful corrective to the depiction often made of his theology: Pauw, *Supreme Harmony,* 5-8.

prolegomena,[7] Ames begins his reflections on God proper in the fourth chapter entitled 'God and his essence,' in which he stresses the transcendence of God and our incapacity to understand or to describe him.[8] Even with revelation, our comprehension is limited. The distance between us and God necessitates epistemic modesty, such that we must be reserved in any propositions we make concerning him. There is no mention of the triune character of God in this section.

> 2. God, as he is in himself, cannot be understood by any save himself ...
> 3. As he has revealed himself to us, he is known from the back, so to speak, not from the face ... He is seen darkly, not clearly, so far as we and our ways are concerned ...
> 5. ... many things are spoken of God according to our own conceiving rather than according to his real nature.[9]

The next section, Ames's brief presentation of the Trinity, appears under the rubric of 'The subsistence of God,' and consists of three and one half pages.[10] The language of subsistence is applied to both the singular essence of the Godhead and to the traditional concept of the hypostatic distinction between persons of the Trinity: 'The subsistence, or manner of being [subsistentia] of God is his one essence so far as it has personal properties,' and 'The same essence is common to the three subsistences.'[11] Ames makes use of the traditional Augustinian psychological analogy of understanding and love to highlight God's unity while allowing relations within the Trinity, presenting the Father as '*Deus intelligens,*' the Son as '*Deus intellectus,*' and the Spirit as '*Deus dilectus.*'[12] The next section, 'The Efficiency of God,' describes the power of God at work in the world, and in point number eight lists '[t]he proper order for conceiving these things is, first, to think of God's *posse*, his power; second, his *scire*, knowledge; third, his *velle*, will; and lastly his *efficere potenter*, efficient power.'[13] Significantly it is the *power* of God which both begins and ends this description, that is, the expression of God's power is both 'the meaning of that efficiency which pertains to God's essence,' and 'in some ways follows after his knowledge and will.'[14] Because Ames is concerned not to divide the Godhead by allowing for 'compositeness or

[7] These sections reflect the background of Ramist logic, which is characterised by 'dichotomizing of concepts – subdividing them into pairs, and splitting those pairs into more pairs, and so on – as being the key to epistemological and educational mastery of all realities.' See James I. Packer, 'A Puritan Perspective: Trinitarian Godliness according to John Owen,' in *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice* (ed. T. George; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 94.
[8] It is one of the characteristics of pre-modern or classical philosophy that essence precedes existence, whereas modern philosophy inverts the assumption.
[9] Ames, *Marrow,* 83.
[10] There is no chapter headed 'The Trinity.'
[11] Ames, *Marrow,* 88.
[12] Ames, *Marrow,* 89.
[13] Ames, *Marrow,* 92.
[14] Ames, *Marrow,* 92.

mutation of power ... in God's perfectly simple and immutable nature,"[15] the Father, Son and Spirit labour together 'inseparably,' though according to their own distinctive 'manner of working.'[16] In Ames's chapter seven, called 'The Decree and Counsel of God,' a similar prioritising is listed:

> 1. In the exercise of God's efficiency, the decree of God comes first. This manner of working is the most perfect of all and notably agrees with the divine nature.
> 2. The decree of God is his firm decision by which he performs all things through his almighty power according to his counsel ...
> 3. God's constancy, truth and faithfulness appear in his decree.[17]

In each of these examples, the doctrine of the Trinity does not create the structure of the presentation, but rather is accommodated to philosophical theology exemplified in the exercise of God's power in the world. Nor does Christology play a significant role, as Ames is keen to defend the simplicity of the Godhead. God is dependable because God is essentially one.

John Norton (1606 -1663), on the other hand, begins his introduction to *Orthodox Evangelist* (1654) with a description of love as the foundation of Christian ministry and of his whole teaching endeavour:

> This Ministerial Spirit rested not only upon that great Doctor of the Gentiles, but also rests, and acts in its measure, in all the Ministers of the Gospel, for the calling, and compleating of the Elect, until we all come to be a perfect man. So as there is not to be found a more vigorous effusion of the Bowels of Jesus, in any of the hearts of the children of men, then [sic] is in the souls of the Ministry: no bowels either of civil, or natural relations exceed theirs: the love of them is wonderful, surpassing the love of Ionathan, that passed the love of women ... Hence (I hope) in its measure in this present labor for the truth's sake, for your sake, for the sake of any, that in the Lord shall accept thereof, and for conscience sake.[18]

Like Ames, he names chapter one 'Of the divine essence,' argues for the divine simplicity, and begins with the fundamental accommodation of God to human finitude. He defends the unity of the Godhead, while acknowledging various pluralised names for God in the Bible. Significantly, *unlike* Ames, chapter two of *Orthodox Evangelist* is entitled 'Of the Trinity' and devotes some fifteen pages to this theological theme. Norton includes an explanation of the mutual indwelling of each member of the Trinity,[19] which by contrast Ames has no need to expound because of his assertions of God's simplicity. Norton makes no reference to the

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[15] Ames, *Marrow,* 91.
[16] Ames, *Marrow,* 93.
[17] Ames, *Marrow,* 94.
[18] John Norton, *The Orthodox Evangelist, or A Treatise Wherein Many Great Evangelical Truths (Not a Few Whereof Are Much Opposed and Eclipsed in this Perillous Hour of the Passion of the Gospel,) Are Briefly Discussed, Cleared, and Confirmed: As a Further Help, for the Begetting, and Establishing of the Faith which is in Jesus. As also the State of the Blessed, Where; Of the Condition of their Souls from the Instant of their Dissolution: And of their Persons after their Resurrection* (London: John Macock, Henry Cripps, Lodowick Lloyd, 1654), 1.
[19] Norton, *Orthodox Evangelist*, 31-32.

legal covenant of redemption[20] (which Ames makes the precondition for the covenant of grace[21]) but instead in chapter two expresses pastoral concern for 'the consolation of believers.'[22] It is significantly *organic* imagery applied to the effulgence of God and an almost *mystical* appreciation of the process of remanation, described rapturously, which helps to mark out Norton as distinct from the Amesian school with its propensity to *forensic* categories:

> God is a full fountain, or rather a fountain which is fulnesse it self [sic]; willing to communicate as the sun sends forth its light, a fountain its streams, and the prolifical virtue in plants, inclineth them to fruitfulnesse; and the seminal virtue in living creatures, disposeth them to generation ... Goodnesse so descends and cometh from God unto the creature, as that it stops not there, but ascends and returns again unto God ... Hence love is said to be both extatical [sic], that is, carrying the lover as it were out of himself unto the loved ... Unto that infinite and created sea, whence all created rivers of goodnesse come, thither they return again.[23]

Knight sees in Ames a 'preference for images of domination' and 'the master trope of sovereignty,'[24] while in Norton and his school she witnesses 'neoplatonist visions of divine plenitude and effulgence,' and 'the master trope of benevolence.'[25] While Ames expresses reserve concerning God's involvement with the created order and human capacity to appropriate God's benefits, Norton is in no sense beholden to such caution. He affirms both the nature of mystery, *and* the value of exploring it:

> Though the perfect manner how one person is of another, is incomprehensible, and unutterable in this life, (the perfect knowledge thereof being reserved unto glory) yet so far hath God revealed himself unto us in his word in this life, as that we may and ought to attain unto some distinctness ... and not to rest in an implicite [sic] faith, concerning this Mystery of mysteries.[26]

We must speak of the Trinity even when such description of the life of the Trinity has the potential to disorder and overwhelm our experience. It is just such a risk that we observe in Edwards as well. Here we find not a spirit of theological caution but rather of trinitarian assertion, and this based on our created likeness to God:

> Though the divine nature be vastly different from that of created spirits, yet our souls are made in the image of God: we have understanding and will, idea and love, as God hath, and the difference is only in the perfection of degree and manner.[27]

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[20] The covenant of redemption is that pretemporal consent of the Father with the Son to effect salvation for human beings, enacted through the temporal covenant of grace. Appeal is made to Psalm 2 or Ephesians 3:14-15 to support such a pact.
[21] Ames, *Marrow,* 149.
[22] Norton, *Orthodox Evangelist*, 34.
[23] Norton, *Orthodox Evangelist*, 13.
[24] Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 75.
[25] Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 76, 82.
[26] Norton, *Orthodox Evangelist*, 34.
[27] Edwards, 'Trinity,' *WJE* 21: 113.

It is not that Edwards wants to teach that all mystery is removed, but that, by analogy with nature and on closer inspection, we can be more confident of what we will come to discover:

> I humbly apprehend that the things that have been observed increase the number of visible mysteries in the Godhead in no other manner, even as by them we perceive that God has told us much more about it than was before generally observed ... And if he views them [natural things] with a microscope, the number of the wonders that he sees will be much increased still. But yet the microscope gives him more of a *true knowledge* concerning them.[28]

Edwards's understanding of the Trinity aligns him with that school which maintains God's approach to this world through promise of consistent access.

The Grammar of the Life of the Church: The Persons of the Trinity

Edwards's presentation of the Trinity in this discourse not only locates him within a broader Puritan ecclesiological trajectory, but provides concrete images and tropes which anchor his doctrine of the church for the life of the people of God. The work of Father, Son and Spirit provides the grammar within which Edwards's doctrine of the church can be viewed.

(i) A bride for Christ

The security of the church is exemplified in the metaphor of the church being a bride for Christ. While the outpouring of God's life towards the creation in love and grace could be potentially overwhelming,[29] this expansive self-expression nonetheless has shape in the Son, whom Edwards describes as 'the face of God,' or 'the brightness, effulgence or shining forth of God's glory.'[30] Christ's luminescence is associated in Edwards's mind with his office as 'the great prophet and teacher of mankind, the light of the world, and the revealer of God to creatures.'[31] The potentially disordering elements of effulgence or the destabilising distinction of the persons, such that the Godhead is a 'society' or 'family,' are brought to focus Christologically in the revelation of the Son, despite the dynamism of the image.[32] He is the end for which God created the world and the constrained means by which God's extravagant love is expressed:

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[28] Edwards, 'Trinity,' *WJE* 21: 139-140. Emphasis mine.
[29] The use of natural images (for example, God 'communicates himself ... as the emanation of the sun's action, or the emitted beams of the sun') can create visceral reactions. Edwards, 'Trinity,' *WJE* 21: 138.
[30] Edwards, 'Trinity,' *WJE* 21: 118, 119.
[31] Edwards, 'Trinity,' *WJE* 21: 120.
[32] Amy Plantinga Pauw, 'Practical Ecclesiology in John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards,' in *John Calvin's American Legacy* (ed. Thomas J. Davis; Oxford: University Press, 2010), 95.

> Christ is divine wisdom, so that the world is made to gratify divine love as exercised by Christ, or to gratify the love that is in Christ's heart, or to provide a spouse for Christ – those creatures which wisdom chooses for the object of divine love as Christ's elect spouse, and especially those elect creatures that wisdom chiefly pitches upon and makes the end of the rest.[33]

The church therefore is the creation of God to gratify Christ's love, just as Christ's ministry is an agency of God's love for the church and the world. Conversely, God gives the church to Christ as his bride 'so that the mutual joys between this bride and bridegroom are the end of the creation.'[34] The church is necessary to the person of Christ. This ought not to be understood, however, as expressing divine dependence on the creation, as the formula here is not the trinitarian language of the Father and the Son, which as a result of Nicene debates maintains a line between the Creator and the creation. Here the functional terminology of 'Christ,' the one anointed for service, allows for economic distance from ontological concerns.[35]

The life of the church is framed by the church's role as the reward to Christ, who is the head of the body and the groom for the bride. This union between Christ and the Church will never be surrendered nor sundered, giving to Christ an eternal distinction amongst the members of the Trinity, and to the church a stake in the life of the Godhead and a Christologically defined future:

> He was then invested with a twofold dominion over the world: one vicarious, or as the Father's vicegerent, which shall be resigned at the end of the world; the other as Christ God-man, and head and husband of the church. And in this latter respect he will never resign his dominion, but will reign forever and ever, as is said of the saints in the new Jerusalem, after the end of the world, Rev. 22:5.[36]

(ii) A covenant between the Father and the Son

A detail pertinent to ecclesiology and connected to Edwards's trinitarian thought, which is adumbrated in the 'Discourse' (though appearing more explicitly later in 'Misc.' 1062), concerns the pre-temporal covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son:

> It is evident by the Scripture that there is an eternal covenant between some of the persons of the Trinity about that particular affair of man's redemption; and therefore that some things that appertain to the particular office of each person,

[33] Edwards, 'Trinity,' *WJE* 21: 142.
[34] Though there is only one reference in the 'Discourse' to the provision of a spouse for Christ, and this being added later than the mid 1730s, he has nevertheless made use of this imagery in an early essay: see Jonathan Edwards, 'Misc.' 271, in *The "Miscellanies" (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 13; ed. T. A. Schafer; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 374.
[35] It must furthermore be acknowledged that in the book of Revelation, the language of *groom* or of *Christ* is never used in relation to the bride. Consistently in Revelation, the imagery is derived from the domain of sacrifice, in which the second person of the Trinity is presented as the Lamb. The language of *Christ* is however drawn from Paul's concerns in Ephesians 5.
[36] Jonathan Edwards, 'Misc.' 1062, in *The "Miscellenanies" (Entry Nos. 833-1152)* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 20; ed. A. P. Pauw; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 440.

> and their particular order and manner of acting in this affair, does result from a particular, new agreement, and not merely from the order already fixed in a preceding establishment founded in the nature of things, together with the new determination of redeeming mankind.[37]

In recognition of the traditional weakness of Western thought, and its propensity to stress the oneness of God at the expense of the distinctions with equality of the persons of the Trinity, Edwards expounds the pre-temporal conversing of the Father and the Son, which demonstrates their equality as a result of their willingness to enter into a covenant of redemption with each other for the sake of those to be saved. The covenant of redemption helps Edwards to avoid the danger of subordinationism in the Trinity and so protect the deity of the Son and of the Spirit from the danger of Arianising.[38] Indeed, Edwards goes on to describe not only the covenant of redemption, but also a colloquium or 'council of peace,' possibly with overtones of the frontier, between the Father and the Son which takes place prior to the formal covenant, in which they agree in principle 'concerning the part that some, at least, of the persons are to act in that affair [of redemption].'[39] Such dynamism is nevertheless designed, for the outcome of the agreement is regarded by members of the Trinity as 'fit, suitable and beautiful.'[40]

On the other hand, when Edwards highlights the equality of the triune persons by brazenly describing their hypostatic interactions as a 'society of the Trinity,' he must simultaneously assert the ordering and agreed leadership of God the Father, 'who acts as the head.'[41] Using such anthropomorphic language as 'society,' he applies to the Godhead a structure which we would rather expect to encounter in a town or a

[37] Edwards, 'Misc.' 1062, *WJE* 20: 432.
[38] However, because the work of each member of the Trinity is not simply interchangeable, Edwards asserts that there is a 'priority of subsistence' within the life of the Trinity, which 'is more properly called priority than superiority.' Subordination, in his estimation, exists when the language of volition is applied to one member of the Trinity in relation to another: 'For one is not superior to another in excellency; neither is one in any respect dependent on another's *will* for being or well-being. For though one proceeds from another, and so may be said to be in some respect dependent on another, yet it is no dependence of one on *the will of another*. For it is no *voluntary* but a *necessary* proceeding, and therefore infers no proper subjection of one to the will of another.' See Edwards, 'Misc.' 1062, *WJE* 20: 431.
[39] Edwards, 'Misc.' 1062, *WJE* 20: 433.
[40] Edwards, 'Misc.' 1062, *WJE* 20: 431. However, Edwards's later descriptions of relations within the Godhead appear to leave the Holy Spirit at some level disenfranchised, or at least depersonalised. The Spirit is referred to as Christ's 'treasures,' and later the language of the Augustinian trinitarian model reemerges, in which the Spirit is presented as 'the bond of union between the two covenanting persons,' 'the infinite love of God to himself and to the creature,' the 'moving cause of the whole transaction,' and the 'great good covenanted for.' See Edwards, 'Misc.' 1062, *WJE* 20: 439, 443.
[41] Edwards, 'Misc.' 1062, *WJE* 20: 433. Emphasis mine. It has been pointed out that such language is not original to Edwards but was used by Petrus van Mastricht, a Dutch Reformed theologian whom Edwards read and greatly admired. See Adriaan C. Neele, *The Art of Living to God: A Study of Method and Piety in the Theoretico-Practica Theologia of Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706)* (Perspectives on Christianity 8:1; Pretoria: Department of Church History, University of Pretoria, 2005), 223, 237. Mastricht takes his cue from the imagery of Psalm 2 and the vocabulary of Ephesians 3:14-15.

church. Appropriating the terminology of covenant functions as a device to bring order to the relationships within the Trinity itself, and removes the fear that God's sovereign work in the world is capricious or arbitrary, or the result of internecine divine squabbling, encouraging those who approach him to expect consistency and compassion. As Christ orders the glory of God *ad extra*, so the covenant between Father and Son orders the glory of God *ad intra*. Christ's work in the world is the means by which the Son brings honour to the Father, in as far as the Son fulfils his part in the economy of God through his work as mediator of the new covenant.[42] He concludes:

> The Redeemer shall present all that were to be redeemed to the Father in perfect glory, having his work completely finished upon them.[43]

(iii) The Spirit of union

Spiritual union is at the heart of Edwards's theological project.[44] The Spirit defines the unity that exists between Christ and the church, 'for the Spirit is the bond of union and that by which Christ is in his saints and the Father in him.'[45] While language of the covenant usefully orders eternity with time, and God with humankind, it is in the end the *Spirit* and not *covenant* who mediates grace to believers, and so the covenant must not be interposed between Christ and the church. Most fundamentally, individuals participate in the Spirit who makes possible our common life:

> It is a confirmation that the Holy Ghost is God's love and delight, because the saints' communion with God consists in their partaking of the Holy Ghost. The communion of saints is twofold: 'tis their communion with God, and communion with each other ... In this also eminently consists our communion with the saints, that we drink into the same Spirit: this is the common excellency and joy and happiness in which they are all united.[46]

Even when the Spirit is given to us without restraint, he comes to us chiefly as an overflow from Christ, for the

> oil that is poured on the head of the church runs down to the members of his body and to the skirts of his garment.[47]

Despite this disclaimer, covenant is used by Edwards to relate vital piety and the benefits of salvation which accrue to the individual believer, albeit with Christological mediation. He defends this connection, when for example he writes that '[t]he covenant was made with Christ, and in

[42] It is important to note that Edwards does not use the language of the economy of God exclusively to refer to the acts of God performed *ad extra* for the salvation of the elect. In his usage, *economy* speaks more generally of the ways in which God both determines and carries out his purposes.
[43] Edwards, 'Misc.' 1062, *WJE* 20: 434.
[44] Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics*, 255.
[45] Edwards, 'Trinity,' *WJE* 21: 144.
[46] Edwards, 'Trinity,' *WJE* 21: 129, 130.
[47] Edwards, 'Trinity,' *WJE* 21: 136.

him with his mystical body,' or 'that [covenant] that is made to men is a free offer; that which is commonly called the covenant of grace is only Christ's open and free offer of life, whereby he holds it out in his hand to sinners and offers it without any condition.'[48] Notionally a distinction between covenants may be entertained, but Edwards is at pains to maintain the substantial unity of the purposes of God, *expressed* through covenant, but *enjoyed* through union with Christ:

> Christ and his church are one in law; that is, they are one in respect of the covenant. By Christ's performing the condition of the covenant, the condition is as if it were performed by them. If you divide Christ and the church in covenant, and say that one covenant is made with one and another with the other, you make them two in law ... Whereas, if we would leave off distinguishing the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption, we should leave all these matters plain and unperplexed.[49]

Similarly, the heuristic value of distinguishing covenants may support our understanding of order within the economy of God, but its usefulness is limited if the distinction between covenants is pressed too far. Edwards wants to eschew the implicit danger of making human faith a condition to receiving the covenant of grace, apart from the covenant God made with Christ to fulfil the covenant on our behalf, which is offered to us without condition:

> But, ye'll say, they explain themselves and say [that] though faith is the condition of salvation, yet they are not saved because of it as a work, but only a condition. But to this I say, I cannot think of any intelligible meaning of the word "work" in divinity, but something to be done as a condition ... Talking thus, whether it be truly or falsely, is doubtless the foundation of Arminianism and neonomianism, and tends very much to make men value themselves for their own righteousness. *But it seems to me, all this confusion arises from the wrong distinction men make between the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption*.[50]

A modification to the definition of personhood which is traditional in the Western church gives further integrity to Edwards's desire to reaffirm the nature of spiritual union as foundational to the church's life. As Danaher suggests, for Edwards a person is not 'an individual substance of a rational nature,' but rather 'a dynamic state of relationality in the self-consciousness, which is modelled after God's own triune personhood.'[51] Such a psychological model provides Edwards with the framework to describe human moral life as a participation in the life

[48] Jonathan Edwards, 'Misc.' 2, in *The "Miscellanies" (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 13; ed. T. A. Schafer; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 198-199.
[49] Edwards, 'Misc.' 2, *WJE* 13: 199.
[50] Edwards, 'Misc.' 2, *WJE* 13: 197-198. Emphasis mine. Edwards would go on to qualify this language, arguing that it is indeed possible to describe faith as a condition of justification, if we simultaneously deny that faith is a cause of salvation. See Sang Hyun Lee, 'Grace and Justification by Faith Alone,' in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. H. Lee; Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 145.
[51] Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics*, 7.

of God through the Spirit, known as *divinisation* or *theosis*, supported by the social model's description of the Godhead's interpersonal love.[52]

The church is in spiritual union with Christ as the body to the head. Though members of that body receive Christ severally, the body of Christ as a metaphor for the church orders the diverse expressions of grace and gifts into a unitary whole. Covenant language in these texts is applied primarily to Christ as head over the church, and only secondarily to 'Christ mystical.'[53] The Spirit brings grace to individual lives, and thereby derivatively forms a community. The church appears as a corporate instrument to give expression to the prior work of God in individuals' lives and, as we shall see, to order the work of grace for glory. Cherry summarises such a progression:

> Covenant theology was most valuable to Edwards for a description of the nature of the saints' relation to God in faith, and his church-covenant principles were ramifications of this primary use of the theology.[54]

The covenant between the *individual* and the *church*, though ultimately a foreground issue in later debates surrounding qualifications for full membership and Edwards's dismissal, are essentially secondary in Edwards's thinking. It is the Christian's *participation in Christ through the Spirit*, for which the covenant language of redemption and of grace is chiefly a defensive epithet, and a strategy warning against crude theories of divine absorption.

The Trinity as Defence against the Implosion of the Church

Edwards has attempted to retool the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity to make it more robust in debates of the eighteenth century which would otherwise discredit it as superstitious remnants of earlier philosophical platforms. In so doing, Edwards bears intellectual arms against those labelled 'Arminians,' an amorphous group which highlighted not only the positive role humans can perform in achieving salvation, but also the liberal notion that individuals are the indivisible unit of society.[55] A complex web of theological (Arminianising), philosophical (liberalising), and political (individualising) trends conflate to become an enemy in Edwards's apologias. The Arminian foe is in the end an ecclesiological

[52] Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics*, 6-7.
[53] Edwards, 'Misc.' 1062, *WJE* 20: 442.
[54] Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 109. Cherry makes significant efforts here to demonstrate the importance of covenant imagery to Edwards, given Perry Miller's claims against just such a position.
[55] Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 14.

foe, who asserts that the ultimate locus of authority is the individual believer, in contrast to the body of Christ. As Jenson asserts:

> But what, univocally, was "Arminianism"? It was Protestantism without the Reformation. It was the assimilation of Protestant protest against spiritual bondage to Enlightenment protest against religious authority ... "Arminianism" was "Protestant principle" mustered not on behalf of threatened "catholic substance" but rather for the further mitigation of its offensive promises and demands.
>
> Liberalism's refusal to regard communities as primary historical agencies, and its need to keep God out of the action, are closely linked phenomena.[56]

Edwards's doctrine of the Trinity provides positive ecclesiological definition to counteract such philosophical pressures. The very Spirit who unites Father to Son, who equals the cost of redemption and purchases life for believers, is the one who brings individuals under the authority of the Father and who knits together those believers as a spouse for the Son. The outcome of emphasis on the sociality of the Godhead is not only to provide individuals with access to this triune life through the indwelling Spirit, but also to present the church with the opportunity of defining itself in relation to this triunity and of modelling itself to some degree on the triune life. Though not explicitly argued in the 'Discourse,' such trinitarianism is outlined as necessarily exercising ecclesiological shape in the mind of Krister Sairsingh:

> Since the love which binds the Trinity together is the same love which binds the church to the Son and the saints to each other, we can rightly conclude that the structure of relationship which constitutes the glory of God or God's internal fullness is the same structure which constitutes the reality of the church ... The re-presentation of the societal and relational structure of God's trinitarian life in the community of the saints, is, in a manner of speaking, the visibility of God in the world.[57]

Trinitarianism keeps corporate and therefore ecclesiological expectations alive. The divine glory *ad intra* and *ad extra*, expressed in the Son and through the Spirit, is a model of order and not of confusion, appealing to philosophical rigour and not superstition, visible in God's work in the church. Edwards's conflation of the themes of the immanent and the economic Trinity, which becomes a 'hallmark of Edwards's theology,'[58] serves our understanding of his ecclesiology well. His dynamic and ordered conception of Trinitarian relations has its echo in the dynamic yet ordered life of the church in the world.

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[56] Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 54-55, 100.
[57] Krister Sairsingh, Jonathan Edwards and the Idea of Divine Glory: His Foundational Trinitarianism and its Ecclesial Import (Unpublished doctoral dissertation; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1986), 208-209.
[58] Lee, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 21: 31.

3.1 THE REVIVED CHURCH AND *THE FAITHFUL NARRATIVE*

Our public assemblies were then beautiful: the congregation was alive in God's service, everyone earnestly intent on the public worship. (*WJE* 4: 151)

Edwards's assumption of leadership in Northampton in 1729 coincided with unprecedented economic and social challenges in Western Massachusetts, which involved changes to traditional family structure, the sufficiency of local production and desire for manufactured goods from elsewhere, and radical ruptures in received authority.[1] Traditional models of vital piety therefore appeared to many as a retardant against expeditious social transformation. More immediately, Edwards also had to provide confidence to those in the church that his leadership would perpetuate the emphases of his vaunted predecessor. Revivals, known locally as 'harvests,' had been a visible feature of Stoddard's long ministry, an expectation of which the grandson inherited along with the pulpit, font and table. Edwards was to be responsible for the church in vastly different circumstances.

Revivals, expected yet surprising, reshaped the social order in unforeseen ways as they generated further instability in already labile times. Indeed, for Edwards to write publicly in the mid to late 1730s about those revivals of 1734-1735 parallels the experiment conducted on Schrödinger's cat: the observation itself changes the very phenomenon observed. Edwards's letter of May 30, 1735 to Benjamin Coleman in Boston relating events in Northampton, and its subsequent publication with greater detail and length in London in 1737 under the title *The Faithful Narrative*, shapes as much as describes the expressions of revival, whether intentionally or not.[2] This tract gives us some of Edwards's first written thoughts on the nature of a revived church, which begins to draw together theological themes and ecclesiological concerns which had confronted him in the formative years of the 1720s. He must now decide

[1] Catherine A. Brekus, 'Children of Wrath, Children of Grace: Jonathan Edwards and the Puritan Culture of Child Rearing,' in *The Child in Christian Thought* (ed. M. J. Bunge; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 306.

[2] See Jonathan Edwards, 'Unpublished Letter of May 30, 1735,' in *The Great Awakening* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 4; ed. C. C. Goen; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972). The historiography of the Great Awakening has been addressed recently by Thomas Kidd, who argues persuasively that rather than being an interpretative fiction, the events of the mid to late eighteenth century in North America contain sufficient commonalities even without the branding of Whitefield and his unifying peregrinations. See Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), especially xviii-xix. A summary of recent debate is found in Bruce Hindmarsh, 'The Great Awakening Revisited,' *Evangelical Studies Bulletin* 68 (2008): 1-5. These views are contrasted with Frank Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), and Jon Butler, 'Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction,' *Journal of American history* 69/2 (1982): 305-325.

whether his revised model of church life is sufficiently robust to bear the weight of revivalist corporate renewal.

The Faithful Narrative is essentially a defence of the events of the period of revival in Northampton from 1733 to 1735. It begins with the spiritual state of the town, proceeding then to an outline of the 'surprising work of God' or the nature of the awakening within that compressed period in the Connecticut River Valley, followed by an appraisal of the variety of conversions in Northampton itself, concluding with two notable case studies and some final observations. Though presented as a *narrative,*[3] what is unexpected is that perhaps one third of the account is given over to more intentional theological interaction with the nature of preparation for conversion in the appraisal section. Edwards seeks as his goal not merely to provide encouragement to those readers outside of Northampton to pray and work for revival. He essentially seeks to make a theological case for his understanding of conversion, itself a locus of debate in New England. He takes this opportunity to submit to public scrutiny his arguments against the threats of Arminianism and Antinomianism, which stress respectively either the merits of preparationism or the value of unmediated experience of God. This work is certainly occasional, but it is not thereby accidentally theological or responsive only to the events portrayed. Edwards's constructive ecclesiology is located in the importance attached to divine freedom, local authority, and international concern, which revival in the church magnifies. How contingent the church is, given new perspectives and pressures, is the question facing Edwards.

Revival as an Antidote to Arminian Challenges

The Rand and Breck affairs were the focus of much energy and grief in Massachusetts in the early to mid 1730s. William Rand (1700-1779) and Robert Breck (1713-1784) were both Harvard graduates, whose apparently heterodox opinions had won them notoriety in Hampshire county, the former for instigating in Sunderland 'the great noise which was in this part of the country about Arminianism,'[4] and the latter for the

[3] The title of the piece was not of Edwards's choice, but rather was assigned by his English editors, Isaac Watts and John Guyse, with whom Edwards had several editorial disagreements. See Clarence C. Goen, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *The Great Awakening* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 4; ed. C. C. Goen; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 37, 42.
[4] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 148. Goen points out (Goen, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 4: 9, 17-18) the false conclusion of Goodwin that the 'great noise' referred to the Breck rather than the Rand affair; in Goen's estimation the Breck affair post-dated the writing of the 'Faithful Narrative.' See Goen, 'Editor's Introduction,' 7-8, and Gerald J. Goodwin, 'The Myth of

'late lamentable Springfield contention."[5] Breck was to have accepted a ministerial settlement in Springfield, though his Arminian beliefs divided the congregation and caused unrest amongst local clergy before his eventual ordination on January 26, 1736. Though these cases may appear to be minor irritants rather than substantial causes, for Edwards they were quickly connected to the incident in Yale in 1722 when leading Congregationalists defected to Anglicanism, and reflected a broader change of mood, in which

> for at least half a century the whole basis of church life in New England had been shifting imperceptibly to human effort and moral striving, so that quite unawares many orthodox ministers were encouraging a subtle form of salvation by works. Indeed, this is what "Arminianism" meant in mid-eighteenth-century New England: it had less to do with Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), the Dutch theologian from whom it took its name, than with a mood of rising confidence in man's ability to gain some purchase of the divine favor by human endeavor.[6]

Breck's ordination, upheld on appeal to the Massachusetts General Assembly, not only represented local threats to the traditional *theological* order, it also flagged for Edwards and those of his ministerial association the rights of the congregation being affirmed at the expense of the learned opinion of the clergy. The label 'Arminian' implied a threat to the *ecclesiastical* order as well.[7]

The question remains in what ways the Connecticut River revival of 1733-1735, and the description of it in the *Faithful Narrative*, maintain a stand against Arminian threats of the same period. To make this case, it must be shown that in Edwards's writing, these revivals are attested by explanation and examples of conversion, which allow for no human contribution to salvation, and which do not disintegrate into disorderly enthusiasm and opposition to the means of grace. Indeed, in the 'Preface to the First Edition,' the editors make clear that 'such blessed instances of the success of the Gospel' are attached to traditional doctrine 'without stretching towards the Antinomians on the one side, or the Arminians on the other.'[8] An outline of the preparationist debate in which Edwards finds himself can determine whether covenant terminology implicitly imports works righteousness into salvation. We are fundamentally asking questions of the ways in which God's grace works within the natural order, without breaching the created givenness of the church.

"Arminian-Calvinism" in Eighteenth-Century New England,' *New England Quarterly* 41/2 (1968): 213-237, especially 221.
[5] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 145.
[6] Goen, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 4: 10.
[7] William J. Scheick, 'Family, Conversion, and the Self in Jonathan Edwards' *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*,' *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 18 (1973): 79-89.
[8] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 132.

Edwards distances himself from the preparationist stream of Puritan piety by acknowledging the variety of ways in which human appropriation of grace occurs. 'Legal awakening,' or the individual's recognition of one's true status before God, can come quickly or slowly, but in either case ought not to be confused with the experience of salvation itself:

> I therefore proceed to give an account of the manner of persons being wrought upon: and here there is a vast variety, perhaps as manifold as the subjects of the operation; but yet in many things there is a great analogy in all. Persons are first awakened with a sense of their miserable condition by nature, the danger they are in of perishing eternally ... Some are more suddenly seized with convictions ... Others have awakenings that come upon them more gradually ... Others that, before this wonderful time, had been something religious and concerned for their salvation, have been awakened in a new manner, and made sensible that their slack and dull way of seeking was never like to attain their purpose ... These awakenings when they have first seized on persons have had two effects: one was, they have brought them immediately to quit their sinful practices ... And the other effect was, that it put them on earnest application to the means of salvation.[9]

While Edwards does of course allow for a human experience of movement towards God, he is at pains to make clear that God is free to exercise his power to redeem without applying one method in particular. One ought to be modest in one's description of Christian beginnings in Edwards's estimation:

> God has of late abundantly shown, that he don't need to wait to have men convinced by long and often repeated fruitless trials; for in multitudes of instances he has made a shorter work of it ... There have been some who have not had great terrors, but have had a very quick work. Some of those that han't had so deep a conviction of these things before their conversion have, it may be, much more of it afterwards. God has appeared far from limiting himself to any certain method in his proceedings with sinners under legal convictions. In some instances it seems easy for our reasoning powers to discern the methods of divine wisdom, in his dealings with the soul under awakenings; in others his footsteps can't be traced, and his ways are past finding out: and some that are less distinctly wrought upon, in what is preparatory to grace, appear no less eminent in gracious experience afterwards. There is in nothing a greater difference, in different persons, than with respect to the time of their being under trouble.[10]

Interestingly, such 'legal convictions' are not consistently attached to exposure to the law, but might well result from comparison with the assurance of others, the inability of strong pious affections to subdue anxieties, or through an apprehension of personal helplessness.[11]

Similarly, the moment of conversion itself might be experienced through a variety of categories: as a sudden 'glorious brightness' or the gradual 'dawning of the day,' through the Spirit bringing 'Scripture to the mind,' being persuaded of the 'truth of the Gospel in general' or 'some

[9] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 160-161.
[10] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 166-167.
[11] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 160, 164, 170.

particular great doctrine of the Gospel.'[12] Edwards wants to protect those who are of tender conscience, who by comparison with others or through preparationist teaching, deny themselves a genuine experience of grace:

> There is an endless variety in the particular manner and circumstances in which persons are wrought upon, and an opportunity of seeing so much of such a work of God will shew that God is further from confining himself to certain steps, and a particular method, in his work on souls, than it may be some do imagine. I believe it has occasioned some good people amongst us, that were before too ready to make their own experiences a rule to others, to be less censorious and more extended in their charity.[13]

Edwards recognises the departure from the majority opinion that such a view represents, and this coming from a person relatively inexperienced in the ministry. He therefore validates his present ministry by association with the ministry and harvests of Stoddard:

> I am sensible the practice [of judging experiences of grace] would have been safer in the hands of one of a riper judgment and greater experience; but yet there has seemed to be an absolute necessity of it on the forementioned accounts ... The work that has now been wrought on souls is evidently the same that was wrought in my venerable predecessor's days; as I have had abundant opportunity to know, having been in the ministry here two years with him, and so conversed with a considerable number that my grandfather thought to be savingly converted in that time ... And I know no one of them, that in the least doubts of its being the same spirit and the same work.[14]

Edwards appears to sit loose to a commitment to a rigorous theological description of Christian beginnings, which had been characteristic of his Puritan predecessors. What gives assurance is not the ability to discern the first stirrings of grace in human experience (though this might be possible), but rather the outworking of grace in practical piety:

> By the "sense of the heart" he meant the ability to promote and cherish grace, not the ability to discern its first invasion in the soul. Thus religious sorrow and brokeness [sic] of heart were not, in his mind, preliminary steps to conversion but distinguishing marks in the character of a Saint. Where the earliest Puritan divines had looked to "conversion" as the beginning of "hope," as the start of a process leading toward possible assurance of election, Edwards saw conversion as one of the many "signs" of election. In brief, he distinguished between the nature of true piety and the process whereby that piety is revealed.[15]

Edwards does not advocate the abolition of the language of preparation, and he does not deny God's freedom to use human psychology, experiences or circumstances to achieve his own salvific ends. However, he is in this way presenting a picture of God, in which God is free to take 'the work into his own hands,' and thereby acknowledges that 'there was as much done in a day or two as at ordinary times.'[16] God's grace might use natural processes more gradually to redeem individuals, but there is also a case to support God's more decisive intervention.

[12] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 177-179.
[13] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 185.
[14] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 176, 190.
[15] Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (2nd ed.; Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 210.
[16] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 159.

Edwards's mediating position is significant, especially since he does not use the language of *covenant* in this work to express such a view. Essentially, he pushes back the notion of conversion to include those stages which formerly had been viewed as preparatory, and in so doing gives less room for any notion of human contribution to salvation.[17]

Revival as the reordering of social relationships

The process of revival had a significant impact on the social world of the eighteenth century English colonies of North America. In New England, the role of families, settled ministerial authority, the ministry of women, and the place of children and youth were all impacted by this new work of God, as *A Faithful Narrative* relates. Edwards's account describes the reordering of social relationships in ways which both affirm and challenge his own status quo as God's clerical representative.

A new approach to youth ministry was the impetus for the 1733-35 revival in Northampton. It had been a constant expectation of Puritan family life that parents had the responsibility to inculcate Christian faith in their children, both through private instruction and through public lessons in a school or church. Education to instruct the mind as much as to constrain the soul were means of grace eagerly adopted by Puritan divines.[18] Common assumptions about the covenant of grace, under which the children of Puritans were in some sense privileged, provided the categories in which family, society and church could be coordinated.[19] It was confronting therefore for Edwards to acknowledge a decline in this traditional order, which had been underway for some years. Edwards describes the degeneracy he faced after Stoddard's death:

> [I]t seemed to be a time of extraordinary dullness in religion: licentiousness for some years greatly prevailed among the youth of the town; they were many of them very much addicted to night-walking, and frequenting the tavern, and lewd practices, wherein some, by their example exceedingly corrupted others. It was their manner very frequently to get together in conventions of both sexes, for mirth and jollity, which they called frolics; and they would often spend the greater part of the night in them, without regard to any order in the families they belonged to: and indeed family government did too much fail in the town.[20]

Though the family was understood as the commonwealth writ small, the pressures it faced in an increasingly dynamic economic setting impacted

[17] Scheick, 'Family, Conversion and Self,' 85.
[18] Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (New, revised and enlarged ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 87-95.
[19] Scheick, 'Family, Conversion and Self,' 80.
[20] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 146.

its capacity to maintain its previous functions. Brekus exposes the developments which Edwards might only have vaguely perceived:

> [M]en began to lose authority over the family. Because of widespread land shortages, many fathers could no longer provide farms for their sons, and because of the growth of a new market-oriented economy, they lost control of children who moved away from home in search of greater economic opportunities. Although they still tried to influence whom their children would marry, they had little success.[21]

Edwards's response to this declension was remarkable for its day: he would target the demographic which needed a timely word. He began a new 'service,' which included preaching, to address specific issues for the youth, organised neighbourhood meetings of parents to discuss the matter, and encouraged those same heads of families to assert once again coordinated discipline. He had some reason for optimism, as the youth had responded well during previous harvests in Northampton. As it turned out, the youth decided through the preaching to modify their behaviour, though serious local incidents had certainly prepared the ground. The death of 'a young man in the bloom of his youth' from pleurisy, and the death of a young woman after a lengthy illness with assurance of salvation being expressed at the last,[22] along with the conversion of a young woman 'who had been one of the greatest company-keepers in the whole town,'[23] function in any age as spiritually sobering, not least to youth. This phenomenon was reported not only from Northampton, but from surrounding towns as well.[24] The youth themselves began to meet in small groups for fellowship and discussion, which in turn the elder people imitated.[25]

The most striking examples given to validate the revival come at the end of the narrative. The conversion of a woman, Abigail Hutchinson, and of a girl, Phebe Bartlett, are fulsomely recounted. The former, a quiet person who worked in a shop, was not known for enthusiastic expressions of piety. Yet, despite the illness which soon took her life, she demonstrated extraordinary humility, assurance of salvation, commitment to the conversion of others, and love of the fellowship.[26] The process leading to her conversion was itself swift, taking place within a week, and while it does display some elements of method, for example the sensation of terror as a result of 'a flash of lightning' followed by a 'lively sense of

[21] Brekus, 'Children of Wrath, Children of Grace,' 307-308.
[22] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 147-148.
[23] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 149.
[24] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 152-159.
[25] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 148.
[26] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 191-199.

the excellency of Christ, and his sufficiency to satisfy for the sins of the whole world,"[27] what is most evident is the variety of means appropriated by her to win and sustain a personal relation to Christ. She heard her brother speak of the importance of 'seeking regenerating grace,' she resolved to read through the entire Bible starting at the beginning, and engaged in 'reading, prayer and other religious exercises.'[28] Her friends provided her with regular counsel, and she was concerned to 'go to the minister hoping to find some relief [from her spiritual anxiety] there."[29] She spoke of having visions of Christ, though Edwards editorialises with the parenthetical remark that she had seen Christ 'in realizing views by faith."[30] Words resounded spontaneously within her mind, while on other occasions she attended meetings and desired to be instructed further in the faith.[31] Her heart was so aligned with God that she wanted to door-knock the streets to speak of the sweetness of Christ, or simply to pull others near her that they might be saved.[32] Her painful death reinforced in her a desire to be with Christ, where grace would flow unimpeded. While reference is made here to the ministry of Edwards, church services, and sermons, it is patently true that the means God used to advance grace in Abigail's life were diverse and dispersed. This youth reasserted her own filial piety towards her parents, and at one stage contemplated taking up residence in the Edwards' manse for further formation in the faith,[33] but on balance the ordering of spiritual experience for Abigail was provided chiefly through non-hierarchically defined means.

The case with Phebe Bartlett was different. As a four year old, she had limited opportunities to avail herself of means of grace outside of normal weekly meetings, though the catechism, the visit of a neighbouring minister, and texts of Scripture play a role in her spiritual improvement. What is of most value for our purposes is the ways in which Phebe inverted normal family roles and set an agenda in piety for her parents and siblings. It was her eleven year old brother, and apparently not her parents, who first introduced Phebe to the 'great

[27] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 192-193.
[28] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 192.
[29] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 193.
[30] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 193-194. Edwards elsewhere explains how such visions might be understood as 'ideas strongly impressed, and as it were, lively pictures in their minds,' using categories of sensation, which highlight human passivity and divine immanence: Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 188.
[31] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 194-195.
[32] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 196.
[33] It has been pointed out that it was not unusual for the children of Puritan families to be sent away to live in other families, either for work or for education, or simply to avoid excessive doting from parents. See Morgan, *Puritan Family,* 77.

things of religion.'[34] Indeed, her mother tried to inhibit Phebe from personal devotions 'in her closet,'[35] and refused to pray with another daughter, Amy, despite Phebe's importunate pleas.[36] Her mother in no way encouraged Phebe to believe in the possibility of assurance, but instead exhorted her merely to hope.[37] Phebe acknowledged that she loved God more than parents or siblings![38] The child was full of remorse when she discovered that taking some plums from a neighbour's yard without permission was stealing, and was only pacified when a child was sent to the neighbour to make good the sin.[39] Her tender conscience was in evidence when she discovered that a local poor man had lost his cow: she begged her father (the only time he appears in the account) to give a cow to the man, or to let the man's family come and live with them.[40] Finally, somewhat precociously, she longed to hear Edwards preach, and was thrilled when he returned to Northampton:

> She had manifested great love to her minister: particularly when I [Edwards] returned from my long journey for my health, the last fall, when she heard of it, she appeared very joyful at the news, and told the children of it, with an elevated voice, as the most joyful tidings; repeating it over and over, "Mr. Edwards is come home! Mr. Edwards is come home!"[41]

While Edwards is obviously pleased with Phebe's exclamations of delight, and the respect for his position that it entailed, what is most interesting in this account (and in the story of Abigail Hutchinson) is that traditional piety is established at the expense of received social and familial structures. Edwards's ministry in kindling revival actually serves to change the structures of Puritan culture which it had been assumed were generative of fresh expressions of piety, but which in these accounts appear to have held them back. Tracy suggests that Edwards inadvertently undermined traditional social order through his targeted ministry:

> The problem in Northampton, as Edwards himself defined it in the *Narrative*, was the failure of family government. But while decrying the decline of parental authority, Edwards ironically eroded part of what was left of it by appealing directly to the adolescents and intervening between child and parent in significant ways ... The story of Edwards's last fifteen years in Northampton might be summed up as his own holding fast to an ideal vision of community life and ministerial influence that seemingly became a reality in 1734-35, while the

[34] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 199. Morgan points out that the family is the basic unit of church and society, deriving from the creation account. See Morgan, *Puritan Family,* 135-136.
[35] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 199.
[36] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 204.
[37] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 200.
[38] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 201.
[39] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 203.
[40] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 204-205. A similar situation is described as occurring at the time of the sacramental season at Red River, where a young girl rebukes her father for his lack of charity, thereby illustrating the powerful redefinition of social roles through revival: see Leigh E. Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scotland and the Making of American Revivalism* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 107.
[41] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 205.

