

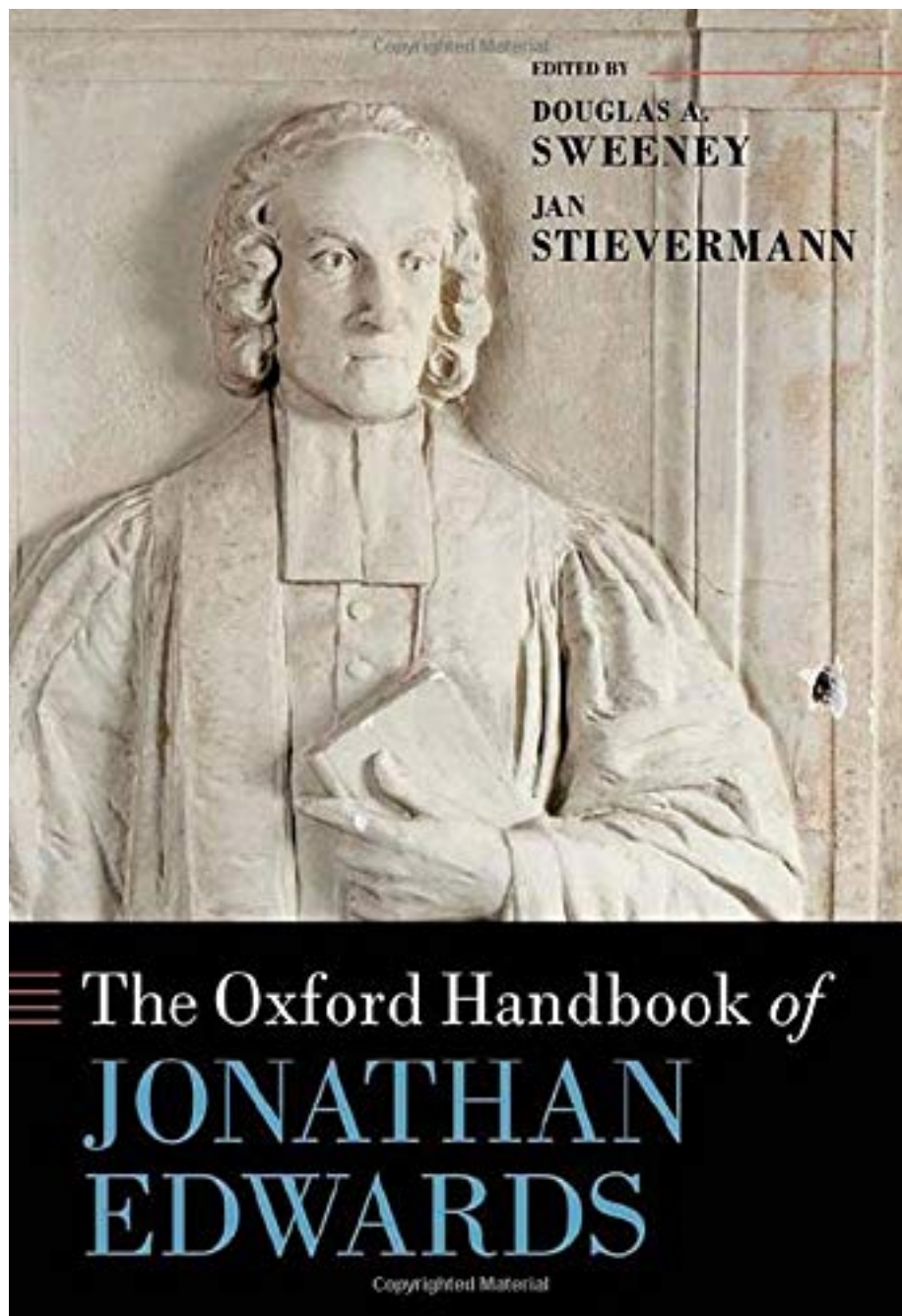
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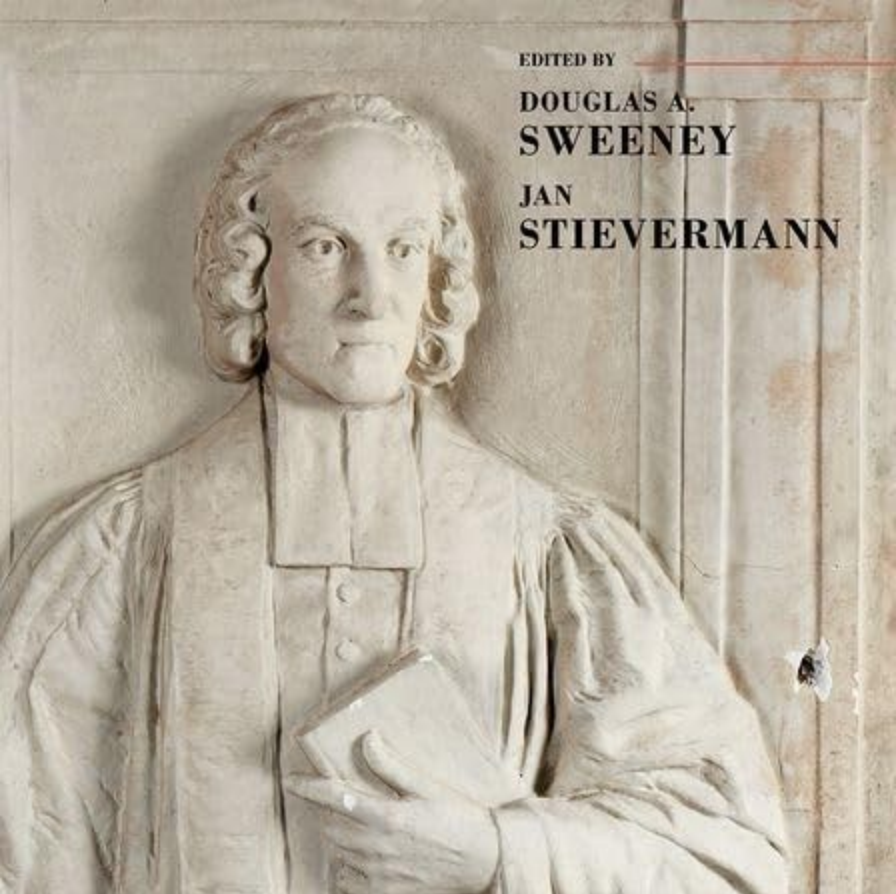
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EDITED BY