> community continued to grow economically and socially away from the ability or the desire to participate in such a mode of life.[42]

It is of course true that Edwards began the *Faithful Narrative* with a critique of families that 'did too much fail in the town,'[43] and thereupon made attempts to coordinate their efforts at discipline, but we are not given the impression in this piece that Edwards wants to reinstate or advocate a model of social life which had proved inadequate to the needs of the day. His models of piety are not adults who resume former practices successfully, but young women who promote a new kind of religious devotion despite the dead weight of inert family norms. In fact, order has been provided not by the reimposition of familial hierarchy, but rather:

> God has so ordered the manner of the work in many respects, as very signally and remarkably to shew it to be his own peculiar and immediate work, and to secure the glory of it wholly to his almighty power and sovereign grace.[44]

It may be justifiable for Tracy to eschew the interpretation that Edwards was brilliant while his congregation was stupid,[45] but her danger is to overplay the opposite contingency: that Edwards was naïve in his stewardship of the Northampton revival and ended up sponsoring the demise of Puritan structures of patriarchy from which his power base had benefited. He may well have been concerned about the excesses of the revival, and situated the account of Hawley's suicide in non-chronological order in the *Narrative* to highlight the revival's positive achievements, but this account in no sense disparages the newness of relations in Northampton, except to bemoan their untimely end. Edwards appears to value the diversity of means of grace which the revival engendered and which God had subsequently brought to order. It is not Edwards's ordination, nor his education, but his readiness for innovation which accredits his leadership in this piece.[46]

Revival as the solution to tribalist concerns

The construction of regional identity in New England appealed to the terminology of covenant, which functioned as the grand unifying theory for social life. Its theoretical capacity to produce cohesive relations between individuals, families, churches and the nation was

[42] Patricia J. Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor: Religion and Society in Eighteenth-Century Northampton* (The Jonathan Edwards Classic Studies Series; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 111, 122.
[43] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 146.
[44] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 209-210.
[45] Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor*, iii.
[46] E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Pulpit & Pew; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1-9.

prodigious. Indeed, though some commentators have suggested that the language of covenant applied to the nation was in decline in Edwards's time, others have reminded us that occasional sermons rather than the regular Sunday preachments may be the place to locate the ongoing power of the ideology of the national covenant.[47] The inherent sociological danger of New England viewing itself as the new Israel, in covenant with God, was tribalism, or protecting impervious boundaries between local life and movements elsewhere. Indeed, Morgan argues that Puritans succumbed to tribalism in several ways:

> Puritans of course thought of their God as the one God of the universe; but they made him so much their own, in the guise of making themselves his, that eventually and at times he took on the character of a tribal deity ... In the first generation men like John Winthrop and Thomas Hooker held in check the tribal spirit in Puritanism and strove to make New England a beacon to the world, not a refuge from it. But later generations, losing sight of the errand on which the founders had come, succumbed more and more to tribalism ... The Puritan system failed because the Puritans relied upon their children to provide the church with members and the state with citizens.[48]

Janice Knight identifies this trajectory in particular with that party of Puritans, including Hooker and Shepard, who privileged pastoral discipline, preparationist views of conversion and local church autonomy:

> [A] growing tribalism among the New England divines emerged in tandem with the rhetoric of preparationism. Their original devotion to pure church ordinances prompted these men to focus first on reform of their own hearts and then on the New England churches. Little energy or interest was left over for the millennial dreams that absorbed English radicals, to whom the preparationist emphasis on local purity may have seemed self-absorbed ... The truths of the faith now became the secrets of the tribe ... in general, they subscribed to a premillennialist reading of history, modeling their utopian ecclesiology on Old Testament precedent. While countering arguments for the importance of a general millennial fervor, this primitivist pattern supports claims of increasing tribalism based on congregational localism and preparationist individualism.[49]

The contours of the church presented in the *Faithful Narrative* are at odds with this prevailing ecclesiology. The very composition of this document attests an international concern and breadth. Edwards first conceives the idea of relating the events of the Connecticut River revival after Benjamin Colman, pastor of the Brattle Street Church in Boston and would-be editor, had solicited such news from him. Edwards writes:

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[47] See Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: University Press, 2002), 45, 48. It should be pointed out, however, that Noll does not say that the covenant had no role for Edwards, only that its totalising value was no longer necessary. Noll writes: 'In his two published works, Edwards's key move was to repudiate a long history of New England thought by shifting emphasis on covenant away from the complex nexus of person, church and society to a simpler bond between the converted individual and the church ... To make the covenant more powerful for the church, Edwards was willing to relinquish its all-purpose functions for society.' Noll here echoes earlier scholarship, which argued that Edwards surrendered the language of covenant in its social application. This position has been critiqued by Stout, amongst others: Harry S. Stout, 'The Puritans and Edwards,' in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. H. Lee; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 288.
[48] Morgan, *Puritan Family,* 168, 173, 185.
[49] Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 166-167.

> Northampton, May 30, 1735
> Dear Sir:
> In answer to your desire, I here send you a particular account of the present extraordinary circumstances of this town, and the neighboring towns with respect to religion.[50]

This letter was in time expanded and appended, though only as an excerpt, to a small volume of sermons by William Williams and published in Boston in November 1736. The first complete edition of Edwards's account was published in London in 1737, the second, also in London, in 1738, and finally a version with errors expunged appeared in Boston in 1738. The account of the revivals held great interest from the earliest days not only in New England but in the metropolitan world of London too. An incidental feature of the first edition, which betokens the international reach of its content, can be found in the error on the title page. This *Faithful Narrative* was putatively set amongst the towns and villages of 'New Hampshire in New-England.' The 1738 edition overcorrected this geographical clumsiness by identifying more adequately that it took place in 'the County of Hampshire, in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England."[51] International concern is no assurance of typographical accuracy. Such collaborative efforts in publication registered the speed and nature of the republic of letters in the eighteenth century trans-Atlantic world.[52]

Indeed, it was becoming increasingly clear that not only would revival spill over into neighbouring communities, but the pressures which Northampton faced were not to be isolated from concerns being faced elsewhere. The incident of Joseph Hawley's suicide appeared to create copy-cat aspirations amongst 'multitudes in this and other towns.'[53] The nature of events in Northampton had become known in many places, prompting jealous and unfair reports of God's work elsewhere.[54] Edwards even used the interest of Watts and Guyse as a strategy to incite his own congregation to greater faithfulness, as he recounted to them such international exposure in a discourse on the picture from Matthew's Gospel of the city on a hill.[55] This is itself significant, as it reflects Edwards's dream of the local revived congregation taking over the responsibility from the colony to become the model of the transformed

[50] Edwards, 'Unpublished Letter of May 30, 1735,' *WJE* 4: 99.
[51] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 128-129.
[52] Susan O'Brien, 'A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755,' *American Historical Review* 91/4 (1986): 811-832.
[53] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 206.
[54] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 209.
[55] Edwards, 'Faithful Narrative,' *WJE* 4: 210.

community which others must imitate. Edwards's scope here is nothing less than revivals as precursors to the dawning of the new world, with churches that world's most visible actualisation.

3.2 THE PILGRIM CHURCH IN *CHARITY AND ITS FRUITS*

The love of God flows out towards Christ the Head, and through him to all his members. (*WJE* 8: 373)

At the same time that Edwards and his Northampton church were receiving international notoriety through publication of *A Faithful Narrative* in 1737, Edwards himself was becoming increasingly agitated by the lack of long-term fruit displayed in the lives of those so affected locally. Instead of improvement in social and spiritual relations, Edwards witnessed deterioration, both formally and anecdotally. The second meeting-house on the Northampton site had been abandoned upon the collapse of its gallery in March 1737, whereupon the design and construction of the new meeting-house, dedicated in January 1738, drew out party spirit, dissensions, and callous disregard for others. Instead of the previous model of seating arranged with deference to age, the new floor plan gave priority to the wealth and family status of church members.[1] Husbands and wives could now sit together in family boxed pews, with those of higher status seated towards the middle. The youth, if not with their parents, would sit upstairs. The old style architecture was adapted to new tastes: in line with contemporary English fashion, a steeple was added, making it look less like a meeting-house and more like a church. Town meetings were now accommodated in a purpose-built town house. Preservation of Puritan ideals was not of chief concern, nor was charity for one's neighbour. The church's fellowship was in need of sustained ethical revival.

Edwards consequently undertook in the late 1730s three most significant sermon series to remedy the growing spiritual malaise in the town. These series, though paying formal homage to traditional Puritan homiletic conventions, were for Edwards himself unusual, as they worked with smaller portions of the Biblical text in sequence over a sustained period. The *first* of these was based on the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), outlining the folly of indiscriminate and hasty recognition of the true church.[2] The *last* of these series in 1739, known as the *History of the Work of Redemption*, to be dealt with in the next section of this thesis, tried to resuscitate ailing spiritual health by locating the church of Northampton in the flow of redemptive history. The *middle* series, a sequence of sermons subsequently labelled *Charity and its Fruits*

[1] Marsden, *A Life,* 184-189.
[2] See further Ava Chamberlain, 'Brides of Christ and Signs of Grace: Edwards's Sermon Series on the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins,' in *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation* (ed. S. J. Stein; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 3-18.

and based on Paul's hymn to love in 1 Corinthians 13, consisted of fifteen preachments delivered in 1738. Like the other series, this one on the nature of sanctification in the Christian life had as its overall goal to provoke church-goers to more serious Christian obedience, through exposition of love's moral psychology and its corporate eschatology. Though the beginnings of the Christian walk were grounded in union with God, there was nevertheless a journey to be undertaken. His own summary of the series appears at the end of the last sermon: 'As heaven is a world of love, so the way to heaven is the way of love.'[3] Our *corporate hope* ought to have along the road to heaven an *ecclesiastical reflex*. We are a pilgrim people.

The Way of Love: The Church Militant

A pilgrim people must grow in love, not presuming to have reached perfection. These sermons therefore contain exhortations, motivations, and warnings, so that the past experiences of a revived church are consummated in godly order, and not chaotic presumption. Love is binding. Edwards *exhorted* his congregation to repent of their sin and to practise love. He questioned their inward intentions when he mused, 'There are many here present who make a profession and show of religion, and it may be some who seem to do considerable things in religion ... But let us inquire whether we have sincerity of heart.'[4] More pointedly he named the *sin of gossip*, much in evidence in the town: 'The iniquity which is committed by men in all our taverns by what they say of one another behind their backs is beyond account. Some injure others by making and spreading false reports of others, and so slandering them.'[5] *Economic sins* are likewise addressed:

> And they are of a spirit and practice ... who will take all opportunities to get all they possibly can of their neighbors in their dealings with them, asking more for what they sell to their neighbor or do for him than the thing is worth, squeezing and extorting to the utmost out of him.[6]

It has even been the case that such wrangling has been brought into relationships within the church: 'There has been much anger in times past in this town on public occasions, and you or many of you here present are

[3] Jonathan Edwards, 'Charity and its Fruits,' in *Ethical Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 8; ed. P. Ramsay; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 396.
[4] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 181.
[5] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 187.
[6] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 214.

those in whose bosoms *this anger* has rested. Examine this anger.'[7] Edwards's seventh sermon concludes with the peroration:

> We in this land are trained up from generation to generation in a too niggardly, selfish spirit and practice; and notwithstanding all our professions of religion, and though there are many good things done which are worthy to be commended, yet without doubt we do in general come vastly short of what is required of Christians in the New Testament.[8]

These sermons, however, do more than just exhort to love. Edwards's own perceptive distinctions within the realm of moral psychology lend to this series a constructive function, providing *reasoned incentives to obey*. In fact, the first sermon, 'The Sum of all virtue,' demonstrates its doctrine by outlining 'what *reason* teaches of the nature of love.'[9] Using language of eighteenth century moral theory, Edwards goes on in sermon four to make a further contrast between types of love: 'as it respects the good enjoyed or to be enjoyed *by* the beloved, it is called love of benevolence; and as it respects good to be enjoyed *in* the beloved, it is called love of complacence.'[10] The associated trinitarian foundations of love are summarised in the fifteenth sermon:

> The infinite essential love of God is, as it were, an infinite and eternal mutual holy energy between the Father and the Son, a pure, holy act whereby the Deity becomes nothing but an infinite and unchangeable act of love, which proceeds from both the Father and the Son.[11]

For Edwards, love is simply captured in the 'disposition or affection by which one is dear to another,'[12] and this in turn for Christians is both a participation in the 'Spirit influencing the heart,'[13] and an imitation of 'the eternal love and grace of God, and the dying love of Christ.'[14] Our responsibility to practise love makes the church authentically Christian.

It must also be acknowledged that *entirely disinterested love* is, according to Edwards, not something which the Scriptures enjoin on believers.[15] In fact, he fully expects some elements of *self-love* in those who are growing in sanctification, as he writes in the seventh sermon entitled 'Charity contrary to a selfish spirit' that:

> It is not a thing contrary to Christianity that a man should love himself; or what is the same thing, that he should love his own happiness. Christianity does not

[7] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 280. Emphasis mine.
[8] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 271.
[9] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 134. Emphasis mine.
[10] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 212-213. Danaher points out the ways in which the traditional language of *agape*, *philia* and *eros* relate to Edwards's contemporary labelling of the language of love. See Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics,* 245.
[11] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 373.
[12] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 129.
[13] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 132.
[14] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 213.
[15] He is in fact thereby critiquing the British school of moral sense philosophy, which espoused this position to create a foundation for ethics outside of revealed religion. See Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History,* 38.

> tend to destroy a man's love to his own happiness; it would therein tend to destroy the humanity. Christianity is not destructive of humanity.[16]

The assumption in Edwards's reckoning is that as God diffuses his love and happiness to the creature, so we best promote our own happiness by seeking what God would give us. He does however qualify his argument by denying the possibility of 'an inordinate self-love' in the believer.[17] The experiential turning-point in a believer's life at conversion is to be understood as a refocusing of our self-love rather than its extirpation:

> The alteration which is made in a man when he is converted and sanctified is not by diminishing his love to happiness, but only by regulating it with respect to its exercises and influence, and the objects to which it leads ... And so when a saint increases in grace, he is made still more happy.[18]

Such ethical deliberation has, of course, its roots in the diffusive love of God, but also serves contextually to distance Edwards from those of his peers who maintained that to love God disinterestedly is to make space for self-destruction in order to increase the glory of God.[19] Edwards avers that '[i]n some respects wicked men do not love themselves enough. They do not love themselves so much as the godly do. They do not love that which is their true happiness.'[20] Edwards instead provides emotional boundaries for those of tender conscience, who, like his uncle Joseph Hawley, might be tempted to take their own life as a response to melancholy; and provides strategic boundaries for those who would disparage the revivals because of their propensity to extremism. Such abhorrent self-negation was exposed as lacking in sanctified grace in Edwards's mind through his moderate espousal of self-love. Stephen Post makes the case that:

> Edwards's suspicion of exaggerated demands for self-denial can be related to more than a respect for Puritan orthodoxy. Practical interests also persuaded him that proper self-regard must be included in the Christian ethic.[21]

Edwards also had to work against the tendency amongst the revived to judgmentalism. They could pursue self-abnegation as a kind of self-judgment, or in similar fashion judge *others* through a censorious spirit, to which he devotes an entire sermon, the ninth in the series. 'Thinking evil of others,' against which 1 Corinthians 13:5 warns, tends to

[16] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 254.
[17] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 255.
[18] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 255.
[19] Edwards's disciples, and in particular Samuel Hopkins, are responsible for distorting this view, suggesting that pursuing damnation for the greater glory of God would confirm one's status amongst the elect. See David C. Brand, *Profile of the Last Puritan: Jonathan Edwards, Self-love, and the Dawn of the Beatific* (American Academy of Religion Academy Series; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 72, 125.
[20] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 257.
[21] Stephen Post, 'Disinterested Benevolence: An American Debate over the Nature of Christian Love,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 (1986): 356-368.

fracture relationships and ultimately the church. While there is a responsible form of judging, for example that exercised by 'judges in civil societies and churches, who are impartially to judge of the actions of others that properly fall under their cognisance, whether good or bad,'[22] Edwards is more concerned in this sermon with that type of irresponsible judging which extends beyond the subject's competencies:

> A censorious spirit appears in a forwardness to judge ill of others' states. That is, to pass a censure upon those who are professors of religion, and to condemn them as hypocrites. Extremes here are to be avoided ... God seems to have reserved the positive determination of men's state in his own mind, as the only searcher of the heart, and trier of the reins of the children of men. Persons are guilty of censoriousness in condemning others' state when they will do it from things which are no evidence of their being in a bad estate.[23]

God alone can judge the heart, according to Edwards in the late 1730s. His position here affirms the importance of the practice of charity in adjudicating church disputes, though ecclesiastical discipline is not inconsistent with this.[24] The church maintains boundaries, though they are necessarily provisional. In another place, Edwards acknowledges the mixed inclinations of any heart:

> Though there be a great deal of hypocrisy, yet if there be any sincerity, that little sincerity shall not be rejected because there is so much hypocrisy with it.[25]

Ramsay notes that here 'Jonathan Edwards's discussion of the mixture of sincerity and hypocrisy remaining in the heart (the seat of both) shows that he did not expect "purity of heart" in this life. The "little sincerity" acceptable to God means that the Christian life was always *in via* toward holiness.'[26]

Spiritual gifts are a major theme of Edwards in several sermons in this series. With appeal to egregious displays of power by enthusiast leaders of the Connecticut River revivals, much damage had been done in Edwards's estimation to the cause of the Gospel.[27] Sermon two, entitled

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[22] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 286.
[23] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 284.
[24] Not long after preaching 'Charity,' Edwards excommunicated from the church a drunkard, Mrs Bridgman, after repeated and appropriate warnings, which he outlined in a sermon where, unusually for Edwards, the individual is named: Jonathan Edwards, '482. Sermon on Deut. 29:18-21 (July 1738),' in *Sermons, Series II, 1738, and Undated, 1734-1738* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online Volume 53; Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, 2008). Excommunication had been an uncommon practice in Northampton, this being the first occasion since 1711. He argues in a sermon shortly after in July 1739 that though excommunicants are rightly cut off, significantly this does not mean total disconnection from love: 'They are cut off from being the objects of that charity of God's people that is due to Christian brethren. *They ben't cut off from all charity of God's people*, for they ought to love all men. There is a love of God's people due to the heathen and others that are not in the visible church of Christ.' See Jonathan Edwards, 'The Means and Ends of Excommunication,' in *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 22; eds. H. S. Stout, N. O. Hatch and K. P. Farley; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 71. Emphasis mine.
[25] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 181.
[26] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 182, n. 8.
[27] See his references to extremes of experience later in this sermon: Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 168-169.

'Love more excellent than extraordinary gifts of the Spirit,' presents the argument, foreshadowing later developments in *Religious Affections*, that while spiritual gifts are a great privilege and were used with extraordinary results in the time of the apostles, nevertheless

> the ordinary influences of the Spirit of God working grace in the heart is a far greater privilege than any of them; a greater privilege than the spirit of prophecy, or the gift of tongues, or working miracles even to the moving of mountains.[28]

The way of love as described in 1 Corinthians 13 is book-ended with descriptions in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 of the value yet limitations of gifts, which are not necessarily the result of the Spirit abiding in the heart or mind:

> The Spirit of God communicates itself much more in bestowing saving grace than in bestowing those extraordinary gifts ... The Spirit of God may produce effects on many things to which it does not communicate itself ... Yea, grace is as it were the holy nature of the Spirit of God imparted to the soul.[29]

Such spiritual gifts are merely the temporary means to some more noble ends, notably the spread of the Gospel, the diffusion of grace, and the promotion of holiness, which lasts into eternity.[30] Edwards's cessationist position further amplifies his ethical aspirations for the distinctiveness of the post-apostolic church.[31]

Love for Edwards promotes *order*, rather than chaos, in the *church* and in society. Watchful of spiritual danger or material dearth, the magistrate and the minister together secure protection and provisions for their community, as expressions of charity, and of course are in need of it for themselves as well:

> Especially will a Christian spirit dispose those who stand in a public capacity, such as ministers and magistrates and all public officers, to seek the public good. It will dispose magistrates to act as the fathers of the commonwealth with that care and concern for the public good that the father of a family has for the family, watchful against any public dangers, forward to improve their power to promote the public benefit, not being governed by selfish views in their administrations ... a Christian spirit will dispose them [ministers] mainly to seek the good of their flock, to feed their souls as a good shepherd feeds his flock, and carefully watches over it, to lead it to good pasture, and defend it from wolves and other beasts of prey.[32]

A deferential society is presumed in such a model, whereby the duty of the flock is not merely to receive ministrations, but to submit to the one offering them:

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[28] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 157. This sermonic thesis comes after the accumulation of positive examples of spiritually gifted believers from all dispensations, attesting the rhetorical skills of Edwards in leading his listeners towards a climax, only to pull the rug out from under their feet at the last.
[29] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 158.
[30] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 162, 166.
[31] Michael A. G. Haykin, *Jonathan Edwards: The Holy Spirit in Revival: The Lasting Influence of the Holy Spirit in the Heart of Man* (Emmaus; Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2005), 59-73.
[32] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 261-262.

> Love would dispose to those duties which they owe one another in their several places and relations ... It would dispose a people to all proper duty to their ministers, to hearken to their instructions and counsels, and submit to them in the house of God, and will to support them.[33]

Remarkably, Edwards reminds his audience that the virtue of humility will 'prevent a leveling behavior,' as it discourages grasping at another's station:

> They who are under the influence of a humble spirit will not be opposite to giving to others the honor which is due to them. They will be willing that their superiors should be known and acknowledged in their place, and it will not seem hard to them. They will not desire that all should be upon a level; for they know it is best that some should be above others and should be honoured and submitted to as such, and therefore they are willing to comply with it agreeable to those precepts.[34]

Though Edwards sets before his listeners and readers high moral demands with both intellectually taxing and personally challenging justifications, these sermons nevertheless exemplify moderating influences in the mid-eighteenth century. He is resolutely not an advocate for a church of sinless perfection, nor for one in which confession is disconnected from charity. Summarily, the church militant ought not to consist of superior officers alone, for there would be no one to fight on the front line, nor on the other hand should the church relax recruitment standards in such a way that disciplined victory becomes unattainable. Love marks the way for the individual as for the fellowship, as the above exhortations show. Holiness is not to be understood in terms of liberation from the world, but in terms of our obligations within it.[35] The church in Edwards's view plays a key role in *moral formation*, just as the pursuit of love sustains the *social plausibility* of the pilgrim church. I concur with Danaher that in 'Charity and its Fruits' Edwards makes the transformed life of the church a central theme.[36]

The World of Love: The Church Triumphant

Such transformed life is constructed not just by philosophical or ethical conceptualities, but significantly through teleological vision. Edwards builds on assumptions concerning *protology*, when he states that '[t]he love of God flows out towards Christ the Head, and through him to all his members, in whom they were beloved before the foundation of the world.'[37] However, he goes beyond this to position discussion of love within *eschatology*, when he suggests at the beginning of sermon fifteen,

[33] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 136.
[34] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 242.
[35] Murray, *Jonathan Edwards,* 150-151.
[36] Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics,* 202, 235.
[37] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 373.

called 'Heaven is a world of love,' that the church militant on earth is 'in an imperfect state, a kind of state of childhood in comparison with what it will be in the elder and latter ages of the church, when it will be in a state of manhood, or a perfect state in comparison with what it was in the first ages.'[38] Edwards uses organic language to describe how the church matures, or is in progress, a sign of which is leaving behind gifts which properly belong to infancy:

> Prophecy and miracles argue the imperfection of the state of the church, rather than the perfection ... When the Christian church first began after Christ's ascension, that was the infancy of the church, and then it needed miracles and prophecies to establish it. But being once established, and the canon of Scripture completed, they ceased ... The Apostle seems to call these gifts ... childish things in comparison with that nobler fruit of the Spirit, divine love.[39]

Negatively, similar organic language extends to inform us that in heaven there is no 'deformity of any kind,'[40] which would be a 'monster, wherein many essential parts are wanting.'[41] There is growth in the life of the church within this age (as gifts' usefulness is superseded), just as there is positive growth in the life of the church between this age and the next. The way of love and the world of love are continuous, an ecclesiologically unitary vision of the pilgrim church.[42]

Indeed, drawing from the assertion that love endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:7), and in order to teach us the nature of perseverance along the pilgrim way, Edwards makes the remarkable parallel between the presence of the Spirit in an individual's life and the presence of the people of God in the world:

> It is very much with grace in the heart of a Christian, as it is in the church of God in the world. It is God's post and it is but small, and great opposition is made against it by innumerable enemies ... So grace in the heart is like the church of Israel in Egypt, and in the Red Sea and the wilderness ... Thus as the gates of hell can never prevail against the church of Christ, so neither can they prevail against grace in the heart.[43]

Here we witness not just a movement from the church militant to the church triumphant, we also see the mechanism for Edwards which connects the grace-bearing believer with the survival of the church in this world and for the next. Astoundingly, the model by which to understand the church is the regenerate Christian. God sets up 'Christ's kingdom in

[38] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 366.
[39] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 362.
[40] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 371.
[41] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 338.
[42] Spohn makes clear the ways in which Edwards's approach to virtue is necessarily social, for Edwards does not fall prey to the mistake of bypassing 'the world of social relations and institutions in the pursuit of the sacred,' nor of using 'spiritual practices instrumentally for personal benefit.' See William C. Spohn, 'Spirituality and its Discontents: Practices in Jonathan Edwards's *Charity and its Fruits*,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31/2 (2003): 253-276, especially 271.
[43] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 342-343.

men's hearts,'[44] which will be perfected in the lives of individuals upon their death, and in the 'church of Christ collectively as a body.'[45] The experience of grace working itself out in an individual's life begins a chain reaction which ignites God's work in the congregation. To defend God's engagement with the world in the philosophical context of deist attempts to remove him, Edwards attempted 'to transport the dynamism revealed in saving grace from the inner sphere of the soul into the whole realm of history.'[46] Edwards applies most moving imagery to persuade his audience that harmony in the coming world of love begins with the individual now, which thence permeates the world around:

> And at the end of the world, when the church of Christ shall be settled in its last and most complete and eternal state ... yet then divine love shall not fail, but be brought to its most glorious perfection in every individual member of the whole elect church: when in every heart that love, which was but a spark, shall be blown up to a flame, and every holy soul shall be as it were all a flame of divine love ... Every saint is as a flower in the garden of God, and holy love is the fragrancy and sweet odor which they all send forth, and with which they fill that paradise. Every saint there is as a note in a concert of music which sweetly harmonizes with every other note, and all together employed wholly in praising God and the Lamb.[47]

A similar progression is implicit in much of the structure of this sermon series. Though expounding love, Edwards repeatedly connects this one virtue to a list of others which find their supreme expression in charity. Love alone abides, but it is in his estimation not to be understood monistically. There is a plurality within the nature of love, for which the expressive word 'concatenation' is its distillation:

> the graces of Christianity are all linked together or united one to another and within one another, as the links of a chain; one does, as it were, hang on another from one end of the chain to the other, so that if one link be broken, all falls; the whole ceases to be of any effect.[48]

There is one source of grace in the Spirit, and one end towards which all graces tend. The pivotal experience of conversion is the point at which the Spirit joins the individual to the cosmic destination of love.[49] The singularity of conversion betokens a singularity of purpose. It is of great concern to Edwards to demonstrate that all virtues must be engaged with all others holistically, allowing none expression without the concomitant presence of others of their kind, for no person can claim to honour God in their lives while selectively accentuating some virtues without others. Love brings order to diverse buddings of grace. Ramsay makes the comment:

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[44] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 360.
[45] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 359.
[46] Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History*, 151.
[47] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 359, 386.
[48] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 327-328.
[49] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 332-333.

> A beautiful symmetry and uniformity – the concatenation of all the graces – is the "aesthetic" element in Jonathan Edwards's understanding of the Christian moral life.[50]

Ramsay also argues that this whole series of sermons reflects a greater narrative arc, in as far as the idea of progress or growth in holiness of the individual, and the idea of perfection or maturity in the life of the church, is confirmed eschatologically throughout the preaching units as they tell the story of the work of God in the world. Redemption is the theme of this series, not finally moral psychology *tout court*. Edwards is at pains to situate his understanding of virtue on a broader theological canvas. The first sermons deal with charity in terms of its place within interpersonal relationships, while the latter sermons introduce into their titles the language of 'grace' and the 'divine.' By inverting the traditional order of the tables of the law (placing duties towards humankind before our duties towards God), Edwards can both surprise his audience with a counter-intuitive approach to ethics, as well as highlight the goal towards which our ethical responsibilities tend. As 1 Corinthians 13 begins with activity that is without love, so the chapter ends with the fulfilment in Christ of all loving aspiration. Ramsay summarises:

> We shall look at ... some important moral progressions corresponding to the Christological-eschatological movement in the chapter ... From the beginning of the sermon series, the movement has been from God manward and returning to him. This is Edwards's master image or root metaphor.[51]

The way of love is a pilgrimage, which finds its destination in the world of love, which is heaven. Reprising earlier Puritan rhetoric, Edwards exhorts his audience to press on toward that 'glorious city of light and love ... on the top of an high hill ... and there is no arriving there without traveling uphill.'[52] The view becomes better and better the higher a saint ascends. The convergence of individuals walking in love towards a common destination makes for a community overflowing in love, as Christ's love 'flows out to his whole church there, and to every individual member of it.'[53] As the Spirit perfects the church, so the Son unites the church, fitting it to be his bride.[54] The world of love is being rehearsed even now, as the church militant both within and without shapes its environment for good:

> [T]he ethos of the church is transformative of the surrounding society ... For Edwards, the church is not merely a vehicle for moral formation ... but establishes the *telos* for the moral life. That is to say, Edwards believes that the

[50] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 331, n. 3.
[51] Paul Ramsay, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *Ethical Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 8; ed. P. Ramsay; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 93.
[52] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 395.
[53] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 374.
[54] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 368, 374, 371.

> church's eschatological communion with the Trinity orders all our interpersonal relationships. To participate in the life of the church is to recognize that mutuality and self-giving are normative in all human relationships, for in the triune God, mutual love among persons is supreme.[55]

The church is the *body* of Christ, where mutual interdependence is exercised between *members*, where selfishness has no place, and our horizontal responsibilities are encouraged. Elsewhere, the image of the body highlights not the horizontal but the vertical: it is the body of *Christ*, who is its Head and from whom the church's life is derived.[56] Using theological vocabulary which unites the mundane with the mystical, Edwards provides another Biblical avenue to strengthen the relationship between ethics and eschatology. The journey and the destination are cut from the same cloth, just as our oneness in Christ means for Christians that 'all things shall be yours.'[57] Edwards's preaching on love itself formed a vital strategy in repristinating Reformed theology in the eighteenth century, and gifted to traditional presentations of redemption new emphases.[58] It awaits discussion in the next section of this thesis exactly what kind of experiences within *redemptive history* the pilgrim people of God ought to expect.

[55] Danaher, *Trinitarian Ethics,* 237, 253-254.
[56] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 270. Edwards assembles a list of Biblical references to the spiritual body in the application of sermon seven to illustrate this point.
[57] Edwards, 'Charity,' *WJE* 8: 270.
[58] Marsden, *A Life,* 191-192.

3.3 THE PURPOSEFUL CHURCH IN *A HISTORY OF THE WORK OF REDEMPTION*

How happy a society the church of Christ is: for all this great work is for them. (*WJE* 9: 526)

From its opening line, it is clear that a guiding theme of Edwards's discourse *A History of the Work of Redemption*, based on a sermon series of March to August 1739, is the doctrine of the church, for he begins with the hope that his preaching will 'comfort the church under her sufferings and persecutions of her enemies.'[1] Innovatively, he preaches this entire series under one single Biblical banner, namely 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 forever, and my salvation from generation to generation.' While in the previous year Edwards had constructed a whole sermon series by expounding 1 Corinthians 13 a verse at a time, here the longer sequence of thirty sermons is based not on a chapter but on a single verse. The scope of this discourse, finally published posthumously in 1774,[2] is conceived on a more narrow footing but with a more expansive vision: to expound the purpose of the church in the world.

Purporting to recount the work of God 'from the fall of man to the end of the world,' as outlined repeatedly in the doctrinal heading of the sermons, this series describes in three overarching parts first of all the preparation for the incarnation in the nation of Israel, then the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus himself, concluding with the history of the people of God after the ascension until the last judgment. Edwards uses the language of redemption not merely as a synonym for the doctrine of the atonement, but to present the story of salvation history.[3] The 'work of redemption' functions as shorthand for the outworkings of the 'covenant of redemption' made pre-temporally between the Father and the Son, achieved in time and space through the earthly ministry of Christ, and applied to human lives through the work of the Spirit.[4] Brown suggests that for Edwards the terminology of the work of redemption 'makes reference to the whole of God's work *ad extra*, and thus to the whole of

[1] Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 9; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 113.
[2] Edwards's son, Jonathan Edwards, Jr., presented this published edition to the printers with amendments to the original, which disguised its sermonic origins and pastoral intentions. There was little interest in publishing the work in revolutionary America, so it was taken up by John Erskine in Scotland and published in Edinburgh instead. See John F. Wilson, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *A History of the Work of Redemption* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 9; ed. J. F. Wilson; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 20-25.
[3] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 117.
[4] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 118.

those doctrines relating to this work.'[5] It is most significant that Edwards visualises redemption on such a sweeping vista, for this situates his ecclesiology in this work as an essential feature of divine operations.

The church in this discourse, both local and universal, functions as the unifying thematic subject (indeed the collision point between God's beneficence and Satan's malice), as well as the object of Edwards's apologetic attempts to define his theological programme over and against that of his deist opponents. Edwards is reconfiguring a defence of divine engagement in the world using history and the church's place within it as his bulwark.[6] The church will be preserved by God 'from generation to generation,' while those who oppose God's design, in former days or even contemporaneously with Edwards, will perish, just as 'a moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool.' Despite their elevated tone, Edwards preached these sermons to his own congregation in Northampton, and by using the method of historical development to teach centrally important doctrines of Christian faith, he makes clear that these particular auditors are part of God's developing economy in the world. This chapter demonstrates, from the 'Redemption' discourse, first the nature of the church's *instrumentality*, then its *growth* and finally its *purpose*, with an eye to the philosophical challenges and local declension which Edwards witnessed.

The Instrumentality of the Church and the Doctrine of Redemption

When Edwards speaks of the church, he is making claims for God's ongoing commitment to, and involvement with, the material order. His schematic history of God's work in the world, carried by the language of redemption, is a sharp critique of deist thought in the early to mid eighteenth century. Edwards insisted upon God's intervention in the world and not God's distance from the world, not universality of access to God but rather the particularity of access to God through events where God makes himself known. For deists, the power of rationality, or universal reason, was the 'candle of the Lord' which illuminated insights gleaned from observation of the natural world – Christianity 'either added nothing at all to "natural religion" or contained foolish and false elements, and hence must be purged, reinterpreted or rejected.'[7] In terms of their

[5] Brown, *Edwards and the Bible*, 172.
[6] Brown, *Edwards and the Bible,* 164-166, 178.
[7] Porter, *Enlightenment,* 112.

logic, deists applied *deductive reasoning* to the theological issues at hand in order to bring *order* to ostensibly disparate religious convictions and practices. They asserted *individual autonomy* rather than traditional authority (whether it be the Scriptures, clergy or ecclesiastical forms) and held that the 'purpose of religion is *morality*.'[8] Essentially, the self-evident truths of creation were ranked more highly than the suspect claims of revealed religion:

> God and true religion were thought to be absolutely invariable since the beginning of history. In this sense, deism was a-historical. Deists were adamant about the *static* nature of both God and religion because they rejected *particularity*. Since they had decided a priori that revelation must have always been available equally to all human beings from the very beginning of history, and that to admit anything otherwise would be to conceive an unjust and malevolent God, they found it necessary to insist on the unchanging character of both true religion and its deity ... For the deists, then, true religion has no history and little or no relation to culture. All religions connected to history are necessarily suspect and products of an arbitrary god who is not God. All changes in history are unrelated to religious or even philosophical truth.[9]

Edwards makes clear in this discourse that the threat posed by the deists is inimical to Christian faith:

> [A]nother thing that has of late exceedingly prevailed among Protestants, and especially in England, is deism. The deists wholly cast off the Christian religion, and are professed infidels ... Indeed, they own the being of God but deny that Christ was the son of God, and say he was a mere cheat, and so they say all the prophets and apostles were. And they deny the whole Scripture; they deny that any of it is the word of God. They deny any revealed religion, or any word of God at all, and say that God has given mankind no other light to walk by but his own reason.[10]

He also asserts in sermon twenty-one that it is indeed *a kind of particularity*, that of the Gospel, which has led to the successes of the Christian religion within history generally, and to the triumphs of the church in the age of Constantine more notably:

> From what has been said we have a strong argument of the truth of the Christian religion, and that the Gospel of Jesus Christ really is from God. This wonderful success of it that has been spoken of, and with those circumstances that have been mentioned, are a strong argument of it ... The very deists themselves acknowledge that it can be demonstrated that there is one God, and but one, that only he has made and governs the world. But now 'tis evident that 'tis the Gospel, and that only, that has actually been the means to bring the knowledge of this truth.[11]

For Edwards, God is presently active in the world, exercising divine power in historically contingent ways. He moves beyond the facile contrast between the doctrine of redemption and the deists' emphasis on creation, for he actually appeals to the purpose of the creation even when subordinating it to the goal of redemption. He takes the position that God expresses his glory penultimately through the world's creation, while

[8] McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 18-22. Emphasis mine.
[9] McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 28-29. Emphasis mine.
[10] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 432.
[11] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 398-399.

the ultimate diffusion of his glory is planned for the divine work of redemption, which was 'if possible, even more fundamental than its [the world's] creation.'[12] To make from the creation a 'spouse and kingdom for his Son' is an audacious desire, enabled through the trinitarian redemptive plan of God from the beginning of time:

> [T]he Work of Redemption is, as it were, the sum of God's works of providence. This shows us how much greater the Work of Redemption is than the work of creation, for I have several times observed before that the work of providence is greater than the work of creation because 'tis the end of it, as the use of an house is the end of the building of an house ... This Work of Redemption is so much the greatest of all the works of God, that all other works are to be looked upon either as part of it, or appendages to it, or are some way reducible to it. And so all the decrees of God do some way or other belong to that eternal covenant of redemption that was between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world; every decree of God is some way or other reducible to that covenant ... for the Work of Redemption is the great subject of the whole Bible.[13]

While the work of redemption itself, according to Edwards's doctrine, is carried on from the '*fall of man* to the end of the world,' Edwards is keen to nuance this with the explanation that there were 'many things done in order to the Work of Redemption ... *before the world was created*, yea from all eternity,'[14] though decrees to allow the fall or to pursue reprobation are not here made explicit. He stops short of espousing supralapsarianism *tout court*.

In as far as Edwards describes such a work of redemption and the church's place within it in historically objective terms, he is subtly reshaping the Puritan approach. He of course still passionately echoes the Puritan concern for the *subjective* appropriation of grace in the life of an individual. 'Charity and its Fruits,' preached a year earlier, amply demonstrates this concern, as do several loci in the 'Redemption' discourse, which draw a parallel between the soul's pilgrimage from conversion to glory and the progress of the church.[15] However, Edwards also demonstrates his Puritan, indeed premodern, historical sensibilities, when he requires that the *objective* course of redemption history has meaning only in as far as it is provided through a prophetic voice from outside the creation. Prophets decipher the ambiguity of earthly reality.[16]

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[12] John F. Wilson, 'History,' in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. H. Lee; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 215.
[13] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 513-514.
[14] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 118. Emphasis mine. See also discussion of this in Edwards, 'Misc.' 1062, *WJE* 20: 430-443, where Edwards describes the work of the Trinity before the creation of the world in establishing the covenant of redemption.
[15] For example Edwards, *WJE* 9: 144.
[16] See John F. Wilson, 'Jonathan Edwards as Historian,' *Church History* 46/1 (1977): 5-18, and William J. Scheick, *The Writings of Jonathan Edwards: Theme, Motif and Style* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1975), 65, for arguments concerning Edwards's historical method. Wilson critiques the views of both Peter Gay and Perry Miller, the former who makes of Edwards an

Enlightened thinkers of Edwards's day would insist that history ought only to be understood on its own terms, explained from within the observable world, disallowing any recourse to the transcendent to ascertain human or ecclesiological purpose.

The 'Redemption' discourse is therefore distinctively new in terms of its concrete description of the historical connections between creation and redemption leading to the consummation of the world. Each stage builds upon the divine purpose embedded in previous historical achievement, giving to the overall shape an eschatological or cosmic trajectory. God's glory is the end for which God's creation and redemption are the means. Wilson highlights the importance:

> As important as it is to observe that Edwards's concern for redemption as the most basic religious category was carrying forward a prominent strand of New England culture, we must note that he also turned these concerns in a different direction entirely. Here he proposed systematic attention to the "objective" side of the issue: redemption seen in relationship to the whole of creation as the means to comprehend the relationship of the world to God ... In effect, Edwards's argument was, so to speak, that if creation is a stage, the purpose of which is to permit the drama of redemption to be played out, the outcome of the drama (and thus the reason for creation) is God's self-glorification.[17]

In short, God's ordered relationship with the world can be understood in terms of deliberate and identifiable steps (at least in retrospect). While we have earlier seen that Edwards might better be described as a voluntarist with regard to conversion morphology, highlighting the freedom of God to work in surprising ways within the life of the individual,[18] when it comes to assessing the life of the church writ large, Edwards is just as likely to highlight the regularities and continuities to be found between design within history and in the church and so be described as an intellectualist. While the Spirit's work in the individual adheres to a minimum of stages, the church brings order to the Spirit's work in as far as it conforms to numerous successive dispensations of God.[19] As a consequence of the redemptive design being incorporated into the material creation, the church as the redeemed part of the created order occupies a dignified and exalted place.

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anachronism, and the latter who presents Edwards as modern without remainder. Neither position for Wilson can remain uncontested.

[17] Wilson, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 9: 31-32.

[18] Brand draws our attention to writers for whom Edwards's Augustinian and voluntarist heritage is essential to understanding his soteriology. See Brand, *Profile of the Last Puritan*, 111-124.

[19] Edwards's first set of divisions creates three periods of history, namely the period before the incarnation, the period of Christ's humiliation, then the reign of Christ in heaven after his exaltation. Within this schema, the last dispensation is further subdivided into the era until the fall of Jerusalem, then until the conversion of the Empire under Constantine, then until the Fall of Antichrist at the Reformation, then until the Day of Judgment. These periodisations are structured for Edwards around different 'comings of Christ.' See Edwards, *WJE* 9: 351.