DOUGLAS A.
SWEENEY

JAN
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≡ The Oxford Handbook of
**JONATHAN
EDWARDS**

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

JONATHAN
EDWARDS

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JONATHAN
EDWARDS

Edited by

DOUGLAS A. SWEENEY

and

JAN STIEVERMANN

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THE WORKS OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

All citations from Edwards's writings will refer to the Yale edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (letterpress volumes by Yale University Press, 1957–2008; online edition ongoing at Yale University) and use the abbreviation *WJE*.

- Vol. 1 *Freedom of the Will*, Paul Ramsey, ed.
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INTRODUCTION

WHILE the mid-twentieth century witnessed the beginning of what is often called the Jonathan Edwards Renaissance, mainly in the US, the last thirty years have seen an explosion of first-rate scholarship on Edwards in North America and abroad. The 2010s have been particularly fecund. Edwards-related monographs have appeared every year, as have dozens of journal articles, book chapters, and essays. This proliferation of Edwards studies has much to do with the 2008 completion of the Yale edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (begun in 1957) that makes available in twenty-six volumes the full canon of Edwards's published works together with a large corpus of his unpublished and private writings. The letter press *Works of Jonathan Edwards* is complemented by an ongoing online edition of the remaining holograph manuscripts, hosted by the Edwards Center at Yale. These texts are revealing new aspects of Edwards's life and work and continue to invite revisionary studies of well-worn topics. The Center's international activities and satellites—more fully described in the final chapter—have further contributed to keeping the Edwards industry busy. They also reveal a significant trend toward the globalization of that industry. Edwards might have gained much of his iconic status as 'America's theologian' through the labours of scholars invested in the project of establishing a national tradition of theology and philosophical thought. But if put in his wider contexts, the colonial divine always challenged the premises of that project, and in recent years the study of his works has been more and more de-nationalized. The great diversity and internationality of the current state of Edwards studies is not covered in any of the existing, otherwise commendable handbooks and compendia (the most important of which are Lee 2005; Stein 2007; and Stout, Minkema, and Maskell 2005). This *Oxford Handbook of Jonathan Edwards* surveys the full breadth of the present spectrum of scholarship on Edwards across different disciplines and regions of the world.

On the one hand, the ongoing interest in Edwards pertains to the historical figure and what his life, writings, and socio-cultural practices can tell us about various dimensions of early American and transatlantic history. Through a great variety of methodological lenses, Edwards is being studied by general historians as well as scholars in the fields of church and religious history, history of theology, intellectual and literary history, history of theology, and, more recently, book history. Also, the reception histories of Edwards's works and of the larger Edwardsean tradition has received considerable attention. On the other hand, Edwards continues to be of interest as a resource for contemporary academic theology and philosophy as well as for many lay believers and more popular religious authors. Edwards is a particularly important conversation partner for theologians and ordinary Christians from around the world who identify with evangelical and

charismatic traditions. Indeed, it is these traditions and their mission histories that are largely responsible for spreading his name into regions beyond North America and Europe. The chapters of this handbook have been written by an international consortium of experts and speak clearly and compellingly to all these interest groups. They will orient readers in current debates about the various facets of Edwardsean theology and philosophy, giving detailed attention to the different areas of divinity. And they offer guidance through the complex scholarship on the historical Edwards as well as the histories of how he has been interpreted in the US and abroad. At the same time, the chapters make original contributions to the study of Edwards and open new avenues for future research.

The essays in this volume fall into four sections, which reflect the diversity of Edwards studies today. The first section (*Edwards's Backgrounds, Sources, and Contexts*) turns to the historical Edwards and seeks to ground him in his period and the relevant contexts that shaped his life and work. It follows a series of widening circles from the familial and local to the wider Atlantic world. The chapters by *Chamberlain* and *Stout* introduce Edwards as a family man and parish minister at Northampton and Stockbridge. In so doing, they engage with larger questions regarding the transformation of the New England tradition in the age of revivals and its social and gender history. *Marsden* and *Kling* then situate the provincial clergyman in the broader political and ecclesial history of his period, giving special attention to recent literature on British Protestantism after the Glorious Revolution, the transatlantic awakenings, and early mission movement. How Edwards responded to changing intellectual currents in the eighteenth-century republic of letters is treated by *Thuesen*, who in particular demonstrates the formative influence of philosophical, religious, and historical authors associated with a moderate Enlightenment.

The second section (*Edwards's Intellectual Labours*) balances the historical reconstruction of Edwards as a theological and philosophical thinker with explorations of his usefulness for constructive theology and the church today. Most of the traditional topoi of systematic theology are covered by these essays. However, we deliberately chose to pair some of these in unusual ways to gain new perspectives on how the great questions of divinity were related in Edwards's mind and how he responded to them. Together the chapters in this section paint a dual portrait. They show us Edwards as a child of his period and conventional representative of early modern Protestantism—at least much of the time—who was also keenly aware of new intellectual trends often associated with the age of Enlightenment. Yet they also show us Edwards as an extraordinary and creative—even idiosyncratic—thinker who, within a thoroughly traditional framework of theology, formulated innovative and synthetic answers to great questions that continue to interest many people all around the world.

Wainwright and *Helm* discuss the ontological and epistemological foundations of Edwards's theology. This gets them into one of the most hotly contested sub-fields of Edwards studies today: what to make of his radical idealism and occasionalism. The essays by *Strobel* and *Hamilton* then address the three core areas of theology, the doctrine of God, Christology and soteriology. Among other things they grapple with

competing interpretations of Edwards's Trinitarianism and his unusual view of the atonement that have so preoccupied the field in recent decades. *Caldwell* helpfully reminds us that the Holy Spirit was equally important to Edwards, who practiced an intensely pneumatological brand of evangelical faith. *Nichols's* chapter outlines Edwards's understanding of revelation and his defence of the supernatural authority of the canonical Bible, and van *Vlastuin's* shows how central the inherited tradition of federalism was to Edwards's reading of Scripture.