The work of redemption is fundamentally a unifying work of God, despite the disparate historical contingencies it must inhabit. It must be recognised however that this unity is not the equivalent of universalism, in which all are saved. For the church to be redeemed leaves others without such a redemption, and leads to opposition for the people of God in the world. After all, the theme of the 'Redemption' discourse is to provide comfort to the church in its dangerous pilgrimage and in its own battles with Satan. Not only does the lead text from Isaiah 51:8 imply the existence and eventual destruction of opposition, we have it expressed in more explicit terms in the first sermon: 'the sufferings and the persecutions of her enemies,' 'the happiness of the church of God is set forth by comparing it with the contrary fate of his enemies that oppose her,' 'how shortlived the power and prosperity of the church's enemies is.'[20] Indeed, such sufferings begin to define the church's experience in history:

> Seeing that God has so ordered it in his providence that his church should for so long a time, for the bigger part of so many ages, be in a suffering state, yea and often in a state of such extreme suffering, we may conclude that the spirit of the true church is a suffering spirit. Otherwise God never would have ordered so much suffering for the church; for doubtless God accommodates the state and circumstances of the church to the spirit that he has given them.[21]

This is of great significance not only pastorally for Edwards's readers, but also for his philosophy of history, which is driven most fundamentally by the redemption provided by God for the church since her fall and against her enemies. The contest within history between the forces of good and evil is the *sine qua non* of the whole discourse, and the underlying and unifying reality of all history. McClymond locates such a narrative within the apocalyptic traditions of Christian thought:

> Strife between the righteous and the wicked is the driving force of world history ... Behind the various events and circumstances of religious persecution is the invisible power of Satan, animating and activating the human agencies of evil ... Since one of the dominant characteristics of apocalyptic literature is the sharp demarcation of good and evil and their cataclysmic conflict with one another, one concludes that Edwards portrayed all of history, and not merely its consummation, in apocalyptic terms ... The true believers seem to be a tiny huddle surrounded by a hostile mob; thus Edwards's conception of the church shows the sectarian tendency common to apocalyptic writing.[22]

God's activity to interpose is indeed fundamental to Edwards's conception of history, and the duality between good and evil is part of an apocalyptic worldview. However, Edwards's model is not one of occasional and spectacular divine intrusion, but rather continuous

[20] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 113.
[21] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 453.
[22] Michael J. McClymond, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 70-71.

involvement with periodic recalibrations. The continuities between creation, redemption and consummation suggest that instead of an *apocalyptic* model, a *prophetic* model describes better Edwards's philosophy of history, in which God through human instruments provides necessary corrections and appeals to return to previously revealed ways. The church is not a defensive remnant but the victorious beneficiary of Christ's resurrection.[23]

Avihu Zakai is a most insightful commentator on Edwards's philosophy of history. He first wants to assert that it was a distinctive characteristic of *Protestant* historiography more generally to locate eschatological and apocalyptic developments within the time and space continuum. The Reformers had rejected the Augustinian framework of God's ultimate triumph beyond history, which had rendered static the historical experience. With this denial Edwards would of course concur.[24] However, Zakai also asseverates that traditional *Puritan* eschatology, based on the model of the Exodus from Egypt, which appealed to apocalyptic rupture as the rationale for leaving England had been relativised in New England and was now conceived in more nuanced terms. Edwards was distancing himself from more recent Protestant apocalyptic interpretation:

> Edwards's philosophy of history shows that he was true heir of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant and Puritan historiography, which was founded upon an apocalyptic interpretation of history, although he radically transformed some of its basic assumptions. Edwards inherited the quest to establish the closest possible link between prophecy and history ... Yet, in contrast to the Protestant assumption that the historical process is based ultimately on social, political, and ecclesiastical changes, such as the struggle against the Church of Rome, Edwards held that the principal source governing the historical process is God's redemptive plan.[25]

A battle within history between the people of God and all who oppose her might be understood in apocalyptic terms; however Edwards does not tie the victory of God's people to cataclysmic intervention. Christ does not reign on the earth in unmediated glory in the millennium.[26] Rather than a 'tiny huddle surrounded by a hostile mob,'[27] the church of God is a prosperous society, though for a brief time possibly experiencing apostasy.[28] On the other hand, Edwards does not go so far as to collapse God's will entirely into the historical process without remainder. He disavows a cyclical pattern of history that in the end makes no progress.

[23] See for example Edwards, *WJE* 9: 360-361.
[24] Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 22-24.
[25] Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History*, 161-162.
[26] Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History*, 269-270.
[27] McClymond, *Encounters with God*, 71.
[28] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 471-486.

Such a position, 'analogous to the life cycle of the individual organism,"[29] would be to fail to acknowledge any millennial structure in Edwards's thought.

With the church as case study, it becomes evident that Edwards baptises neither the abstract rationalism of the deists, which would permit of no historical particularity, nor the erratic or wholly arbitrary ministry of the enthusiasts, which tended towards the impossibility of determining historical order.[30] McClymond suggests that Edwards takes a mediating position, acknowledging both the continuities between creation and redemption, and the possibility of the new in an individual's life. It may be characterised as a 'graduated supernaturalism whose dominant characteristic was the blurring of any sharp line between the natural and the supernatural."[31] The church is theologically as well as practically situated to engender this collocation as an *instrument* of divine agency.

Edwards has frequently been named the American Augustine,[32] and *A History of the Work of Redemption* certainly fulfils the role, similar to that of the *City of God* in the fifth century, of interpreting his own times, now in relation to the revivals, and answering objections to the claims of Christian faith in philosophically cogent ways. Both works describe the war in which believers are engaged in history. Edwards's discourse, however, does more than acknowledge the difficulties facing the people of God in their pilgrimage in this world, or allow for the usefulness of the church in waging that war. He makes a positive case to describe the progress that is made during their historical sojourn.[33] The verifiably real progress of the church is the theme of the next section of this chapter.

The Progress of the Church and the Use of Typology

The redeemed church is not just valiantly defending her toehold in a world opposed to the claims of Christ: she is actually making valiant though often unrecognised progress despite her adversaries. Edwards appropriates a typological strategy to demonstrate such progress, and to deny the deist assumption that any change within the historical order

[29] Stow Persons, 'The Cyclical Theory of History in Eighteenth Century America,' *American Quarterly* 6/2 (1954): 147-163.
[30] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (First Wesleyan ed.; Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 55.
[31] McClymond, *Encounters with God*, 110.
[32] See for example Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History*, 334.
[33] Marsden, *A Life,* 197.

must necessarily be degenerative. Typology provides cohesion in Biblical interpretation, and brings order to literature commonly seen as unreliable because it is disparate in form and matter. It became an increasingly important methodology in several areas: to interpret difficult portions of Scripture, like the Song of Songs or the book of Revelation; to maintain the relevance of the Old Testament to the Puritans' New England situation, despite rejection of, for instance, the Old Testament sacrificial system;[34] and to allow a providentialist view of history in the days after the closing of the New Testament canon.[35] When faced with persecution, it was most tempting through typological exegesis to connect present experience with Scriptural texts that admitted of a common shape to the adversity experienced, even if its details varied.[36] While redemption provided a unifying soteriology, typology provided a unifying epistemology in Edwards's search for ecclesiological progress.

Typology is the hermeneutical strategy which connects an earlier event or achievement in history with one that comes after it, lending to the latter exemplar some of the theological value which adhered to the earlier model. Unlike allegory, which takes a concrete historical instance and relates it to a suprahistorical idea or concept, the structure of *type* (the earlier instance) and *antitype* (the latter instance) maintains historical checks and balances and disallows fanciful, perhaps Platonic, interpretation. Puritans were not averse to seeking communication from God in historical events both within and without the Biblical revelation: they simply had to establish a rigorous correspondence in the mind of the divine author between the parts to establish their case.[37] Edwards further grounds this hermeneutical device not just in the divine mind but in the divine character. He maintains that an essential attribute of God is the desire to communicate his glory in creation and in history, wherefore phenomena in all the world can function as means of communication. In opposition to deist assumptions about the retreat of God from this world, Edwards is theologically predisposed to hear God 'through many and diverse media.'[38]

[34] While typology might provide a case for historical development, appeal to the Old Testament at all for validation of New England's ecclesiastical settlement could have the opposite effect, namely to remind Puritans of decline from a primitivist purity of design and execution. See Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives,* 17. Edwards's ecclesiology is contrasted here with such a 'first is best' mindset.
[35] Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan: Metaphor and Symbol in New England from the Puritans to the Transcendentalists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), viii, 27, 35.
[36] W. Reginald Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), 145.
[37] Lowance, *Language of Canaan*, 4-5.
[38] McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 43, 225.

For Edwards, typology demonstrates both divine oversight of history, and divine interpretation of history. Old Testament types, whether institutions, providences, or persons,[39] essentially point forward to, and teach about, Christ: the exodus from Egypt is 'the greatest type of Christ's redemption of any providential event whatsoever,' the details of Israel's legal code were together designed to show 'that the whole nation by this law was as it were constituted in a typical state,' the judges are understood as 'types of the great redeemer and deliverer of his church,' and supremely David was presented as 'the greatest personal type of Christ of all under the Old Testament.'[40] To establish a typical relationship between historical events or institutions within the narrative of the Bible was relatively conventional, for Christological typology in the New Testament provided a 'strong unifying tendency' between the testaments.[41] Such connections could be expressed both through propositional *prophecy*, or figurative *types*:

> We observed before that the light that the church enjoyed from the fall of man till Christ came was like the light which we enjoy in the night, not the light of the sun directly but as reflected from the moon and stars, which light did foreshadow Christ to come, the sun of righteousness hereafter to arise. This light of the sun of righteousness to come they had chiefly two ways. One was by *predictions* of Christ to come whereby his coming was *foretold and promised*, and another was by *types and shadows* of Christ whereby his coming and redemption were *prefigured*.[42]

Edwards, however, more radically, is also prepared to see typical relationships between extracanonical historical events and the life of the church.[43] Somewhat predictably, the tabernacle is presented in sermon eight as the multivalent type for 'the human nature of Christ, and of the church of Christ, and of heaven.'[44] Remarkably, on the other hand, the parallel is drawn between the conversion of the pagan Roman Empire under Constantine's leadership, a kind of 'coming of Christ' as interpreted from Revelation 6:12-17, with the ultimate 'coming of Christ' at the Last Judgement, working essentially from antitype back to type.[45] He also extravagantly describes the Constantinian achievement as 'the greatest revolution and change in the face of things on the face of the earth that ever came to pass in the world since the flood.'[46] Though

[39] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 204.
[40] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 175, 182, 196, 204.
[41] McClymond, *Encounters with God,* 68. Note for example the recurrent use of the word τυπος in 1 Corinthians 10 to extract moral lessons from the Law.
[42] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 136. Emphasis mine.
[43] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 270. Edwards begins sermon twelve by allowing for confident interpretation of events in the period between the end of Old Testament prophecy and the coming of Christ, even without 'Scripture history to guide us.'
[44] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 224.
[45] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 351, 397.
[46] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 396.

noticeably lacking in the 'Redemption' discourse, in his typology notebooks Edwards also endorses 'a system of types in nature,'[47] bordering on allegory, which would relate the contours of natural phenomena to spiritual lessons. In *Images of Divine Things*, he can imaginatively assert that ecclesiology can be drawn out of botany:

> 99. ... The church in different ages is lively represented by the growth and progress of a tree; and the church in the same age, in Christ its head and stock, is like a tree. The various changes of a tree in different seasons, and what comes to pass in its leaves, flowers and fruit in innumerable instances that might be mentioned, is a lively image of what is to be seen in the church ... A tree also is many ways a lively image of a particular Christian, with regard to the new man, and is so spoken of in Scripture. *Corol*. Hence it may be argued that infants do belong to the church.[48]

In surrounding entries, Edwards extracts lessons for the prosperity of the church from the vicissitudes of daily weather patterns, and teaches that the erect posture of human beings signifies 'that he was made to have heaven in his eye.'[49] Wilson sees this trajectory as a departure from conservative Puritan exegesis, thus allowing Edwards a more dynamic interpretation of history and Christian experience than was recently possible. Wilson's claim that 'the discourse became as much a celebration of the God of nature as a hymn to the Lord of history' is, however, to overreach.[50] Observations on nature are distinctly not at the heart of the 'Redemption' discourse.

One of the most pregnant uses of typology for ecclesiological purposes in this discourse is the hportrayal of Christ as prophet, priest and prince.[51] Those occupying these three mediatorial offices in the Old Testament had in common an anointing, which presaged the commissioning of Christ in his baptism for divine service. Immediately after the fall, the Son began his work mediating between the Father and sinful humanity: 'He undertook henceforward to teach mankind in the exercise of his prophetic office and to intercede for fallen man in the <exercise of the> priestly <office> and he took on him as it were the care and burden of the government of the church and of the world.'[52] The priestly role is fulfilled through Christ's purchase of redemption and his pleading of the merits of his purchase before the throne of grace. The kingly role describes victory by God through Christ over his enemies and

[47] McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 113.
[48] Jonathan Edwards, *Typological Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 11. Edited by Wallace E. Anderson, Mason I. Lowance, Jr., and David H. Watters; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 89.
[49] Edwards, *WJE* 11: 88-89.
[50] Wilson, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 9: 50.
[51] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 218.
[52] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 130. Words in angle brackets represent Edwards's own words, which appear in the original as interlinear additions.

the distribution of blessings thereby won. The prophetic role, more importantly for us, suggests ecclesiological dynamism.

Christ as prophet reveals the Gospel, makes promises, predicts the future, inspires divine songs, makes clear the mind of God, and silences in the end the typical prophets when his own time for approach arrived. Christ allowed other kinds of teachers of philosophy in order that, by contrast with him, the limitations of human wisdom might be perceived.[53] The construction of successive stages of history, expounding the story of redemption in the world, using the language of types, lends itself to the privileging of the office of prophet to describe the work of Christ, for the historical development of the life and structures of the church requires continual explanation, as does the coordination of direct prediction with figural foretelling. Christ's priestly work of atonement may be chronologically the centre of the history of the work of redemption, but Christ's prophetic work of revelation functions as the epistemological web capturing the church's varying stages into a unified whole.

To present the church in such developmental terms, as making progress within the course of history, was significant for pastoral and apologetic reasons in Edwards's own day. It must be remembered that this discourse was, unlike similar compendia of church history, not written for academic purposes in the first instance.[54] Indeed, this series had as its first auditory the people of Northampton, for whom these thirty sermons should locate New England in the progress of salvation history, and function as a reality check given their recent but now waning experience of revival. The immediate goals of this subsequently misnamed 'discourse' were to provide cosmic perspective on their mundane squabbles, and to provide encouragement to persevere in their spiritual labours. One of the few explicit mentions of Northampton in this text places it at the end of a line of God's works throughout the world, making this western Massachusetts town tantamount to the climax of redemption history thus far:

> Another thing that it would be ungrateful for us not to take notice of, is that remarkable pouring out of the Spirit of God which has been in this part of New England, of which we in this town have had such a share. But it is needless for me particularly to describe it, it being what you have so lately been eyewitnesses to, and I hope multitudes of you sensible of the benefit of.[55]

[53] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 137, 318, 358; 187, 358; 134, 137, 187, 315, 209, 269, 278.
[54] See further Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History*, 235.
[55] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 436.

The tone of this remark does not inspire confidence that the townsfolk of Northampton, whose concerns it appeared were growing more worldly, were eager to own the ongoing work of the Spirit. The recent separation of church meeting-house from town meeting-house did not bode well for integrated Christian living, dividing godly from secular affairs, as Northampton's growing regional status had necessitated larger spaces for both. Edwards's pulpit became a more exalted platform from which to exercise his expanding spiritual influence beyond the Connecticut River valley, despite the very localised spiritual declension of church members and the pain it caused him. Even though Edwards situated motors to drive the history of world in revivals and not in a particular monarch or nation, Northampton clearly had a role to play in exemplifying God's purposes. Perry Miller senses such an aspiration: '[T]he book definitely embodies Edwards's time and place; it is the history of Northampton writ large.'[56]

This discourse further reflects Edwards's historical location in as far as it reasserts classic Christian theism in face of eighteenth century deist denials of God's immanence in the created order. The deists' antagonism towards Christian claims to historical particularity was countered by Edwards in part by asserting the reality of divine redemptive intervention, but significantly also by asserting not just the reality of the redeemed people of God but their development within history. Typology insists upon intentional progress:

> God was pleased now wonderfully to represent the progress of his redeemed church through the world to their eternal inheritance by the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan. Here all the various steps of the redemption of the church of Christ was represented, from the beginning of it to its consummation in glory.[57]

Such dynamism is reflected further in the images which Edwards appoints to reinforce the framework of progress. He can write of the diurnal course of the sun in sermon nineteen:

> Thus we see how the light of the gospel which began to dawn immediately after the fall, and gradually grew and increased through all the ages of the Old Testament, as we observed as we went along, is now come to the light of perfect day, and the brightness of the sun shining forth in his unveiled glory.[58]

In a remarkable paragraph in sermon thirty, Edwards concatenates various images, all of which reinforce the dynamism of history and the relationship between its parts. The tropes of river, wheel and chain, taken

[56] Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 315.
[57] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 183-184.
[58] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 367.

from nature and industry, militate against a static conception of time and its deist reflex that change necessitates deterioration:

> We began at the head of the stream of divine providence, and we have followed it and traced it through its various windings and turnings till we are come to the end of it, and we see where it issues: as it began in God, so it ends in God. God is the infinite ocean into which it empties itself. Providence is like a mighty wheel whose ring or circumference is so high that it is dreadful with the glory of the God of Israel above upon it ... We have seen the revolution of this wheel, and how that as it was from God so its return has been to God again. All the events of divine providence are like the links of a chain, the first link is from God and the last is to him.[59]

Deists wanted to level the epistemological playing field and give all human beings access to divine truth through the universalising dictates of reason, making historical contingencies anathema. In their minds, this had become especially urgent with discoveries of new lands and new peoples, mediated through popular travel writings, in which were described nations without Christian witness and led by pagan mystagogues. Despite his appeals to the *prisca theologia*, the contention that all peoples had some vestige of revealed truth available to them passed down from Noah and his sons even if received in compromised form, Edwards still insisted on the overall positive growth of the church within history. History was Edwards's ally, not his adversary. McDermott comments:

> Deists generally had little sense of history. Most posited an original Golden Age of natural religion that was subsequently corrupted by priests for their own gain. Deterioration or degeneration, then, was the paramount principle of what little historiography they had. A similar principle of degeneration can be seen in the *prisca theologia* and Edwards's use of it ... Edwards also rejected deist and Enlightenment notions of God and religion as static and unhistorical. For Edwards, humanity, religion and even the deity are in development as they enlarge and progress. Hence theology cannot be understood apart from consideration of its historical development.[60]

Edwards's respect for the essence of history reflects his commitment to the gradualness of God's work of redemption. God makes typological preparations for the comings of Christ in grace and in glory, which function as a pedagogical strategy, adapting God's communication to human capacity to understand.[61] As illustration, Edwards provides the story of preparations made for the coming of an important person to a town to suggest the emotional impact of steps and planning for a future event.[62] Stages of redemptive history ought to be expected as the norm:

> There is not reason from God's Word to think any other than that this great Work of God will be gradually wrought, though very swiftly, yet gradually ... But this is a work that will be accomplished by means, by the preaching of the

[59] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 517-518.
[60] McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 96, 108.
[61] McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 116-117.
[62] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 292.

> gospel, and the use of the ordinary means of grace, and so shall be gradually brought to pass ... The Scriptures hold forth as though there should be several successive great and glorious events by which this glorious work shall be accomplished.[63]

Edwards's distance from personal preparationism contrariwise amplifies the kind of preparationism inherent in history.[64] When the parallels are made between the individual and the history of the world, then it is not the stages of conversion that are Edwards's interest, but instead the stages of the Christian's life in the church post-conversion which reflect and reinforce the gradualism of history.[65] Edwards is refashioning his Puritan patrimony. His focus is not on the complexity of Christian beginnings, but rather on the movement towards Christian ends. The introspective tendency of much previous Puritan thought is replaced by an expansive vision of the church's cosmic role. Conversions will take place until the end of time, so the work of redemption is to be understood cumulatively and as a corporate phenomenon:

> And then will come the time when all the elect shall be gathered in; that work of conversion that has gone from the beginning of the church after the fall, through all these ages, shall be carried on no more. There shall never another soul be converted. Every one of those many millions, whose names were written in the book of life before the foundation of the world, shall be brought out; not one soul shall be left. And the mystical body of Christ, which has been growing ever since it first began in the days of Adam, will now be complete as to number of parts, having every one of its members; in this respect the Work of Redemption will be now finished.[66]

Types point to their antitypical fulfilment in Christ, the head of the church, and by implication in Edwards's mind types also point to the mystical body of Christ, which evermore completes Christ.[67] The very use of figural, more specifically typological, as opposed to propositional communication strategies was both a traditional and corporate literary conceit.[68] Just as the work of redemption is given Scriptural consistency in the use of typology, typology gives the church an essential role in the plans and purposes of God. What exactly that design is will be treated in what follows.

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[63] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 458-459.
[64] William J. Scheick makes this a central contention. See William J. Scheick, 'The Grand Design: Jonathan Edwards' *History of the Work of Redemption,*' in *Critical Essays on Jonathan Edwards* (ed. W. J. Scheick; Boston: G. K. Hall & Co, 1980), 183.
[65] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 144.
[66] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 492.
[67] McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 101.
[68] John F. Wilson, 'History, Redemption, and the Millennium,' in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience* (eds. N. O. Hatch and H. S. Stout; New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 138.

The Purpose of the Church and the Revivals of Piety

For Edwards, history is teleological. It is not just that history and the church located within it are dynamic, which could imply random or disorganised movement. The church rather progresses towards a particular and exalted goal. It is not just that, using the image of the wheel, history mechanistically turns, or completes one or several revolutions (which in Edwards's day did not yet signify political upheaval but rather repetition and constancy). The 'Redemption' discourse makes clear that the dynamism of the church in history has divinely appointed ends. God is not distant, nor is he impotent to change the course of history. God brings order to the creation,[69] and demonstrates that order proleptically through the church, which gathers in the fruits of periodic revivals, themselves the engines of transformation. History has a unity, and the church provides evidence for the case, even if the progress of the church in the world is not easy to identify or does not always track a constantly upward trajectory.

The periodic revival of vital piety is central to Edwards's view of order in history, because such an occurrence presupposes the possibility of declension due to evil and sin, and recognises the need of a distinct work of God to overcome opposition or laxity. Cyclical spirituality furthermore has Scriptural warrant in as far as Old Testament narratives present the recurring rise and fall of Israel, draw on agricultural or seasonal imagery,[70] divide time into repeating patterns, for example the Sabbath day of rest or the year of Jubilee, or present miracles as concentrated within certain periods, and not always forthcoming. To insert surprising revivals into an already evolving work of divine redemption within history is to create a dynamism which is not innate but contingent upon the work of God, and is to render unpredictable that same work. The life of the church is organic and unique, and not merely mechanistic or predictable. It is the Spirit which makes the difference:

> 'Tis observable that it has been God's manner in every remarkable new establishment of the state of his visible church, to give a remarkable outpouring of his Spirit.[71]

Furthermore, such growth is complicated through the presence of random evil. For example, Edwards outlines in sermon twenty various steps that God has enacted through the pouring out of the Spirit,

[69] Scheick, *The Writings of Jonathan Edwards*, 50-53, 141.
[70] Schmidt, *Holy Fairs,* 156.
[71] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 266.

whether it be on the day of Pentecost, in the mission to the Samaritans, in the city of Ephesus, or to the Gentiles, to achieve great numbers of converts.[72] Such growth is then met with opposition, as Satan, 'seeing Christ's kingdom make such amazing progress such as never had been before, we may conclude he was filled with the greatest confusion and astonishment, and hell seemed to be effectively alarmed by it to make the most violent opposition against it.'[73] This pattern would recur through history, with the pertinent illustration used often by Edwards of the darkness being heaviest immediately before the dawn:

> As the moon from the time of its full is approaching nearer and nearer to her conjunction with the sun, her light is still more and more decreasing, till at length when the conjunction comes, it is wholly swallowed up in the light of the sun ... Thus God began gloriously to revive his church again and advance the kingdom of his Son after such a dismal night of darkness as had been before from the rise of Antichrist to that time [of the sixteenth century Reformation]. There had been many endeavors used by the witnesses for the truth of the reformation before, but now when God's appointed time was come, his work brake forth and went on with a swift and wonderful progress.[74]

One can allow that overall redemptive progress is being made while at the same time acknowledging that this is not a steady achievement. The church may mark advances and suffer retreats, if at the end of the day her forward line is better positioned for her next redemptive success.[75] Alongside the image of night and day, Edwards also uses the picture of a building which slowly rises to completion, though its construction may be intermittent:

> After this [the reign of Solomon] the glory of the Jewish church gradually declined more and more till Christ came, though not so [much] but that the Work of Redemption still went on; whatever failed or declined, God still carried on this work from age to age, this building was still advancing higher and higher ... And now the whole Work of Redemption is finished ... Now the topstone of the building is laid. In the progress of the discourse on this subject we have followed the church of God in all the great changes, all her tossings to and fro that [she] is subject to in all the storms and tempests through the many ages of the world, till at length we have seen an end to all these storms.[76]

Rather than it being an embarrassment for Edwards to acknowledge the vicissitudes of the life of the church, such a confession rather suits his overall purpose. The work of redemption is applied in the first instance to the experience of individuals, who face the crisis of conversion by imitating Christ in his death and resurrection. The church, too, reflects this spiritual shape, according to Edwards, in as far as its own

[72] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 371-386.
[73] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 381.
[74] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 229, 422.
[75] Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1954), 1471. Bosch suggests that Latourette has been the name most closely associated with this model, in which the 'pattern of expansion ... had been like seven successive waves of an incoming tide. The crest of each wave was higher than the crest that had preceded it, and the trough of each wave receded less than the one before it.' See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (American Society of Missiology Series; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 334.
[76] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 228, 508.

journey in the world is constituted by the experience of judgement or conflict, with preservation and growth. Opposition to the church is cathartically written into its storyline. While individuals may experience radical discontinuities leading to conversion, without predictable stages or expectations, and churches on the other hand experience more gradual growth or decline, both the individual and the church have in common what Davidson refers to as the model of *afflictive progress*. It is a psychological model writ large in history:

> The millennial perspective of New Englanders ... focused not on a utopian model of social perfection but on a history which catalogues events, past and future, leading to the final triumph of Christ's kingdom. Preoccupation was not with the millennium itself (Edwards's *History of Redemption* devoted only four pages out of 220 to the subject) but with the pattern of God's actions within history which shaped the struggle between the Lamb and the beast. And the pattern which both consciously and unconsciously gave the drama its form was that of an individual's conversion.[77]

The church will triumph despite adversity. Sacred history has at its heart the work of redemption concentrated in periods of revival, which ecclesial life watches over and sustains until the consummation.[78] The reign of the church on earth through the saints during the millennium is not expansively described by Edwards, for that would be to place the church in the driving seat. The unfortunate yet frequent association of Edwards with incipient American nationalism, generated by misreadings of 'Some Thoughts concerning the Present Revival' (1742)[79] and the place of the millennium in American history, finds no support in the 'Redemption' discourse.[80] The millennium is significant in Edwards's cause for hope, but is not at the heart of Edwards's conception of history.

Of note as well is the fact that clerical ministry is not a prominent theme in the discourse. Ministry can be validated through appeals to ordination, learning, or charismatic gifting; however none of these gives authority to the church here, perhaps at least in part because clericalism had become such a contested theme in eighteenth century debates over traditional authority. Sermon nineteen relates the origins of gospel ministry to Christ's commission to the apostles in Matthew 28 to preach to the nations, which exists as model to all later ministers or elders. The

[77] Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought,* 216-217. See pages 137-138 for further explanation of the connection between conversion, afflictive progress and the millennial state of the church.
[78] See comments on Zakai's views in R. Bryan Bademan, 'The Edwards of History and the Edwards of Faith,' *Reviews in American History* 34/2 (2006): 131-149, especially page 137.
[79] Jonathan Edwards, 'Some Thoughts concerning the Revival,' in *The Great Awakening* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 4; ed. C. C. Goen; New Haven and London: Yale Univeristy Press, 1972), 353.
[80] Gerald R. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 42-43.

role is one which facilitates the church's expansion.[81] Edwards briefly recognises the role of councils of the church to bring order from both theological and organisational divisions.[82] Ministers are referenced in sermon twenty-seven to placard the harmony that will exist between them and their people in the future times of peace and love![83] However, ministerial distinctives shall be relativised at that time:

> A time of excellent order in the church discipline and government [shall] be settled in his church; all the world [shall then be] as one church, one orderly, regular, beautiful society, one body, all the members in beautiful proportion.[84]

His vision for the future of the church was not concerned with the *prerogatives* and *privileges* of the clerical caste, as this discourse makes plain, even if he does maintain that the pastor must answer to the Judge for the conduct of his ministerial *responsibilities*.[85] Like his Puritan forebears, he understood ministry as a conscious repudiation of sacramentally centred Roman Catholicism, and a kind of Protestantism which gave significant space to lay piety and ministrations, especially at the beginning of the New England experiment,[86] but unlike his deist interlocutors, he would not have espoused the position that clericalism was at the heart of social degeneration.[87] Ministerial authority is rather harnessed by God for his purposes in revival.

Edwards's vision of the future of the church functions polemically and modestly to demonstrate that order is part of the Christian interpretation of history. While deists might assume historical entropy, and the primitivist necessity therefore of recapturing the pristine kernels of revelation implanted in the creation, Edwards gives no credence to their assumptions. He succeeds in formulating an account of history which allows for both diversity and unpredictability, with unity and purpose. He purports to provide a more satisfactory explanation of the events of history than his philosophical adversaries. Sermon thirty is infused with the language of teleology to draw together the above themes:

> The consideration of what has been may greatly serve to show us the consistence, order, and beauty of God's works of providence. If we behold the events of providence in any other view than that in which it has been set before us, it will all look like confusion, like a number of jumbled events coming to pass without any order or method, like the tossing of the waves of the sea. Things will look as though one confused revolution came to pass after another merely by blind chance, without any regular design or certain end ... 'Tis with God's

[81] Edwards, *WJE 9:* 364.
[82] Edwards, *WJE 9:* 368.
[83] Edwards, *WJE 9:* 483.
[84] Edwards, *WJE 9:* 484.
[85] As I shall later show, Edwards's 'Farewell Sermon' deals with this very issue of both ministerial and congregational responsibility when Christ returns to judge.
[86] McClymond, *Encounters with God,* 39, 82.
[87] McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 24.

> work of providence as it is with his work of creation: 'tis but one work. ... God's works of providence ben't disunited and jumbled, without connection or dependence. But all are united.[88]

The diversity of contributions towards the common aim can occasionally suggest that there is no design or end. This Edwards guards against, in as far as he puts the case that any onlooker at a building site would be hard pressed to accurately imagine the ultimate design of the project, though the architect has just such a plan, from which to work.[89] The church was bound to triumph eventually in the coming millennial kingdom of Christ, though the focus was not the local ecclesiastical tribe, but the divine universal perspective.[90] The contours of the church in the 'Redemption' discourse are ever expanding to correspond to the new order of the new creation. While Solomon Stoddard could be content that a revival demonstrated God's pleasure with New England, his grandson had loftier visions of revival demonstrating the inevitable victory of God in the world.[91]

Though McClymond is cautious of Edwards's attempts to make providential history lie on an eschatologically taut Procrustean bed, he nevertheless concurs with Perry Miller that the unity of history is Edwards's philosophical aim in this discourse, with revival as the engine of history and the church as the ripe fruit of its progress.[92] Both deist ahistoricism and the suspicion of contamination of revelation in the course of history are impotent criticisms of theism in Edwards's apologia. The scandal of particularity that they prosecute finds itself without witnesses in the stand. Edwards's attempts to defend divine engagement with the world without rendering experience chaotic or arbitrary is the philosophical underpinning for the 'Redemption' discourse, as much as the ordering role of the church is its polemical centre. Edwards adapts his Puritan patrimony by objectifying the work of redemption and highlighting historical process driven by periods of revival in which the church features prominently and purposefully.

[88] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 519.
[89] Edwards, *WJE* 9: 122-123.
[90] Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History*, 247.
[91] Michael Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in its British Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 134.
[92] McClymond, *Encounters with God*, 104.

3.4 THE STRUCTURED CHURCH AND *SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING THE REVIVAL*

Order is one of the most necessary of all external means of the spiritual good of God's church.
(*WJE* 4: 455)

A short time following Whitefield's triumphant tour of the colonies in 1740, and Northampton's own experience of the flames of revival, Edwards preached in July 1741 a sermon subsequently entitled 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,' at Enfield, Massachusetts (later Connecticut) while supplying the pulpit for a pastoral colleague. Though the awakening response, consisting of cries, faintings, and shrieks, marked Edwards himself as a revivalist of note, such notoriety was moderate compared with the ministry of James Davenport (1716-1757), whose itinerations and bizarre manifestations of the Spirit generated vociferous opposition, and challenged traditional patterns of Christian experience and ministry in the New England.[1] Edwards the theologian, jockeying psychologically for preeminence over Edwards the revivalist, condemned the extreme antics of Davenport, and consequently Edwards positioned himself as the spokesman for the Great Awakening, both as practitioner and theoretician. Edwards's own positive attitude towards moderate enthusiasm plied a mediating position between *ecclesial structures* and *movements for revived faith*.

Edwards's reflections on the revival, voiced in a lecture at the Yale Commencement exercises in 1741 and published under the title 'The Distinguishing Marks,' were subsequently presented to the printers in 1742, to be distributed in the form of a discourse known as 'Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival,' and were made available to the public in 1743. In Gura's words, Edwards in this writing wanted to win 'support for the ongoing awakening among those still confused by the events' untoward direction."[2] Wholesale opposition, not just to the form but to the content of the revivals was gaining ground. Edwards's metropolitan interlocutor, Charles Chauncy (1705-1787), of Boston's First Church, preached against such revivalist frenzies in 1742, published later under the title 'Enthusiasm Described and Cautioned Against."[3] His own implacable disdain for the revivals pushed Edwards increasingly into the middle

[1] Though of excellent Puritan pedigree, Davenport's antics, for example street-singing, overthrowing clerical privilege and igniting a 'bonfire of the vanities' in New London on March 6, 1743, polarised reaction to the nascent movement for revival. Singing in the streets appeared to cloud distinctions between public and ecclesiastical spheres.
[2] Philip F. Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America's Evangelical* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2005), 124.
[3] Goen, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 4: 56-65.

ground. The revivals and their fruits were splintering the clergy into a number of parties with varying ideological responses.[4]

The purpose of Edwards's discourse is to correct any errors in interpreting the movement for revival, irrespective of the origin of those misunderstandings, and in doing so to set up appreciation for structural innovations and to prosper the 'happy state of [God's] church on earth.'[5] In his preface, Edwards outlines a critical methodology, committing himself to accepting the truth of a claim 'wherever I see it, though held forth by a child or an enemy.'[6] He divides the work into five sections. In the first part, he nails his colours to the mast and asserts that the revival is indeed to be received as a genuine work of God, adducing philosophical, scriptural and logical arguments for its authenticity. Notably, he also presents the case study of a significant believer, known to us as Sarah Edwards but never mentioned by name in the text, who successfully treads the fine line between extravagant and excessive Christian experience and becomes thereby a model to others.

Part two presents reasons why believers must not only recognise God's work in the revival but also advance that work for 'there is no such thing as being neuters.'[7] Responsibilities of magistrates, ministers and the laity are itemised. Next, in the third part, Edwards defends more specifically those promoters of revival who have experienced calumny, while in the fourth part those selfsame revivalists are critiqued, in order to salvage from the movement positive achievements of the Holy Spirit. The concluding section makes application of the foregoing analysis by suggesting ways to further prosper revivalist energy. Edwards wants to promote revival *and* social decorum.[8]

At heart, the discourse does not insist upon the separation of reason, will and affections as the cause of disorder, but rather addresses misunderstandings of the revivals based 'in the understanding, and not in the disposition.'[9] Edwards makes clear from the outset that the revival

[4] Kidd nuances the traditional categories of 'Old Lights' and 'New Lights,' by examining the Great Awakening from the perspective of anti-revivalists, moderate evangelicals, and radical evangelicals. See Kidd, *The Great Awakening,* xiv.
[5] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 324.
[6] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 292. Edwards hereby avoids the 'genetic fallacy,' in which a truth-claim is assessed not by the content of the proposition but by the origin of the proposition itself.
[7] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 349.
[8] Hall, *Contested Boundaries,* 93. Social decorum might not have been very different from obedience to the church.
[9] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 297 cf 293.

must be judged not by looking *a priori* to its beginnings, instruments or methods. The psychology of its proponents will always contain both noble and ignoble elements, and its means will be sullied by compromised motivations. Rather he insists that the outcomes of the revival over time are a more substantial way of ascertaining the extent to which the Spirit of God has been part of the movement. He appeals to *a posteriori* evidence to adjudicate the case.[10] In so doing, he allows for the presence of disorder as a concomitant to the work of the Spirit, or at least he does not presume to dismiss the genuineness of the work merely on account of the presence of some presenting disorder, which may be expressed in terms of gender, class or race.[11] Edwards's own commitment to philosophical occasionalism provides space for secondary causation, even if this makes turbid the waters of propriety. In short, one cannot argue 'the nature of the cause from the nature of the effect, or vice versa."[12]

The church as it is presented in this discourse is described in relation to a narrow band of themes. Edwards does not address here in any detail the attributes of God in relation to the world, nor is there any sustained reflection on ecclesiastical polity, the sacraments, or questions of the morphology of conversion. This work does, however, contribute to our understanding of Edwards's ecclesiology, as we see him address issues concerning the rise of itinerancy, the ministry of the laity, and the authority of the clergy, all modalities of divine operation in the context of the local congregation. The efficient cause of the church occupies our attention in this piece. New religious experience is acknowledged by Edwards, and, alongside this, new ecclesiastical forms are affirmed, but these are never simply the outcome of pragmatic pressures or social developments. Edwards is deliberately adapting structures to new theological insights.

The Rise of Itinerancy and the Fear of Social Disorder

One of the most significant challenges to both social and ecclesiastical order in the eighteenth century was the rise of itinerancy. While travelling preachers had been part of the Christian landscape since the days of the apostles, in the Middle Ages and in the early modern

[10] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 293. This position is summarised in Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening,"* 189-190.
[11] For examples of such disorder, see Erik R. Seeman, *Pious Persuasions: Laity and Clergy in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Early America: History, Context, Culture; Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 158, 172.
[12] Goen, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 4: 67.

period their role had been to itinerate where no settled parochial ministry was present.[13] Despite the growing oppositional character of Puritan aspirations during the reigns of James I and Charles I, the Puritans on new soil in North America still maintained the structure of established churches by recreating a parish-like system in order to maintain social as well as churchly authority.[14] By the time of George Whitefield's visit to America in 1740, however, new social and economic pressures had placed this system under great stress: migration towards the frontier, the pluralism of ethnic and denominational groupings, commercial exchange, and the development of communications, all undercut the adequacy, or indeed the ability, of settled ministry to serve local interests.[15] Mobility fractured inherited static models of authority.[16] The conceptual world of those living in times of rapid change was expanding, dealing to itinerancy a powerful and (for social conservatives) threatening hand, supporting an emerging dynamic social order. Focussed on Whitefield,

> the new itinerancy ... had broken out of its religious confines to make seemingly irreparable breaches in the local, deferential, patriarchal social order symbolized by the parish. Critics leapt to the defense [sic] of that traditional order by attacking itinerancy. In so doing, they elevated it to the status of a conceptual category.[17]

Whitefield and other itinerants further rubbed salt into the wound of non-itinerating clergy, when they dared to suggest that many of those ministers, in whose parishes they preached, were not regenerate in the first place, necessitating their itinerancy and raising the thorny question of who was 'better qualified to interpret the word of God."[18] Gilbert Tennent's sermon 'The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry,' delivered on March 8, 1740, concentrated the mind of his clerical brethren, though Whitefield had pioneered the breach.[19] Jones makes the salient point that the 'Arminians warned of the dangers of an uneducated ministry; the evangelicals warned of the danger of an unconverted ministry."[20]

Furthermore, the itinerants preached importunately for the experience of new birth, and the possibility of immediate assurance, something that Puritans of a previous generation had generally resisted. Such immediacy was in itself a threat to order, for in some eyes it was viewed as antithetical to growth in obedience and commitment to social

[13] Hall, *Contested Boundaries*, 17-23.
[14] Hall, *Contested Boundaries*, 24.
[15] Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 132.
[16] Hart, 'Community of the Word,' 38.
[17] Hall, *Contested Boundaries*, 39.
[18] Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 142-143.
[19] Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 116.
[20] Jones, *Shattered Synthesis*, 117.

norms, and was labelled 'Antinomianism.' It reminded of the disorder in the period of early New England settlement when Anne Hutchinson forsook the established authorities of Bible and tradition, and pursued instead immediate spiritual discernment as governing authority. This fear was not the preserve of one party alone:

> Both Arminian and Reformed opposers worried that by appearing to divorce the knowledge of a person's conversion from her or his outward behavior, the doctrine of inward assurance undermined Christianity's role in the preservation of that person's place and the place of every other person within the deferential, elite-brokered social order.[21]

A rising internationalism amongst believers was both the observable means and the ultimate ends of such itinerancy, which 'offered a new model of the church and its social world: a mobile, dynamic, expansive, potentially unbounded community held together voluntarily by a common spirit among individual members of every locale.'[22]

Significantly, Edwards was a supporter of itinerancy in the context of the Great Awakening. In a letter drafted in the early phase of the revival, before writing 'Some Thoughts,' Edwards describes itinerants in positive though to some degree guarded terms:

> As to the ministers that go about the country to preach, I believe most of the clamor that is made against them must needs be from some other principle than a regard to the interest of religion ... As to ministers that ride about the country, I can't say how the case is circumstanced with all of 'em, but I believe they are exceedingly misrepresented.[23]

While Edwards was quick to distance the revived spirituality of his wife from the itinerant ministrations of George Whitefield,[24] he nevertheless speaks glowingly of Whitefield and his impact in the colonies:

> And the great things that Mr. Whitefield had done everywhere, as he has run through the British dominions (so far as they are owing to means), are very much owing to the appearance of these things [zeal and resolution], which he is eminently possessed of. When the people see these things apparently in a person, and to a great degree, it awes them, and has a commanding influence upon their minds ... oftentimes it has been that when anything very considerable that is new is proposed to be done for the advancement of religion, or the public good, many difficulties are found out that are in the way, and a great many objections are started, and it may be, it is put off from one to another; but nobody does anything. And after this manner good designs or proposals have oftentimes failed, and have sunk as soon as proposed. Whenas, if we had but Mr. Whitefield's zeal and courage, what could we not do, with such a blessing as we might expect?[25]

[21] Hall, *Contested Boundaries*, 54.
[22] Hall, *Contested Boundaries*, 7.
[23] Edwards, 'To Deacon Lyman,' *WJE* 4: 533-534.
[24] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 333.
[25] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 509.

A caveat is however offered. Though mightily used of God, it is the chief temptation of travelling preachers to succumb to arrogance,[26] which betokens the ultimate sinful subversion of godly order:

> There ought to be the utmost watchfulness against all such appearances of spiritual pride, in all that profess to have been the subjects of this work, and especially in the promoters of it, but above all in itinerant preachers: the most eminent gifts, and highest tokens of God's favor and blessing will not excuse them. Alas![27]

On the larger canvas, though itinerancy could undermine the standing order, Edwards is patient with expressions of disorder, knowing that there exist other means to constrain it. After a long litany of 'errors and irregularities' attending this powerful work of the Spirit, he can aver that:

> [t]he end of the influences of God's Spirit is to make men spiritually knowing, wise to salvation, which is the most excellent wisdom; and he has also appointed means for our gaining such degrees of other knowledge as we need, to conduct ourselves regularly, which means should be carefully used: but the end of the influence of the Spirit of God is not to increase men's natural capacities, nor has God obliged himself immediately to increase civil prudence in proportion to the degrees of spiritual light.[28]

Indeed, Edwards is so positive concerning this disruptive work of the Spirit, that he ties it into a positive future for the world and the prosperity of the church. Millennial expectations for the people of God are nurtured in response to this 'dawning' or 'prelude' of that later work of God which 'shall renew the world of mankind.'[29] This loosening of the social order is affirmed and encouraged; in fact, it would be, in Edwards's mind, 'dangerous ... to forbear so to do.'[30] Such cosmic perspective lends to the revivals an international frame of reference, transcending local contingencies and relationships of deference, and replacing them with a 'dynamic, expansive, potentially global religious orientation,' in which Christians could experience 'permeable boundaries and long-distance, affective ties.'[31] Seeman notes contrariwise that the laity had little capacity to reflect eschatologically on events that they witnessed, though in Edwards's case this could not be due to a deficit of pulpit exposition on the millennial themes.[32] Edwards's openness to itinerancy reflects a concomitant openness to a redefinition of order as the pastoral

[26] Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 144.
[27] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 428.
[28] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 323. I take it that the 'civil prudence' spoken of equates to the appreciation of public order, which includes relationships of deference.
[29] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 353. The issue of America's role in this coming millennial reign of Christ is highly contested, though it appears to me to be salutary that it is because America is the 'meanest, youngest and weakest part' that she fulfils such a vaunted position; see Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 356.
[30] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 358.
[31] Hall, *Contested Boundaries*, 82, 103.
[32] Seeman, *Pious Persuasions*, 151.

relationship between minister and people was redefined, as was the assumption of those listening when not in the socially controlled environment of a church building. However, Edwards's approval is not without qualification.