The unexpected interconnections that Edwards drew between the doctrines of creation and predestination are explored by *Hussey* and *McClymond*, while *Stievermann* engages with Edwards as a historical thinker, focusing in particular on his providentialism and millennialist eschatology. With *Barshinger* and *Tan* we get to the areas of hamartiology and anthropology. Here Edwards made some unusual interventions in response to contemporary challenges, modifying the traditional understanding of original sin and its imputation and redrawing the Augustinian-Calvinist view of humanity in the context of eighteenth-century theories of affections. No less influenced by the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment were Edwards's hermeneutics and his aesthetic sensibilities. *Dyrness* and *Reklis* make it clear how much these informed Edwards's entire theological project and how they found expression in some of its most striking innovations such as natural typology. More conventionally Reformed were Edwards's notions of the church and the sacraments, as *Bezzant* notes. The essay by *Cochrane* examines Edwards's theological ethics and especially his conceptualization of true Christian virtue, which, through his New Divinity disciples, would become so influential in nineteenth-century American Protestantism. Albeit in very different ways, the last two chapters of the section both deal with Edwards's reaction to the period's rise of new forms of scientific empiricism and a natural philosophy dominated by Cartesianism. *Zakai* sees Edwards as a reactionary thinker who, in a rear-guard action, selectively appropriated aspects of empiricism and natural philosophy for apologetic purposes, while ignoring or rejecting their problematic implications for traditional theology. And for *Rehmann* Edwards's version of philosophical idealism, reserving causal agency to God alone, is an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to come to terms with the rise of mechanistic philosophy.

With section three (*Edwards's Religious and Social Practices*) the focus shifts to the different ways and contexts in which Edwards attempted to realize his ideas and ideals in his personal life, scholarship, and ministry, but also to the ways in which these historical realities stood in tension with, limited, or resisted his aspirations. At the same time, some of the chapters in this section explore how Edwards's concrete practices, as well as the socio-cultural structures in which they were embedded, shaped or redirected his thinking and also made him complicit in the injustice, exploitation, oppression, and violence in which his native New England was entangled. *Hambrick-Stowe* situates Edwards's intense devotional practices in the tradition of Puritan piety but also points out how the new spiritual currents of the eighteenth century influenced him. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the enormous time and energy Edwards gave to biblical exegesis. *Brown's* chapter surveys the large body of Edwards's scriptural interpretations,

their main sources and tendencies. The essay also discusses their conflicted, sometimes contradictory, nature, as Edwards was attempting to reconcile innovative forms of historical-contextual criticism with a traditional understanding of the Bible's supernatural authority. Closely connected to his exegetical practices was, of course, Edwards's ceaseless production of sermons, the full corpus of which is only now becoming available. Drawing on these new materials, *Minkema* examines Edwards's changing routines of writing sermons and styles of homiletic performance, but also embeds his sermon manuscripts in the material context of Edwards's household economy. The different spheres and forms (the household, the church, the mission school, the college) in which Edwards was engaged as an educator are the subjects of *Potgieter's* chapter. *Grigg* and *Saillant* then look at Edwards's involvement in colonial efforts to evangelize enslaved Africans in his home and church as well as Native Americans during the Stockbridge years. Both chapters reveal the tensions between Edwards's missionary idealism and commitment to Christian notions of spiritual equality on the one hand, and his endorsement of racial ideologies and active participation in the systems of slavery and native dispossession on the other. Similarly, *Valeri* demonstrates that Edwards critiqued certain commercial and social practices on religious grounds. Overall, however, he tended to embrace, and theologically legitimize, the political and economic order of the British Empire, seeing himself as a loyal provincial subject of the Hanoverian monarchy.