The Ministry of the Laity and the Challenge to Clerical Order

Tensions between clergy and laity were not swept away by the enthusiasm of the mid-century revivals either. Increasing clericalisation had been part of New England life since the turn of the century, not least in Connecticut supported by the Saybrook Platform (1708) . More recently, ministerial associations had gained in authority, whether as part of the Anglicising ethos of the era which tried to circumscribe lay congregational control, in response to Enlightenment streams to rationalise social structures, or as a kind of professional development structure for clerical support and learning. Most notably, ordinations were no longer conducted by laymen, but rather fellow clergy from neighbouring parishes performed the rite.[33] The clergy grew further away from the laity in terms of worldview as well, for the latter were more likely to interpret history providentially, reading off from historical events signs of God's pleasure or wrath.[34] Such divergences between the clergy and the laity were neither caused by the Great Awakening, nor resolved by it, but were part of a larger cultural development which had been running its course through the first half of the eighteenth century.[35]

Edwards gives high status to lay ministry. He notes that 'every Christian family is a little church, and the heads of it are its authoritative teachers and governors.'[36] He praises those people, young and old, men and women, who have gathered together voluntarily to practise the spiritual disciplines on days other than the Sabbath.[37] Edwards even allows that, *in extremis*, women and children might exhort as a kind of warning, or to express their own spiritual convictions, for example if one lies dying or has been struck by lightning![38] He also exhorts civil rulers to fulfil their own duties to God as part of their Christian obedience as

[33] Youngs, *God's Messengers*, 32.
[34] Seeman, *Pious Persuasions*, 7.
[35] The thesis of Seeman's book makes this very point well, pointing to reading habits, death-bed testimonies, the writing of personal histories, and attitudes towards the Lord's Supper to substantiate his claims that divergence of opinions between clergy and laity was endemic to the culture.
[36] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 487.
[37] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 519.
[38] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 486.

laymen: they should take a lead for the rest of the community in expressing their own acknowledgement, indeed approval, of the work of revival that they witness. Edwards ennobles the work of civil magistracy when he chastises them for failures to strengthen the present work of the Spirit:

> And I humbly desire that it may be considered, whether we han't reason to fear that God is provoked with this land, that no more notice has been taken of this glorious work of the Lord that has been lately carried on, by the civil authority; that there has no more been done by them, as a public acknowledgement of God in this work, and no more improvement of their authority to promote it, either by appointing a day of public thanksgiving to God for so unspeakable a mercy, or a day of fasting and prayer, to humble ourselves before God for our past deadness and unprofitableness under the means of grace.[39]

To illustrate his point, Edwards describes those situations when 'a new king comes to the throne' or when 'a new governor comes into a province,' and the local authority shows deference.[40] The assumption here is that the revivals represent proleptically God's own coming to reign unopposed, in consequence of which civil authorities must 'manifest their loyalty, by some open and visible token of respect,' lest they be 'struck down' as the King passes.[41] The question of divine authority is conceived to be at the heart of the revivals from Edwards's perspective, highlighting not just ministerial accountability, but the responsibilities of godly laity as well.

Beyond the magistracy, Edwards challenges 'every living soul' to do as they are able to promote the work of the Spirit. Drawing on the account of building the tabernacle in the wilderness, Edwards reminds his readers that all contributed as they were able, some offering 'gold or silver,' while yet others brought 'goats' hair.'[42] He highlights the onus which lies on the very wealthy to give generously to the work of the Lord:

> One would think that our rich men, that call themselves Christians, might devise some notable things to do with their money, to advance the kingdom of their professed Redeemer, and the prosperity of the souls of men, at this time of such extraordinary advantage for it ... If some of our rich men would give one-quarter of their estates to promote this work, they would act a little as if they were destined for the kingdom of heaven, and a little as rich men will act by and by, that shall be partakers of the spiritual wealth and glories of that kingdom.[43]

He has a particularly strong word for those of his lay readers whose work was publishing, for they have an important role in helping or hindering the revival's spread. While some Boston publishers were great supporters of the work, others needed to be warned of their spiritual state:

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[39] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 372-373.
[40] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 370, 373.
[41] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 371.
[42] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 379.
[43] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 514, 515.

> Those therefore that publish pamphlets to the disadvantage of this work, and tending either directly or indirectly to bring it under suspicion and to discourage or hinder it, would do well thoroughly to consider whether this be not indeed the work of God; and whether if it be, 'tis not likely that God will go forth as fire, to consume all that stands in his way, and so burn up those pamphlets; and whether there be not danger that the fire that is kindled in them, will scorch the authors.[44]

The Puritan assumption, that just as all are saved equally, so therefore all must serve with equal devotion, is in evidence here. All human activity could be distinguished as worship.[45]

Edwards even acknowledges that there is a case to be made for lay ministry of the Word, though this had proved divisive, with much 'disputing, jangling, and contention.'[46] He has no objection to someone preaching loudly, within earshot of a great number, nor even if such proclamation were to occur in the meetinghouse when the divine service has ended.[47] However he insists that such be described as fraternal exhortation, and that no one allows the impression to be received that authority is being claimed. His concern is not how people learn, but rather that both the attitude of the one teaching and the response of those being taught do not incite insubordination:

> But then may a man be said to set up himself as a public teacher, when he in a set speech, of design, directs himself to a multitude, either in the meetinghouse or elsewhere, as looking that they should compose themselves to attend to what he has to say; and much more when this is a contrived and premeditated thing, without anything like a constraint, by any extraordinary sense or affection that he is then under; and more still, when meetings are appointed on purpose to hear lay persons exhort, and they take it as their business to be speakers, while they expect that others should come, and compose themselves, and attend as hearers; when private Christians take it upon them in private meetings to act as the masters or presidents of the assembly, and accordingly from time to time to teach and exhort the rest, this has the appearance of authoritative teaching.[48]

These guidelines seek to constrain lay ministry through interpretation of contextual factors. Such a nuanced and subjective rationale attests Edwards's limited permission-giving approach, responsive to new conditions, while at the same time preserving some degree of clerical privilege.[49]

A comparable situation is described when Edwards adjudicates the propriety of street-singing. He of course rejoices that spontaneous praise has erupted from God's people in response to the work of the Spirit, while demurring that such activity can be disruptive, or even harmful, if

[44] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 381.
[45] Youngs, *God's Messengers*, 2-3.
[46] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 483.
[47] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 485-486.
[48] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 486.
[49] McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, 165.

practised in ways that fail to account for the slowness of some to embrace new forms. He does not suggest that street-singers wait until no objections are raised, but rather that the fruit not be picked 'before 'tis ripe,'[50] demonstrating his proclivity to social gradualism. In the end, after due process both in respect of the congregation's fragility and his own theological reflection, he writes that 'I cannot find any valid objection against it.'[51]

His reasoning makes much of the distinction between what is private and what is public, and concludes that an individual singing on the street would transgress Christ's command not to use piety to impress, but a group of worshippers making their way to church would not. The group extends public worship outside of the meetinghouse, but compels none to participate, which would be the case if a private society were to behave in a similar fashion. Comparable to the practice of preaching out of doors, Edwards allows for the innovation of singing God's praises 'in the open air, and not in a close place,' 'moving as well as standing still.'[52] With respect to public praise:

> 'Tis fit that God's honor should not be concealed, but made known in the great congregation, and proclaimed before the sun, and upon the housetops, before kings and all nations, and that his praises should be heard to the utmost ends of the earth.[53]

It is less clear to me how he can justify the practice of *lay singing* in relation to its results, while the practice of *lay preaching*, though attaining similar outcomes, is more suspect. The argument that the difference consists in the nature of the perception of the activity's threat to traditional authority is, while logically tenable, highly subjective and prone to misuse. It appears that the godly propriety of an activity was constituted less by its location, whether meetinghouse or street, or by the results of the words, than by the particular traditional authority which that activity threatened. To interpret the subtle distinctions, clergy were still needed.

The Work of the Clergy and the Appeal to Traditional Order

The revivals constituted a threat to the received order of New England towns and churches, but especially to the clergy who worked to stimulate revival, and oversaw its results. The danger of formalism was

[50] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 490.
[51] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 491.
[52] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 492. It is noteworthy that part of Davenport's retractions concerned advocacy of singing out of doors. See Hall, *Contested Boundaries,* 96.
[53] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 492.

combated by preaching to stir hearts and minds, leading to the connected danger of insubordination, exacerbating the tensions between laity and clergy already felt in the first half of the eighteenth century. The power of the laity in the congregational model had been further encouraged through revivalist empowerment, against which some leaders would rail. The question of the qualifications for ministry focus the questions concerning authority and order amongst those experiencing revival.

Edwards expounds his vision for the ordained ministry in 'Some Thoughts' with reference to various metaphors for ministry. In one particularly concentrated passage, Edwards describes ministers as stewards, husbandmen, wise builders, architects, traders, merchants, fishermen and soldiers, using Scriptural texts for support.[54] Chiefly, however, Edwards highlights the role of ambassadors or messengers of God, for it is this occupation which trades in words, as delegated from some higher authority, and secures clerical rights.[55] The authority of the ministerial caste is an extension of Christ's princely authority, just as the church is the anteroom for heavenly felicitude:

> Ministers are those, that the King of the church has appointed to have the charge of the gate at which his people enter into the kingdom of heaven, there to be entertained and satisfied with an eternal feast; ministers have the charge of the house of God, which is the gate of heaven.[56]

The authority of the gatekeeper therefore must have that kind of preparation or training which best accords with such a ministry:

> If once it should become a custom, or a thing generally approved and allowed of, to admit persons to the work of the ministry that have had no education for it, because of their remarkable experiences, and being persons of good understanding, how many lay persons would soon appear as candidates for the work of the ministry? ... The opening a door for the admission of unlearned men to the work of the ministry, though they should be persons of extraordinary experience, would on some accounts be especially prejudicial at such a day as this.[57]

The act of ordination itself is not made the basis of Edwards's appeal, nor is gifting or godliness. In the above section, Edwards goes on to acknowledge that there may be some laymen who are indeed more gifted, or clergy who ought not to have been ordained after all, for want of learning despite academic degrees. It is rather the power of education to make authority orderly rather than disruptive, due to its own gradual acquisition, that forms the basis of Edwards's argument. Such training

[54] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 445.
[55] Hall, 'The New England Background', 71. With this model, the clergy stand outside of the congregation. See the later chapter on a 'Farewell Sermon' for this view expanded.
[56] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 377.
[57] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 456-457. See also Edwards's paraphrase of Zechariah 13:5, which stresses the gradual and natural means God employed to make a prophet: Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 434.

ought to provide not just learning but formation in personal Christian godliness as well. Edwards's comments ought to be understood as an implicit critique of his experiences of Yale, where he had been student and tutor:

> There is a great deal of pains taken to teach the scholars human learning; there ought to be as much, and more care, thoroughly to educate 'em in religion, and lead 'em to true and eminent holiness. If the main design of these nurseries is to bring up persons to teach Christ, then it is of greatest importance that there should be care and pains taken to bring those that are there educated, to the knowledge of Christ. It has been common in our public prayers to call these societies "the schools of the prophets;" and if they are schools to train up young men to be prophets, certainly there ought to be extraordinary care there taken to train 'em up to be Christians.[58]

Youngs summarises:

> In sanctifying the position of men whose real qualification for the ministry was educational preparation, it was natural for the ministers to believe that God's movement in the world was rational and predictable.[59]

The ordering capacity of the ordained clergy was seen not just in their training, but in the liturgies which it was their responsibility to conduct. Although Edwards does not in this treatise give much attention to the celebration of the Lord's Supper (an issue which was to occupy him more in the years ahead), after refusing to enter into the debate concerning the requisite 'relation of grace' to be presented before the congregation, he does seem to advocate a consistent policy, such that once a person is admitted to the communion they ought not to be later rejected. He wants to protect against the dangers of a censorious spirit.[60] He does, however, express his commitment to the external worship of God as being a duty incumbent upon those who profess his name, and encourages his readers to partake of the Lord's Supper more often than was at that time the custom. Interestingly, he describes the whole season of revival using language imported from the Communion, lending to the discrete and potentially disorderly events a unifying coordination through ministerial supervision:

> There has been of late a great increase of preaching the Word, and a great increase of social prayer, and a great increase of singing praises. These external duties of religion are attended much more frequently than they used to be; yet I can't understand that there is any increase of the administration of the Lord's Supper, or that God's people do any more frequently commemorate the dying love of their Redeemer in this sacred memorial of it, than they used to do: though I don't see why an increase of love to Christ should not dispose Christians as much to increase in this as in those other duties; or why it is not as

[58] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 511-512. At this point, Edwards echoes the appeal made by Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), whose own 'pious desires' included the provision of theological education by regenerate professors, and attention to the moral as well as academic formation of students. See Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. T. G. Tappert (Seminar Editions; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 103-115. Edwards himself trained clergy by means of the apprenticeship model, when for example he took Samuel Hopkins into his home to share his ministry with him: McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society,* 115.
[59] Youngs, *God's Messengers,* 78-79.
[60] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 480, 481.

> proper that Christ's disciples should abound in this duty, *in this joyful season, which is spiritually supper time, a feast day with God's saints*, wherein Christ is so abundantly manifesting his dying love to souls ... And whether we attend this holy and sweet ordinance so often now or no, yet I can't but think it would become us, at such a time as this, to attend it much oftener than is commonly done in the land.[61]

Edwards is concerned about the lack of regard for the Lord's Supper. He sees it as a means by which individuals might express their devotion and by which the community might be brought together. However it is Seeman's contention that the communion was in the eighteenth century more prone to community disruption than community creation, suggesting already at the beginning of the 1740s a disconnection between Edwards and his people on the power of this rite.[62]

Clerical authority is again defended when Edwards comes to describe the habit of some to allow mutual censoring within the congregation. He chastises those who would maintain the 'worthlessness of external order,' or who deny that responsibility for judging within the congregation should be 'reserved in the hands of particular persons, or consistories appointed thereto, but ought to be left at large for anybody that pleases to take it upon them, or that think themselves fit for it.'[63] However, such an appeal to the necessary order within the local fellowship must be balanced by Edwards's later appeal to clergy and laity alike not to fall prey to a spirit of censoriousness, which is endemic in times of revival. Taking up the argument outlined in 'Distinguishing Marks,' he criticises those who claimed to discern whether a particular clergyman was converted or not, no doubt in response to the preaching of Tennent and Whitefield on this topic.[64] Notably, it did not belong to the preaching of his venerable grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, to undertake such witchhunts. It is not that Edwards believed that all clergy were converted; rather it does not lie within the bailiwick of another minister to make such a judgement. He would himself not presume to make such a discerning claim:

> Indeed it appears to me probable that the time is coming, when awful judgments will be executed on unfaithful ministers, and that no sort of men in the world will be so much exposed to divine judgments; but then we should leave that work to Christ, who is the Searcher of hearts, and to whom vengeance belongs; and not, without warrant, take the scourge out of his hand into our own ... For my part, though I believe no sort of men on earth are so exposed to spiritual judgments as wicked ministers, yet I feel no disposition to treat any minister as if I supposed that he was finally rejected of God.[65]

[61] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 522. Emphasis mine.
[62] Seeman, *Pious Persuasions*, 81.
[63] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 455.
[64] See Edwards, 'Distinguishing Marks,' *WJE* 4: 283-287.
[65] Edwards, 'Some Thoughts,' *WJE* 4: 475, 476.

The background argument which Edwards alludes to here establishes that a believer may not presume to have access into another's soul, and thereby discriminate. Public charity insists that it is only by virtue of visible behaviour that any distinction can be made between those claiming to follow Christ.[66] Clerical authority for Edwards, then, is a necessary attribute of ecclesiastical life, and at the same time it is limited in its capacity to make judgements to that which is visibly discerned, again treading a fine line between clergy's distinct powers and those common to all Christian believers.[67]

It appears to me that on balance Edwards is not so much denying clerical authority or advancing the rights of the laymen in his church, but instead is positioning all human authority, clerical or lay, as subsidiary means of ordering the work of the Spirit, and in response to that surprising work of God. While some scholars argue that the notion of revival was conceived by colonial clergy to revive moribund churches and thereby to aggrandise ministerial authority,[68] the overall intention of 'Some Thoughts' is to allow for the rise of new practices and conventions, without destroying the received order of the church. This is not so much the reactionary defence of Puritan polity or order, as it is the creative adaptation of that order to new exigencies. God's new work requires both laity and clergy to accommodate revised structures of ministry, whether that means relinquishing authority or exercising it without readily discernible precedent. Ardour and order embrace.

[66] Edwards, 'Distinguishing Marks,' *WJE* 4: 286.
[67] Edwards speaks strongly in 'Misc.' 689, one of the few written during the Connecticut River revivals, concerning the authority of ministers, as 'officers of the church,' to exercise a ministry of the keys. God is of course the head of the visible church, but deputises this authority to human leaders, who search hearts provisionally, and whose judgement is then accepted by God 'on presumption of their sincerity and faithfulness.' See Jonathan Edwards, 'Misc.' 689, in *The "Miscellanies" (Entry Nos. 501-832)* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 18; ed. A. Chamberlain; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 251-252. This is one of the few miscellanies furthermore written in the 1730s expressly to deal with the nature of the church.
[68] Seeman, *Pious Persuasions*, 148.

3.5 THE ACCOUNTABLE CHURCH AND *THE TREATISE CONCERNING RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS*

A fair and beautiful profession, and golden fruits accompanying one another, are the amiable ornaments of the true church of Christ. (*WJE* 2: 400)

Ava Chamberlain well notes that 'Jonathan Edwards was a polemicist,'[1] writing not abstractly as a detached academic but in the cut and thrust of pastoral and revivalist challenges. Indeed, the *Treatise concerning Religious Affections* (1746), which reads as a discourse on the nature of religious psychology and has spawned a multitude of commentaries on human anthropology and spiritual experience,[2] was originally conceived as a sermon series, preached in 1742-43 in Northampton, and took aim at theological adversaries who would undermine the integrity of the revivals as a genuine work of God. It is true that while rationalist critics as well as enthusiastic exponents approached the revivals from differing perspectives, in Edwards's estimation they could both inadvertently sponsor the same destructive ends: thwarting appreciation of the active involvement of God in human affairs. Edwards composes this now classic treatise on Christian experience to provide criteria for discerning true regeneration, establishing public accountability within the congregation, and thereby sustaining the fruit of the revivals in corporate life. It was contested theories of *psychology*, which had the power to illuminate tensions within *ecclesiology* during the Great Awakening.[3]

Edwards built his case under the banner of 1 Peter 1:8. He expounded the nature of true religion as revealed through trials, which make it visible. True religion is also expressed in love and joy, which anticipate God's glory yet to be revealed.[4] Such confidence is ultimately based on 'spiritual sight,'[5] for the passage assumes an eschatological context in which persecution teaches us to look beyond our present situation. Trials and their purifying temper provide assurance of salvation,

[1] Ava Chamberlain, 'Self-Deception as a Theological Problem in Jonathan Edwards's "Treatise concerning Religious Affections,"' *Church History* 63/4 (1994): 541-556.
[2] See for example James Hoopes, 'Jonathan Edwards's Religious Psychology,' *Journal of American History* 69/4 (1983): 849-865, or Michael J. McClymond, 'Spiritual Perception in Jonathan Edwards,' *The Journal of Religion* 77/2 (1997): 195-216, or Miklos Vetö, 'Spiritual Knowledge according to Jonathan Edwards (translated by Michael J. McClymond),' *Calvin Theological Journal* 31/1 (1996): 161-181, or David R. Williams, 'Horses, Pigeons, and the Therapy of Conversion: a Psychological Reading of Jonathan Edwards's Theology,' *Harvard Theological Review* 74/4 (1981): 337-352.
[3] Fiering, 'Will and Intellect,' 558. Fiering goes so far as to locate the central disagreement during the revivals as psychological and not theological.
[4] Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 2. Edited by John E Smith; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), 93-96.
[5] John E. Smith, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *Religious Affections* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 2; ed. J. E. Smith; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959), 12.

for the resultant virtue is increasingly apparent and confirms the believer in their 'true religion.' Edwards's opening exposition on 1 Peter most poignantly concludes that 'True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.'[6] His aim in this work is not to differentiate between the operations of the Spirit which are of a saving nature, and those which are not, for this was his intention in the previous treatise 'Distinguishing Marks.'[7] In *Religious Affections*, Edwards was originally not so much speaking to those outside the camp, as to those within the church who were unsure how to assay their experience. He guides those who need to reassess where they stand *coram deo* by describing and critiquing experiences which may or may not give adequate insights into a person's spiritual state.[8] The issues addressed concern personal assurance and presumption, as much as external antagonism towards the faith. His own preface alerts us to this pastoral motivation:

> There is no question whatsoever, that is of greater importance to mankind, and that it more concerns every individual person to be well resolved in, than this, what are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favor with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards? Or, which comes to the same thing, What is the nature of true religion?[9]

Edwards's desire to ascertain 'qualifications' and to establish 'true religion' lead to pertinent ecclesiological implications in this work, for personal experience is held accountable to necessary social outcomes. No private religion is private without remainder. 'True religion,' in a Reformed framework, can allow for no human contribution to salvation, whether it be from the human subject of election or from those charged with pastoral responsibility for the flock, but it does expect human consequences.[10] Edwards is at pains to use the *personal experience of revival* to underwrite the *ecclesial expectation of renewal*, even if in the years immediately following the publication of the *Religious Affections*, such an unswerving commitment was to have momentous consequences for Edwards himself. Indeed, the risks of unmediated experience, for which

[6] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 95. After this opening elucidation of 1 Peter 1:8, Edwards presents in Part II twelve signs, present in the revivals, which are no certain signs of grace, while in Part III he presents the positive case of twelves signs which do attest gracious affections, 'their source, their nature and their results.' See Stephen R. Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory: An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 176.
[7] Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 2. Edited by John E. Smith; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), 89. Such a distinction was intended to silence the detractors of the revivals, who regarded the whole as profoundly misguided.
[8] It is most instructive to note that Edwards points to the revivals in Part I as having appeared in 'the late extraordinary season.' This temporal reference betokens his own emotional distance from the events, facing as he does the pastoral fact that 'religious affections are grown out of credit.' See Edwards, *WJE* 2: 119. Marsden sees the New Light threat as Edwards's focus here, while Cherry sees no difference between *Religious Affections* and preceding works in terms of reasons for composition: see Marsden, *A Life,* 285, and Cherry, *Theology,* 170.
[9] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 84.
[10] See McClymond, 'Spiritual Perception in Jonathan Edwards,' 201, where tensions within the Augustinian-Calvinist inheritance of Edwards are acknowledged.

Edwards had some sympathy, make all the more important the pursuant security which the church provides.

Pure Experience: The Church and Beginnings

During the revivals, the experiential nature of the Spirit's work to save and to sanctify are scrupulously examined to discern whether and how they promote freedom and order, that is how they subvert or support life in the church. Antinomian or extreme New Light attempts to locate conversion in direct inspiration of the Spirit without mediation of the Word were reviled by others as dangerously anarchic, and Arminian or Old Light attempts to position conversion in the intellect without reference to any power for godliness were similarly rejected as mere form.[11] Questions concerning Christian experience, its origins and outcomes, are profoundly *ecclesiological* because they beg questions concerning freedom and order, which are themselves *structural* concerns. One of the most foundational distinctives of Protestant ecclesiology is its determination to see the church and its order as a product of, and subservient to, the Word of divine initiative which brings freedom, and not the progenitor of that freedom.[12] The Word precedes the Church. Historically, *matters of faith* (or responses to the Word) were the gravitational centre of Reformation Protestantism, while *matters of order* (and the authority of the church) were given a more significant place in Roman Catholic conceptions of ecclesiastical exclusivity.[13]

Edwards is at pains first of all to defend the priority of unmediated experience of grace by expounding his Augustinian and voluntarist notion of the beginnings of religious affections in the soul, even when that

[11] William Breitenbach, 'Piety *and* Moralism: Edwards and the New Divinity,' in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience* (eds. N. O. Hatch and H. S. Stout; New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 179-182. These concerns have been present in the writings of Edwards from his earliest years in Northampton. In his sermon 'A Divine and Supernatural Light,' preached in 1733, Edwards distances himself from both Antinomians and Old Light rationalists. He first of all defends the immediacy of the Spirit's work, appealing to the rights of the Creator to continue to be actively and intimately involved in the creation. Having said this, he also defends the use of means, especially here the Word of God, while disclaiming that the Word is not a second cause, for 'it don't operate by any natural force in it.' He likewise makes clear that rationality has no power to create a new 'sense of the heart.' He avers: 'Reason's work is to perceive truth, and not excellency.' See Jonathan Edwards, 'A Divine and Supernatural Light,' in *Sermons and Discourses, 1730-1733* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 17; ed. M. Valeri; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 421, 416, 423, 422. It is concluded by Carr that this sermon contained a 'vision for renewal of the church.' See Kevin C. Carr, 'Jonathan Edwards and *A Divine and Supernatural Light,*' *Puritan Reformed Journal* 2/2 (2010): 187-209, especially 207.
[12] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 41.
[13] John von Rohr, '*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*: An Early Congregational Version,' *Church History* 36/2 (1967): 107-121. Von Rohr asserts that this contrast does not hold for the Congregationalism of the early seventeenth century, which inverted the traditional understanding and made matters of faith dependent on matters of order and polity, see especially 107 cf 117.

appears to give too much ground to extremists.[14] He presents the regenerate person as unitary, without a hierarchy of faculties which had been common in previous systems of anthropology.[15] God's grace does not begin with one faculty and then proceed in stages to affect another, introducing intermediate experiences between God and the soul. While different words are used in the Scriptures and in theological discourse to represent different features of human psychology, these in Edwards's estimation describe the intensity of the soul's relationship to the world rather than distinct powers:

> [T]he affections are no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul ... The will, and the affections of the soul, are not two faculties; the affections are not essentially distinct from the will, nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will and inclination of the soul, but only in the liveliness and sensibleness of exercise.[16]

The fragmentation of the self by virtue of sin is overcome with the reordering work of the Holy Spirit.[17] The unity of soul with body is likewise affirmed, acknowledging the impact that each has on the other.[18] Such an approach to anthropology serves not only Edwards's immediate pastoral argument that preparationism may be inadequate to describe Christian beginnings, but also disallows any notion that one part of human psychology might be isolated from the taint of sin, a theological platform 'amenable to the very Arminianism that Edwards was seeking to refute."[19]

When Edwards does concede dual capacities within the soul, he does so by describing on the one hand *doctrinal knowledge* or *speculative notions,* which allow perception and judgement, and on the other *inclinations* or *affections* which reflect attraction or repulsion towards the object being perceived.[20] Inclinations imply weighting and partiality, not neutrality, and make use of that knowledge or notions which is their capacity to focus on their object, rather than being an impediment to the

[14] This is in line with the trajectory of much spirituality in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as noted by Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1947), 91-92.
[15] It was assumed in Greek philosophy, for example, that reason's role was to make base animal passions submissive. See John E. Smith, 'Religious Affections and the "Sense of the Heart,"' in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. H. Lee; Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 104; Marsden, *A Life,* 281-282.
[16] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 96, 97.
[17] Roger Ward, 'The Philosophical Structure of Jonathan Edwards's *Religious Affections,' Christian Scholar's Review* 29/4 (2000): 745-768, see especially 753, 758.
[18] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 98.
[19] K. Scott Oliphint, 'Jonathan Edwards on Apologetics: Reason and the Noetic Effects of Sin,' in *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards and the Evangelical Tradition* (eds. D. G. Hart, S. M. Lucas and S. J. Nichols; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 135.
[20] Smith avers that this taxonomy allows for distinction without opposition. See Smith, 'Religious Affections and the "Sense of the Heart,"' 105.

view to be overcome.[21] Using categories of relationship, attraction or movement, which reminded of Newtonian ontology, Edwards defines religious affections as those 'vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination,' distinct from basic human reason or passions, which powerfully draw us towards an object or repel us:

> As all the exercises of the inclination and will, are either in approving and liking, or disapproving and rejecting; so the affections are of two sorts; they are those by which the soul is carried out to what is in view, cleaving to it, or seeking it; or those by which it is averse from it, and opposes it.[22]

And when it comes to the great matter of the Gospel, Edwards can see no place for disinterested assent, or 'weak, dull and lifeless wouldings, raising us but a little above a state of indifference', but only those responses 'such as running, wrestling or agonizing for a great prize of crown' which attest the power and liveliness of true religion in personal experience.[23]

Edwards furthermore encourages the unmediated character of grace through repeated appeals to the sense of taste, particularly the taste of honey, as emblematic of *immediate apprehension* of divine or spiritual truth. No one is able adequately to convey the experience of tasting honey, no matter how much instruction a person has had concerning it.[24] The immediacy, perhaps intimacy, of putting something in one's mouth that the other senses of sight or hearing or smelling would observe from a distance, is powerfully evocative, in terms of its imagery and philosophical implications:

> I have shown that spiritual knowledge primarily consists in a taste or relish of the amiableness and beauty of that which is truly good and holy: this holy relish is a thing that discerns and distinguishes between good and evil, between holy and unholy, without being at the trouble of a train of reasoning ... He that has a rectified palate, knows what is good food, as soon as he tastes it, without the reasoning of a physician about it ... Thus a holy person is led by the Spirit ... and judges what is right, as it were spontaneously, and of himself, without a particular deduction, by any other arguments than the beauty that is seen, and goodness that is tasted.[25]

A common trope in eighteenth century moral discourse, Edwards goes on to cite an entry from the Chambers's *Cyclopedia* concerning taste to support his case.[26]

Immediacy was a contested category in theological debates surrounding the revivals for several reasons. For rationalists in the Aristotelian tradition like Charles Chauncy of the Old South Church in

[21] Smith, 'Religious Affections and the "Sense of the Heart,"' 104.
[22] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 98.
[23] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 99, 100. See also Smith, 'Religious Affections and the "Sense of the Heart,"' 107.
[24] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 272.
[25] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 281-282.
[26] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 282-283.

Boston, the dangers of anarchy arising from the decentring of reason as the ordering principle of religious psychology and of church life were immense. It is of course true that Edwards is critical of merely speculative notions, for as James reminds us, even the devils can believe (James 2:19). However, Edwards does not expect our experience to be at odds with our reason, or to be expressed without reason's involvement; it is just that reason has no essential priority in the life of the soul. The affections in Edwards are 'expressions of inclination *through the mind*' according to Smith.[27] Vetö notes that immediate apprehension of spiritual things does not negate critical awareness:

> As the synthesis of an immediate sensation and an instantaneous judgment, the sense of the taste has an ethical and supernatural application.[28]

Immediacy must also be disentangled from misconceptions concerning the potentially overpowering collision of God's grace with human nature. While there has been much discussion concerning the relationship between Edwards's 'new sense' and those five senses which human beings enjoy by virtue of their creation, the point here is to demonstrate the ways in which grace for Edwards perfects nature rather than annihilates it.[29] Hoopes usefully draws out the distinction that a new *sense* but not a new *sensation* is given to the believer in conversion.[30] Conrad Cherry is securely within this school of interpretation when he avers that:

> new faculties are not given in illumination, but a new basis is given to the mind from which the natural faculties operate in a new way ... Furthermore, the Spirit in illumination never becomes a human "possession" that is manageable by human mental powers.[31]

In McClymond's mind, Edwards wisely resorts to the conceptuality of *participation* to express distinction between the human and the divine role

[27] Smith, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 2: 13. A similar point is made by Helen Westra as she summarises Edwards's preaching in the 1730s and 1740s: Helen P. Westra, 'Jonathan Edwards and "What Reason Teaches,"' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34/4 (1991): 495-503, see especially 501 for interaction with the *Religious Affections*.
[28] Vetö, 'Spiritual Knowledge,' 171.
[29] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 206. Edwards defends such immediacy, it should be recalled, as an apologetic strategy against attacks of deism, but recognises nevertheless that when grace cooperates with nature as secondary causation it does so because those means have no power within themselves. See Smith, 'Religious Affections and the "Sense of the Heart,"' 108.
[30] Hoopes, 'Jonathan Edwards's Religious Psychology,' 859. The argument outlining a sense 'discontinuous' with our five natural senses has been advocated by Paul Helm and David Lyttle, among others, built upon a less nuanced interpretation of the putatively Lockean phrase 'a new simple idea' (*WJE* 2: 205). McClymond acknowledges the verbal similarity, but suggests that Edwards is using this language and infusing it with new content, and thereby presents the new sense as operative within the capacity of our natural five. There is no sixth sense. See McClymond, 'Spiritual Perception in Jonathan Edwards,' 198-205.
[31] Cherry, *Theology,* 30.

in spiritual perception, without allowing absorption of the human into the divine, or annihilation of the human by the divine.[32]

Such a defence of immediacy not only distances Edwards from those churches which preached rationalist interpretation of religious psychology, but it significantly distances him as well from the intricate Puritan morphology of conversion which required ecclesiastical involvement throughout the fourfold process of conviction, compunction, humiliation, and faith.[33] We note the denials regarding steps or stages in Edwards's description of public profession of the faith:

> But in order to persons making a proper profession of Christianity, such as the Scripture directs to, and such as the followers of Christ should require, in order to the acceptance of the professors with full charity, as of their society; 'tis not necessary they should give an account of the particular steps and methods, by which the Holy Spirit, sensibly to them, wrought and brought about those great essential things of Christianity in their hearts.[34]

The *ordo salutis* inherited from his Puritan roots is critiqued, and thereby the seeds are sown for a new appreciation of the powers of individual ownership of the experience of conversion,[35] without oversight of the process by clergy which had previously dominated. Indeed, the sovereignty of the Spirit of God to blow how he will, relativises any 'ordinary' patterns. Conversion is nothing else than a 'personal, revelatory experience' of grace, over which no traditional, familial, social or ecclesiastical authority has any control.[36] Stout sees in this development an instantiation of the democratising of religious sentiment which accelerates after the Revolution. It is not just that negatively some social sectors lose control; Edwards's approach to religious affections positively empowers others in significant ways:

> The social and spiritual implications of Edwards's treatises on the affections were momentous. As long as the sources of true enthusiasm lay within the grasp of natural man, then the true enthusiast was the person of superior breeding and refined sensibilities. But if the source of true enthusiasm came from without – as Edwards insisted it did – then *anyone* was a potential candidate for remaking, and distinctions of learning or breeding lost their significance ... he cut a doorway to an assertive lay piety that would open far wider than he ever

[32] McClymond, 'Spiritual Perception in Jonathan Edwards,' 201. This coheres well with the premise of Reg Ward that a defining feature of renewal movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth century is its anti-Aristotelianism, or the desire to subvert systems. Scholastic theology, which was 'orientated to Aristotle, moved the understanding only and had no power to move the heart,' while the second kind of theology 'which had its seat in the will implanted by God, is all experience, reality and practice.' Ward, *Early Evangelicalism,* 13.
[33] This breakdown was the particular nomenclature of Thomas Shepard, though its logic was widespread, even when the vocabulary differed. See David Kobrin, 'The Expansion of the Visible Church in New England: 1629-1650,' *Church History* 36/2 (1967): 189-209, especially 192-193.
[34] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 416.
[35] Ward, 'Philosophical Structure of *Religious Affections*,' 763. The only possible pattern of progress towards the conversion of an individual according to Edwards has its parallel in the experience of the Hebrews after the Exodus: first terror, or convictions of conscience, then relief or joy, though even this sequence can be feigned. This argument constitutes the eighth negative sign of Part II. See Edwards, *WJE* 2: 151-163.
[36] Ward, 'Philosophical Structure of *Religious Affections*,' 765.

> imagined and that would permanently alter the relations between pastors and congregations in more democratic directions.[37]

Furthermore, the immediacy of the Spirit's work provided resources to define assurance in subjective terms. Like the seal used by princes to demonstrate ownership, so the Holy Spirit provides 'clear evidence to the conscience, that the subject of it is the child of God,' and is 'enstamped in so fair and clear a manner, as to be plain to the eye of conscience.'[38] Boldly, Edwards says that he allows for:

> intuitive knowledge of the divinity of the things exhibited in the gospel ... without any argument or deduction at all; but it is without any long chain of arguments; the argument is but one, and the evidence direct; the mind ascends to the truth of the gospel but by one step.[39]

Knowing our own adoption as children by our Heavenly Father is the privilege of all who have been saved, and one which the Holy Spirit with the human spirit attests, not being able to be imitated by Satan. Edwards holds that the inner testimony of the Spirit is not one to produce revelations, but does produce the love of a child in place of the fear of the slave.[40] Edwards is not embarrassed by appeal to the inner testimony.[41] While such a witness may not represent the 'highest level of assurance,' it nevertheless served an important role as '[i]t was both temporally immediate ... and also functionally immediate ... imparting to the saint the experience of being loved, and conveying the acceptance of sonship.'[42] Cherry judiciously allows for distinct spheres, of which the inner must not be neglected:

> Edwards does not deny that the Spirit of God works within the heart of a saint for the benefit of that saint's assurance; but he does maintain that when the heart is worked upon, the will is changed. When the will is changed, that change is discernible in practice wherein the willing has both an inside and an outside ... the "signs of godliness" may be divided into those predominantly inward and those predominantly outward.[43]

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[37] Stout, *The New England Soul*, 207.
[38] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 232, 233.
[39] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 298-299 ,and also *WJE* 2: 303.
[40] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 238.
[41] Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, 265.
[42] W. Ross Hastings, 'Discerning the Spirit: Ambivalent Assurance in the Soteriology of Jonathan Edwards and Barthian Correctives,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 63/4 (2010): 437-455, especially 440. Hastings goes on to argue that the doctrine of assurance in Edwards is unstable, due to its pneumatological rather than Christological foundation, even when the useful corrective of social controls are introduced. Williams is surely right nevertheless to highlight the difference between Wesley and Edwards when it comes to discussion of inner testimony, for Edwards will not appeal to imagination alone, which can be replicated by the Devil: Garry J. Williams, 'Enlightenment Epistemology and Eighteenth-Century Evangelical Doctrines of Assurance,' in *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (eds. M. A. G. Haykin and K. J. Stewart; Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 361-363.
[43] Cherry, *Theology,* 145.

Edwards's view on the immediacy of experience in salvation is, however, currently under review.[44] In reaction to the Bebbington thesis, that assurance and therefore activism are the distinguishing features of evangelicalism as it broke away from Puritanism, several scholars are wanting to complicate the description of seventeenth century Puritanism to allow for greater recognition of assurance towards the beginning of the Christian walk, and early attempts at mission.[45] Conversely, Edwards is shown to be open to ongoing struggle to secure assurance, and his theological legacy is shown to generate structures for mission only slowly.[46] Despite these disclaimers and their underlying historiographical agenda that the *continuities* between Puritanism and evangelicalism are more substantial than their *discontinuities*, any nervousness on the part of these scholars concerning assurance of salvation is marginalised when we make room for Edwards's own ecclesiological framework, which creates theological continuity at a still deeper level.

God assures us of his favourable disposition in different ways. While Edwards's language of immediacy or directness quite literally speaks of God addressing the soul without intermediaries, it is not hard to see that his audience could misunderstand his intentions and assume him to say that as one begins the Christian life, so one goes on without order or structure. For Edwards contrariwise, just as justification is by grace through faith, though issuing forth in works, so the immediacy of grace is for Edwards necessarily expressed in material ways. Edwards's depiction of conversion might marginalise the church's responsibility as a necessary agent of Christian beginnings, though he does not detract from the responsibility of the church as an instrument of Christian proclamation or personal maturation, as the following section will show. To magnify the immediacy and potential disorder of God in conversion is matched very quickly by the power of the church to bring order to Christian experience.

[44] This topic functions as a *Leitmotif* in the recent compilation of essays discussing the merits of Bebbington's quadrilateral. See Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, eds., *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008).
[45] John Coffey, 'Puritanism, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Protestant Tradition,' in *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (eds. M. A. G. Haykin and K. J. Stewart; Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 252-277.
[46] See Michael A. G. Haykin, 'Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment: A Reassessment,' in *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (eds. M. A. G. Haykin and K. J. Stewart; Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), Williams, 'Enlightenment Epistemology,' 345-374.

Proven Experience: The Church and Means

Edwards's defence of unitary anthropology, and the affections which denote regenerate life, were an implicit critique of non-experimental Calvinism, and the Puritan polity which supported it. There was however another, perhaps greater, fear in the New England psyche: namely Antinomianism, or enthusiasm, which had bedevilled the colonies since the Hutchinsonian crisis of the 1630s.[47] Claims to direct illumination of the Spirit had occasionally led to social disorder, theological anarchy, and family breakdown. Worrying for those in positions of clerical authority, given the high esteem in which Edwards held such religious affections, was the possible implication that there was no place for a learned ministry amongst those who pursued such immediate and arbitrary experiences of grace.[48] Edwards squarely faces these objections in drafting the *Religious Affections*.

The bulk of the *Religious Affections* is structured around two sets of twelves signs, the first set describing experiences which may not assuredly be signs of a regenerate life, and the second set presenting attributes of the believer which most certainly do attest gracious affections, or true religion. The sign described in most detail is the twelfth in the second series, which places love as the most persuasive sign of a regenerate life. While arguments dealing with the *subjective* assurances of salvation appear intermittently throughout the treatise, it is salient to note that discussion concerning the *objective* signs of true religion form the very framework of the entire piece. Edwards is not here chiefly concerned with rationalists like Chauncy, but builds his entire case against those like Davenport who are satisfied with less than sustained moral transformation in the redeemed.[49] If it is irrefragable signs of the Spirit's presence that are contested, then it is visible tokens, public tests, proven experience, objective criteria, which Edwards will in turn demonstrate as necessary in the life of the regenerate.[50]

[47] See David D. Hall, ed. *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History* (2nd ed.; Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 3-23.
[48] Bainton, *Yale and the Ministry*, 34.
[49] Chamberlain, 'Self-Deception as a Theological Problem,' 546. Other itinerants who pursued extravagant expression were Eleazar Wheelock, Samuel Buell and Benjamin Pomeroy, to name the more prominent. See Marsden, *A Life,* 269.
[50] McClymond notes the anti-Kantian perspective in Edwards's works, in as far as Edwards wants to ground objective reality not principally in the perception of the subject, but in God who is the perceived object. See McClymond, 'Spiritual Perception in Jonathan Edwards,' 206, cf Edwards, *WJE* 2: 240.

Edwards is not content with enthusiastic warmth of heart generated by the light of the Spirit, if it is not consonant with the gift of Christian revelation previously given.[51] The Word of the Gospel is 'as a glass, by which this light is conveyed to us,'[52] just as sunlight uses a magnifying glass to concentrate its rays to create a spark at close range to the kindling. This does not render the Spirit's work any less immediate, but rather the Spirit focuses the truth of the Word in the heart. Claims that an individual has received personal revelations or inspiration are particularly odious to teachers of Edwards's Reformed convictions, for they presuppose that the Spirit brings content as well as conviction. Using the nomenclature of Thomas Shepard (1605 -49), Edwards distinguishes between *legal* and *evangelical* hypocrites, meaning those believers who are deceived by the evidences of morality on the one hand or are deceived by the evidences of their own ecstatic experiences or discoveries on the other.[53] Subjective assurance is desirable, but must be a correlate of an objective offer of salvation.[54]

Grace must be made visible as a valid way of testing true religious affections, for, Edwards writes, 'grace is of the nature of light, and brings truth to view.'[55] He makes the link between the subjective and objective facets of the impact of light when he asserts:

> Godliness is as it were a light that shines in the soul: Christ directs that this light should not only *shine within*, but that it should *shine out* before men, that they may see it. But which way shall this be? 'Tis by our good works.[56]

Smith perceptively remarks that such highlighting of activity is not what we may have expected in a treatise bearing the word *affections* in its title. Indeed, he asseverates that at this point Edwards breaks from his own tradition, by insisting that 'Protestantism's sacred domain – the inner life – ... be subjected to a public test.' While personal appropriation of grace through faith had become a Protestant slogan, and the Puritans had further internalised the faith when socio-political hurdles had impeded ongoing reform in England,[57] here Edwards takes 'a large step in the direction of making action a center of attention,' and all this without leaving himself open to the accusation of salvation by works.[58]

[51] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 120, 266.
[52] Edwards, 'Divine and Supernatural Light,' *WJE* 17: 416.
[53] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 173.
[54] Cherry, *Theology,* 155.
[55] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 235.
[56] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 407-408. Emphasis mine.
[57] See Charles L. Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (Oxford: University Press, 1986), 272, and Brauer, 'Conversion,' especially 239.
[58] Smith, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 2: 42-43.

McDermott rightly contextualises the *Religious Affections* as a production of Edwards's despondency after the evident inadequacies of the revivals, and has no hesitation in implying motive to their composition:

> Edwards has lost confidence in subjective forms of consciousness, which could be sources of self-deception. Now only publicly manifested Christian practice could be relied upon as a test of true religious experience.[59]

Noll succinctly sharpens our conclusion when he states that religious affections make the church visible: 'Edwards's ecclesiology reflected his belief that the effects of true grace were tangible, visible, and reliably discernible.'[60] Religious affections have necessary ecclesiological entailments, for they cannot be explained with reference to subjective heat or private experience alone. Objective light must generate them, and public reception must welcome them, both of which the life of the church supports. Importantly, Edwards is relativising the traditional means of grace to give religious affections a more determining role in the ecclesial life.

Religious affections, because their fruit are visible to public scrutiny, require furthermore public and moral appraisal. Indeed, this treatise at heart presents the evidential value of love in Christian experience, and thereby demands 'the complex and subtle language of character and moral assessment,' when investigating either first person or third person cases.[61] Edwards recognises that the church is a mixed community, and its purity will always be a pious desire as much as a present reality, and therefore falling within the bailiwick of corporate scrutiny. Individual human capacity to determine one's own spiritual state is limited, but determining that of others is more difficult still.[62] The Antinomian enthusiasts were prone to conflate assurance with the act of belief itself, which built in no checks and balances, nor did it adequately allow for the possibility of self-deception as an outworking of sin. Edwards wants to distinguish faith from assurance, and he can achieve this by relativising the evidential value of experiences *connected with conversion* in order to highlight the evidential value of experiences *connected to moral development*:

> The Scripture represents faith, as that by which men are *brought into* a good estate; and therefore it can't be the same thing, as believing that they are *already*

[59] McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, 113.
[60] Noll, *America's God*, 45.
[61] Wayne Proudfoot, 'Perception and Love in *Religious Affections*,' in *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation* (ed. S. J. Stein; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 125, 132. Proudfoot goes further to suggest that third person moral appraisal, exemplified in Edwards, is a vital methodology in religious psychology.
[62] Cherry, *Theology,* 157.

> in a good estate. To suppose that faith consists in persons believing that they are in a good estate, is in effect the same thing, as to suppose that faith consists in a person's believing that he has faith, or in believing that he believes.[63]

Evaluation of Christian practice has more potential for objective verification than mere appraisal of Christian sentiment, whether one's own or someone else's. As Chamberlain suggests, Edwards affirms external tests, not only to critique the claims of the enthusiasts, but to provide surer knowledge:

> In *Religious Affections*, therefore, he both insisted upon the centrality of the affections in the religious life and rejected immediate experience as a solution to the epistemological problem concerning the nature and means of assurance. To minimize the potential for self-deception, he advocated a life of persevering Christian practice as the only sound foundation on which to build a hope of salvation.[64]

The church therefore plays an important role for Edwards in prosecuting such measures as are designed to prove religious affections. It is not just the inquiry into relations of grace whereby the church can exercise its judgement of charity, but more generally it is empowered to provide outside affirmation and encouragement to those who doubt. Edwards affirms as well the role of the sacraments when he asserts 'that they should be, as it were, exhibited to our view, in sensible representations ... the more to affect us with them.'[65] Similarly, the 'duty of singing praises to God' fulfils the function of prompting our affections. The Ministry of the Word expressed through preaching was also designed to be different from the use of books or commentaries so as primarily and affectively to impress upon human hearts the application of the Word,[66] and to convince sinners of the misery of their state before God and the remedy of their sickness through Christ.[67] This ministry in turn was the preserve of the ordained, and not open to laymen, even those of otherwise godly disposition.[68] These ecclesiological helps could sustain

[63] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 178.
[64] Chamberlain, 'Self-Deception as a Theological Problem,' 555.
[65] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 115. Nuttall furthermore presents a range of Puritan authors who affirm the ordinances as Scripturally mandated instruments of the Spirit's work, recognising also Puritan hesitation towards material helps: Nuttall, *Holy Spirit,* 91. Chamberlain reminds us that it was a peculiarity of Antinomian perfectionism to deny the efficacy of the ordinances, for immediacy would disdain the use of means: Chamberlain, 'Self-Deception as a Theological Problem,' 551.
[66] Marsden, *A Life,* 282.
[67] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 115. Interestingly in this description of means, there is no scrutiny of how it is that the Spirit avails himself of such means for affectional ends. The link between the Word and the Spirit is not so tight that Edwards can't distinguish affections which 'arise on *occasion* of the Scripture, and not *properly come from* the Scripture, as the genuine fruit of the Scripture, and by a right use of it; but from an abuse of it.' Edwards, *WJE* 2: 143. He does not posit an *ex opere operato* impact of preaching. Conversely, preaching is not the only means, argues Ward, that can be used by God to bring a sinner to comprehend the condition of his soul: Ward, 'Philosophical Structure of *Religious Affections*,' 764.
[68] Edwards, 'To Moses Lyman,' *WJE* 16: 101-103.

the Christian's affective discipleship, which had been part of New England ecclesiology since its founding.[69]

Indeed, part of the church's role was to confirm wavering assurance in its members, even if judgments made were conditionally. Edwards does not want to arrogate to himself or to any of the clerical caste the irrefragable right of indubitable discernment. He maintains that God alone can definitively separate the sheep from the goats.[70] In the meantime, the church is given the task not of declaring without error who is regenerate, but of building confidence in their election, for:

> 'tis agreeable to Christ's designs, and the contrived ordering and disposition Christ makes of things in his church, that there should be sufficient and abundant provision made, that his saints might have full assurance of their future glory ... And the nature of the covenant of grace, and God's declared ends in the appointment and constitution of things in that covenant, do plainly show it to be God's design to make ample provision for the saints having an assured hope of eternal life, while living here upon earth. For so are all things ordered and contrived in that covenant ... It further appears that assurance is not only attainable in some very extraordinary cases, that *all* Christians are directed to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure.[71]

Edwards, in this eleventh sign of no certain grace, is attempting to disconnect the affections from the necessity to produce assurance. He is rebuking pride which grows out of strong affections. He is suggesting that the remedy for wavering confidence is not strong or violent emotion, but rather the regular and orderly ministrations of the church or covenant.[72] Assurance is for all, but will not necessarily be present in all evenly or immediately. Antinomian claims to private validation of spiritual graces are denied.

Significantly, Edwards both affirms the centrality of religious affections to Christian experience and relativises their subjective reality in the life of the church. Religious affections are a coordinating category for the individual, drawing together all faculties towards the one end of love for God and neighbour, yet they are inadequate without reference to further criteria to establish assurance for life in the world. Religious affections may be experienced as an intensive crisis, yet their outworkings

[69] Kobrin, 'The Expansion of the Visible Church in New England,' 190, 195. In earlier times the church provided support for the *completion* of the process of salvation (given the regnant conversion morphology of the 1630s and 1640s). In Edwards's day it was no less true that the church was given to improve the spiritual confidence of its members, though now conversion was more often understood as a compressed movement with the church providing *confirmation* of the salvation attained.
[70] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 193. Whether Edwards relinquishes the judgement of charity assumed here in the later crisis around his dismissal will be dealt with in my chapter on the 'Humble Inquiry.'
[71] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 168, 169.
[72] As we shall have reason to pursue later, Tracy interprets such ministerial interventions as essentially motivated by desire for control, and is sceptical of the role of the clergy to appraise moral development. See Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor,* 144, 173.

need to be cultivated gradually and extensively and with due consideration of means. Religious affections are not merely for the individual's assurance, but their expression and validation do function as positive witnesses both to the individual and to the church at large.

Purposeful Experience: The Church and Ends

Religious affections, in Edwards's estimation, are a sign of regenerate life, which requires however external attestation for the assurance of those who believe. Such affections bring critique to both Arminians, who stressed rationality in Christian experience, and to Antinomians, whose immediate apprehension of the Spirit did not necessarily coordinate with moral transformation. The affections are furthermore an implicit challenge to the immediate audience of these sermons or arguments, namely the lax who were seated Sunday by Sunday in the meetinghouse in Northampton, who may have agreed with Edwards's critique of excessive enthusiasm and speculative preaching, but who nevertheless were not engaged with Edwards's programme for social transformation.[73] Edwards, albeit more obliquely, addresses public concerns in this treatise, not merely privatistic piety.

Edwards is of the conviction that true religious affections must necessarily be expressed in public ways, for their nature is to move towards their object, namely other human beings or God. Indeed, one of the marks which distinguishes true from counterfeit piety is its capacity to act in the interest of the object without any benefit accruing to the subject of the affections. He recognises that in appearance a disinterested action and a self-seeking one can look similar, but he nevertheless prizes the true expression of affective faith:

> It was before observed, that the affection of love is as it were the fountain of all affection; and particularly, that Christian love is the fountain of all gracious affections: now the divine excellency and glory of God, and Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the works of God, and the ways of God, etc. is the primary reason, why a true saint loves these things; and not any supposed interest that he has in them, or any conceived benefit that he has received from them, or shall receive from them, or any such imagined relation which they bear to his interest, that self-love can properly be said to be the first foundation of his love to these things.[74]

[73] William K. B. Stoever, 'The Godly Will's Discerning: Shepard, Edwards, and the Identification of True Godliness,' in *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation* (ed. S. J. Stein; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 96. We encounter instances within *Religious Affections* of applications directed towards very particular social situations, for example the use of fine apparel or ornamentation: Edwards, *WJE* 2: 335. David Hall purports to see references to the 'Bad Book Affair' as another example of social declension lying behind Edwards's remonstrations. See David D. Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *Ecclesiastical Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 12; ed. D. D. Hall; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 58.
[74] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 240.

Furthermore, such love becomes the steady practice of true believers, in such a way that a life of strenuous activity in the world results.[75] Action in turn provides a kind of confidence in the soul of the believer that one is of the elect:

> 'Tis not God's design that men should obtain assurance in any other way, than by mortifying corruption, and increasing in grace, and obtaining the lively exercises of it. And although self-examination be a duty of great use and importance, and by no means to be neglected; yet it is not the principal means, by which the saints do get satisfaction of their good estate. Assurance is not to be obtained so much by self-examination, as by action.[76]

Edwards reminds his audience of the practical significance of that kind of ministry, which served the physical needs of others, and which was exemplified in the active and compassionate life of Christ.[77]

The place which Edwards assigns to exertion in Christian experience has often been contested. Cohen makes much of the dynamic of activism within Puritan spirituality generally, in which great anxiety is met by great relief from great action (though he is justly critical of details of Max Weber's analysis of Calvinist activism). He asserts that activism is a correlate of conversion, even if works righteousness is formally denied by Puritan teachers.[78] Smith is most adamant that piety is not to be divorced from practice in understanding Edwards's ethics:

> Religion, much as it concerns the heart in Edwards' view, is not to be confined to an internal feeling or state of mind. Religion, though it is ultimately an intangible relationship between the individual and God, must express itself objectively and thus assume public shape. In order for this to take place, changes must be wrought in the surrounding universe. If it is true that a man must not only be in right relations with God, but also show this through an outward and visible form of life, then the entire social order must ultimately be affected.[79]

Heimert energetically states that the '*Religious Affections* ... was an exhortation to Edwards' readers to be up and doing, and to the ministers of the colonies to urge their people on their way.'[80] Hall reiterates the importance of recognising that Edwards's writings of the 1740s, due to disappointment with the revivals, have a public reflex: Edwards wants the movement of the Spirit to have a longer, lasting impact on social forms. Bebbington sees Edwards's doctrine of assurance being responsible for a keen activism in the nascent evangelical movement.[81] Writings coming

[75] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 398.
[76] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 195.
[77] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 369.
[78] Cohen, *God's Caress,* 22, 109-10, 272.
[79] John E. Smith, 'Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character,' *The Journal of Religion* 54/2 (1974): 166-180 176.
[80] Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (The Jonathan Edwards Classic Studies Series; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 132.
[81] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 47.

after *Religious Affections* are an application of the dynamic activism embodied in that seminal work of 1746.[82]

From a broader theological perspective, we ought not to be surprised that Edwards's piety is not quietistic but has its expression in the world of social or ecclesiological forms. His theology of conversion absorbs much of the crisis-oriented themes of the New Testament, leaving the process-oriented material its due application in matters of church and eschatology. The *immediacy of conversion crisis* needs the *gradualness of church life* to provide orientation and direction. The growing tendency amongst reform-minded believers in the seventeenth century to adjourn the return of the Lord, or to expect it not immediately but in the middle distance, funded both the immediacy of apocalyptic presentations of conversion, and openness to worldly commitments while waiting for the parousia. While the authority of many amongst the clergy had benefited from preaching the imminent return of Christ, providing as it did urgency and points of leverage over the congregation, to preach the expectation of a longer-range return empowered the laity to see their place and responsibility within the historical order, not least as this was expressed in adjudicating the affections of those seeking admission.[83] The outcome of the revival of true religion might be disorderly and apparently anti-social in the short term, but Edwards's own belief in the ultimately stable purposes of God in history made from these affections an essential ingredient in the reconstitution of the present order. Both individuals and society would be impacted by the exercise of affections.[84]

Whether such lofty expectations of social transformation were realistic, will better be understood with reference to the reaction of the parishioners of Northampton to Edwards's espousal of this notion of the affections. Though he is already flagging here the relative unimportance of precise order or method in recounting one's conversion experience,[85] there is nonetheless still the requirement that an account be publicly rendered:

[82] Richard Hall surveys the attitude of commentators towards Edwards's depiction of piety and practice. While there have been a number of writers who portray Edwards as quietistic (for example Mead, Alexis and De Jong), Hall, along with Heimert and Smith, sees the social reflex latent in Edwards's conception of religious affections. See Richard A. S. Hall, *The Neglected Northampton Texts of Jonathan Edwards: Edwards on Society and Politics* (Studies in American Religion 52; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 25-28, 58, 150.
[83] Ward traces this development back to the influence of Spener's eschatology. See Ward, *Early Evangelicalism,* 31-33.
[84] Stout, *The New England Soul,* 204. See as well Ward, 'Philosophical Structure of *Religious Affections*,' 761, where he connects the exercise of the fruit of the Spirit with the saint's desire for harmony, perfection or completion in the external world.
[85] McClymond, *Encounters with God*, 42.

> 'tis not necessary they should give an account of the particular steps and method, by which the Holy Spirit, sensibly to them, wrought and brought about those great essential things of Christianity in their hearts ... I am far from saying that it is not requisite that persons should give any sort of account of their experiences to their brethren. For persons to profess those things wherein the essence of Christianity lies, is the same thing as to profess that they experience those things.[86]

He wants to emphasise as well that to be able to give a formal relation of grace is relativised by the ability of those around to testify to the presence of love in the named person.[87] A church comprising an expectation of converted saints is necessarily more demanding than a congregation of the nurtured, though any judgement arrived at after the relation of grace is necessarily provisional, for no one can ascertain with absolute precision the state of another's soul:

> [N]othing that appears to them in their neighbor, can be sufficient to beget an absolute certainty concerning the state of his soul: for they see not his heart, nor can they see all his external behavior; for much of it is in secret, and hid from the eye of the world: and 'tis impossible certainly to determine, how far a man may go in many external appearances and imitations of grace, from other principles.[88]

This determination contains both the high hope of genuine transformed lives and the gritty realism that our best efforts at appraising are still only our best efforts. In all likelihood the denizens of Northampton heard the former hope loudly, and had little time for clerical disclaimers. The appeal to religious affections was evidently received as an appeal to lift their game, one which they almost instinctively chose to resist, itself reflecting an attitude of confidence in ecclesiological if not pneumatological status.[89] Though several years would pass before Edwards's dismissal, the contours of his theological approach to pastoral expectations were clearly now open to scrutiny. The purpose of the church would be a matter of dispute between pastor and people.

[86] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 416.
[87] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 418, 420.
[88] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 420.
[89] See Stoever, 'The Godly Will's Discerning,' 96.

4.1 THE CHURCH'S MILLENNIAL HOPE IN *AN HUMBLE ATTEMPT*

> *And how lamentable is the moral and religious state of these American colonies? Of New England in particular? How much is that kind of religion, that was professed and much experienced and practiced, in the first, and apparently the best times of New England, grown and growing out of credit? What fierce and violent contentions have been of late among ministers and people, about things of a religious nature? How much is the gospel ministry grown into contempt, and the work of the ministry, in many respects, laid under uncommon difficulties, and even in danger of sinking amongst us? ... Church discipline weakened, and ordinances less and less regarded? ... How strong and deeply rooted and general are the prejudices that prevail against vital religion and the power of godliness, and almost everything that appertains to it or tends to it?*[1]

Edwards recognised that the second half of the 1740s was a difficult time for the church, of which he was a leader. He devoted himself therefore to formulating a renewed vision, theologically defined and concretely applied, of the place of the church in the world. Disappointments from *local* revivals and their ensuing pastoral and experiential dilemmas were displaced by new aspirations for the *global* expansion of the Kingdom of Christ. Richard Hall argues that Edwards's writings of the later 1740s demonstrate a new social agenda, which broke open ecclesiological concerns with greater determination.[2] It is my contention that Edwards's doctrine of the church lies at the heart of the treatise calling believers to united prayer, and published in 1748, under the laborious 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 Last Time.'[3] The very first sentence demonstrates Edwards's intentions: 'In this chapter we have a prophecy of a future glorious advancement of the church of God.'[4]

Combined efforts in corporate prayer were in themselves the embodiment of new kinds of Christian union.[5] Of course, Puritans had previously been great exponents of the life of prayer, either through manuals of piety or through personal exhortation,[6] but now Christian leaders began to challenge those in their care to meet for 'extraordinary prayer' at times and in places other than during the Sunday gathering or in household groupings. Such calls to prayer reflected a broader

[1] Jonathan Edwards, '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 Last Time,' in *Apocalyptic Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 5; ed. S. J. Stein; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 357-358.
[2] Robert Hall notes the relative ignorance of the writings of Edwards from the late 1740s despite their value in understanding Edwards's ecclesiological and social agenda, and their importance in an ecclesiological vision larger than the church in Northampton, which has disappointed him. See Hall, *Neglected Northampton Texts,* 46, 58, 63.
[3] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 308.
[4] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 312.
[5] Crawford, *Seasons of Grace,* 229.
[6] Haykin, *Holy Spirit in Revival*, 137-138.

impatience with the state of the church in the mid eighteenth century.[7] Edwards's appeal to constitute a movement of prayer meetings in New England, in connection with Concerts of Prayer elsewhere, is just such an example of encouragement for new ecclesial models of the church. His own unique contribution to this movement is to be found in his steps of logic between energised prayer and the expansion of the Kingdom, which give significant signposts to his ecclesiological vision: the theological connections between missions, the millennium and ministerial role in this 'Humble Attempt' give us insight into the ways Edwards was reconceiving human agency and historical contingency for the sake of the church's impact in the world.

Edwards as Ecclesial Entrepreneur

A certain 'Memorial' had been sent by 'a number of ministers' from Scotland outlining their hopes and rationale for an international prayer meeting.[8] Though the call to concerted prayer did not originate with Edwards, he included within the 'Humble Attempt' a summary of this background to his own request, presented the Memorial substantially as it was printed in *The Christian Monthly History* and reprinted in *Historical Collections*, and added his own theological motivations.[9] The Memorial sets out the hope that ministers will encourage their parishioners to meet every week for a prayer concert, either on Saturday night or Sunday morning, and further on the first Tuesday of each quarter, with due acknowledgement that circumstances in different places may necessitate changes to this schedule.[10] The invitation is open to all who have 'at heart the interest of vital Christianity and the power of godliness,'[11] irrespective of their denominational or party background.

[7] Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf, for example, had promoted prayer through his Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed, which was expressed in the round-the-clock and one hundred years-long prayer meeting on his estate in Upper Lusatia. Praying Societies in the Scottish lowlands had been constituted, which had a significant bearing on the development of associate presbyteries and revival there in the 1730s. John Wesley himself used Edwards's treatise, albeit expurgated of Calvinist colouration, to encourage his Methodists to pray. In less organised ways, children had *spontaneously* devoted themselves to prayer as well, both on the estates of the Moravians but also amongst children in Silesia. See Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening,* 127.
[8] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 320
[9] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 321-328.
[10] The proposal was made that this prayer movement be continued for seven years, perhaps longer, building on an earlier network for prayer begun in 1744. Such precise recommendations made Edwards vulnerable to the accusation of pharisaicism, which demanded works of piety beyond those prescribed by the law. He responds to such accusations in Part III of the treatise, and thereby gives us some insight into the suspicion that introduction of new means for the sake of the church's advance aroused.
[11] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 326.

The proposal was ecumenically inclusive, and designed to heal divisions resulting from the earlier revivals.[12]

Edwards longed for the latter-day glory of the church of God that would sweep over the world.[13] Taking as his primary text the prophecy of Zechariah 8:20-22 concerning the future 'accession of Gentile nations to the church of God,'[14] Edwards expounds this vision by highlighting how it might be achieved through the *practice of prayer*: vast numbers of nations will come together to pray intentionally that God might bestow his presence and blessing on their common life. He argued that believers have a 'duty of prayer,' at heart a thirsting for God himself, which will be expressed amongst many nations when they join together in a 'visible union ... explicit agreement, a joint resolution,' performed with willing alacrity, which brings great honour to God.[15] The inflow of the nations is further supported by appeal to Isaiah 60:2-4, where the light of God in this world acts centripetally to draw together those who were previously in darkness.[16] The treatise is replete with Scriptural references, often from the Old Testament, outlining the ways in which God will fulfil glorious promises as yet only partially realised. It is not just that Edwards is encouraging people to pray; he is also encouraging his readers to pray with the particular hope that their praying will bring a consummation to God's work in history.

Indeed it is Edwards's use of apocalyptic in justifying prayer, missions and revival, which makes his work so distinct. The Boston sponsors for this treatise (Joseph Sewall, Thomas Prince, John Webb, Thomas Foxcroft, and Joshua Gee) provide a preface which not only affirmed the intentions of Edwards, but also drew attention to the novelty of some of his views:

> To promote the increase, concurrency and constancy of these acceptable prayers, is the great intention both of the pious Memorial of our reverend and dear brethren in Scotland, and of the worthy author of this exciting essay. And this design we can't but recommend to all who desire the coming of that blissful kingdom in its promised extent and glory, in this wretched world. As to the author's ingenious observations on the prophecies, we entirely leave them to the reader's judgment.[17]

[12] Hall, *Neglected Northampton Texts*, 57.
[13] Using another frame of reference from Isaiah 11:9, Edwards awaits the moment when the knowledge of God will be known everywhere, just as 'the waters cover the sea.' Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 332.
[14] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 312.
[15] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 314, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320.
[16] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 313.
[17] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 310.

Edwards attempts to call people to pray, and calls them to pray in earnest for the revival of religion on the basis of an eschatological timetable, albeit with some reservations on the part of his backers. Even after his dismissal from the Northampton church, Edwards still maintained the value of the Concert of Prayer as a means of encouraging revival.[18]

Edwards as Ecclesial Internationalist

It would be too easy to isolate the cooling of revivalist sentiment in New England and to begin to question whether there had been a Great Awakening at all. Recent historiography on the period has moved beyond the particularities of New England to suggest that the context of Edwards's thought must be painted more broadly,[19] paying due respect to its regional and international commonalities.[20] Significantly, the prayer movement, of which Edwards is a sponsor, highlights a most remarkable feature of the eighteenth century revivals: namely how they were either established, coordinated, or encouraged through a network of correspondence, not just within Europe or within North America, but between them as well,[21] with their results published and circulated widely. Indeed, the Memorial inserted into the 'Humble Attempt' argues that private correspondence requesting support for the Concert of Prayer will prove more powerful than other means:

> As the first printed account of this concert was not a proposal of it, as a thing then to begin, but a narration of it, as a design already set on foot, which had been brought about with much harmony, by means of private letters; so the farther continuance, and, 'tis hoped, the farther spreading of it seems in a promising way of being promoted by the same means; as importunate desires of the renewing the concert have been transmitted already from a very distant corner abroad, where the regard to it has of late increased: but notwithstanding of what may be done by private letters, it is humbly expected, that a Memorial spread in this manner, may, by God's blessing, farther promote the good ends in view; as it may be usefully referred to in letters, and may reach where they will not.[22]

The culture of letter-writing, described from time to time as 'the republic of letters,' crossed denominational as well as geographical boundaries. George Whitefield, an Anglican Calvinist, who became a focal point of the revivals, in North America as well as in England, Scotland and Wales, used correspondence to publicise his campaigns.

[18] Jonathan Edwards, 'To the Reverend John Erskine, July 5, 1750,' in *Letters and Personal Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 16; ed. G. S. Claghorn; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 350.
[19] O'Brien, 'Transatlantic Community of Saints,' 832.
[20] For Kidd's recent historical defence of the 'Great Awakening' in relation to the writing of Jon Butler, see footnote 2 on page 66.
[21] Ward, *Awakening*, 2. It has been estimated that August Hermann Francke of Halle in Prussia had around 5000 correspondents!
[22] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 327.

John Guyse and Isaac Watts, both Dissenting ministers in Northamptonshire in Old England, learned of events in America through correspondence and encouraged the publication of Edwards's works in London. Edwards requested news of the revivals amongst the Dutch Reformed in the Netherlands from his Presbyterian correspondent in Scotland, likely to be John McLaurin of Glasgow.[23] The correspondence not only existed between clergy, but laymen of different denominations also promoted the revival through their own money and letters.[24] The 'Humble Attempt' reflects more than the importance of a prayer meeting. Its organisation reinforced relationships beyond denominational or regional associations:

> The new community created by international correspondence was, in part a continuation of the seventeenth-century Puritan letter-writing community, but its spirit of evangelism marked a point of departure. Evidence suggests that revival correspondence was not only of personal significance to those involved but that it also served evangelical functions. Although letters between neighboring ministers were often of a practical nature – making arrangements for meetings and the exchange of pulpits, for example – those between distant and especially between international correspondents could be a means to convert the unconverted. In addition, because ministers discussed revival issues in their letters, their correspondence also helped to shape their attitudes to evangelism.[25]

Indeed, while constructing this treatise, Edwards's family was playing host to a great example of healthy revivalist piety, David Brainerd, whose moderate success ministering amongst the indigenous Indian populations at the Forks of the Delaware and along the Susquehanna River[26] was an eloquent testimony to trans-Atlantic networking described in a letter by Edwards to a Scottish correspondent:

> Besides those things that have a favourable aspect on the interest of religion in these parts, among the English, and other inhabitants of European extract, Mr. Brainerd, a missionary employed by The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, to preach to the Indians, has lately had more success than ever. This Mr. Brainerd is a young gentleman of very distinguishing qualifications, remarkable for his piety, and eminent zeal for the good of souls, and his knowledge in divinity, and solidity of his judgment, and prudence of conduct.[27]

While some older interpretations of this treatise give prominence to a vision of a great American future,[28] Edwards's internationalism militates against any narrowly sectarian millenarianism.

[23] Edwards, 'Letter to a Correspondent in Scotland,' *WJE* 5: 444.
[24] O'Brien, 'Transatlantic Community of Saints,' 819.
[25] O'Brien, 'Transatlantic Community of Saints,' 820.
[26] Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 292.
[27] Edwards, 'Letter to a Correspondent in Scotland,' *WJE* 5: 449.
[28] Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 156-158.

Edwards as Ecclesial Millennialist

Edwards believed that prayer changes history. As his supporters pointed out in their preface,[29] the link between prayer and the glory of the latter days of the church was integral to the vision of Zechariah 8:20-22, with which he began the 'Humble Attempt.' Edwards went on to expound another apocalyptic passage from the book of Revelation, which bears on prayer and its impact on the course of history:

> God has respect to the prayers of his saints in all his government of the world; as we may observe by the representation made, Rev. 8, at the beginning. There we read of seven angels standing before the throne of God, and receiving of him seven trumpets, at the sounding of which, great and mighty changes were to be brought to pass in the world, through many successive ages. But when these angels had received their trumpets, they must stand still, and all must be in silence, not one of 'em must be allowed to sound, till the "prayers of the saints" are attended to [v. 4].[30]

Furthermore, Edwards appeals to the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11, which expressly links the activity of praying for the Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven with the pouring out of the Spirit, for the paragraph following the Lord's Prayer promises the Holy Spirit to those who ask. The various petitions of the prayer, which Jesus gave us as a model, are then effectively the equivalent of asking for the greatest of God's blessings, his Spirit himself.[31] Prayer which encourages the pouring out of the Spirit changes the course of history, not infrequently for Edwards through revival.[32] This connection allows Edwards to suggest:

> The Scriptures don't only direct and encourage us in general to pray for the Holy Spirit above all things else but it is the expressly revealed will of God, that his church should be very much in prayer for that glorious outpouring of the Spirit that is to be in the latter days.[33]

Kidd summarises the period:

> For provincial New Englanders, among whom Edwards was only the most articulate, prayer became in its most ambitious form a tool to hasten the course of redemptive history and the return of Christ ... This increased sense of urgency resulted largely from one of the most distinctive theological developments of the period: an increased emphasis on the Holy Spirit's workings.[34]

While a renewed commitment to prayer coupled with the pouring out of the Spirit are highlighted as means used of God to enlarge and strengthen his people, the paradigm that Edwards used to summarise the result of this activity is the millennial kingdom of Christ, drawing from the

[29] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 310-311.
[30] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 353.
[31] Marsden, *A Life,* 335. Hall points out how the blessing of the Spirit is an outworking of covenant promises: Hall, *Neglected Northampton Texts,* 87.
[32] Crawford, *Seasons of Grace,* 229.
[33] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 348.
[34] Thomas S. Kidd, '"The Very Vital Breath of Christianity": Prayer and Revival in Provincial New England,' *Fides et Historia* 36/2 (2004): 19-33.

timetable of Revelation. Such speculation was not new to Edwards, as it had been common to Puritan eschatology in the century before him.[35] However, Edwards takes those leading Puritan categories to build his own eschatological edifice in new ways.

Central to Edwards's interpretation of Revelation is the identity of the Pope with the Antichrist, a parallel constant since the Reformation.[36] Since the Protestant cause had grown since the sixteenth century, and the defenders of vital religion had not experienced the bleakness of days like those before the sixteenth century,[37] Edwards appealed most persistently to the accounts in Revelation 11 (the slaying of the witnesses) and Revelation 16 (the timing of the pouring out of the vials, in modern translations 'bowls') of the triumphs of the Antichrist,[38] which he argued must refer to the period *before* the ministry of Luther and Calvin.[39] This position allowed Edwards to promote the Concert of Prayer with the positive expectation of glorious days for the church, and not with foreboding that prayer for revival would exacerbate the suffering of the church under the terrors of the Antichrist's impending rule. Prayer was ecclesiologically motivated.

Though Edwards pinpoints the decisive blow against the Antichrist in the ministry of the Reformers, he nevertheless acknowledges that the complete destruction of the Antichrist will only come gradually, through the patient proclamation of the Gospel attending the persistent prayers of the saints in the course of history. Just as the Exodus of the people of God from Egypt and the entry into the Promised Land involved stages,[40] so Edwards argued that it would be in vain to await an apocalyptic intervention of God to inaugurate the millennial reign of Christ:

> And if I may be allowed humbly to offer what appears to me to be the truth with relation to the rise and fall of Antichrist; it is this. As the power of Antichrist, and the corruption of the apostate church, rose not at once, but by several notable steps and degrees; so it will in the like manner fall: and that divers steps and seasons of destruction to the spiritual Babylon, and revival and advancement of the true church, are prophesied of under one. Though it be true, that there is some particular event, that prevails above all others in the intention of the prophecy, some one remarkable season of the destruction of

[35] Crawford points out the millennial commitments of Cotton Mather as motivation for concerted prayer. See Crawford, *Seasons of Grace,* 229.
[36] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 381.
[37] Withrow, 'A Future of Hope: Jonathan Edwards and Millennial Expectations,' especially 90-92.
[38] Withrow, 'A Future of Hope: Jonathan Edwards and Millennial Expectations,' 79.
[39] This is at odds with the opinions of Moses Lowman (1680-1752), whose *Paraphrase and Notes on the Revelation* (first edition 1737) had been in Edwards's earlier reflections such an important model.
[40] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 384.

> the Church of Rome and papal power and corruption, and advancement of true religion, that the prophecies have a principal respect to.[41]

Often supported by international perspectives garnered through correspondence, political events in Europe and North America provided important background to the thought of Edwards in 'Humble Attempt' and further encouraged millennial speculation. The frequent military encounters between England and France in the eighteenth century, in the Caribbean, India, the South Pacific, Europe and North America, betokened a larger issue in Puritan minds concerning the suprahistorical battle between Christ and Satan, given concrete expression in English Protestantism and French Roman Catholicism. The urgency with which Edwards called his people to prayer must be read against the urgency generated through military conflict very close to home. Edwards experienced in his own family the results of French mobilisation in Canada, where his father was sent as chaplain.[42] Later French incursions into New England created the need for his home in Stockbridge to be palisaded, and drove many Indians as refugees into Massachusetts. There was even a recent reassertion of Roman Catholic claims to rule in the United Kingdom:

> We have lately heard of the Pretender's eldest son his entering Scotland, and being joined there by a number of Highlanders. How far God may punish the nations of Great Britain by him, we cannot tell. We have not yet heard of the rebellion's being suppressed, but are ready to hope, by the aspect of affairs, from what we hear, that it is done before this time. It is a day of great commotion and tumult among the nations, and what the issue will be we know not: but it now becomes us, and the church of God everywhere, to cry to him, that he would overrule all for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and the bringing in on the expected peace and prosperity of Zion.[43]

Many of these threats to the Protestant character of New England were in time averted. In fact, the English in North America had witnessed some extraordinary turnarounds in their military fortunes. However, rather than these victories dampening the apocalyptic fervour of New Englanders, Edwards chief amongst them, the connection between these military feats and prayer actually incited still further confidence in the mighty works of God in history:

> God don't only forbear to destroy us, notwithstanding all our provocations and their aggravations, which it would be endless to recount; but he has in the forementioned instances, wrought great things for us, wherein his hand has been most visible, and his arm made bare ... And it is to my present purpose to observe, that God was pleased to do great things for us ... in answer to extraordinary prayer. Such remarkable appearances of a spirit of prayer, on any particular public occasion, have not been in the land, at any time within my observation and memory, as on occasion of the affair of Cape Breton. And 'tis worthy to be noted and remembered, that God sent that great storm on the

[41] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 407-408.
[42] Stein, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 5: 9.
[43] Edwards, 'Letter to a Correspondent,' *WJE* 5: 459-460.

> fleet of our enemies the last year, that finally dispersed, and utterly confounded them, and caused them wholly to give over their designs against us, the very night after our day of public fasting and prayer, for our protection and their confusion.[44]

Indeed, the prospect of Antichrist's *gradual demise* encouraged concrete speculation about the *gradual advance* of Christ's Kingdom in the world.[45] This schema encouraged adventurous missionary enterprise. It also defended the justice of God in a Calvinist worldview, as it allowed for the total number of the elect to be greater than those who are damned, given that the population of the world like that of New England was growing exponentially, and that the vast majority of people who would ever live and be converted were yet to be born.[46] The steady progress of the purposes of God would in time incorporate many peoples as yet untouched by the Gospel:

> If the Spirit of God should be immediately poured out, and that great work of God's power and grace should now begin, which in its progress and issue should complete this glorious effect; there must be an amazing and unparalleled progress of the work and manifestation of divine power to bring so much to pass, by the year 2000. Would it not be a great thing, to be accomplished in one half century, that religion, in the power and purity of it, should so prevail, as to gain conquest over all those many things that stand in opposition to it among Protestants ... ? And if in another, it should go on so to prevail, as to get the victory over all the opposition and strength of the kingdom of Antichrist ... ? And if in a third half century, it should prevail and subdue the greater part of the Mahometan world, and bring in the Jewish nation ... ? And then in the next whole century, the whole heathen world should be enlightened and converted to the Christian faith, throughout all parts of Africa, Asia, America and Terra Australis ... I have thus distinguished what belongs to a bringing of the world from its present state, to the happy state of the millennium.[47]

It is the understanding of Edwards in this treatise that though Christ is Lord of history, his reign is exercised essentially through the church, and extended through the church's expansion. The millennium is that climax to the history of the church which witnesses Christ's rule with minimal opposition in the world, with the saints in heaven as co-rulers through the church militant on earth.[48] Such a framework requires a church polity, with membership increasingly restricted to those who are unambiguously regenerate. Edwards highlighted the continuities of the historical process, and offered hope within history to his readers, as he expounded the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world:

> It is natural and reasonable to suppose, that the whole world should finally be given to Christ, as one whose right it is to reign, as the proper heir of him, who is originally the king of all nations, and the possessor of heaven and earth: and

[44] Edward, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 362.
[45] Marsden, *A Life,* 337.
[46] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 343.
[47] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 411.
[48] Reiner Smolinski, 'Apocalypticism in Colonial North America,' in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (Volume 3: Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age; ed. S. J. Stein; New York: Continuum, 2003), 59.

> the Scripture teaches us, that God the Father hath constituted his Son, as God-man, and in his kingdom of grace, or mediatorial kingdom, to be "the heir of the world" ... For that promise [Gen. 22:18] is what the Apostle is speaking of: which shews, that God has appointed Christ to be heir of the world in his kingdom of grace, and to possess and reign over all nations, through the propagation of his gospel, and the power of his spirit communicating the blessings of it.[49]

Though this treatise discusses prayer, the means of revival and the millennium, and answers at length possible objections to Edwards's understanding, at its heart Edwards is actually writing about the church, its place in history, and hope for its expansion, providing Scriptural support for such millennial hopes. If Edwards's postmillennialism refers to the Kingdom's coming as 'emergent rather than supervenient upon history,' then it is the church which becomes the centre of the world's future.[50]

Edwards as Ecclesial Optimist

While Edwards the altruist looks forward to greater days for the church on earth, he nonetheless has great regard in this treatise for the visible, perhaps mixed, church in daily experience. He spoke highly of the 'gospel ordinances' as means of grace,[51] valued the fellowship of God's people beyond the local congregation by promoting the 'welfare and happiness of the whole body of Christ,'[52] and stressed the continuity between the Old and the New Testaments by describing the whole nation of the Jews in Esther's day as 'the church of God.'[53] Like many Puritan supporters of the Christendom model of church-state relations before him, Edwards is prepared to affirm the Constantinian revolution of the fourth century as providentially engineered:

> For Constantine ... was a member of the Christian church, and set by God in the most eminent station in his church; and was honoured, above all other princes that ever had been in the world, as the great protector of his church, and her deliverer from the persecuting power of that cruel scarlet-colored beast ... But more eminently was this glorious change in the empire owing to the power of God's Word, the prevalence of the glorious gospel, by which Constantine himself was converted, and so became the instrument of the overthrow of heathen empire in the East and West.[54]

Despite this providential engineering, he does, however, recognise the need for God to address the decrepitude of the old church by reviving it in order to bless the world. We should be:

> earnestly praying to him, that he would appear in his glory, and favor Zion, and manifest his compassion to the world of mankind, by an abundant effusion of

[49] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 330.
[50] Hall, *Neglected Northampton Texts*, 101.
[51] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 322.
[52] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 366.
[53] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 367.
[54] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 400, 402.

> his Holy Spirit on all the churches, and the whole habitable earth, to revive true religion in all parts of Christendom, and to deliver all nations from their great and manifold spiritual calamities and miseries, and bless them with the unspeakable benefits of the kingdom of our glorious Redeemer, and fill the whole earth with his glory.[55]

Most significantly, these blessings for the church are focussed on the conceptuality of 'union,' which becomes a *Leitmotiv* within Edwards's ecclesiology. Unity is the 'peculiar beauty of the church of Christ."[56] Derivatively, the essentially personal and *invisible union,* which believers enjoy with God through the Spirit, is to be prized:

> 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*; in short, God's manifestations and communications of himself by his Holy Spirit.[57]

However, the union which Edwards particularly highlights in this treatise is a *visible union* amongst the regenerate, with participation in the Concert of Prayer as a valued expression and an example of the 'social embodiment' of revived piety.[58] Such explicit agreement in prayer is seen by Edwards as 'one of the most beautiful and happy things on earth, which indeed makes earth most like heaven'[59] and indeed brings heaven to earth.[60] In an extraordinary section in Part III (Objection II, Answer 2), Edwards uses cognates of the word *visible* twenty-six times to promote his argument that a universal movement of God's Spirit can be visibly manifested through the prayers of God's people offered *at the one and the same time*, though the gathering of God's people *in one place* is not possible.[61] Union amongst professing Christians is somehow inadequate without such concrete, visible expression:

> As 'tis the glory of the church of Christ, that she, in all her members, however dispersed, is thus *one*, one holy society, one city, one family, one body; so it is very desirable, that this union should be manifested, and become visible; and so, that her distant members should act as one, in those things that concern the common interest of the whole body, and in those duties and exercises wherein they have to do with their common Lord and Head, as seeking of him the common prosperity.[62]

This union is embedded deeply in the knowing capacity of those participating. The harmony perceived in such a gathering for united

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[55] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 321.
[56] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 365.
[57] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 315. Emphasis mine.
[58] Hall, *Neglected Northampton Texts,* 58. See also James Carse, *Jonathan Edwards and the Visibility of God* (New York: Scribner's, 1967), 149, where Carse argues that the church was, for Edwards, 'the most apparent good for the world.'
[59] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 365.
[60] Crawford, *Seasons of Grace,* 230.
[61] Edwards wrote to a Glasgow correspondent making this aspiration specific: 'though we dwell at a great distance, one from another here in this world, yet that we may meet together often at the *throne of grace here*, and have a joyful meeting and eternal co-habitation before the *throne of grace hereafter*.' Edwards, 'To the Reverend John MacLaurin,' *WJE* 16: 207. Emphasis mine.
[62] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 365.

prayer could inspire further attempts at beautiful union.[63] While sense perception is regularly presented positively by Edwards, here he nevertheless grounds this prayerful expression of unity in an ontologically realist perception of the mind:

> The encouragement or help that one that joins with an assembly in worshiping God, has in his worship, by others being united with him, is not merely by anything that he immediately perceives by sight, or any other of the external senses (for union in worship is not a thing objected to the external senses), but by the notice or knowledge the mind has of that union, or the satisfaction the understanding has that others, at that time, have their minds engaged with him the same service.[64]

Later in the treatise, the practical significance of visibility becomes increasingly evident. Preparation for the coming of Christ in his kingdom (as distinct from his coming in his 'public ministry, in the days of his flesh'[65]) will be attended by 'the distinguishing between true religion and its false appearances, the detecting and exploding errors and corrupt principles, and the reforming the wicked lives of professors, which have been the chief stumbling blocks and obstacles that have hitherto hindered the progress of true religion.'[66] Though Edwards is arguing gently for *ecclesiolae in ecclesiam*, he works hard to defend his proposal against the claims of the Old Light conservatives that his own views of the revival are tending towards separatism. The Concert of Prayer fulfils the function of the *collegia pietatis* in other schemes for the revival of the church.[67] His defence against separatism is clear:

> All open engaging in extraordinary exercises of religion, not expressly enjoined by institution, is not Pharisaism, nor has ever been so reputed in the Christian church ... The ministers that make this proposal to us, are no separatists or schismatics, promoters of no public disorders, nor of any wildness or extravagance in matters of religion; but are quiet and peaceable members and ministers of the Church of Scotland, that have lamented the late divisions and breaches of that church.[68]

It is however true that Edwards's use of the word *visible* is somewhat of an innovation, and could lead to confusion. While Puritans before him made the distinction between the visible church (those who professed the creeds and participated in the sacraments, without scandalous living) and the invisible church (the elect known only to God mingling with those who are not elect during regular worship), Edwards applies the language of visibility to those who make themselves distinct from those mere professors, who are not necessarily regenerate. True

[63] Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 115-116.
[64] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 374-375.
[65] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 426.
[66] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 426.
[67] Edwards furthermore makes an implicit case in the 'Humble Attempt' for the distinction between 'pious and civil society' which is based on a conception of the former involving a form of beauty and therefore of consent. See Hall, *Neglected Northampton Texts,* 317-318.
[68] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 377, 433.

members of Christ's body are described, in this appeal at least, as *visible*, not *invisible*. With renewed confidence in the work of God within history, renewed emphasis on regeneration and 'vital Christianity and the power of godliness,'[69] and consequently the role of members of the church to be the means through which Christ's Kingdom is seen as glorious in the world, it is no wonder that Edwards's chief goal in writing the 'Humble Attempt' is to promote the visible unity of the true church of God:

> There is a repeated use of the language of glory, and a repeated stress on not just on [sic] unity, but on its visibility. Edwards's great vision of these concerts of prayer is that the Church will be united and be seen to be united, and that is what God will use in part to answer the prayers of the Church, as others see this glorious unity and are drawn to God as a result ... Given the radical difference that, according to Edwards, conversion makes to both knowledge and desires there is thus a need to seek to keep the church pure, however difficult this will inevitably prove in practice ... Thus, unity, in the rich sense of communal consent, is essential to the very being of the Church. Equally, if God is to be glorified by this unity, it must be seen, and so the Church's necessary unity must be visible unity.[70]

This combination flags a new stage in ecclesiology. While the sixteenth century reformers built their doctrine of church, somewhat polemically, on the twin foundations of the faithful preaching of the Word and due administration of the sacraments, Edwards moves beyond this most clerical definition by presenting the fruits of regeneration expressed in visible unity as a necessary mark of the true church as well.[71] In proposing a Concert of Prayer, in negotiation with other ministers, he is of course still making the minister's authority central to the revival of the church:

> Private Christians may have many advantages and opportunities for this [joining in united prayer]; but especially ministers, inasmuch as they not only are by office overseers of whole congregations of God's people, and their guides in matters of religion, but ordinarily have a far more extensive acquaintance and influence abroad, than private Christians in common have.[72]

At another level, however, he is levelling the ground on which both clergy and laity together stand, and in McDermott's estimation applied the Great Commission in new ways, with high regard for praying and 'only marginal place to preaching as the stimulus which prompts outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon the earth.'[73] A common meeting, outside of the time assigned for regular prayer, preaching and sacraments, tends to the equality of those participating:

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[69] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 326.
[70] Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory*, 193-194.
[71] Calvin advises against presuming to be able to distinguish between the visible and the invisible church. See Calvin, *Institutes,* IV/1/ii, or IV/1/vii.
[72] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 435.
[73] Gerald R. McDermott, 'Missions and Native Americans,' in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. H. Lee; Princeton: University Press, 2005), 259.