The fourth and final section on *Edwards's Global Reception* proceeds from Edwards's own time and North-Atlantic culture to the present period and various regions of the southern hemisphere. Together the chapters tell a story of widening renown and influence as well as diverse appropriations. *Byrd* and *Yeager* follow the trajectories through the worlds of North American and European Protestantism by which Edwards developed from celebrated revivalist to one of the great systematic theologians of the English language. While *Yeager* gives special attention to the transatlantic print networks that enabled Edwards's rise to fame, *Byrd* highlights the important role Edwards played in the formation of a specifically American evangelical identity and New England schools of theology. These reconstructions in the field of religious history are complemented by *Gustafson's* chapter on Edwards's reception in Anglo-American literature that looks at fascinating examples from Harriet Beecher Stowe, Robert Lowell, and Marilynne Robinson, illustrating the dramatically changing and tension-filled perceptions of Edwards and New England Puritanism more generally. *Han*, *Piggin*, *Neele*, and *Campos* trace the hitherto mostly hidden reception histories of Edwards in Asia, Australia, Africa, and Latin America, respectively. The reception involves two basic dimensions: first, the use of Edwards in the contexts of church life, popular religion, and revivals, and, second, the scholarly study of his works. Each of these histories is distinct and connected with different Protestant churches and missions, ranging from the Dutch Reformed in eighteenth-century South Africa and Presbyterianism in South Korea to Pentecostalism in contemporary Brazil. But all of them show the astonishing adaptability of Edwards's works to local contexts. And they evince Edwards's great usefulness to revival-oriented varieties of Protestantism that sought to ground an affective,

conversionist spirituality in a robustly biblical and intellectually substantial theology. Notably, many of these regions have also developed their own strands of Edwards scholarship, with numerous studies being produced especially in Korea and Japan but also Australia. The section closes with *Sweeney's* chapter on recent trends in Edwards studies, including its globalization.

We hope this handbook does justice to the richness and complexity of the field of Edwards studies and helps readers seeking a state-of-the-art summary of and critical reflection on that field. We are confident that this volume has advanced our understanding and appreciation of Edwards and his varied global legacies. And we invite you, the reader, to make good use of this volume by contributing to the future of the study of Jonathan Edwards. As the chapters herein demonstrate, much remains to be done.

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PART I

EDWARDS'S
BACKGROUNDS,
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CHAPTER 1

FAMILY LIFE

AVA CHAMBERLAIN

THIS chapter will focus on Jonathan Edwards's family life. Its primary aim is not to explore the connections between his family life and his theological thought, although these connections exist. Rather, it will view Edwards and his close kin in their domestic setting as members of a family. Edwards was the patriarchal head of a flourishing Puritan family. During their thirty-year marriage, he and his wife Sarah Pierpont, who acted as his helpmeet and co-head, skilfully managed their large domestic enterprise. Scholars often overlook this record of success, focusing instead on the moment of patriarchal failure that forced Edwards from his Northampton pulpit. However, in colonial New England successful family government was a man's most important accomplishment. 'The manly Puritan', notes Anne Lombard, 'was a sober, conservative father, responsible for a household full of dependents' (Lombard 2003, 9). In this role Edwards's authority was secure. Modelling the traditional Puritan ideal of domestic order, his family publicly displayed his mastery of the habits and virtues that defined adult manhood.

PREPARATION FOR MANHOOD

Jonathan Edwards was the fifth child and only son of Timothy Edwards, pastor of the Congregational church in East Windsor, Connecticut, and his wife, Esther Stoddard. Like all Anglo-American boys in colonial New England, he was raised with the expectation that he would as an adult become the head of his own household. Colonial law required all persons to live in families, either as dependents subject to family government or as household heads (Morgan 1966, 27). In his early years Edwards was a dependent in his parents' household, and he remained subject to their government until he formed a family of his own. Throughout this period of adolescence, he strove to acquire the character an adult man required to perform the duties of household head.

In his preparation for manhood, Edwards was assisted by two powerful male role models, his father and his maternal grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, pastor of the church in Northampton, Massachusetts. Both of these older authority figures were successful patriarchs who governed their families and their congregations with a strong hand. The son of a wealthy Boston merchant, Stoddard had settled in Northampton when it was a small western Massachusetts outpost, far from the more cosmopolitan life along the coast. Well-suited to the challenges of the frontier, he was a physically imposing man, as much at home in his fields as in his pulpit. During his sixty-year pastorate he raised a large family and established himself as one of New England's most influential theological polemicists, the 'pope' of the Connecticut River Valley (Lucas 1976, 146–9; Marsden 2003, 11). Although his mentorship of Edwards was short lived, his influence was long lasting. Drawn into Stoddard's orbit as a young man, Edwards struggled throughout his own Northampton pastorate to escape the force of his personality and establish his own independent authority.

By contrast, Timothy Edwards was a durable presence his son's life. Outliving his father by only two months, Jonathan regularly turned to him for advice and support, and over time they developed a relationship more of companionable friendship than filial deference. He never, however, forgot his place in the family hierarchy. In letters written as an adult Edwards always addressed his father as 'Honored Sir' and closed as 'your dutiful son', the same greeting and salutation he had used as a boy (*WJE* 16: 32–3, 37–8, 420–1, 702). These tokens of respect reflected the orderly East Windsor household in which he had been raised. Timothy Edwards was a demanding governor of his large family and an uncompromising pastor of his congregation, who was so self-conscious of his prerogatives that he 'would never be seen in public without his full clerical garb' (Marsden 2003, 34). Although reflecting the patriarchal order of colonial society, Timothy's need for control was likely also rooted in his own personal experience. The eldest son of Richard Edwards and his first wife, Elizabeth Tuttle, he had grown up in a disorderly household that had scandalized its Hartford community by allegations of adultery and repeated petitions for divorce (Chamberlain 2012, 146). His father had worked hard to overcome this legacy of family failure by remarrying and establishing himself as a successful household head. Timothy's Harvard education, elite profession, and flourishing family represented the culmination of this intergenerational effort, but this child of divorce knew all too well the dangers of disorder. As family head, he was determined to establish a record of patriarchal success.

Evidence suggests that Timothy and Esther kept a tight rein on their son. Having deep family connections to the Boston elite, they sent all of their daughters but one to the colonial capital for finishing school (Minkema 1992, 41). Nevertheless, Timothy ensured young Jonathan received his education closer to home. He trained for the ministry at the Collegiate School, later Yale College, which the Connecticut legislature had established in 1701 as an alternative to Harvard, and following graduation, he remained in New Haven to continue his studies and complete his ministerial training. Timothy also influenced his son's search for a permanent ministerial post. Jonathan's first posting was in New York City, where he briefly served as a supply preacher to a small Presbyterian

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congregation. All the while his father was working to secure him the pulpit in Bolton, Connecticut, a small village located near the family parsonage (Marsden 2003, 55). Returning home in 1723 to defend his Master's degree, Jonathan was poised to take this modest position when he received a better offer to return to his alma mater as a tutor. This extended period of ministerial preparation came to an end when he accepted a post as his grandfather Stoddard's pastoral assistant in Northampton. A prestigious pulpit firmly in the family's orbit, this position was a fortuitous combination of his own career ambitions and his father's patriarchal desires.

In his character the young Edwards was also eager to live up to his parents' expectations. As a boy he strove to embody the religious sentiments and moral values his father declaimed from his pulpit. Distancing himself from his peers, he did not join in such youthful acts of rebellion as 'night-walking' and 'company-keeping'. The only known group activity he organized as a boy was building 'a booth in a swamp' for a secret place of prayer (WJE 16: 791). Similarly, as a student at Yale Edwards strove to adopt the demeanour of a mature adult man. Writing home to his father, he censured his fellow students for their youthful indiscretions. '[S]ome monstrous impieties, and acts of immorality' were 'lately committed in the College', he reports, and he notes with satisfaction that 'I am perfectly free of all their janglings.' He likewise informed his father that he had refrained from joining in the student boycott of the college commons, and that he had reprimanded another student for his participation, telling him that 'I thought he had done exceeding unadvisedly, and... what I thought the ill consequences of it would be' (WJE 16: 38, 37). Jonathan was also 'astonished' when his roommate refused to draw cider for him, and he reported this act of disobedience to the boy's father, observing that it was 'the first instance I have known of a freshman's absolutely refusing his senior' (WJE 16: 35). Because Yale was a training ground for future leaders, elder boys were expected to practice the art of government in their relations with the younger students. Edwards, however, described in detail his attempts to exercise manly rule hoping to receive the approbation of these male authority figures. He was determined from a young age to merit acceptance by the community of adult Christian men.