> 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 ... and in a particular manner, would it naturally tend to engage ministers (the business of whose lives it is, to seek the welfare of the church of Christ, and the advancement of his kingdom) to greater diligence and earnestness in their work: and it would have a tendency to the spiritual profit and advantage of each particular person. For persons to be thus engaged in extraordinarily praying for the reviving and flourishing of religion in the world, will naturally lead each one to reflect on himself, and consider how religion flourishes in his own heart, and how far his example contributes to the thing that he is praying for.[74]

A more organic model of church is on view. An apparently administrative appeal to participate in a prayer meeting has provided a window into Edwards's openness to innovate, his international credentials, his millennial expectations, and his break with more traditional Puritan categories of ecclesiology. For Edwards, the church of God ought increasingly to demonstrate visibly its universal reach, along with purity of lives and unity of faith, characteristics which reflect the being of God himself. The traditional marks of the church in the Apostles' Creed as catholic and holy are given new experiential loading. God uses concrete means to achieve his work in the world, and validates those means visibly through the work of his Spirit. The piety encouraged in 'An Humble Attempt' begins to redefine the purity and unity of the church. Crawford summarises:

> Just as salvation comes to individual souls through the means administered by the church, so too the redemption of the world comes through the community of the saved.[75]

[74] Edwards, 'Humble Attempt,' *WJE* 5: 366.
[75] Crawford, *Seasons of Grace,* 231.

4.2 THE CHURCH'S MISSIOLOGICAL CHALLENGE AND *THE LIFE OF BRAINERD*

My soul was ardent in prayer, was enabled to wrestle ardently for myself, for Christian friends, and for the church of God. (*WJE* 9: 226)

The Life of Brainerd (1749) is an edited compilation by Edwards of the diary and journal of the eighteenth century missionary to the North American Indians, David Brainerd (1718 -1747). It is a series of highly introspective, often depressing, yet always provocative entries by a man orphaned in his youth, suffering both from the physical effects of tuberculosis as well as the misguided remedies of eighteenth century medicine,[1] but who nevertheless perseveres in his task of bringing the Gospel to indigenous peoples, and sees some eighty converted. Brainerd's own youthful earnestness (he died at the age of 29), and the belief that a revival of religion amongst the indigenous peoples would accelerate the coming of the millennium and the return of Christ, motivated his mission.[2] He almost accidentally pioneered a new way of ministering by living 'on terms set by the life of a society other than one's own,' which we would know as cross-cultural mission.[3]

Starting with Brainerd's ambiguous place in the Christendom model of ministry and his experiences *in extremis*, it is my contention in this chapter, that *The Life of Brainerd* presents not only *Brainerd's* private reflections on his own cross-cultural endeavours but also, through polemical drafting, provides *Edwards's* own commentary on the inadequacies of the Christendom model of ecclesial life, and strategies for repristinating the relationship between the church and its social setting.[4] The liminal position of New England society brings into clear relief the

[1] An example of such a misguided remedy was the advice that riding horseback over uneven ground could cure consumption by acting as an expectorant for coughing up blood!
[2] Norman Pettitt, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *The Life of Brainerd* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 7. Edited by Norman Pettitt; ed. N. Pettitt; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 1-2.
[3] 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* (ed. D. W. Kling, Douglas A. Sweeney; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 256.
[4] As examples of his editing, Edwards has left out altogether some of Brainerd's most private thoughts, and sifted Brainerd's entries through his own theological grid. Edwards added commentary to explain events, he changed particular words, and book-ended the material first with his own 'Author's Preface,' then with 'Some Further Remains of the Rev. Mr. David Brainerd,' 'An Appendix containing some Reflections and Observations on the Preceding Memoirs of Mr. Brainerd,' and 'A Sermon Preached on the Day of the Funeral of the Rev. Mr. David Brainerd.' The Yale edition then includes some correspondence related to Brainerd's ministry: Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of Brainerd* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 7. Edited by Norman Pettitt; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985). The interplay between Brainerd's example and Edwards's commentary is in evidence on the title page when we contrast the heading 'Account of the Life' in *large* print with the explanation in *smaller* print 'Chiefly taken from his [Brainerd's] own Diary and other private writings, written for his own use.' This work is distinctly Edwardsean, though at first it was Brainerd and not Edwards who was regarded as the most important contributor to its content. For a reproduction of the title page, see Edwards, *WJE* 7: vii.

changing fortunes of the Puritan project at the perimeter of the British dominions, and raises questions concerning the adequacy of territorial assumptions in ministry.[5] New impulses for understanding the church and its mission were generated not at the centre of Empire, but at its periphery, through cohabitation of a land with non-Christian peoples. *The Life of Brainerd* opens doors for understanding the life and ministry of the church in mid-eighteenth century New England, and gives recognition to Edwards's concern for new forms to defend received faith.

The Limits of Territorial Christianity and Brainerd's Vocation

David Brainerd aspired to a settled pastoral ministry, the model for which was an accepted feature of New England life: one man, one church, one geographically defined ministry. The shape of such a pastoral charge was integral to the bigger conceptuality of Christendom, which 'consisted of contiguous territory ruled according to the law of Christ by Christian princes subject to the King of kings, with no public place for idolatry, or blasphemy, or heresy.'[6] The Roman Catholic world had exemplified such a crusading, or Christendom, model of extra-European Christian expansion in the sixteenth century,[7] which through the Jesuit order and the maritime experience of Portugal in particular had successfully prosecuted a missiological agenda; for example, Francis Xavier's endeavours in the East Indies, Japan and China.[8] Imperial expansion was an apt compatriot with territorial Christianity.

In New England, the theocratic ideal was a variation on this Christendom theme, although for the first time in a millennium, Christians were living as neighbours with unbelievers, not having to cross oceans to minister amongst them. The earlier established 'crusading' model of engagement with non-European peoples gradually gave way to a more missionary model of interaction and reciprocity.[9] With an attractional model of ministry as essential to the founding rhetoric of the

[5] See Andrew F. Walls, 'The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening in Its European Context,' in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (ed. B. Stanley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Carpenter, 'New England Puritans,' 520-521; and Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening,* 78, who builds the case for resistance to imperial assimilation in Silesia or Moravia as factors contributing to revivals there. Suggestively, Sweeney sees in the early eighteenth century a transgression of 'the ethnic, geographical, and confessional zoning system that had long divided the citizens of Western Christendom – for the sake of promoting revival and conversion cooperatively.' See Douglas A. Sweeney, 'Evangelical Tradition in America,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. J. Stein; Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 217.
[6] Walls, 'Missions and Historical Memory,' 248.
[7] Walls, 'Missions and Historical Memory,' 249.
[8] Walls, 'The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening,' 27.
[9] John B. Carpenter, 'Puritan Missions as Globalization,' *Fides et Historia* 31/2 (1999): 103-123, especially 107.

'city on a hill,' the strategy to win American Indians to the cause of Christ was unlike the received imperial model, which assumed military conquest. Though not mandated in the New England vision of the Christian society, nevertheless skirmishes and battles with the indigenous tribes and clans of the north-east did regretfully eventuate: the King Philip's War (1675 -76) between the settlers and the Indians led by the Wampanoag chief Metacom, also known as Philip, made for all practical purposes the evangelistic mission of the Massachusetts colonists impossible.

Brainerd's early vocation was however interrupted by his expulsion from Yale in 1741-42 due to attendance at a revival meeting and to the private indiscretion of comparing a graceless chair with a graceless tutor. The College was determined to make an example of his enthusiasm, and to stop in its tracks revivalist fervour. The College's attitude in turn fuelled revivalist resentment towards the clerical establishment, for which it stood, and towards its understanding of the ministerial role.[10] Brainerd re-routed his vocation and became a preacher to Indians of Kaunaumeek, New York, Crossweeksung, New Jersey, and Susquehanna, Pennsylvania. Without the imprimatur of the established church hierarchy, he was strengthened in his ministry aspiration by the model of John Eliot ('Apostle to the Indians'), who in the seventeenth century had established fourteen 'Praying Towns' to provide protection, catechism and economic security for the native American population.[11]

Territorial Christianity functions as the key to grasp the significance to ecclesiology of Brainerd's ministry amongst the indigenous population. Competing spheres of Christian influence brought different experiences to the Indians contacted or converted by Europeans. It was not just that the Indians had to decide for the folk religion of the powwow or the Christian Gospel; they also had to decide between the rival claimants to Christian hegemony – the French Roman Catholic missionaries, traders and soldiers west of the Appalachians navigating south on the Mississippi, and the European Protestant (including English and Puritan) colonisers, landholders and educators along the Atlantic coastal plain.[12] Not surprisingly, these encounters generated moral

[10] Joseph Conforti, 'Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work: *The Life of David Brainerd* and Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Culture,' *Church History* 54/2 (1985): 188-201, especially 188.
[11] Richard W. Cogley, 'John Eliot's Puritan Ministry,' *Fides et Historia* 31/1 (1999): 1-18.
[12] These Indian contacts were often located in the dense and uninviting forests, mountains and foothills of the Appalachian chain, forming the border between English and French spheres of

dilemmas: entrepreneurs were encouraged to speak the Gospel as they travelled to find new markets or to source furs, food and labour, presenting a conflict of interests both to those offering and those receiving their ministrations. Bringing 'civilisation to the natives' might offer new economic and educational opportunities, but more often could destroy traditional cultures and languages, disperse tribes from their ancestral lands, and introduce disease, vice and anomie into village life. Brainerd ministered amongst Indians who had already been impacted by colonial pressures.

However, there was more to the attempts to bring the Gospel to the indigenous peoples of America than imperial motivation. Theological factors shaped the encounter as well. When the Puritans made efforts to preach the problem of human sinfulness and its solution in redemption only through the name of Christ, they were treating Indians with dignity and equality. Not to preach sin and salvation in this way would have been to deny that Indians were of the same stuff as the remainder of the human race.[13] The conversion of Indians demonstrated God's acceptance of them and the propriety of the revivals themselves.[14] Though there was the belief amongst some Christians that North American Indians had been trapped by the Devil in a continent as yet unreached by the Gospel, this did not obviate their need as men and women made in the image of God to hear Christian proclamation on the same basis and terms as the English themselves had heard it when still living in pagan darkness.[15] Puritan assumptions concerning the dignity of the native population were often at odds with those of political ideologies.

Alongside preaching, Puritans also expected that the Indians be treated as equals by including them under the laws of the land and its economic system, though not at the expense of their language and survival. In the minds of the English, encouraging the Indians to pursue a vocation would be a way to help them avoid mischief and to inculcate discipline for the sake of sanctification.[16] Brainerd's model of living amongst the Indians but not expecting the Indians to settle in the midst

influence, which between 1756 and 1763 would explode into colonial fighting known as the Seven Years' War (to the Europeans) or the French and Indian Wars (to the Americans). From a European perspective, winning the Indians was strategic militarily, as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* makes so clear.

[13] Rachel Wheeler, "'Friends to Your Souls": Jonathan Edwards' Indian Pastorate and the Doctrine of Original Sin,' *Church History* 72/4 (2003): 736-765, especially 759, where reference is made to the doctrine of original sin as guarantor of spiritual equality.

[14] Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 272.

[15] Carpenter, 'New England Puritans,' 521.

[16] Carpenter, 'New England Puritans,' 524.

of Europeans attests his desire to affirm a distinct method of Christian outreach. Encouraging a township to grow around his own cottage equated with the belief that to receive civilisation in the European cities was no necessary preparation for Christian conversion:

> December 31 [1746]. Spent some hours this day in visiting my people from house to house, and conversing with them about their spiritual concerns; endeavouring to press upon Christless souls the necessity of a renovation of the heart: And scarce left a house without leaving some or other of its inhabitants in tears, appearing solicitously engaged to obtain an interest in Christ. The Indians are now gathered together from all quarters to this place, and have built them little cottages, so that more than twenty families live within a quarter of a mile of me. A very convenient situation in regard both of public and private instruction.[17]

This was not evangelism by absorption into white culture, but separation from both traditional and European forms for the sake of spiritual independence. The Christendom model was inadequate, in as far as it would use *coercion* to deny Indians any ongoing cultural or linguistic distinctives and expect clear allegiance to one European system or another. Brainerd rather used *persuasion*, expressed through an interpreter named Moses Tinda, to pursue the cause of Christ in his part-sedentary, part-itinerating ministry. Brainerd's ministry at the edge of the known world was reshaping pastoral vocation.

Brainerd's remunerative network was also innovative. Structures which had been created to serve different social settings were redefined, and their modus operandi reconfigured. For example, organisations like the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (organised in 1701 and chartered by Queen Anne in 1709) or the Society in London for Propagating the Gospel in New England and Parts, which were originally incorporated to support a traditional model of parochial ministry, were now raising money for Brainerd's work outside of the parochial structure. His contractual association with these societies in the broader church creates a trans-Atlantic layer of responsibility, yet his distance from accountability highlights to all intents and purposes his individual autonomy. His outreach amongst the Indians of the Six Nations was neither territorially constrained nor clerically defined, but internationally inspired and underwritten. *The Life of Brainerd* was even promptly translated into German, and was published first by Fresenius and then by Steinmetz as tokens of its appeal beyond British borders.[18]

[17] Edwards, *WJE* 7: 350-351.
[18] Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 275.

His personal support network is another striking feature of Brainerd's diary. The number of friends and ministerial colleagues with whom he remains in contact, or with whom he stays and seeks the opportunity of recuperation in his many sicknesses is prodigious. He frequently returns to New York, Long Island, or Boston to consult with his sponsors, to seek aid, and to refresh his ailing body and spirit. Indeed, Pettitt, in his introduction to the Yale edition of *Brainerd*, enumerates these figures under the headings 'Family,' 'Evangelists,' 'Adversaries,' 'Friends,' 'Associates,' and 'Confidants.'[19] It is a dizzying constellation. It is not just that Brainerd seeks their company, but also covets their prayers, both while he is with them and when he is away. Edwards's 'Humble Attempt,' published a year earlier, had described the links between prayer, revival and mission which Brainerd now exemplifies as an appropriate preparation and support of missionaries in the field. New means for new opportunities were accepted.[20] Edwards sees these convergences as something worthy of emulation, and broadens the purpose of the church to include missionary expectation:

> As there is much in Mr. Brainerd's life to encourage Christians to seek the advancement of Christ's kingdom in general; so there is, in particular, to pray for the conversion of the Indians *on this continent*, and to *exert themselves in the use of proper means* for its accomplishment ... I think we have reason to hope that the wonderful things which God wrought among them by him are but a forerunner of something yet much more glorious and extensive of that kind; and thus may justly be an encouragement to well-disposed charitable persons to "honour the Lord with their substance" [Prov. 3:9] by *contributing as they are able*, to promote the spreading of the Gospel among them; and this also may incite and encourage gentlemen who are incorporated and entrusted with the care and disposal of those liberal benefactions which have already been made by pious persons to that end; and likewise the missionaries themselves that are or may be employed; and it may be of direction unto both as to the *proper qualifications* of missionaries and the *proper measure* to be taken in order to their success.[21]

Such renewal in structures was decidedly however not an ends in itself, but a means to the arrival of the millennial kingdom. The conversion of the Indians was the most proximate step towards the defeat of the Antichrist, and all that held back the coming of the kingdom. Christendom was not just inadequate to modern conditions, it also inadequately subserved a more cosmic ideal. Marsden situates their ministry eschatologically:

> Brainerd's self-sacrificing missionary zeal and Edwards's wider activism must be understood in the context of their earthly optimism. Edwards's theology was not simply philosophical reflections growing out of his contemplations of God

[19] Pettitt, 'Editor's Introduction,' 32-71.
[20] Hindmarsh suggests that just as roads enabled mission in the early church, and the printing press multiplied the effects of the Reformation, so the Awakenings appropriated new methods, focused in individual agency. Bruce Hindmarsh, 'Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron? A Historical Perspective,' in *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?* (ed. J. G. Stackhouse, Jr.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 29.
[21] Edwards, *WJE* 7: 533. Emphasis mine.

> and a heavenly eternity. Rather, since it was always refracted through Scripture, it was grounded in a breathtaking historical perspective that provided incentive for unflagging evangelical action ... In reckoning the progress towards Christ's kingdom, Edwards did not draw any sharp line between the spiritual and the political. The work of David Brainerd, the Concert of Prayer, and the war with the French and their Indian allies were all of one piece. The spread of the Gospel was the pre-eminent goal, but he never doubted that one precondition was Protestant military success against "papal" regimes.[22]

Even political structures needed to be addressed in order to prosper the coming Kingdom.

However, despite the fact that the colonisation of New England had at least in part been driven by the missiological desire to evangelise the indigenous population, and to provide a model to Old England of a Christian commonwealth, early attempts at mission amongst the North American Indians had not been spectacularly successful. While John Eliot may have seen greater fruit for his labours than many of his contemporaries labouring amongst Europeans, his was the exception that proved the rule. As Carpenter points out:

> Like most Protestants, the Puritans had not developed the church structures to carry out mission ... Though they had the highest percentage of clergy to populace in the European world, they were handicapped by their assumption that a true minister must have a church ... It is easy to look back and assume that Protestants should have intuitively known how to organize missions structures and go about the work; but in reality, the lessons we take for granted today had to be hard won.[23]

A new stage in missions was however dawning. The use of various and innovative *means* to reach the heathen was later to be emphasised by William Carey in his tract of 1792, though such a strategy had previously been pioneered, for example, in the exertions of the German Pietists in the Tranquebar mission in South India and by Brainerd himself. He exemplifies the value of creative modelling and the need for renewal of church life in a distinct and emerging New World ecclesiological context.

The Reversion to Totalising Christianity and Brainerd's Piety

The nominalism of territorial Christianity was something which the Puritans could not abide, and was of course part of the reason for early migrations to New England to set up a new 'model of charity' in the words of Winthrop. While their assumptions did not focus on the need to crusade and conquer, they were nevertheless people of their own time, who perpetuated the Christendom model of church-state co-dependency to create a godly commonwealth ordered through covenantal gearing.

[22] Marsden, *A Life,* 334, 338. The contribution of the Concert of Prayer to ecclesiology was discussed in the last chapter.
[23] Carpenter, 'New England Puritans,' 520-521.

They were, as Walls asserts, 'totalitarian Christians, those for whom the religious imperatives overcame the economic and political.'[24] Each part of social life was connected to every other part, even when the church in the middle of community experience was conceived congregationally and not with presbyteral or episcopal coordination. Carpenter makes the point:

> Mission for the Puritans required far more than a few missionaries; it demanded the transplantation of a whole social system. For Puritans, since missions was [sic] the extension of God's rule ... it was more than church planting and certainly far more than individual conversions. They envisioned, since they assumed all people were made in the image of God, a united civil-ecclesial community. Of course, their holistic approach to mission opens up the Puritans to criticism for using religion for political ends.[25]

Brainerd's more traditional social assumptions, and his acceptance of Reformed patterns, can be seen where he catechises his Indian converts. He has high standards and great hopes for the Indians, their Christian obedience and sacramental observance. As quoted in his *Journal*, from which Edwards excerpts material regarded as significant to include in the *Life*, Brainerd writes:

> Saturday, August 24 [1745] ... Spent the forenoon in discoursing to some of the Indians, in order to their receiving the ordinance of baptism. When I had opened the nature of the ordinance, the obligations attending it, the duty of devoting ourselves to God in it, and the privilege of being in covenant with him, sundry of them seemed to be filled with love to God, and delighted with the thoughts of giving up themselves to him in that solemn and public manner, melted and refreshed with the hopes of enjoying the blessed Redeemer.[26]
> April 7 [1746]. Discoursed to my people at evening from 1 Cor. 11:23-26. And endeavoured to open to them the institution, nature, and ends of the Lord's Supper, as well as the qualifications and preparations necessary to the right participation of that ordinance. Sundry persons appeared much affected with the love of Christ manifested in his making this provision for the comfort of his people, at a season when himself was just entering upon his sharpest afflictions.[27]

Brainerd's expectation of Indian converts was not unlike what he would have desired for Anglo-American believers generally.[28] As Wall summarises:

> Not surprisingly, the early Protestant movement, which was principally evangelical in character, initially brought to the non-Western world the same message and the same methods that it brought to the nominally Christian world which produced evangelical radicalism. And it expected the responses (and evangelicals had plenty of experience within Christendom of hostile or indifferent response) to be along the same lines.[29]

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[24] Walls, 'Missions and Historical Memory,' 249.
[25] Carpenter, 'Puritan Missions as Globalization,' 110.
[26] Edwards, *WJE* 7: 317.
[27] Edwards, *WJE* 7: 381.
[28] It is easy to draw attention to the blind-spots of the Puritans in their attitudes to *the Indians*, but perhaps less easy to acknowledge our own prejudices towards *the Puritans*: 'To assume that their [seventeenth century Puritans'] behavior toward Native Americans was simply motivated by hypocrisy, cynicism, and greed is to fail to take on board the historical and cultural context, the structure of belief, which they inhabited – in other words, to be as blinkered in relation to them as they in turn were in relation to the Native Americans.' See Richard Francis, *Judge Sewall's Apology: The Salem Witch Trials and the Forming of an American Conscience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), 16-17.
[29] Walls, 'Missions and Historical Memory,' 258.

It is important to understand however that the essential narrative arc of *Brainerd* is driven not by external events but by internal reactions to the conditions of life and mission which he faces. This work presents a *model of piety*, not so much a *programme of ecclesiastical reform* or a *platform for church growth*. The disinterested benevolence which became the hallmark of virtue for Christians engaged in mission in the nineteenth century can at times appear here like self-absorbed malevolence with *introspection* rather than *inculturation* the theme. The progress of his own godly character becomes for Brainerd an important source of assurance of salvation. Edwards alerts us in his 'Appendix' to the way that Brainerd prized personal piety above ecstatic or revivalist experiences:

> I find no one instance of a strong impression on his imagination through his whole life: no instance of a strongly impressed idea of any external glory or brightness, of any bodily form or shape, any beautiful majestic countenance: no imaginary sight of Christ hanging on the cross with blood streaming from his wounds; or seated in heaven on a bright throne with angels and saints bowing before him; or with a countenance smiling on him; or arms open to embrace him ... But the way he was satisfied of his own good estate, even to the entire abolishing of fear, was by feeling within himself the lively actings of a holy temper and heavenly disposition, the vigorous exercises of that divine love which casts out fear: This was the way he had full satisfaction soon after his conversion ... And we find no other way of satisfaction through his whole life afterward.[30]

In setting up Brainerd as the prototype of regenerate piety in this way, Edwards wants to challenge nominal faith and a myopic vision of the Kingdom of Christ in its European guise, and not in the first instance to create a hero of someone who incidentally labours amongst Indians. Edwards presents Brainerd as a man of great perseverance despite incapacity, prayer despite doubt, self-sacrifice despite meagre resources. Brainerd embodied a generic evangelical piety.[31] Such character is the necessary ingredient to all renewal and reform amongst the clergy and within the church:

> The foregoing account of Mr. Brainerd's life may afford matter of conviction that there is indeed such a thing as true experimental religion, arising from immediate divine influences ... Is there not much in the preceding memoirs of Mr. Brainerd to teach, and to excite to duty, us who are called to the work of the ministry, and all that are candidates for that great work?[32]

Mission was regarded as the essential outworking of revived character and religious affections, which was Edwards's polemical intention in publishing these reflections:

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[30] Edwards, *WJE* 7: 503-504. Distance from 'blood and wounds' spirituality creates a contrast with the Moravians, especially Zinzendorf, for whom this particularly vivid imagery served regenerative ends. Their christomonistic mysticism demonstrated an aversion to doctrinal precisionism, Enlightenment categories, and engagement with structural reform. Edwards wants to maintain Brainerd's distance from this type of spirituality. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening,* 116-159.

[31] Sweeney, 'Evangelical Traditions,' 223.

[32] Edwards, *WJE* 7: 520, 530.

> For Edwards, who made that [Brainerd's] life known to the world, it was primarily a demonstration of the true character, authentic experience, and proper doctrine of a Christian minister ... For Wesley ... it [the expurgated version of *The Life*] was valuable not because it would call people to the mission field, but because it would teach them devotion and acceptance of harsh conditions in their service in England. For Wesley and Edwards alike, what we would call the cross-cultural aspect of Brainerd's work was coincidental.[33]

Brainerd is a potent sign that the revivals are neither moralistic, nor enthusiastic, but doctrinal and affective. His zeal 'ran off neither into pharisaism on the one hand nor antinomianism on the other.'[34] Such a model of piety has not merely an impact on those who have not heard the Gospel, but serves to validate a theological agenda embedded in Western theological debates, and offers a plausibility structure for Edwards's own conception of religious affections:

> His [Brainerd's] conversion was plainly founded in a clear, strong conviction, and undoubting persuasion, of the truth of those things appertaining to these doctrines which Arminians most object against, and which his own mind had contended most about ... And if his conversion was any real conversion, or anything besides a mere whim, and if the religion of his life was anything else but a series of freaks of a whimsical mind, then this one grand principle, on which depends the whole difference between Calvinists and Arminians, is undeniable, viz., that the grace or virtue of truly good men not only differs from the virtue of others in degree, but even in nature and kind.[35]

It is a commonplace to see the theological distinctive of the eighteenth century revivals in their commitment to regeneration and the experience of sanctification. While a divine forensic declaration has no necessary visible outcome, the organic nature of the new birth must surely be witnessed through human senses. Indeed, *Brainerd* becomes the concrete and visible expression of the very principles which *Religious Affections* teaches more abstractly.[36] Edwards's final prayer in the 'Appendix' makes not just of Brainerd's circumstances, but of his individual example as well, a means to inspire future mission and revival:

> The Lord grant also that the foregoing account of Mr. Brainerd's life and death may be for the great spiritual benefit of all that shall read it, and prove a happy means of promoting the revival of true religion in these parts of the world. Amen.[37]

This theological agenda itself spawned a social vision, for Brainerd's piety confirmed orthodoxy and order, with a dynamic centre. The key to the renewal of the church, both doctrinally and structurally, and the extension of God's rule, in America as elsewhere, was the conversionist piety of its leadership. Conservative Calvinism may have,

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[33] Walls, 'Missions and Historical Memory,' 256.
[34] Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 144.
[35] Jonathan Edwards, 'An Appendix Containing some Reflections and Observations on the Preceding Memoirs of Mr Brainerd,' in *The Life of David Brainerd* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 7; ed. N. Pettitt; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 522-523.
[36] Marsden, *A Life,* 331.
[37] Edwards, *WJE* 7: 541.

inadvertently, discouraged exertion in the conversion of unbelievers or the awakening of the nominal, but Edwards wants to defend theological anti-Arminianism, while at the same time espousing evangelistic enterprise. For him, the sovereignty of God is the basis for mission, not its enemy.[38] God would achieve his own ends with the aid of new material means,[39] but those ends did not lead to the disembowelment of Christianised society, rather the radical recentering of such society in the personal piety of its representatives. This church did not yet prosper 'on others' terms,' but the fracture of Puritan social consensus in the revivals was nevertheless a harbinger of a world in which the church in New England would no longer occupy a privileged position.

The juxtaposition of missionary endeavours and autobiographical expression in the person and writings of Brainerd, as they are transmitted to us through the hand of Edwards, makes the point clear. We see from outside the paradigm more distinctly than from within that Edwards's agenda is to repristinate the local church through personal spiritual renewal, in order to shape the world for Christ. The territorially defined church is relativised without being marginalised. The church grows comfortable with a missionary edge, though missiological considerations do not yet drive ecclesiology. The ministry of David Brainerd provides an opportunity for us to approach missiology as a prism through which eighteenth century ecclesiology can be reconstructed.

[38] Carpenter, 'New England Puritans,' 527. The distinction between natural and moral ability, which empowers for mission, is a theme in Edwards's later writing. See Edwards, *WJE* 1: 156-159.
[39] Carpenter, 'Puritan Missions as Globalization,' 119.

4.3 THE CHURCH'S VISIBLE UNION IN *AN HUMBLE INQUIRY*

The apostles, when speaking of ... visible Christians, as a society ... speak of it as visibly (ie in profession and reputation) a society of gracious persons. (*WJE* 12: 247)

At the end of the 1740s, Edwards undertook a massive review of the nature of the Lord's Supper as it was experienced and practised in his congregation in Northampton. He wanted to expose assumptions concerning this ordinance tenaciously held by Solomon Stoddard and his supporters, both in Northampton and in surrounding towns in western Massachusetts, who had essentially practised a policy of open communion, disbarring from the sacrament only those who were notorious sinners. Edwards prompted a reconsideration of deeper contentions concerning the relationship between corporate and personal covenants, which in turn revisited the trajectory of New England theology, both sacramental and otherwise, and brought to the surface simmering pastoral tensions between him and his people.[1] In some minds in Northampton, being a citizen of a nation covenanted to God required participation in the Lord's Supper, irrespective of the presence of heightened religious sensibilities, such were the interlocking realities of the covenants.

The discourse which provoked the debate is '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.'[2] Here Edwards wants to retrieve rules concerning admission to the sacrament from the Scriptures, rather than from the Congregational Way,[3] and to revise grandfather Stoddard's practice, by admitting to full communion only those who are 'in profession, and in the eye of the church's Christian judgment, godly or gracious persons.'[4] Edwards would thereby create a distinction between groups within the local church, some confessedly in full communion, and others not.[5] This is a high stakes manoeuvre, which ultimately resulted in his dismissal from the church after twenty-three years service. The reasons why this

[1] See Ava Chamberlain, '"We have Procured on Rattlesnake": Jonathan Edwards and American Social History' (paper presented at the American Society of Church History Conference, Seattle, Washington, January 2005), 11, where Chamberlain outlines the growing importance of social history in understanding events like Edwards's dismissal.
[2] Hereafter referred to in the text as the 'Humble Inquiry.' The first part of the discourse is a summary of the position being argued. The second part comprises eleven sub-points, elaborating on the thesis. The third part answers objections being raised against his views.
[3] Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12: 68.
[4] Jonathan Edwards, *Ecclesiastical Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 12. Edited by David D. Hall; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 174.
[5] Edwards acknowledges the widespread practice of admitting 'to baptism on lower terms than to the Lord's Supper,' although he confesses that regarding change to the criteria for baptism, 'there is scarce any hope of it.' See Edwards, 'To Thomas Foxcroft,' *WJE* 16: 283.

particular dispute had such dire outcomes has been a persistent question in colonial American history, with an extraordinary variety of explanations.

It is of course true that Edwards handled a number of presenting pastoral issues in maladroit fashion in the years immediately preceding the dismissal. The *intrusive* Edwards has been described, who in 1744 mishandled the 'Bad Book Affair.' He not only named publicly those youths in the church who consulted a chap-book's midwifery diagrams (an eighteenth century version of seeking out pornography) and used the information gained to deride young women, but he also names without any qualification those who were *witnesses* but not *participants* in the episode. This, not surprisingly, infuriated families of good reputation in the town.[6] Ava Chamberlain has outlined these arguments to provide background to Edwards's surprising dismissal, presenting someone not entirely comfortable with recently renegotiated boundaries of sexual propriety.[7]

Simmering resentment surfaced when Edwards finally presented to the eldership of Northampton his desire to revisit communion qualifications, but only after salary negotiations had been finalised and subsequent to the death on June 19, 1748, of Colonel John Stoddard, an erstwhile supporter of Edwards but also fierce advocate of Solomon Stoddard's more inclusive policies on worthy participation in the Supper.[8] Clumsy responses by Edwards to actual incidents of sexual immorality were similarly incendiary: in 1749, after a council had been convened to hear the matter and despite Edwards's instruction, neither Lieutenant Elisha Hawley nor Thomas Wait would marry the women they had deflowered, respectively Martha Root and Jemima Miller. Edwards's authority was thereby challenged by some leading Northampton clans, the Hawleys and the Pomeroys, of whom a daughter was later to marry Lieutenant Hawley![9] Some measure of pastoral ineptitude made turbid the waters of pastoral relations in Northampton, and further confirmed for many (men in particular) Edwards's intrusive style.[10]

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[6] Sweeney, 'The Church,' 183-184.
[7] Ava Chamberlain, 'Edwards and Social Issues,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. J. Stein; Cambridge: University Press, 2007), especially 338.
[8] Strange, 'Visible Sainthood,' see especially 127, 131.
[9] Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, 316.
[10] The details of pastoral breakdown in the parish are examined in detail in Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor,* 147-170, or in Marsden, *A Life,* 341-374. Minkema lays great weight on the demographic factors contributing to poisoned pastoral relationships and consequently the

Edwards is furthermore occasionally portrayed as socially *hostile*, for it is argued he had a long-running vendetta with the Williams clan, a wealthy and influential New England family, for whom tightening communion requirements represented an attack on their liberal or Arminian principles. This approach was advanced by Sereno Edwards Dwight (Jonathan's great-grandson) in the nineteenth century and more recently by Perry Miller, David Hall and Edwards Davidson.[11] Another theory presents the *naïve* Edwards, a victim of growing capitalist and democratic forces, which Edwards was unprepared to face. Self-assured exponents of the free market would broach no ministerial impediments to their reckless greed.[12] Captain Ephraim Williams wrote scathingly of Edwards: 'I am sorry that a head so full of divinity should be so empty of politics.'[13] Ola Winslow popularised this theory in the 1940s. Coupled with this position were Edwards's ongoing grievances concerning 'settlement' or remuneration throughout the 1740s, which were frequently viewed by townsfolk as greedy and unrealistic, though such conflicts were not limited to Edwards and his relationship with the church in Northampton.[14]

Nor is the portrayal of the *frightened Edwards* adequate.[15] This interpretation supposes that Edwards, when backed into a corner, reverted to type and exercised an outmoded authoritarian leadership style better suited to the seventeenth century than the increasingly democratic structures of eighteenth century ministry. While it is true that Edwards was a keen observer of human religious psychology, and that he was also undoubtedly exasperated by the spiritual recalcitrance of members of his own congregation, and might justifiably be critiqued for dogged determination in an issue without consideration of long-term outcomes, he was not, most assuredly, merely reactionary. He was not without theological principles, nor was he unaware of the limitations of the New

dismissal: Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Old Age and Religion in the Writings and Life of Jonathan Edwards,' *Church History* 70/4 (2001): 674-704.
[11] Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' 84-85. A similar sentiment is expressed by Edward H. Davidson, *Jonathan Edwards: The Narrative of a Puritan Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 127.
[12] This model of interpretation is most famously expressed in the writings of Perry Miller; see Miller, *Jonathan Edwards,* 218.
[13] Wilson H. Kimnach, 'Preface to the Period,' in *Sermons and Discourses 1743-1758* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 25; ed. W. H. Kimnach; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 28, note 2.
[14] James W. Schmotter, 'Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth-century New England: The Social Context, 1700-1760,' *Journal of Social History* 9/2 (1975): 249-267, especially 256.
[15] For further espousal of this interpretation, see Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor,* 108-111, 183-188; R. David Rightmire, 'The Sacramental Theology of Jonathan Edwards in the Context of Controversy,' *Fides et Historia* 21/1 (1989): 50-60, especially 53; Scheick, *The Writings of Jonathan Edwards,* 50.

England Way as he had inherited it. The positive theological concerns of Edwards and his ownership of innovation during the revivals, as highlighted in this thesis, give us reason to pause before we accuse him of changing the criteria for taking communion out of merely reactionary motives.

This chapter has as its aim not so much to reconstruct the reasons for Edwards's dismissal which were multifarious, as to analyse the theological contours of his sacramental thought, paying particular attention to their ramifications for, or their being framed by, his broader ecclesiology.[16] His 'Humble Inquiry' is the centrepiece of this investigation, though reference will also be made here to the later 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' and his 'Narrative' of the controversy.[17] Even if his revised sacramental views had not led to his separation from the parish, they would nevertheless be instructive for understanding theological conditions on the ground in eighteenth century Massachusetts. Relations within the parish were deteriorating so quickly that Edwards might well have been dismissed by members of the congregation appealing to some other provocation, even if he had not changed his mind concerning qualifications for complete standing and full communion.[18] His ecclesiological beliefs are in sharpest relief in this controversy, and form a natural outlet to streams of ecclesiological thought previously adumbrated.

Suspicion of Separatism: Rejection of the Pure Church

Present from the beginning of the New England experiment was the dream of the pure church.[19] Though the settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony were not themselves committed to a disestablished church which would maintain its purity through separation from the coercion of civil society, the colony at Plymouth, having been planted ten years earlier in 1620, did espouse a covenant which renounced state support and

[16] Some of these factors are summarised in Marsden, *A Life,* 69-371.
[17] These texts can be found in Edwards, *WJE* 12.
[18] It appears that the actual content of his views was of little practical concern to his church. Indeed, Edwards makes repeated reference to the fact that his parishioners were not prepared to read his discourse 'Humble Inquiry,' and when he finally presented some weekday lectures on the contention at hand, few denizens of Northampton came, the lecture being at least half full of 'strangers,' or those from out of town, presently visiting Northampton for a meeting of the court. See Jonathan Edwards, 'Narrative of Communion Controversy,' in *Ecclesiastical Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 12; ed. D. D. Hall; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 598. McDermott sees the communion controversy as the 'formal' though not 'material' grounds for his dismissal: McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society,* 167.
[19] George M. Marsden, *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards* (Library of Religious Biography; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 36.

affirmed the power of the congregation to adjudicate in all matters of dispute. Such a desire for freedom from state control and the purity of the fellowship were coordinate beliefs, for freedom provided them with the capacity to choose pure fellowship and a pure ministry.[20] Significantly, ideological support for separatism came from the marginalia printed alongside the text of the Scriptures in the Geneva Bible, and used widely by Christians, and especially those dissenting, in Britain.[21] Other settlers in Massachusetts, more concerned to establish social order in a chaotic New World, brought with them the Authorised Version, without marginalia but with the imprimatur of the monarch and the assumption that their errand in this wilderness was to create a civilisation founded on scriptural blueprint, which would in time reform the polity of Britain, towards whom they had only temporarily turned their backs.

The majority church in Massachusetts, centred in Boston, was concerned for purity, but was not prepared to define the nature of the church in terms of its subjective holiness. It tended instead towards a Calvinist conception of the church's responsibility to provide for the community pastorally, rather than the Anabaptist position, which saw the church's life as a gift almost exclusively to the redeemed.[22] English Puritans had struggled in the course of the seventeenth century to hold together both conceptions of the church; the fragility of the synthesis led to imminent instability under New World conditions. The Antinomian Crisis of the late 1630s was an attempt from within the Boston establishment to create a pure church through appeal to spiritual sensation or subjective illumination as arbiter of membership. The crisis which ensued, treated elsewhere in this dissertation, left a permanent mark on the psyche of New World settlers, for whom the preservation of external order, under constant threat from nature, the indigenous population, wars between European powers and theological disputation, was a reflexive desire, and its achievement a mark of progress.

The Congregational Way, exemplified in the New World, held the settled *order* of the gathered church to be of first importance in the polity of New England churches. While historically it was the Roman Catholic Church which preached true faith as dependent on true order, and

[20] David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 39.
[21] Harry S. Stout, 'Word and Order in Colonial New England,' in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History* (eds. N. O. Hatch and M. A. Noll; New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 25-26.
[22] Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12: 21. See also Hall, *Neglected Northampton Texts,* 212.

Protestant denominations which had inverted the sequence, von Rohr regrets the development of something unusual amongst Congregationalists:

> [I]n the dissenting movement in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries a new Protestant pattern emerged. Church order again assumed a role of significance, even of centrality, as the commands of the Lord were understood to prescribe a particular form of ecclesiastical life and also of worship ... It is only within the order which the Lord has prescribed that can arise the faith and continued faithfulness requisite for salvation. There is no question but that for these separatists the forms of ecclesiastical organization and government were no mere *adiaphora*, but were *fundamenta* in relation to God's plans for men's temporal and eternal destiny.[23]

While the New England churches had to make adjustments and modifications to their Congregational Way, by defining it more precisely in the Cambridge Platform (1648),[24] by allowing for a more inclusive membership in the so-called Half-Way Covenant (1662), or by acknowledging the merits of associational councils, particularly of the clergy, in the Saybrook Platform (1708), order remained a vital principle to guarantee the propriety of salvation, even when it was not precisely separatism of the Plymouth variety being demanded.

Jonathan Edwards was adamant that his attempts to regulate access to the Lord's Supper, by expecting prospective communicants to offer a profession of their faith rather than a relation of spiritual experience,[25] was not motivated by a desire to create a pure, or separatistic, church, though this was the accusation levelled against him. He distances himself from such notions in the 'Author's Preface' to the 'Humble Inquiry,' when he avers:

> One thing among others that caused me to go about this business with so much backwardness, was the fear of a bad improvement some ill-minded people might be ready, at this day, to make of the doctrine here defended: particularly that wild enthusiastical sort of people, who have of late gone into unjustifiable separations, even renouncing the ministers and churches of the land in general, under pretense [sic] of setting up a pure church ... I have no better opinion of their notion of a pure church by means of a spirit of discerning, their censorious outcries against the standing ministers and churches in general, their lay ordinations, their lay preachings, and public exhortings, and administering sacraments ... 'tis not unlikely, that some will still exclaim against my principles, as being of the same pernicious tendency with those of the Separatists: to such I can only by a solemn protestation aver the sincerity of my aims.[26]

His requirement of a profession of faith did not assume irrefragable claims to assurance based on internal illumination, nor did it deny any contribution of ministerial means for affirmation.[27] Of the two

[23] von Rohr, '*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*,' see especially 107, 117.
[24] Such a process of clarification was part of the work of the Westminster Assembly as well.
[25] Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12: 61.
[26] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 170-171.
[27] Jamieson describes the conundrum faced by Edwards in the 1730s concerning the criteria adduced for passing judgement on the spiritual experiences claimed by revivalists: John F.

sample professions which Edwards includes in 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' the first makes reference to baptism and covenant and obedience to the commandments of God, while the second omits reference to baptism and covenant, but repeats the singular importance of complying with the commandments and serving God 'with my body and my spirit.'[28] Implicit in these professions is a denial of enthusiastic separatism which is generated by Antinomianism, disobedience and lawlessness, just as these professions also refute the necessity of immediate and intense feelings of assurance, given that each begins with the phrase 'I hope, I [do] truly find ...'[29] Though writing 'Misrepresentations Corrected' in 1752, long after the dispute was determined and he had been dismissed, he argued that at stake in his challenge to reform requirements for communion was not the *manner* of profession or the precise formulation of words, but instead the *matter* which was owned, namely gracious affections in the heart:

> The controversy was, *Whether there was any need of making a credible profession of godliness, in order to persons' being admitted to full communion; whether they must profess saving faith, or whether a profession of common faith were not sufficient; whether persons must be esteemed truly godly, and must be taken in under that notion, or whether if they appeared morally sincere, that were not sufficient?* ... It was wholly concerning the *matter* of profession, or the *thing* to be exhibited and made evident or visible; and not about the *manner* of professing, and the *degree* of evidence.[30]

At heart in the contentions concerning requirements for full communion is an understanding of the theological relationship between grace and nature, a fragile connection at best in separatist thinking. Edwards maintained that the secret workings of grace in the heart must have their outward and visible expression in lifestyle and community, that

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Jamieson, 'Jonathan Edwards's Change of Position on Stoddardeanism,' *Harvard Theological Review* 74/1 (1981): 79-99, especially 89.

[28] Such a profession of faith described generically the experience of grace in one's life, while the earlier expectation of a narrative of grace differed in as far as it presented an orderly account of the progress of grace leading to conversion. Edwards promotes neither formal doctrinal assent, nor the narrative of grace, as sufficient to permit complete membership: both potentially excused the believer from present engagement with God. See Strange, 'Visible Sainthood,' especially 109. The revised statement, a modest declaration when compared to the text of the 1742 covenant renewal (see Edwards, 'Letter to the Rev. Thomas Prince,' especially 550-554), can be found in Edwards, 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' *WJE* 12: 361.

[29] Edwards, 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' *WJE* 12: 361. See also Strange, 'Visible Sainthood,' 134-135, for further on Edwards's interactions with separatists on the nature of assurance. An example of separatist claims to certain knowledge of a saint's spiritual status is given through the words of Ebenezer Frothingham, a minister in Middletown, Connecticut, as cited in Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 9: 47. Edwards's refusal to countenance experience of stages of conversion as essential to the profession left him open to the accusation that he, like separatists, saw the appropriation of grace as sudden and disorderly, rather than as gradual and orderly, though the very case which Edwards makes for distinction between partial and complete standing within the church reimposes the majority position in New England that assumed the church's role in aiding spiritual assurance and godly growth. See further Kobrin, 'The Expansion of the Visible Church in New England,' 193-194. Furthermore, highlighting the sacraments in a definition of the church was unlikely to be held by a Separatist: E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1974), 64. Any early unintentional antinomianism in Edwards's thought was later corrected: Robert W. Caldwell, *Communion in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit as the Bond of Union in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Studies in Evangelical History and Thought; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 141.

[30] Edwards, 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' *WJE* 12: 355-356, 357. Italics belong to Edwards.

is, in the regular patterns of natural life. Edwards was suspicious of the pride generated by separatist certainties growing out of their claimed clarity of personal experience.[31] Separatists' rejection of the national covenant in order to highlight the purity of a voluntary church covenant was a denial of the responsibility 'even if only indirectly and incidentally, for the religious life of the larger part of the community.'[32] The separatist agenda was at odds with the hegemonic and long-practised Puritan and Christendom model. Purity was secured in the separatists' model at the expense of social stability, a position Edwards rejected.

Protest against Formalism: Critique of the National Church

Edwards's revised position on communion inadvertently appeared to connect him to Antinomians and Separatists, which he energetically repudiated. It was, however, not inadvertent that Edwards distanced himself from the practices of sacramental theology in Northampton, which he had inherited from Solomon Stoddard. Despite misgivings and the pain of public disagreement with Stoddard's legacy, Edwards protested his right to subject all church traditions to the scrutiny of Scripture through his preaching and writing.[33] In undertaking this 'Inquiry,' he not only critiqued local conditions, but also drew attention to larger national concerns, particularly the headway being made in New England theology and pulpits by Arminian moralism, which, underscored by popular religion, may well have secured stability in the commonwealth but more perniciously also weakened the distinctives of the local church. While a pure church may not be sociologically viable, a merely formal church could not be theologically plausible.

Provocative to his peers, Stoddard had abolished the necessity of a narrative of grace, opening participation in the Lord's Supper to all who were morally sincere, who gave assent to the doctrines of the church, and who were not notorious sinners. In Stoddard's estimation, the Lord's Supper functioned in a way commensurate with evangelistic preaching, namely to bring sinners to faith and to establish them in godliness.[34] It had a converting function. In his opinion, it was not possible to determine with any degree of certainty who were amongst the elect and

[31] Christopher Grasso, 'Misrepresentations Corrected: Jonathan Edwards and the Regulation of Religious Discourse,' in *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation* (ed. S. J. Stein; Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 26.
[32] Kobrin, 'The Expansion of the Visible Church in New England,' 190.
[33] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 167- 171.
[34] The precise year of Stoddard's innovation is not known: Strange, 'Visible Sainthood,' 114.

who were not.[35] His position drew animosity from the Mathers of Boston, amongst others, who frequently maligned Stoddard's motivations for introducing a new conception of membership. He was not merely acquiescing to the demands of the lax, who, under the provisions of the Half-Way Covenant, could own the covenant of baptism for themselves or their children without attesting the work of God in their heart. He was more importantly acknowledging the spiritual confusion of many would-be communicants, who, due to heightened scrupulosity, refused to take the Lord's Supper for fear of inviting judgment on themselves, should they prove not to be of the elect. Stoddard 'was indeed attempting to remove existing barriers to membership, but he was also criticizing the laxity, as well as the rigor, of prevailing New England practices.'[36] It was however easy to impute to him overriding concern not so much for the church's purity, as for the moral order of the community in which the church was located:

> For Stoddard, the sacraments attested the temporal prosperity of a national Church rather than merely the spiritual blessings of a select community of regenerate saints ... thus making it seem as if the sacrament sealed a social contract rather than a spiritual covenant.[37]

It was widely held that to maintain the integrity of a community established through covenantal obligations based in the churches, those selfsame churches had to accept more adherents into their midst, even if their own distinctives were compromised.[38]

Both Stoddard and Edwards preached for conversions, and neither man demurred against the priority of grace in the process of salvation.[39] It was however a lingering fear for Edwards that to take a position of extreme inclusivism on the sacraments was to aid and abet even unwittingly the growth of Arminian sentiment amongst the churches.[40] After his dismissal and removal to Stockbridge, Edwards wrote to the church in Northampton a letter to be appended to the tract 'Misrepresentations Corrected.' In it, he reminded his former parishioners (perhaps in his own mind still imagined to be under his charge) that to embrace the views of his interlocutor, Solomon Williams, minister of Lebanon, Connecticut, was not merely to reject his own sacramental theology but more ominously to reject as well Stoddard's

[35] Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12: 39.
[36] Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed*, 210.
[37] Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed*, 217.
[38] Strange, 'Visible Sainthood,' 113.
[39] Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 257.
[40] Strange, 'Visible Sainthood,' 126.

views of the nature of saving faith (which both Edwards and Stoddard agreed upon):

> If this book of Mr. Williams with all these things, is made much of by you, and recommended to your children, as of great importance to defend the principles of the town, how far has your zeal for that one tenet, respecting natural men's right to the Lord's Supper, transported you, and made you forget your value and concern for the more precious and important doctrines of Jesus Christ, taught you by Mr. Stoddard, which do most nearly concern the very vitals of religion! ... Before I left you, it was very evident, that Arminianism, and other loose notions in religion ... began to get some footing among you ... Therefore let me entreat you to take the friendly warning I now give you, and stand on your guard against the encroaching evil. If you are not inclined to hearken to me, from any remaining affection to one whose voice and counsels you once heard with joy, and yielded to with great alacrity; yet let me desire you not to refuse, as you would act the part of friends to yourselves and your dear children.[41]

Edwards warned against evacuating Stoddard's position of Gospel content. Oliver Crisp summarises somewhat tersely: 'The Stoddardean conception of the sacrament would then be a sort of forerunner to the rather crass postmodern notion of "belonging, before believing".'[42]

At first glance, Stoddard's practice in Northampton, continued by Edwards after him until repudiated in 1749, does appear inclusive and democratic, with Edwards's revised position as reactionary and aristocratic. In the older model, no degrees of access to the life of the church are maintained for those fulfilling the most moderate criteria, with epistemological modesty being applied in any case for judging. An objective definition of the church is assumed, in which the settled presence of means of grace determines the possibility of access to God, not the purity of life witnessed in those who believe. Equality amongst parishioners is purportedly displayed.

It is however a misleading representation, for the history of Puritanism in both the Old World and the New frequently oscillated between understanding the ministry as a prophetic calling to the redeemed people of God, and a sacerdotal calling which magnified the authority of the clergy and their role not only amongst the redeemed, but also in the wider community. Stoddard may have levelled distinctions amongst the laity, but reinforced his own authority and the authority of the ministerial caste as distinct from the laity:

> Stoddard not only overthrew the concept of the gathered church; in repudiating the church covenant he also repudiated the congregational doctrine that the power of the keys belonged to the entire church.[43]

[41] Edwards, 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' *WJE* 12: 502-503.
[42] Oliver D. Crisp, 'Jonathan Edwards and the Closing of the Table: Must the Eucharist be Open to All?' *Ecclesiology* 5/1 (2009): 48-68, see especially 66.
[43] Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 210.

Stoddard was effectively Presbyterian and not Congregational in his application of the rights of the clergy,[44] and was known ironically as the Pope of the Connecticut River Valley for the imposing place he occupied in the local imagination. Democratic sentiment could easily be interpreted as anarchical, necessitating for example Stoddard's reflexive attempts to preserve and protect order. Inclusiveness with regard to the sacraments might justify claims to increased clerical oversight.

Just as Edwards is critical of the view of the Separatists that the spiritual state of a church member can be determined with certainty, so is he critical of the converse position espoused by those advocating a national church, that it is impossible to search into human souls and discover the workings of grace there. Edwards has more confidence in the powers of the congregation to determine the signs of spiritual life than Stoddard.[45] He does recognise that certainty is not attainable, but is nevertheless content with the possibility of a positive judgement:

> I mean a positive judgment, founded on some positive appearance, or visibility, some outward manifestations that ordinarily render the thing probable. There is a difference between suspending our judgment, or forbearing to condemn, or having some hope that possibly the thing may be so, and so hoping the best; and a positive judgment in favor of a person ... Though we can't know a man believes that Jesus is the Messiah, yet we expect some positive manifestation or visibility of it, to be a ground of our charitable judgment ... I say "in the eye of the church's Christian judgment," because 'tis properly a visibility to the eye of public charity, and not of a private judgment, that gives a person a right to be received as a visible saint by the public.[46]

The judgment of charity had become commonplace in the churches of western Massachusetts, such that the onus for any modification fell to Edwards to demonstrate.[47] He still intuitively reached for the language of charity to make his case, while articulating a position distinct from Stoddard or his own more immediate disputant, Solomon Williams.

It was also not enough in Edwards's view to make the easy parallel between the Old Testament theocracy which was inclusive of all the Hebrews, and the church order of New England. Although, he suggests, Stoddard did indeed apply criteria established for the Passover to the Lord's Supper,[48] he points out the dangers from the Old Testament

[44] Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 206.
[45] While his disputants would asseverate that Edwards was claiming the right to judge the state of an individual's heart, it would be more accurate to suggest that the minister together with full members of the congregation in Edwards's model had responsibility for a positive assessment of the presence of gracious affections in the heart. The issue at stake was not the distinction between the clergy and the laity as much as it was the distinction between the saved and the unsaved. See McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society,* 170.
[46] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 178-179.
[47] Baird Tipson, 'Invisible Saints: The "Judgment of Charity" in the Early New England Churches,' *Church History* 44/4 (1975): 460-471, especially 471.
[48] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 276.

Scriptures themselves of ways in which the 'covenanting or swearing into the name of the Lord degenerated into a matter of mere form and ceremony; even as subscribing religious articles seems to have done with the Church of England; and as, 'tis to be feared, owning the covenant, as 'tis called, has too much done in New England.'[49] Interestingly, Edwards can use typology to justify his own approach to the God-drenched symbols of nature, but in the matter of the constitution of the church, he is much more coy:

> We have no more occasion for going to search among the types, dark revelations, and carnal ordinances of the Old Testament, to find out whether this matter of fact concerning the constitution and order of the New Testament church be true, than we have occasion for going there to find out whether any other matter of fact, we have an account of in the New Testament, be true.[50]

In other places, Edwards makes abundantly clear that, unlike the Old Testament dispensation, the church should be understood as the congregation and not the broader community, and that the meeting of the church ought not to have the 'affairs of civil societies' falling within its bailiwick.[51] He shifted the debate towards New Testament conceptualities.

Such reconsideration of the relationship between the covenanted people of New England and the people of God under the Old Testament dispensation has led Grasso to aver that the communion controversy in Northampton was much more than a debate concerning a sacrament, but called into question the very ideological underpinnings of the Puritan experiment in the New World.[52] Edwards does indeed baulk at collapsing grace into nature, or assuming that God's work in the church is indistinguishable from his work in the world. Edwards wants to reassert their theological distinction, a perspective he feared to be lost through an inherited and impaired policy of communion and a rising tide of Enlightened anthropology washing up on the shores of New England in the form of Arminian heresy.[53]

Incorporation of Revivalism: Repristination of the Mixed Church

It is my contention that Edwards did not advocate a pure church, nor one in which the clergy ruled aristocratically without congregational

[49] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 213.
[50] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 279.
[51] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 271, 519.
[52] Grasso, 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' 20-21.
[53] Grasso, 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' 32.

consent.[54] Edwards neither dismisses the language of covenant as applied to church or nation, nor does he build his ecclesiology monomaniacally upon such a core concept.[55] Instead, we see in the discourses and letters penned around the time of the communion controversy between 1749 and 1752 an approach to the doctrine of the church which manages delicately the tensions embedded within the Puritan constitution between the Reformed/comprehensive and Anabaptist/separatist streams of polity. New challenges, generated from within the revivals and provoking reconsideration of the state of the church, gave Edwards the opportunity to work creatively with his patrimony to repristinate an ossified church.

Edwards's ecclesiological standpoint attempts to hold together both objective (ministry and means of grace) and subjective (affections and godliness) elements, as had been the assumption before the Great Awakening.[56] Like other theological debates which appeal to the notion of distinction without separation, so also in ecclesiology Edwards wants to connect the objective nature of God's consistent and regular offer of grace in the church with the subjective vicissitudes of an individual's regenerate life. To shape this synthesis, he turns to the language of *communion* as a bridging category, for this term suggests subjective participation in God without allowing for objective absorption into God.[57] It is Danaher's argument that the language of communion demonstrates Edwards's Puritan heritage while repristinating it in a new context:

> Edwards still implicitly maintained two central concepts of Puritan covenant theology, the covenant of redemption and covenant of grace. The difference was that while seventeenth-century Puritans put covenant in the foreground and communion in the background, Edwards did the opposite.[58]

While Danaher draws his evidence from the sermonic corpus alongside the discourses of the communion controversy, in both cases he reflects upon the blending of the old and the new in Edwards's thought. Edwards's view of communion is moreover a blending of positions

[54] Edwards repeatedly argues that the pastor is not a 'searcher of hearts' amongst his congregation, for example Edwards, *WJE* 12: 312, 370, 394.
[55] While earlier twentieth century interpreters of Edwards had assumed his rejection of covenant terminology altogether, especially in his teaching on social ethics and the place of New England in God's providential purposes, more recently the case has been made more winsomely that Edwards held to covenant conceptualities, even if the language of covenant was muted. See the summary of this debate in Noll, *America's God,* 44-50. McDermott nuances Edwards's understanding of the national covenant, however, as 'neither tribalist nor provincial.' See McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society,* 34.
[56] Brauer, 'Conversion,' especially 240.
[57] This was central to Edwards's thought. See McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society,* 73; Cherry, *Theology,* 88.
[58] Danaher, 'By Sensible Signs Represented,' especially 269.

deriving from Zwingli and Calvin, namely a memorial and a means of grace.[59] For instance, Edwards joins these together:

> in the minister's offering the sacramental bread and wine to the communicants, Christ presents himself to the believing communicants ... and by these outward signs confirms and seals his sincere engagements to be their Savior and food, and to impart to them all the benefits of his propitiation and salvation.[60]

Both Crisp and Caldwell likewise detect, lying behind the presenting debate concerning qualifications for communion, a metaphysical commitment by Edwards to the notion of union. Whether phrased as 'metaphysically real union,' or as 'invisible spiritual union,' the Lord's Supper confirms and enables a participation in Christ and his benefits.[61] While the language of covenant suggests an external or legal feature of the union, Edwards qualifies its substance, through proposition and illustration:

> For the covenant, to be owned or professed, is God's covenant, which he has revealed as the method of our spiritual union with him, and our acceptance as the objects of his eternal favor ... There is mutual profession in this affair, a profession on Christ's part, and a profession on our part; as it is in marriage ... The transaction of that covenant is that of espousals to Christ; on our part, it is giving our souls to Christ as his spouse: there is no one thing, that the covenant of grace is so often compared to in Scripture, as the marriage covenant.
>
> There are some duties of worship, that imply a profession of God's covenant: whose very nature and design is an exhibition of those vital active principles and inward exercises, wherein consists the condition of the covenant of grace, or that union of soul to God, which is the union between Christ and his spouse, entered into by an inward hearty consenting to that covenant.[62]

Such an understanding of union between the creature and the Creator, reappropriating the teaching of Calvin, assumes a purity of confession, an integrity connecting heart and mouth and life, but it reaches beyond the conceptualities of purity. The purpose for which the church has been formed is not purity *tout court* but rather union with God, of which subjective purity is an attestation.[63] Edwards broadens the conceptualities to re-educate his contemporaries. The language of covenant can highlight moral obligations expressed in obedience and purity. That same language when pressed into service can also highlight not just the possibility of human beings falling short, but the proximity to God which can be experienced and union with God which can be enjoyed by virtue of the covenant:

> But the union, cleaving, or joining of that covenant is saving faith, the grand condition of the covenant of Christ, by which we are in Christ: this is what brings us into the Lord. For a person explicitly or professedly to enter into the

[59] Danaher, 'By Sensible Signs Represented,' 262, 265.
[60] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 256.
[61] Crisp, 'Closing of the Table?' 58; Caldwell, *Communion in the Spirit,* 163.
[62] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 205, 301.
[63] The Apostle Paul makes a similar case: God makes the church ready for Christ, through washing and cleansing, so that she might be presented to him as the bride on the last day (see Ephesians 5:25-32).

> union or relation of the covenant of grace with Christ, is the same as professedly to do that which on our part is the uniting act, and that is the act of faith. To profess the covenant of grace is to profess the covenant, not as a spectator, but as one immediately concerned in the affair.[64]

Edwards is not rejecting the language of covenant, but refreshes it to give priority to an experience of grace leading to intimate and immediate union with God, which the more traditional assumptions concerning covenant might have disguised.[65] Indeed, Danaher sees in this framework one of the chief innovations in Edwards's thought. While Edwards's forebears spoke of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in terms of sealing a covenant formally adopted, itself a soteriological assumption, by contrast the language of union and communion bespeaks something more ontological and therefore more teleological. We experience salvation through a new way of knowing for a new way of being.[66]

In this as in other similar cases, Edwards is attempting to make explicit the relationship between the sign and the thing signified, or between the lexical label and its existential thrust, a relationship which had been incrementally sundered due to the sociological contingencies of the New World.[67] Acerbically, he exposes the incoherence of Solomon Williams's position on the sacraments in 'Misrepresentations Corrected':

> These sacramental actions all allow to be *significant* actions: they are a signification and profession of something: they are not actions without a meaning. And all allow, that these external actions signify something *inward* and *spiritual*. And if they signify anything spiritual, they doubtless signify those spiritual things which they *represent* ... To say, that these significant actions are appointed to be a profession of something, but not to be a profession of the things they are appointed to signify, is as unreasonable as to say, that certain sounds or words are appointed to be a profession of something, but not to be a profession of the things signified by those words.[68]

If union as a theme in Christian theology, made possible by the Spirit and witnessed in the nature of the triune Godhead and in the incarnation of the Son, is to have its essential application to the individual believer, then communion in the Lord's Supper is 'a concentration of what normally occurs in the course of the Christian's spiritual experiences ... The Lord's Supper for Edwards, thus powerfully weaves together and makes visible everything that is spiritually transacted in the Christian life.'[69] Edwards's focus is not on the sacrament as *converting* (the headline position of

[64] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 206.
[65] Torrance suggests that a benefit of the language of 'union with Christ' comes with faith being interpreted in non-contractual terms. See James B. Torrance, 'Covenant or Contract? A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth-Century Scotland,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23/1 (1970): 51-76, and especially 63.
[66] Danaher, 'By Sensible Signs Represented,' 287.
[67] At one point, Edwards suggests that the whole controversy centres on words used with double meanings, often intentionally: Edwards, 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' *WJE* 12: 389.
[68] Edwards, 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' *WJE* 12: 452-453. Italics belong to the original.
[69] Caldwell, *Communion in the Spirit*, 164.

Stoddard), nor on the sacrament as *covenant* seal,[70] but the sacrament as opportunity for *communion* with the Lord, both in the present and proleptically of the future. Edwards's revised policy of admission to the Lord's Supper is more concerned to avoid hypocritical inclusion than accidental exclusion, for the stakes are high when the issue at stake is *participation* in the Lord.[71]

The language of communion, based as it is on spatial imagery of proximity, or the personal imagery of intimacy, has funded extensive discussion of the eschatological implications of the 'Humble Inquiry.' Heimert connects Edwards's desire for a purified congregation to future millennial hopes, with the contemporary church as a type of the future antitype. Boldly he declares that the '*Humble Inquiry* was clearly cast in an eschatological framework.'[72] Carse, more poetically, sees Edwards calling for 'the church to be a community of men who clearly understand their office in the world to be the vanguard, the first legion, in the long journey toward the ultimate society.'[73] Richard Hall introduces his fine work on Edwards's writings of the late 1740s by asserting that the 'Humble Inquiry' presents 'the visible church as the earthly paradigm of a pious society and the prototype of millennial society.'[74] The urgent desire for ecclesiastical reform of a worldly church is easily and logically projected onto the wider canvas of the heavenly purity of the church, or rather that future perfection gives hope to all earthly undertakings. Unbelievably, however, in none of these commentators do we find any quotation from the 'Humble Inquiry' to support their case, and indeed after extensive scrutiny, nor did I find any substantial eschatological material in these writings. Edwards's intentions are altogether different.

Of course, Edwards does acknowledge the existence of the coming Kingdom, and interprets the wedding garment expected of those invited to the feast as their appropriation of saving grace.[75] He uses the language of glory and Kingdom, and makes reference to self-examination to avoid eating judgement upon oneself when discussing 1 Corinthians 11.[76] What he expressly does not do is make the pitch that he is enjoining a more

[70] Rightmire expands on the nature of the seal as assurance of authenticity: see Rightmire, 'The Sacramental Theology of Jonathan Edwards,' 57.
[71] Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed,* 229. See also Edwards's own position, advocating caution rather than indiscriminate welcome: Edwards, *WJE* 12: 310, 312.
[72] Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 125-126.
[73] Carse, *Jonathan Edwards and the Visibility of God*, 149.
[74] Hall, *Neglected Northampton Texts*, 59.
[75] Edwards, 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' *WJE* 12: 468-469.
[76] Edwards, *WJE* 12: 258-262.

rigorous expectation of purity upon the church to anticipate its eschatological future. This may be due to the stress in this discourse on the covenant of grace in the life of the individual, rather than the covenant of redemption as a plan for entire world order.[77] These documents certainly have a more practical and polemical flavour because they were written in the heat of debate as policy papers and not delivered in the first instance as pastorally driven sermons.[78] Danaher maintains that Edwards is putting forward an essentially negative case to deny sacramental access to some, and so starts out wrong-footed if he attempts to expound positive reasons for the practice of exclusion.[79] My reflection on this unusual omission draws upon the legal and combative demands of the situation in which Edwards personally finds himself, the recent substantive exploration of eschatology in the 'Humble Attempt,' and most importantly the very present import of communing with the Lord. The Lord's Supper is not just a picture of the heavenly banquet which yet awaits us, nor is it merely a seal of a previously ratified covenant, but the birthright of the believer to enjoy Christ and his benefits *now*. Communion as the theme of these writings suggests a living experience of the Lord to savour and to protect, and a useful practice to conjoin objective and subjective, Reformed and Anabaptist, notions of the church.

Avoidance of the language of eschatology, and deliberate reconnection of the language and experience of covenant for the individual, do not, however, in Edwards's mind totally neglect social forms nor inevitably lead to social discord.[80] The covenant providing stability for the nation is attenuated, but the union with God, which the covenant of grace protects, assumes a framework, motivation, and power for social engagement in the very world we encounter. Epistemological assurance underwrites this treatise. Voluntary ownership of the covenant by presenting one's profession to the scrutiny of the congregation can encourage consciously active and deliberate engagement with the community around.[81] Even if the order of society is not foremost in mind,

[77] McDermott suggests that often in New England the language of eschatology was reserved for crises of magnitude and large-scale social critique rather than for everyday events: McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society,* 44, 91.
[78] Rightmire, 'The Sacramental Theology of Jonathan Edwards,' 54.
[79] Danaher, 'By Sensible Signs Represented,' 262.
[80] Indeed, there are frequent and striking usages of the language of 'lawful' and its cognates in the 'Misrepresentations Corrected.' The absence of eschatology makes room for other ordering conceptualities. See for example Edwards, 'Misrepresentations Corrected,' 385, 474, *inter alia.*
[81] Lambert makes the useful point that a public account of experienced grace tends to objectivise that which was previously subjective alone. See Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening,"* 50.

a believer can contribute to its order not through coercion but through contrition, which itself is a way of reordering our desires, the better to honour God's intentions for the creation.[82] Even without explicit eschatological reflection, the mixed church in Edwards's depiction would not be reducible to the present order of the world, nor would it stand entirely outside of it, but act as a 'spiritual preservative that protected the wider society from ruin and decay.'[83] The mixed church which Edwards espouses here allows for a dynamic conception of the church, as it must continually adjust itself to internal tensions, even when not eschatologically framed.

Orderly but not Ordinary: Dynamism of the Evangelical Church

With a larger taxonomy in mind, Edwards's view of the church is well described as *pastoral*, in that it incorporates dynamic protest towards the received structures of ministry, such protest germinated in the revivals, while at the same time he expresses appreciation of traditional means of grace, and recognition of the social reality of the church. A *prophetic* model, drawing on the experience of the Anabaptists, presents the minister outside of the culture located within the pure church, and speaking into the world with words of judgment. This stream of Puritan polity was incubated in a world of Laudian persecution, but, finding themselves in the majority position in New England, such ministerial defiance had to be channelled increasingly towards concern for the whole community's survival.[84] Edwards is on occasions prepared, wearing the mantle of a prophet, to speak out against social vice and maintain a critical distance from the regnant political groupings of his day.[85]

The *priestly* model, on the other hand, assumed that clerical authority has wide powers in the church and responsibilities within the broader community. Such a hierarchical and potentially static model was funded from a more Reformed view of the ministry, which acknowledged the interdependence of the church with the ministry of the magistracy, and made space for the church's comprehension of the community.[86]

[82] Patricia Caldwell sees in the history of the conversion narrative in the New World a mechanism by which a centralised moral order might be established. See Caldwell, *Puritan Conversion Narrative,* 20, 35, 135-162. Charles Cohen acknowledges that they could bind communities in mutual regard: Cohen, *God's Caress,* 161.
[83] Danaher, 'By Sensible Signs Represented,' 287.
[84] Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 271.
[85] See McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society,* chapters 3 and 4. Carse likewise presents Edwards as a prophet: Carse, *Jonathan Edwards and the Visibility of God,* 148.
[86] Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd,* 19. The language of prophetic and priestly dimensions of ministry is often applied with sociological rather than strictly theological overtones. Interestingly, Hall

Edwards has no hesitation in affirming some hierarchical authority for the clergy, and gives it disciplinary capacity within the church in the contentions around the qualifications for communion. His approach to the sacraments is not overly sacerdotal, however, for he does regard the ministry of the Word and the priesthood of all believers highly, as the context within which to understand sacramental concerns. Neither the prophetic nor the priestly option was pursued by Edwards exclusively.

Edwards takes a position concerning the nature of the church which is neither Antinomian nor Arminian, and likewise overturns both Stoddardeanism and the Half-Way Covenant, from which Stoddardeanism grew.[87] However, he is not merely reasserting the values of the Congregational Way before 1662, for he is hesitant concerning the national covenant and gives space to those honouring the covenant of grace with their own voluntary profession. Indeed, he envisions a church which has a distinct form in the world, and which is yet also dynamically responsive to the concrete contingencies of the world in which it exists. His ecclesiology is elliptical, taking shape around the twin foci of Word and Spirit,[88] and is thereby classically orthodox in the Western tradition, neither beholden to form nor driven by content without expression in human lives. Edwards's evangelical view of the Lord's Supper is theologically integral, therefore, to the renewed church of which he dreamt,[89] in which orderly ministrations connect to extraordinary works of God's Spirit, to reorder lives and communities from below. The church is for Edwards the place where God's promise, presence and purpose are most clearly and predictably experienced, and in which Christian believers render their prayers and praise unto God.

> The critical matter was not Edwards's theology of God, humanity, or salvation; it was rather what he held about the nature of the church and the relationship of the church to society that created a substantially new context for the writing of theology ... As displayed sharply in *Humble Inquiry* and *Misrepresentations Corrected*, the covenant for Edwards no longer served as an all-embracing theological rationale. To make the covenant more powerful for the church, Edwards was willing to relinquish its all-purpose functions for society. It was

contrasts the prophetic with the sacerdotal and suggests that the Reformed position lies between them and ought to be described as pastoral, though the hierarchical element is more often in Protestant writing referred to as the priestly than the sacerdotal. See also Martin E. Marty, 'Two Kinds of Two Kinds of Civil Religion,' in *American Civil Religion* (eds. D. G. Jones and R. E. Richey; San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1990), and Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought,* 10, where Davidson recognises that ministry has traditionally appealed to both priestly and prophetic, that is comforting and challenging, categories of validation.

[87] Strange, 'Visible Sainthood,' 126, 137.

[88] Rightmire, 'The Sacramental Theology of Jonathan Edwards,' 55-56.

[89] Just as this sacrament had been of paramount importance to the revivals of religion in Scotland earlier: see Schmidt, *Holy Fairs,* 49.

> precisely this move that also spelled the dissolution of Puritan theology as the all-purpose guardian of thought.[90]

The pervasive theory of the *frightened Edwards*, which accounts for his dismissal by describing a man who was not only naïve to new social forces but reactionary, attempting to turn back the clock and re-establish a seventeenth century model, in which the pastor represented aristocratic checks and balances against the 'democratic' forces of congregationalism, is simply inadequate.[91] Patricia Tracy has eloquently prosecuted this case, arguing that 'Edwards's fundamental problem was that he was much more like Stoddard (and his authoritarianism) than the Northampton of 1750 was like the Northampton of 1700.'[92] To argue that Edwards reverted to type when under pressure and tried to impose an outmoded model of leadership on an unsuspecting congregation does not deal with the theological themes in his life and writing.

Edwards wants to reform an ossified Puritan ecclesiology, without shaking all social norms. He gets behind the assumptions of national covenant, and in the terms of the theology of union with God, a central platform in Calvin's thinking and subsequent Reformed faith, repristinates expectations of Christian life and thinking. He is radical in as far as he goes back to the roots of the movement and does not just reapply more recent New England forms. His own reflections on his dismissal and its aftermath in the 'Farewell Sermon' make abundantly clear, as we shall see in the next section, that the *prophetic* Edwards is a more sustainable model of reasons for espousing ecclesiological reform.

[90] Noll, *America's God,* 44, 48. Noll here echoes earlier scholarship, which argued that Edwards surrendered the language of covenant in its social application. This position has been critiqued by Stout, amongst others: Stout, 'Puritans and Edwards,' 288.
[91] 'The Cambridge Platform,' in *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present* (ed. J. H. Leith; Louisville: John Knox, 1982), Chapter X/3, 393.
[92] Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor*, 188.

4.4 THE CHURCH'S PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN *A FAREWELL SERMON*

The mutual concerns of ministers and people have a most direct relation to the day of judgment, as the very design of the work of the ministry is the people's preparation for that day … (*WJE* 25: 474)

Only nine days after the formal separation of pastor and people, on June 22, Edwards rose to address the congregation of Northampton in what he entitled 'A Farewell Sermon.' It was to be a significant statement of Edwards's self-understanding in ministry and the nature of the church which he served. Not surprisingly, therefore, this was the last sermon published during his lifetime, and was written not as a series of headings or 'pick up lines,' as Kimnach so evocatively suggests, but as a full text. While Edwards had more recently composed his sermons using two columns on a page, this sermon broke that pattern and was drafted with a single column. This was to be an unusually significant preachment for Edwards, for his congregation, and for posterity. While in one sense the sermon is a release for both pastor and people, Edwards stayed on for almost another year in Northampton to preach many other sermons, until the church had settled another pastor and Edwards had decided on another position.

In another way, this sermon is not really a farewell at all, for the substantive theme of the address was the reassembling of both pastor and people before the judgment seat of Christ at his second coming, for the Lord to adjudicate with justice the case brought against Edwards by the congregation. The text for the sermon was 2 Corinthians 1:14, 'As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.' Edwards builds upon the verse, and indeed upon the theme of conflict between the Apostle Paul and the Corinthian believers, to establish the doctrine, or the thematic parameters of the sermon: 'Ministers and the people that have been under their care, must meet one another, before Christ's tribunal, at the day of judgment.'[1] In the first section of the sermon, Edwards outlines the reasons for and nature of that meeting, giving particular emphasis to the responsibility of ministers to prepare their people for the Great Assize, and the responsibility of the people to heed the warnings of their

[1] Jonathan Edwards, 'A Farewell Sermon Preached at the First Precinct in Northampton, after the People's Public Rejection of their Minister … on June 22, 1750,' in *Sermons and Discourses 1743-1758* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 25; ed. W. H. Kimnach; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 463.

teachers. In the Application section, Edwards provides some 'reflections' and 'some advice suitable to our present circumstances,' by addressing particular groups within the congregation serially.[2] He addresses 'professors of godliness,' those in a 'graceless condition,' those under 'some awakenings,' then the youth, and lastly the children. He concludes with more general warnings to maintain family order and social cohesion, to avoid Arminian heresy and prayerlessness, and to 'take great care with regard to the settlement of a minister.'[3] He does all this with precision in choice of words, suspenseful arrangement of ideas, and restrained emotional engagement. His final moving sentences resonate with the mood of the Apostle at the end of 2 Corinthians.[4] Edwards writes: 'Having briefly mentioned these important articles of advice, nothing remains; but that I now take my leave of you, and bid you all, farewell.' Perhaps more ominously, he adds: 'And let us all remember, and never forget our future solemn meeting, on that great day of the Lord; the day of infallible decision, and of the everlasting and unalterable sentence, Amen.'[5] The die had been cast. The eschatological accountability of the church and its members was in view.

When a Minister is more than a Pastor: Themes of the Sermon

(i) The objective character of ministerial authority

For the purposes of our investigation, one of the most significant features of this sermon is the way in which it avoids the details of the communion controversy in Northampton altogether, and gives valuable insights into the deeper ideas concerning the nature of ministry, which generated the crisis, at least from Edwards's perspective.[6] He stands back from the questions of qualifications for communion, and presents instead the divine qualifications for the ministry. He does not speak of academic preparation for ordination, a substantial theme in the early eighteenth century, because professional concerns and competition had seen the ministry downgraded in social utility with a corresponding loss of clerical prestige.[7] Nor does he make mention of charismatic gifting or enthusiastical marks for validation of authority.[8] It is instead the objective call and value of the ministry which he highlights. He is set over

[2] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 474.
[3] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 487.
[4] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 485.
[5] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 488.
[6] Marsden, *A Life,* 361.
[7] Youngs, *God's Messengers,* 11-17, 121, 127-128, and Schmotter, 'Ministerial Careers in Eighteenth-century New England,' especially 249.
[8] These options for validating ministry are explored further in Holifield, *God's Ambassadors,* 1-9.

and against the congregation is as far as the minister is answerable to Christ alone for his service:

> Ministers are sent forth by Christ to their people on his business, are his servants and messengers; and when they have finished their service, they must return to their master to give him an account of what they have done, and of the entertainment they have had in performing their ministry ... Ministers are his [the Judge's] messengers, sent forth by him; and in their office and administrations among their people, represent his person, stand in his stead, as those that are sent to declare his mind, to do his work, and to speak and act in his name: and therefore 'tis especially fit that they should return to him, to give an account of their work and success.[9]

The minister in some sense stands outside the congregation, speaking into its life and concerns, representing the will and ways of God. In the course of the early eighteenth century, ordinations in New England were increasingly shaped liturgically to highlight the professional caste being entered, rather than to acknowledge the role of the laity in the ministerial call.[10] Christ's ambassador provides objective, perhaps institutional, weight when engaged in disputes. The increased authority and energy of the laity as a result of the earlier revivals is not here highlighted, in as far as the clergy stand ultimately under dominical authorisation despite the activity or achievements of the congregation.[11]

Adding further provocation to the argument that the minister stands outside the congregation, Edwards uses the image of *light* to reinforce his case. He asserts, for example, that ministers 'are represented in Scripture as lights set up in the churches,' in order to 'enlighten and awaken the consciences of sinners."[12] In this way, the minister reflects something of the final day, when 'the infallible Judge, the infinite fountain of light, truth and justice, will judge between the contending parties."[13] With allusion to the churches of Revelation 2 and 3, Edwards wishes for the people of Northampton a new minister who will be 'truly a burning and shining light set up in this candlestick ... and [for the people of Northampton to] be willing to rejoice in his light."[14] There had been a time when the whole Bible Commonwealth of Massachusetts Bay Colony had been described as a light on a hill, and later whole churches were referred to as New Lights (pro-revival) or Old Lights (dismissive of revival), but now it was the minister alone who was the mediate source of

[9] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25:470, 473.
[10] James W. Schmotter, 'The Irony of Clerical Professionalism: New England's Congregational Ministers and the Great Awakening,' *American Quarterly* 31/2 (1979): 148-168, especially 155.
[11] MacGregor makes the point that Calvin himself held this position (*Institutes* IV/iii/1) as a strategy to defend God's own sovereignty. See Geddes MacGregor, *Corpus Christi: The Nature of the Church according to the Reformed Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1959), 57.
[12] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 466, 467.
[13] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 471.
[14] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 488.

light for the congregation and the world, a staggering claim.[15] Consequently, the progress of the church in the history of the world was no longer equated with the progress of light, as had been an earlier assumption. When Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, it will be not as a triumph at high noon, when the sun has reached its apex, but more sombrely Christ will appear at the dawning of the day, for 'the darkness of the night vanishes at the appearance of the rising sun.'[16] An embattled minister adapts common cultural currency to his particular situation.

(ii) The local identification of the pastor and the people

However, tantalisingly, the distinction of the pastor from the congregation is not all Edwards has to say concerning ministerial vocation. Indeed, the whole sermon has as its premise the fact that this disappointing 'separation' between pastor and people is only temporary, for the bonds which unite them are stronger than some provisional and local legal verdict. There will be an accounting for their conduct, one toward the other, at the Judgment, when separation or dissolution of the relationship is final. Edwards is realistic in speaking of separation in this world:

> Ministers and the people that have been under their care, must be parted in this world, how well soever they have been united: if they are not separated before, they must be parted by death: and they may be separated while life is continued ... Thus ministers and people, between whom there has been the greatest mutual regard and strictest union ... may never have any more to do one with another in this world. But if it be so, there is one meeting more that they must have, and that is in the last great day of accounts.[17]

In another section Edwards repeatedly and sonorously notes the 'mutual concerns of ministers and their people,'[18] counting himself alongside them. Indeed, such mutual concerns are 'in many respects, of much greater moment than the temporal concerns of the greatest earthly monarchs, and their kingdoms or empires.'[19] He points out just how much he has suffered on their behalf, not standing aloof from their lives but devoting himself to their welfare:

> I have spent the prime of my life and strength in labors for your eternal welfare. You are my witnesses, that what strength I have had, I have not neglected in idleness, nor laid out in prosecuting worldly schemes, and managing temporal

[15] Helen P. Westra, 'Divinity's Design: Edwards and the History of the Work of Revival,' in *Edwards in our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping of American Religion* (eds. S. H. Lee and A. C. Guelzo; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 153. A further example of the minister being described as the congregation's light is the central motif in the following: See Jonathan Edwards, 'Sons of Oil, Heavenly Lights,' in *Sermons and Discourses, 1743-1758* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 25; ed. W. H. Kimnach; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 257-274.
[16] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 466.
[17] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 463.
[18] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 473-474.
[19] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 473.

> affairs, for the advancement of my outward estate, and aggrandizing myself and family; but have given myself to the work of the ministry, laboring in it night and day, rising early and applying myself to this great business to which Christ appointed me. I have found the work of the ministry among you to be a great work indeed, a work of exceeding care, labor and difficulty: many have been the heavy burdens that I have borne in it, which my strength has been very unequal to.[20]

The nature of the connection between pastor and people is furthermore exemplified when Edwards draws upon familial imagery to express love and duty. He is their 'spiritual father' and the people of Northampton are his 'spiritual children.'[21] Even allowing for puerile rebellion or parental negligence, such bonds are not easily severed.

(iii) The adoption of a prophetic framework for ministry

Edwards, therefore, finds himself in an unenviable position. He labours within the congregation as a servant in the Master's vineyard, arriving early and staying late with inadequate recompense. However, he also labours as someone sent on a mission, to represent a landowner from a faraway land, to warn the tenants of the vineyard of their presumption and complacency, and the danger they face unless they bear fruit. He stands *with* the people and *against* the people. No wonder Edwards takes up the story of the prophet Jeremiah to describe and summarise his own ministry.[22]

Edwards has preached as Jeremiah did with little or no results. He has preached to revive the nation, but they would not listen. He has been spurned, which plunged him into 'an abyss of trouble and sorrow,'[23] not unlike the man of sorrows whom Jeremiah prefigures and Edwards follows. Remarkably, his own labours endured for twenty-three years just as Jeremiah says his own did (Jeremiah 25:3). In fact, Edwards had originally planned to preach his farewell sermon from that very text, but changed his mind at the last to use the words of the Apostle Paul (to the same ends). Edwards is effectively locating his own ministry as a continuance of the ministry of the prophets, in identifying with the people and yet exposing and challenging their sins.[24] David Hall argues that being a divine ambassador is at the heart of the prophetic calling.[25] While Edwards had been accused by his adversaries in Northampton of the arrogance of *seeing into* others' souls, and thereby denying to some the

[20] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 475.
[21] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 479.
[22] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 475.
[23] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 477.
[24] John E. Johnson, 'The Prophetic Office as Paradigm for Pastoral Ministry,' *Trinity Journal* 21/1 (2000): 61-81.
[25] Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd*, 6, 49, 270.

opportunity for communion, it is more accurate to suggest that Edwards was dismissed for *speaking to* resistant souls, and challenging them to reconsider their relation to the Lord.

One further corollary is to be noted. Though a revivalist sensibility would normally stress the individual in his or her relation to God, the whole tenor of this sermon and its imagery highlights the corporate nature of reality. It will be the church alongside the minister who together face the light of the judgment. It is the minster as prophet who calls the congregation to prepare for that day. Moreover, Edwards sees the family as more foundational even than the church in inculcating piety in the believers. No one is simply an individual:

> We have had great disputes how the church ought to be regulated; and indeed the subject of these disputes was of great importance: but the due regulation of your families is of no less, and in some respects, of much greater importance. Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church ... And family education and order are some of the chief of the means of grace.[26]

The particular application of the doctrine section of the sermon to various groups within the congregation, defined using spiritual or other demographic criteria, substantiates further the social nature of reality in Edwards's mind. Richard Hall suggests that Edwards is at odds with the atomism and mechanicism of much of eighteenth century thought at this point.[27] Preaching with regard to the developmental needs of such groups as children or youth assumes social distinctions but also social solidarity; either way social concerns are evident.[28] The social reality of the church is affirmed.[29]

Edwards's approach to congregational life might thus be read as conservative social engineering, denying the individualising impetus present in the revivals as well as in much Enlightenment philosophy. When he reasserts expectations of filial piety, or ministerial authority, it can sound like heavy-handed reaction or corporatist conformity. In this regard it must be pointed out that while conserving the orders of creation, Edwards stands at the same time ready to transgress them, being fully aware of the dynamism, perhaps even instability, of the present order of things, and arrogating to himself the function of further destabilisation. If the people of Northampton had kicked against the providential ordering of their world by ignoring the warnings of the

[26] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 484.
[27] Hall, *Neglected Northampton Texts*, 287, 289.
[28] Minkema, 'Old Age and Religion in the Writings and Life of Jonathan Edwards,' especially 703.
[29] Indeed, it was illegal in Massachusetts of Edwards's day for an adult to live alone! See Chamberlain, 'Edwards and Social Issues,' 334.

minister, or failing to own their spiritual responsibilities as parents,[30] so would the pastor disturb the temporal order to introduce the priorities of the coming world. He recognised that the times are changing:

> We live in a world of change, where nothing is certain or stable; and where a little time, a few revolutions of the sun, brings to pass strange things, surprising alterations, in particular persons, in families, in towns and churches, in countries and nations.[31]

He therefore recognises his responsibility to inveigle his way into the life of families and address the spiritual concerns of the youth or the children, cutting out the mediate authority of parents or guardians. He acknowledged that this world is 'preparatory, mutable' and that the day of judgment would contrariwise 'fix' our everlasting state, so he intervenes.[32] He has directly warned against 'frolicking (as it is called) and some other liberties commonly taken by young people,' and has not overlooked the children: 'I have endeavoured to do the part of the faithful shepherd, in feeding the lambs as well as the sheep ... you know, dear children, how I have instructed you, and warned you from time to time.'[33] Social or ecclesiastical order are contingent, until the Lord returns.

Perhaps he had been unwise in expecting too much of the revivals to produce a harvest amongst youth and children. Perhaps he failed to expect Christian nurture through the creation good of family order. The reconstitution of rules governing complete membership, or who could take communion, likewise planed against the grain of family life, for to deny to some the ordinance of communion was potentially to deny to their progeny the right to be baptised, as Minkema suggests.[34] Edwards may have lacked the capacity to foresee some of the consequences of his actions. He may have been overly altruistic. However, appealing to the social and theological location of the prophets of Israel, he demonstrates his commitment to a form of social dynamism within the church, which can aptly be described as *prophetic ecclesiology*.[35] His own role has prophetic parallels, and the relationship of the church to its broader community furthermore owns the tension of being engaged though distinct. Even when the revivals are being institutionalised and their initial fervour is

[30] Scheick, *The Writings of Jonathan Edwards*, 117.
[31] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 463.
[32] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 465, 474.
[33] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 483.
[34] Minkema, 'Old Age and Religion in the Writings and Life of Jonathan Edwards,' 697-699.
[35] Marty, in tracing the development of civil religion in America, contrasts the priestly and the prophetic modes, and situates Edwards clearly within the latter. See Marty, 'Two Kinds,' 147.

dissipating, the *prophetic* Edwards has hope that his suffering will be generative of greater transformation.[36]

When a Church is more than a Structure: Aspirations for Transformation

For Edwards, the church is unquestionably a social institution, both in terms of its corporate concerns as well as its material composition. It has a distinct form within the world, and is dynamically responsive to the concrete contingencies of the world. The church has a social location – it is a visible community.[37] However, Edwards suffers the humiliation of 'separation,' itself a spatially freighted term, because of his attempts to create some distance between this visible church in Northampton and the wider community through limiting participation in the Lord's Supper. The church here wasn't visible enough! Indeed much of the reality of the church in this world is veiled, and requires the penetrating gaze of God to strip back all dissembling and bring to light 'every specious pretense, every cavil, and all false reasoning.'[38] Edwards does not here aspire to citizenship in the invisible church, but rather to life in the more visible church. The ultimate destination for believers is the beatific vision of God, to enjoy:

> the most immediate sensible presence of this great God, Savior and Judge, appearing in the most plain, visible and open manner, with great glory, with all his holy angels, before them and the whole world.[39]

Justice will be done and will be seen to be done, for the purpose of that day is to make plain God's righteous judgments for minister and people alike.[40] Though Edwards was wedded to the importance of the visible church, his ecclesiology was nevertheless aspirational, cognizant of an eschatological horizon, even though the revivalist and millennial themes so evident in earlier writings are muted here. Edwards's ecclesiology in his 'Farewell Sermon' honours the *orderly* processes of the created order, while holding out for *extraordinary* transformation in the congregation's life, if not in the now, then certainly in the not yet. Edwards is an advocate of *prophetic ecclesiology*, which is prepared to destabilise the church to create a distinction from the world, which nevertheless recognises the visible reality of the church within this world, and refuses to give in to a static conception of the structures of ministry as if beholden to present forms. The dynamism of the church is a function of

[36] Kimnach, 'Preface,' *WJE* 25: 17.
[37] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 477.
[38] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 476.
[39] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 469.
[40] Edwards, 'Farewell Sermon,' *WJE* 25: 472.

the interaction between the promise, presence and purpose of God, in as far as God's gift of ministry represents these marks of ecclesial life. The church is an expression not just of pastoral or apocalyptic functions, but of prophetic aspirations too.

4.5 THE CHURCH'S COSMIC CONTEXT IN THE STOCKBRIDGE TREATISES

If by reason of the strictness of the union of a man and his family, their interest may be looked upon as one, how much more one is the interest of Christ and his church ...
if they be considered with regard to their eternal and increasing union. (*WJE* 8: 535)

The Stockbridge Period: Edwards's Ecclesiological Context

It would be wrong to assume that in leaving Northampton with his family for life at the Stockbridge mission station, Edwards was turning his back on any interest in revivals or commitment to the church. It is true that in this period (1751-1758) Edwards wrote works which bear a philosophical cast, works for which he is best remembered like *Freedom of the Will*, *Original Sin*, *The End for which God Created the World*, and *True Virtue*, but he was not employed in Stockbridge as a philosopher in residence, or as an academic at all. He even resisted the invitation in 1757 to leave his missionary post in western Massachusetts to take up the position as third President of the College of New Jersey, later to be known as Princeton, for he did not consider himself suited to the life of institutional leader and scholar.[1] Indeed, his position in Stockbridge was formally a church minister and not a freelance missioner, whose sociological role was yet to be developed. Edwards led regular Sunday services, catechised the youth, and in time also acted as Principal of boarding schools for Indian boys and girls, though his schedule did allow him time to write. Edwards's ministry in Stockbridge was essentially *pastoral*, and not *academic*.[2]

Furthermore, the context of this ministry of Edwards was persistently *revivalist*. The mission in Stockbridge had been established as recently as 1734/1735 as a result of the revivals in the Connecticut River valley, and the negotiations for the mission's foundation had involved Edwards from the earliest phase of planning.[3] He preached at Stockbridge for conversions, and worked to see men and women of the local Mahican tribe declare their confession of faith before the congregation, something

[1] See Jonathan Edwards, 'To the Trustees of the College of New Jersey, October 19, 1757,' in *Letters and Personal Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 16.; ed. G. S. Claghorn; New Haven and London: Yale Univerity Press, 1998), 725-730.
[2] His pastoral heart at Stockbridge can further be gleaned from a letter to Sir William Pepperrell, in which he advises that his progressive pedagogy includes the education of girls as well as boys, and the style of learning is not merely rote but Socratic. Edwards, 'To Sir William Pepperrell,' *WJE* 16: 406-414.
[3] Rachel Wheeler, 'Edwards as Missionary,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (ed. S. J. Stein; Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 197.

which he had attempted at Northampton with disastrous consequences.[4] It must be said as well that Edwards took up the position in Stockbridge not because no other jobs were forthcoming: in correspondence with John Erskine, he had been alerted to ministerial positions in Scotland,[5] and two 'comfortable pulpits in New England' had also been on offer.[6] Edwards took the job as missionary to the Indians rather to give expression to his own optimistic, internationalist and revivalist mindset.[7] This was a positive decision to make good on the failures of much of the Puritan project to reach the Indians with the Gospel of Christ, though it was a positive engagement with enormous personal and familial costs: the Williams family, well represented in Stockbridge as they had been in Northampton only forty miles away, continued to cause Edwards much grief through their obstreperous opposition to his programmes and leadership.[8] Three of Edwards's daughters decided that marriage and life elsewhere was preferable to moving to the frontier![9]

It should be acknowledged that Edwards's ministry at Stockbridge was also coloured by the *imperialist* context in which he lived: he was no neutral observer in writing or preaching. His service on the frontier was overshadowed by the French and Indian War between 1756 and 1763, in which British imperial aspirations clashed with French territorial expansion in North America, with many north-eastern Indian tribes being forced to decide which master to serve, in order better to resist assimilation or at least to choose the lesser of two evils. The Stockbridge mission played its part in defence of the Dominions, in as far as Indians taking refuge there, or sending their children to its school, were learning England's civilising ways, and were potentially learning Protestant principles of faith. Edwards stoutly defended Indian rights over and against the rapacious land-grabbing of European settlers in the region.[10] He educated Indian youth when he was granted the right to be Principal of the schools, and taught English to them to empower Indian

[4] Wheeler, 'Edwards as Missionary,' 204.
[5] See 'To the Reverend John Erskine,' in Jonathan Edwards, *Letters and Personal Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 16. Edited by George S. Claghorn; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 355-356.
[6] McDermott, 'Missions and Native Americans,' 265.
[7] McDermott, 'Missions and Native Americans,' 258, 260-261.
[8] Wheeler, 'Edwards as Missionary,' 198-199.
[9] Stephen J. Nichols, 'Last of the Mohican Missionaries: Jonathan Edwards at Stockbridge,' in *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition* (eds. D. G. Hart, S. M. Lucas and S. J. Nichols; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 52 note 14, where Nichols quotes from Minkema.
[10] McDermott, 'Missions and Native Americans,' 266-267, and Rachel Wheeler, 'Lessons from Stockbridge: Jonathan Edwards and the Stockbridge Indians,' in *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Tercentenary of His Birth* (eds. H. S. Stout, K. P. Minkema and C. J. D. Maskell; Lanham: University Press of America, 2005), 133.

negotiations over contracts and title deeds.[11] He argued that all nations were equal in the eyes of God. Most tellingly, Edwards and his family did not live on Prospect Hill, above the township, but chose to live amongst the Indians near the river, to express their solidarity with those amongst whom they served.[12]

Despite his belief that Indians were no worse than the English in matters of sin and no less able to be saved through faith in Christ,[13] Edwards's unwitting complicity in the imperial project is highlighted by Rachel Wheeler, who argues that deliberate incorporation into the church as the results of revival is more in evidence in New England than in the Middle Colonies: the civilising framework of Edwards's ministry is demonstrated with the requirement of a public confession of faith, which (though adapted for Indian usage) betrays larger institutional and therefore cultural commitments.[14] The larger arc of her argument suggests that the philosophical works written in this period could not be ideologically neutral, or theology conceived without any historical pressures influencing their conception, but were conditioned by the power dynamics in which they were drafted.[15]

Though with initial demurring, Edwards did finally acquiesce and take the job as College President. Interestingly, he had at first argued that to take such a job would be to deny himself time to write his grand theological project. Eventually, other factors encouraged his acceptance of the offer, not least his sense that revivals could only be sustained with like-minded leaders in the churches, and Harvard and Yale were no longer sympathetic to the cause of the New Lights in pastoral leadership.[16] Edwards's ecclesiological commitment to the health of congregational life, and to the importance of revivals (rather than human agency) to motor history, were at the forefront of Edwards's mind in Stockbridge as they had been in Northampton.[17] The following brief introduction to the Stockbridge treatises seeks to draw together

[11] Edwards speaks of the empowering advantages of Indian children learning English: Edwards, 'To Sir William Pepperrell,' *WJE* 16: 413.
[12] Nichols, 'Last of the Mohican Missionaries,' 53.
[13] Jonathan Edwards, *Original Sin* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 3. Edited by John E. Smith; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 183, 194. See also Wheeler, '"Friends to Your Souls": Jonathan Edwards' Indian Pastorate and the Doctrine of Original Sin,' especially 739, 765.
[14] Wheeler, 'Lessons from Stockbridge,' 135-136.
[15] Wheeler, 'Lessons from Stockbridge,' 138. Cohen accounts for attraction to the new birth, furthermore, as a means of power to resist social change or ecclesiastical interference. See Cohen, *God's Caress,* 272.
[16] Marsden, *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards*, 131.
[17] Zakai, 'Jonathan Edwards, the Enlightenment, and the Formation of Protestant Tradition in America,' 189.

theological themes which demonstrate the presence of ecclesiological concerns for Edwards in this period, many of which we have encountered in our earlier investigation.

The Stockbridge Content Part I: Edwards's Codas on Ecclesiological Revivalism

When we look at the first two treatises written in this period, *Freedom of the Will* (1754) and *Original Sin* (written in 1757 and published in 1758), we see both philosophical interests and revivalist concerns. It has recently been suggested that at heart, these two discourses are actually codas on the revivals,[18] for both works re-engage with the incapacity of human beings to bring about their own salvation, and the necessity of radical dependence on God and reception of the work of Christ to experience conversion and new life.[19] They explicitly address the ongoing theological dispute with the so-called Arminians who would ennoble human contributions to salvation, and who would reconfigure human capacity to undertake preparation for salvation. Edwards's restatement of Reformed doctrine during the Stockbridge period had polemical as well as pastoral and academic intent: Arminianism was perceived to promote an anti-revivalist mindset.[20] Both these works have the Arminian threat in the cross-hairs:

> Here I would observe in general, that the forementioned notion of freedom of will, as essential to moral agency, and necessary to the very existence of virtue and sin, seems to be a grand favorite point with Pelagians and Arminians, and all divines of such characters, in their controversies with the orthodox. There is no one thing more fundamental in their schemes of religion: on the determination of this one leading point depends the issue of almost all controversies we have with such divines. Nevertheless, it seems a needless task for me particularly to consider that matter in this place; having already largely discussed it, with all the main grounds of this notion, and the arguments used to defend it, in a late book on this subject [*Freedom of the Will*].[21]

Looking in greater detail at *Freedom of the Will*, we see Edwards build a case that human beings are still morally responsible for their decisions and actions, even when it has been established that their will is impotent to do anything other than follow whatever appears to be at that moment the greatest good: 'the will always is as the greatest apparent good is.'[22] Indeed, the will is merely an instrument which does not of its own power *choose*, but is rather *inclined* to follow the dictates of the mind

[18] Ward, 'Philosophical Structure of *Religious Affections*,' especially 746.
[19] Zakai, 'Jonathan Edwards, the Enlightenment, and the Formation of Protestant Tradition in America,' 194-195.
[20] James P. Byrd, *Jonathan Edwards for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 82.
[21] Edwards, *WJE* 3: 375.
[22] Edwards, *WJE* 1: 142.

or soul: 'the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding.'[23] The will is free in as far as there is no impediment to it acting on the strongest desire of the person, though it is never self-determining: 'For the will itself is not an agent that has a will: the power of choosing, itself, has not a power of choosing.'[24] It is never neutral or indifferent in the process of volition. To isolate a self-determining will is for Edwards both psychologically and philosophically untenable. Instead, Edwards advances a unitary conception of human psychology, replacing the theory of a manifold faculty psychology so prominent until now amongst Puritans.[25]

Significantly, to downgrade the centrality of the *human* will in defining culpability and freedom, is to open a door to other explanations of moral agency, involving necessity and contingence. Essentially, Edwards works backwards to defend the priority of the *divine* will as the ultimate theory of causation, expressed through predestination, though he is careful to do this without implying that God is capricious in his dealings with the human race, or that human beings have no moral responsibility in this world: our 'virtuousness or viciousness ... consists not in the *origin* or *cause* of these things, but in the *nature* of them.'[26] Edwards takes a compatibilist position on the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom.[27] To support this contention, Edwards argues strenuously that God's will, *arbitrium*, is not *arbitrary*, but is constrained by his own *wisdom*:

> 'Tis the glory and greatness of the divine sovereignty, that God's will is determined by his own infinite all-sufficient wisdom in everything; and in nothing at all is either directed by any inferior wisdom, or by no wisdom; whereby it would become senseless arbitrariness, determining and acting without reason, design or end.[28]

Edwards essentially began this work to defend the revivals and the freedom of God to draw people to faith in Christ without any moral contribution, but has ended by asserting that God's activity in human lives is not without design. Extreme voluntarism cannot be attributed to Edwards's view of God.[29] Edwards himself concisely states: 'as God designedly orders his own conduct, and its connected consequences, it

[23] Edwards, *WJE* 1: 148.
[24] Edwards, *WJE* 1: 163.
[25] According to Haroutunian, this helps Edwards to escape the accusation of psychological determinism. See Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety versus Moralism: The Passing of New England Theology from Edwards to Taylor* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1932), 222.
[26] Edwards, *WJE* 1: 337. Emphasis mine.
[27] Allen C. Guelzo, 'The Return of the Will: Jonathan Edwards and the Possibilities of Free Will,' in *Edwards in our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping of American Religion* (eds. S. H. Lee and A. C. Guelzo; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 94.
[28] Edwards, *WJE* 1: 380.
[29] Paul Ramsay, 'Editor's Introduction,' in *Freedom of the Will* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 1; ed. P. Ramsay; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957), 111.

must necessarily be, that he designedly orders all things.'[30] The application of these sentiments to our inquiry into Edwards's ecclesiology affirms our contention that though he had revivalist aspirations which would break down order through God's immediate action, these are tempered by the constraints of purpose and design, of which the nurturing life of the local congregation is the chief means.[31]

A complementary line of argument is present in the later volume, *Original Sin*. To hold to the truth of human solidarity in the imputation of the sin of Adam, and concomitantly the righteousness of God in holding us accountable for it, Edwards defends significant features of the Reformed account of Biblical faith in dispute with Arminianism. Edwards makes a traditional appeal to the radical dependence of creatures on their Creator. He does so, however, by expounding the notion of 'continuous creation,' or the divine capacity to uphold the creation at every moment, doing so without any secondary causation, and by arguing that God chooses to regard the human race as organically unitive.[32] The universe is radically discontinuous from moment to moment, and yet the descendants of Adam and Eve are fundamentally united in sinful solidarity. A potentially destabilising espousal of radical contingence is shored up by commitment to ordered union. His Augustinian framework is viewed through Lockean lenses.[33] The imputation of the sin of Adam to his progeny is justifiable given Edwards's account of corporate identity. We are one with Adam in sin and guilt:

> God, in each step of his proceeding with Adam, in relation to the covenant or constitution established with him, looked on his posterity as being one with him ... And though he dealt more immediately with Adam, yet it was as the head of the whole body, and the root of the whole tree; and in his proceedings with him, he dealt with all the branches, as if they had been then existing in their root. From which it will follow, that both guilt, or exposedness to punishment, and also depravity of heart, came upon Adam's posterity just as they came upon him.[34]

Furthermore, our oneness with Adam is necessarily constituted through '*God's sovereign constitution,*'[35] the 'continued immediate efficiency

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[30] Edwards, *WJE* 1: 432.
[31] Significantly, these themes converge in 'Misc.' 1263, written between 1753 and 1754, where Edwards acknowledges the ruptures of conversion which are set alongside the less remarkable influences of God that humans 'ordinarily ... are the subjects of in the course of their lives.' The church is clearly the product of the 'arbitrary operations' of God, but this is only established most clearly when Edwards traces her origins back to the 'foundation laid and when it was as it were formed and established.' Jonathan Edwards, 'Misc.' 1263, in *The "Miscellanies" (Entry Nos. 1153-1360)* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards 23; ed. D. A. Sweeney; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 211, 209.
[32] Edwards, *WJE* 3: 402. See also Oliver Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards and the Metaphysics of Sin* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), especially 130-135, for a critique of Edwards's position.
[33] Crisp, *Metaphysics of Sin*, 98.
[34] Edwards, *WJE* 3: 389.
[35] Edwards, *WJE* 3: 404. Italics original.

of God,'[36] and the 'law of the Supreme Author and Disposer of the universe.'[37] He explains how such an arbitrary constitution does not make for a universe without design:

> And there is no identity or oneness in the case, but what depends on the *arbitrary* constitution of the Creator; who by his wise sovereign establishment so unites these successive new effects, that he *treats them as one*, by communicating to them like properties, relations, and circumstances; and so, leads us to regard and treat them as one. When I call this an arbitrary constitution, I mean, that it is a constitution which depends on nothing but the divine will; which *divine will* depends on nothing but the *divine wisdom*. In this sense, the whole course of nature, with all that belongs to it, all its laws and methods, and constancy and regularity, continuance and proceeding, is an *arbitrary constitution* ... And I am persuaded, no solid reason can be given, why God ... may not establish a constitution whereby the natural posterity of Adam, proceeding from him, much as the buds and branches from the stock or root of a tree, should be treated as one with him, for the derivation, either of righteousness and communion in rewards, or of the loss of righteousness and consequent corruption and guilt.[38]

Enlightenment assumptions, which define the individual over and against the community of which he or she is a part, are here at odds with Edwards's appeal to the corporate solidarity of the race, in as far as he is an advocate for God's desire to bring together that which is otherwise prone to dissolution.[39] Edwards salvages here a place for a 'communion in rewards,' as a potent allusion to the nature of the church which he elsewhere describes as a 'new man,' or as 'represented as one holy person,' for example 'servant of God,' 'daughter of God,' or 'spouse of Christ.'[40] When Edwards defends divine designs for human solidarity or unity, he is at the same time laying the foundation for an ecclesiological vision, of which oneness or communion is the primary gift.

The Stockbridge Content Part II: Edwards's Reflections on Ecclesiological Design

Published jointly and posthumously in 1765, the *Two Dissertations*, comprising *The End for which God Created the World* and *The Nature of True Virtue* in that order, pick up themes from Edwards's earlier writings concerning divine glory, human self-interest, and a defence of the importance of sanctification to Christian assurance. While the two former treatises above deal with issues generated by soteriological debates, these latter works now under consideration are motivated by cosmological and philosophical concerns. The relationship between the Creator and the creaturely world, or in other terms the connection between the spiritual and the material, are here discussed. In the *End of*

[36] Edwards, *WJE* 3: 401.
[37] Edwards, *WJE* 3: 397.
[38] Edwards, *WJE* 3: 402-404, 405.
[39] Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory*, 229.
[40] Edwards, *WJE* 3: 368.

Creation, the supposition that the glory of God is the purpose of the universe raises the question as to the place of the world and its history in that grand design. In *True Virtue*, the relationship between the moral achievements of unregenerate human beings, their pursuit of virtue without the aid of God, becomes a factor in our understanding of common grace and the created order. The earlier treatises assumed the distinction between Christian and non-Christian. These *Two Dissertations* instead draw our attention to the common ground. The church is no Platonic society, existing ethereally and elsewhere, but has rather a substantial footprint in the world we know.

While origins and causation had been a major theme of *Freedom of the Will* and *Original Sin*, in the *End of Creation* Edwards outlines his understanding of consequences and consummation, by distinguishing between inferior and chief ends, and subordinate and ultimate ends.[41] Such fine distinctions, apart from signalling philosophical perspicuity, allow Edwards to relate theological themes such as the divine will, human responsibility, cosmic order, historical sequence, and eternal progression, by reconciling hierarchy and mutability. Such teleology is not without academic precedent, but its application to the realm of redemption is, according to Edwards, not readily comprehensible to human reasoning without divine illumination.[42]

In short, the mystery of God is to declare the glory of God through the created order, not least the church, without necessitating the conclusion that God is self-centred, nor that God is in need of the creation or the church for his own fulfilment. Making use of John 17, Edwards summarises his case through the example of Christ, who 'sought the glory of God as his highest and last end; and that therefore … this was God's last end in the creation of the world.'[43] All subsidiary ends are finally coordinated and united. God both *seeks* his own glory and *communicates* his glory to human beings:

> God is their good. Their excellency and happiness is nothing but the emanation and expression of God's glory: God in seeking their glory and happiness, seeks himself: and in seeking himself, i.e. himself diffused and expressed (which he delights in, as he delights in his own beauty and fullness), he seeks their glory and happiness.[44]

[41] Edwards, 'Concerning the End for Which God Created,' *WJE* 8: 405-406. As noted, we might differentiate such language by speaking of means, instruments, and ends.
[42] Edwards, 'Concerning the End for Which God Created,' *WJE* 8: 419-420.
[43] Edwards, 'Concerning the End for Which God Created,' *WJE* 8: 484.
[44] Edwards, 'Concerning the End for Which God Created,' *WJE* 8: 459.

Remarkably for the eighteenth century, in which portraiture and statuary of leading Enlightenment philosophers were fashioned with the innovation of smiles on their faces, Edwards here, as elsewhere, reclaims happiness for Christian believers.[45]

The process of diffusing glory and reclaiming it, enabling the happiness of both Creator and creature, entails a further corollary. Human beings participate in the diffused life of God, and asymptotically progress towards greater union with God, both in this world and in the heavenly realm as well.[46] Edwards compacts these conceptualities and processes under the banner of 'fullness,' a term appearing in Pauline material (for instance Ephesians 1:22-23) to describe the relationship of Christ the Head with his Body, the Church.[47] Christ dwells with and so fills his people, just as God had once filled the Temple with his brilliant glory. Because God's people acknowledge Christ as Head over *all things* for the *sake of the church*, the language of 'fullness' is particularly apt to trace the arc of God's will for the whole creation, which necessarily focuses on God's will for the church. Edwards combines the spatial image of *fullness* with the physical properties of *light* to position the church within God's cosmic plans:

> In the creature's knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fullness is received and returned. Here is both an *emanation* and *remanation*. The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, and are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is *of* God, and *in* God, and *to* God; and God is the beginning, middle and end in this affair.[48]

The language of fullness and light is elsewhere expressed in terms of union *with* God and conformity *to* God, as the destiny of the elect in the divine economy is lauded. Having just appealed to Trinitarian logic, Edwards writes:

> In this view, those elect creatures which must be looked upon as the end of all the rest of the creation ... must be viewed as being, as it were, one with God. They were respected as brought home to him, united with him, centering most perfectly in him, and as it were swallowed up in him: so that his respect to them finally coincides and becomes one and the same with respect to himself. The interest of the creature is, as it were, God's own interest, in proportion to the degree of their relation and union to God.[49]

Edwards is so enthusiastic in his vision that he must three times in this short paragraph check his theologising with the refrain 'as it were,' to

[45] George M. Marsden, 'Challenging the Presumptions of the Age: The Two Dissertations,' in *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition* (eds. D. G. Hart, S. M. Lucas and S. J. Nichols; Grand Rapid: Baker Academic, 2003), 102.
[46] Edwards, 'Concerning the End for Which God Created,' *WJE* 8: 533-534.
[47] Edwards, 'Concerning the End for Which God Created,' *WJE* 8: 439.
[48] Edwards, 'Concerning the End for Which God Created,' *WJE* 8: 531. Italics original.
[49] Edwards, 'Concerning the End for Which God Created,' *WJE* 8: 443.

caution both himself and his readers against facile understandings of mystical absorption into the Godhead.[50] However, in the end, the union of Christ with his church is explicitly named as 'unspeakably more perfect and exalted' than any human analogy can suggest.[51]

It has become evident that Edwards holds together two significant theological motifs in *The End for which God Created*. First of all, he assumes that the created universe can be read morally with reference to glory, excellency, and happiness, and thereby locates himself in an essentially medieval world of divine enchantment with the creation, which was in eclipse. That is, the cosmos can be described, *pace* Newton, in ways non-mathematical.[52] On the other hand, Edwards depicts the universe as essentially relational, and thereby locates himself in a more modern conceptual framework, which allows for mutability, instability and potentiality, making unambiguous moral readings of the created order more difficult.[53] Holmes rightly points out that it is not his theocentrism that is so remarkable, but it is rather his commitment to the 'dynamic life of God, that is so central to Edwards.'[54] The church, as the focus of God's work in the world, exists in this tension, a community of moral discourse which is open to the vicissitudes of history, a community subject to the pressures of contingency, which also runs a commentary allowing interpretation of God's necessary purposes for the cosmos. Edwards draws this to our attention using primary theological categories:

> [W]e have as much reason to suppose that God's works in creating and governing the world are properly the fruits of his *will*, as of his *understanding*.[55]

In Edwards's estimation, God cannot be described by referring to his will *alone*, or his understanding *alone*. God acts without consulting created intelligent beings, yet acts not capriciously but according to his own mind's design. Conversely, the church is always subject to its Master, and yet grows dynamically towards union with its Master. The church is always the Body, and never the Head, and yet it is organically and necessarily united to the Head, to allude to the language of the Apostle once again. Edwards's ecclesiology is consistently theological yet never merely mechanistic, nor without reference to the chances and changes of concrete reality.

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[50] McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, 73, 99.
[51] Edwards, 'Concerning the End for Which God Created,' *WJE* 8: 535.
[52] Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory*, 77.
[53] Marsden, *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards*, 129.
[54] Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory*, 245.
[55] Edwards, 'Concerning the End for Which God Created,' *WJE* 8: 449. Emphasis mine.

It is at this point that I offer a corrective to the important pioneering essay by Thomas Schafer, written in 1955, which has remained a standard in understanding Edwards's ecclesiology for many years. Schafer pulls together various threads in Edwards's writings, most importantly the Miscellanies, which are in his estimation germane to his doctrine of the church.[56] His argument is essentially that Edwards has been misread, in as far as he has been treated as a separatist, and therefore has been presented as belonging to the revivalist wing of the American church. Schafer takes exception to this view, and writes 'with the hope of correcting in some measure the general impression of his ecclesiology as revivalist.'[57] Not surprisingly, Schafer deliberately begins his piece with *The End for which God Created the World*, and expounds Edwards's ecclesiology, highlighting the nature of creation, the decrees, the fall, and Trinitarian process, all ontologically and cosmologically loaded loci.[58] To provide another source of support for his contention, Schafer investigates the soteriological themes of covenants, faith, union with Christ, excellence, and virtue; and acknowledges Edwards's commitment to the universality and visibility of the church embodied in 'higher and higher unities.'[59] Schafer's method predisposes him to discover in Edwards a theologically robust ecclesiology *from above* which is generated by systematic considerations.

However, it is my belief that Schafer goes too far by concluding that Edwards has 'strengthened the classical Protestant conception of the church'[60] (without actually defining what this might be), and fails to make reference to the ways in which Edwards might have repristinated such a Protestant view, or indeed how Edwards has destabilised in some sense that same view. Granted, popular approaches to Edwards highlight his evangelistic concern, alongside his predestinarian mindset, marginalising in both instances his ecclesiology (something my argument has sought to rebut), but this is not to deny that his revivalist concerns did impact his assumptions about the church's life and worship. His 'theological and philosophical realism' is not to be sundered from his avowed voluntarism, in which God reserves the right to break into this world apart from

[56] Schafer, 'Conception of the Church,' especially 52. Schafer also recognises here that to discuss the church, 'its nature, its unity, its form, and its destiny' would require a more substantial work, taking into account the whole opus of Edwards, a challenge which I have taken seriously in this dissertation.
[57] Schafer, 'Conception of the Church,' 52.
[58] Schafer, 'Conception of the Church,' 52-53.
[59] Schafer, 'Conception of the Church,' 55-56, 57.
[60] Schafer, 'Conception of the Church,' 62.

regularly constituted means.[61] Schafer makes no space for us to adduce from Edwards's writings and practice an ecclesiology *from below*.

Even when Schafer speaks of the dynamism of the church in history, he is quick to point out that such dynamism has never jeopardised the 'perpetuity' of the church, and indeed more tellingly he asseverates that 'the divine glory and the union of the elect in Christ have a *static*, *timeless* quality about them.'[62] He quite rightly wants to argue that Edwards is trying to minimise the distinction between the visible and the invisible church, but overstates his case when he asserts that because Edwards denounced separatism, he must also have actively worked against the development of 'self-consciously converted *ecclesiolae* within the ecclesia.'[63] We have seen that through prayer meetings, youth meetings, voluntary attendance at open-air revivals, or catechism classes, Edwards could encourage intense exercises in piety without falling prey to separatist sentiments. On occasions, Schafer takes single sentences as Edwards's final mind, without due consideration of their place in Edwards's tumultuous ministerial career, nor the provisional nature of many of the Miscellanies.[64] Edwards's 'ecumenical concerns' (clearly the language of the twentieth century) do not just arise out of his 'Biblical ecclesiology and eschatology,' much as Schafer might wish, but out of the painful and serious redefinition of unity as a consequence of the revivals, which he experienced first-hand.[65] Though Sweeney is correct to point out that Schafer values the extraordinarily rich and rare ontological basis for Edwards's ecclesiology, it must be added that Schafer is silent on the more phenomenologically formative features of the same.[66] It seems to me that Schafer has prosecuted a case for a certain understanding of Edwards's ecclesiology which marginalises a more nuanced vision of the church, which it has been the burden of this thesis to establish.

Finally, it is worth observing that Edwards's last treatise, *The Nature of True Virtue*, parallels the arguments of *End of Creation*, though remarkably does so without any interaction with Biblical material. It is amongst the purest of Edwards's philosophical writings.[67] Here, Edwards

[61] Schafer, 'Conception of the Church,' 62.
[62] Schafer, 'Conception of the Church,' 56. Italics mine.
[63] Schafer, 'Conception of the Church,' 60. Italics original.
[64] See Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory*, 141, for frustration at such a methodology.
[65] Schafer, 'Conception of the Church,' 62.
[66] Sweeney, 'The Church,' 169.
[67] The safe assumption has been that the second dissertation is dependent on the first, which frames the eschatology of the second, but does so without drawing out a comprehensive set of corollaries.

engages with the dominant philosophical trend of his age, the project to justify universal moral norms without reference to Christian dogma, showing himself to be in the mainstream of British Enlightenment debate.[68] He is keen to affirm virtuous action, even if motivated by private interest, acknowledging the outcomes of God's gift of common grace, especially in regulating society.[69] He insists however that *true* virtue:

> most essentially consists in benevolence to Being in general. Or perhaps to speak more accurately, it is that consent, propensity and union of heart to Being in general, that is immediately exercised in general good will ... And consequently, that no affection whatever to any creature ... which is not dependent on, nor subordinate to a propensity or union of the heart to God, the Supreme and Infinite Being, can be of the nature of true virtue.[70]

Just as a musical phrase can sound harmonious when performed on its own, and sound discordant when inserted into a passage of music in a different key or tempo, so also virtue needs to be appreciated in relation to the larger moral, or theological, symphony of God's will and design.[71]

The beauty of moral harmony is ultimately sensed in an interpersonal reality when one is related to God as to the 'lawful sovereign.'[72] Edwards here carefully asserts that this Lord, or sovereign, does not govern according to whimsy or caprice, but rather rules with regard to order, design or lawfulness. Again we see the deliberate collocation of his theological voluntarism and epistemological idealism in its eighteenth century guise. Though this treatise has the least of any of his works concerning the doctrine of the church, we are reminded that at the end of his productive ministry, any explanation of the moral life of Christian believers must be depicted on a larger theological canvas, remembering that experiences of Christian fellowship are themselves personal, provisional and yet ultimately public, and grounded in the divine character and works.[73] As Ramsay avers, '*True Virtue* should first be read as Edwards' *ethics of creation*.'[74] This vision of the essence of the moral *life* for Edwards is necessarily connected to a vision of moral *transformation*. We hold that Edwards's understanding of *true* virtue has revivalist and social implications.

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[68] Marsden, 'Challenging the Presumptions of the Age,' 107-108. See further Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought in its British Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).
[69] Marsden, 'Challenging the Presumptions of the Age,' 110-111.
[70] Edwards, *WJE* 8: 540, 556-557.
[71] Edwards, *WJE* 8: 540.
[72] Edwards, 'The Nature of True Virtue,' *WJE* 8: 555.
[73] It would therefore be too much to conclude with McDermott that, in the end, the regenerate heart is at the centre of Edwards's vision of the social or ecclesiastical order. See McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society,* 153.
[74] Ramsay, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 1: 34.

ORDERLY BUT NOT ORDINARY: EDWARDS'S EVANGELICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

The Church of God, in all parts of the world, is but one;
the distant members are closely united in our glorious head. (*WJE* 16: 180)

In surveying the ministry of Edwards under the headings of order in his experience and world, we have created a framework for understanding with new depth and freshness Edwards's ecclesiological commitments, as we will see below. These commitments are in evidence in our demonstration of the *development* within Jonathan Edwards's ecclesiological thought arising from the various potentially disordering situations in which he served. Furthermore, we have shown the constructive *connection* between his understanding of the church and other leading theological themes, which make of the church an essential entailment to Gospel preaching, rather than merely a pragmatic arrangement for passing needs.[1] For Edwards, the *focus* of fellowship amongst the regenerate is to be found in celebration of the Lord's Supper, which provides orderly nurture and visual confirmation of life in the Spirit. Edwards does not merely re-impose seventeenth century assumptions on congregational life in the eighteenth century, but importantly repristinates ecclesiology in New England in his own day. His ecclesiology was generated by superimposing revivalist conditions and social aspirations onto Reformed convictions (sometimes with the revivalist strand eclipsing his patrimony), making it innovatively *evangelical* rather than generically *Protestant*.[2] It is not too much to say with Zakai that Edwards dedicated his life to 'a defence of the Christian church.'[3]

Edwards's Comprehensive Ecclesiological Vision

Edwards understood the church within a grand divine scheme. In his earliest years he was concerned to review the place of his own experience of conversion within received accounts of preparation for salvation and faculty psychology, while during the period of the revivals from the mid 1730s until the early 1740s his centre of attention is the

[1] Vanhoozer would concur, making clear that 'the church is "analytic" in, an implication of, the gospel itself.' See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'Evangelicalism and the Church: The Company of the Gospel', in *The Futures of Evangelicalism: Issues and Prospects* (eds. C. Bartholomew, R. Parry and A. West; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), 70.
[2] Pauw suggests that Edwards departs occasionally from Calvin when he highlights revivalist eschatology. See Plantinga Pauw, 'Practical Ecclesiology in John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards,' in *John Calvin's American Legacy* (ed. Thomas J. Davis; Oxford: University Press, 2010), 106.
[3] Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History*, 334.

church as the necessary framework for understanding and channelling spiritual ardour. The latter part of his ministry after the cooling of revivalist fervour finds his ecclesiological attention coalescing around international and eschatological visions. His apparent disappointment with the local congregation did not equate to a rejection of corporate Christian nurture in its entirety, but leads to its transposition into a new key. The value of conversion and experiential religion gave a new dynamic core to received ecclesiological norms, as the 'affectional transposition of Christian doctrine' endemic to the eighteenth century found its toehold in Edwards's vision of the church.[4]

The overarching divine scheme showcases the church in systematic theological light as well. The extraordinary freedom of God in salvation is tempered by the expectation that the church will ordinarily help us to receive the experience of grace. The church is embedded within the order of creation, while at the same time it represents a downpayment on the transformation of this world in the new creation. Edwards drew together divergent strands of Reformation thought to demonstrate the possibility of creating a purer fellowship for the regenerate, which is nevertheless nestled within a church whose social responsibility is wider than its membership. An ethical vision for human flourishing is tied into divine and dynamic trinitarian life within the church, and is not just based on an individual's rational autonomy. Union with God becomes not just a Reformed explanation of the beginnings of the Christian life (rather than its beatific end), but coheres with the very nature of church life as well, most evident in the solemnity of the Lord's Supper, which has at its heart communion with God. Revivalistic emphases, according to Edwards, must not necessarily undermine habituated ecclesiological forms, nor circumvent received theological norms. In short, Edwards confects a reconstitution of the life of the church with revivalistic emphases at its core.

Edwards's eschatological Gospel of the Kingdom had as its fruit not just regenerate lives but renewed social experience, penultimately in the church but ultimately for the world. He maintained that sponsoring the regeneration of individuals would not necessarily lead to the fissiparous disordering of the community, as some feared, but the moral transformation of the community as it rediscovered its corporate

[4] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)* (The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 128.

moorings and thereby its social vision.[5] McLoughlin reminds us that '[r]evitalization of the individual led to efforts to revitalize society ... Religious revivalism, saving souls, is in this respect a political activity, a way of producing a reborn majority to remodel society according to God's will and with his help.'[6] In New England, revival was intricately linked to the renewal of the covenant, for the 'assumption on which the concept of a revival of religion rests is that God deals with entire communities as discrete moral entities.'[7] Gerald McDermott is of the view that Edwards works to re-establish social cohesion through his ministry, even if his new conception of society is based not on traditional static hierarchy but on a dynamic and relational experiential order.[8] As Ward so succinctly suggests, any adjustment to the model of church as Edwards achieved would have significant repercussions, for 'the New England parish was more than a device for paying a minister; it was a social ideal.'[9] Even if the locus of religious authority was repositioned to occupy the seat of the human heart, it could still be possible to build a social vision around democratic religious expression, rather than clerical control.[10]

Edwards's Curtailed Ecclesiological Legacy

Edwards's ecclesiological vision was however rejected by the Northampton church. While local pastoral concerns may have coloured his people's ability to reflect impartially on Edwards's teaching, the fact that they dismissed their minister, who saw himself as an objective representative of God's *promises* in that place, and thereby opted for a view of the Lord's Supper which did not assume the *presence* of the Lord in the Supper for the regenerate alone, substantially attenuated Edwards's ecclesiological legacy, in Massachusetts and beyond. It was Edwards's dynamic and contextually derived understanding of the place of the church within the historical *purposes* of God, which most resonated with his contemporaries, for in it their own adjustments to New World contingencies were most readily affirmed. Effectively, what his disputants did not do was reject the value of the church as an instrument of God's eschatological purposes, even if such a view, disconnected from Edwards's

[5] Crawford, *Seasons of Grace,* 15, 124, 189.
[6] William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago History of American Religion; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 75.
[7] Crawford, *Seasons of Grace,* 20. Crawford goes on to describe the ways in which New England differed from the Middle Colonies with its assumptions of 'the outpouring of grace for the transformation of a community.' Crawford, *Seasons of Grace,* 122-123, 247.
[8] McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, 137, 141.
[9] Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 277.
[10] McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, 153-154.

larger theological vision, had the potential to eviscerate its Gospel content and become unreconstructed activism.[11] His principled instrumentalism became in the hands of those less astute a pragmatic instantiation of the spiritual independence of the laity.

It is therefore often assumed that Edwards's Gospel was highly subjectivist, growing out of his commitment to religious affections, which were the location of true religion,[12] and that to preach the Gospel was merely to preach an individual experience of salvation from sin, or salvation from God's wrath as sin's consequence. William Abraham asserts with reference to Edwards that this 'anthropocentric turn has been the undoing of modern evangelism,'[13] in which revivalist reductionism rules. Rather than the purveyor of a panoramic approach to world history, for which revivals were a dynamic motor, and the church a necessary carriage of divine encounter and nurture, Edwards is viewed as a fount of separatism, or the source of evangelicalism's antipathy towards ecclesiology. His own ecclesiological synthesis may not in the end have been sufficiently compelling in Northampton to compete with worldly blandishments, but he did nevertheless go a long way to create a vision for the church which was both theologically distinct and yet socially engaged: *distinctio sed separatio*. Edwards's own prophetic sensibility reinforced just such a vision.

Edwards's Gospel was not an attenuated theory of atonement, nor could it be summarised as the good news of an experience of rebirth. His Gospel was neither an idea without application, nor an experience without foundation. For Edwards, the assumptions of covenant life in New England, the millennial frame of his ministry, and his prophetic self-understanding position his preaching as more than an appeal to decision, but as a call to ecclesiological renewal, eschatological expectation as well as spiritual revival. Here was simply no *revivalist evangelicalism*, but rather Edwards as the mouthpiece of a *confessional evangelicalism* with sweeping vision of the church, alongside passion and preaching and prayer for revivals in every land.

[11] Ian Stackhouse, 'Revivalism, Faddism and the Gospel,' in *On Revival: A Critical Examination* (eds. A. Walker and K. Aune; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 244.
[12] Edwards, *WJE* 2: 95.
[13] William Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 58.

Edwards's Orderly but not Ordinary Ecclesiology

Edwards develops an approach to ecclesiology, which highlights the orderly processes but not the ordinary origins of the church's life. In a sense, then, his understanding of the church can be pictured as a *company of the Gospel*, which is a community embedded in the world though tracing its origins to disruptive divine life. The people of God are *companions in fellowship* with one another, especially evident when this takes place outside of the normal bounds of weekly meeting or is focussed on an organisation designed with particular evangelistic goals. Such a company has the dramatic responsibility *of acting out* before the eyes of the world the truth which it claims to embody, and the world which it proleptically represents, making its regenerate life as visible as possible. Edwards's company was also understood as a *society which broke bread* together, appealing to the literal etymology of the word to show how fellowship, visibility, and nurture might be expressed.[14] The Gospel as the animating centre of the church, which births the need for a company at all, situates him in a Protestant tradition which continued to be reformed through the leverage of an unchanging Christological core. His own perceived role as a herald of the Gospel gave this company its *marching orders* and situated it temporally within a battle of cosmic proportions.

For Edwards, the order of the Word creates with the dynamism of the Spirit an elliptical account of the church's life, which makes it both orderly but not ordinary. The church is shaped by the Son and the Spirit, in as far as it can be described as the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Spirit simultaneously. Edwards's representation of the church is an exemplary model, not of traditional mechanistic ecclesiology, nor of revivalist and separatist ecclesiology, but of *evangelical* ecclesiology, which harnesses creative innovative missiological forms to received and systematically constructed Biblical truth. He holds together commitments to both light and truth, even where this threatens, in its own way, to sunder the stability of the church. His insights, scattered amongst his works, can be for us today a modest *lamp for our path*, even when we struggle to fulfil our own calling to be a *city on a hill*.

[14] I acknowledge the source of this image in the writing of Vanhoozer, 'Evangelicalism and the Church,' 85-92. Debates in the ministry of Edwards around the breaking of the bread make this image particularly apt.

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