To earn a place in this community, Edwards had to prepare himself to head his own household. Early modern domestic theory positioned the family as the foundational form of human association that equipped children to join the higher associations of church and state. As William Gouge notes in *Of Domesticall Duties*, one of the most prominent domestic conduct texts, 'the family is a seminary of the Church and commonwealth. It is... a little Church, and a little commonwealth, at least a lively representation thereof' (Gouge 1622, 17, 18). As a young man, Edwards embraced this representation of the family, which by the mid-eighteenth century was commonplace. He echoed Gouge in a sermon to his New York congregation: 'A Christian family is as it were a little church and commonwealth by itself' (WJE 10: 577). These analogies defined proper domestic order and the relative duties of each household member. When Edwards directed the parents in his New York congregation to govern their own families according to these models, he had not yet reached full manhood, but he was working to acquire the interior moral virtues that would ready him for headship.

Glimpses of this effort may be seen in Edwards's 'Resolutions' and 'Diary.' Both texts date from his late adolescence, during his New York pastorate and subsequent return to East Windsor, when he had completed his education but had not yet assumed the adult responsibilities that marked the achievement of full manhood. Commonly interpreted as mapping his spiritual quest for personal salvation, the introspective labour he recorded in these sources also corresponds to the maturation process that transformed Edwards into an adult man capable of governing his own family. The foundational manly virtue was Christian faith. Household heads should be men of faith, for they were responsible for the spiritual nurture of all the members of their little church. The first duty of parents, notes Robert Cleaver, another important domestic conduct author, is to 'instruct & bring up their children even from the cradle, in the feare and nurture of the Lord' (Cleaver 1600, 246). Ministers, as the patriarchal heads of a parish church, also had the duty to instruct members of their congregations in the Christian faith. To prepare, therefore, to lead both a church and a family, Edwards strove for conversion and genuine submission to God's will.

These writings also trace Edwards's efforts to cultivate the character a man required to govern wisely his little commonwealth. Of particular importance were such traits as 'maturity, rationality, responsibility, self-control, and courage.' According to the patriarchal ideal of manhood, adult men exhibited strength and maturity most fundamentally by their ability to control themselves. As Lombard argues, 'claims to manhood in early New England were based...on having attained rationality, self-control, and mastery over whatever was passionate, sensual, and natural in the male self' (Lombard 2003, 8, 9). Only a man who had tamed his own passions had the temper necessary to maintain an orderly household. Because women, children, and other dependents were thought incapable of complete self-mastery, family order depended upon his ability to govern them. If he could not control himself, he would be incapable of ordering their unruly natures or teaching them self-control.

Edwards worked to master his passions, or, to use the language he would later appropriate theologically, transform his passions into rational affections, first, by identifying in his 'Resolutions' areas of particular concern, and then by reflecting in his 'Diary' on his efforts to apply these resolutions to daily life. He struggled with many of the same immaturities that afflict all young people on the cusp of adulthood. That he resolved 'never to allow the least measure of any fretting uneasiness at my father or mother' or express it 'in the least alteration of speech, or motion of eye' indicates he did on occasion sigh and roll his eyes at their counsel. That he was '[m]uch concerned about the improvement of precious time' and worried about 'listlessness and sloth' suggests he lazed about the parsonage from time to time. And that he resolved 'never to do anything that I so much question the lawfulness of' reflects his temptation to participate in the youth culture that in colonial New England valorized lawlessness and rebellion against authority (WJE 16: 756, 761, 760).

He also recorded being troubled by feelings of anger, pride, envy, and revenge, but his struggle for self-mastery is best represented by his approach to food. Multiple entries in the 'Diary' record his failure 'to maintain the strictest temperance in eating and drinking'.

He observes how self-deception fostered his desire to overeat 'at a feast' or 'when there is a great variety of dishes'. He notes that 'sparingness in diet' will allow him 'to think clearer' and vows never to permit his 'study of divine subjects' to 'be interrupted by going to dinner' (*WJE* 16: 754, 785, 786, 789). In these reflections, hunger acts as a proxy for all the natural appetites. The adult man displayed his rationality and strength of will by controlling his sensuous pleasures and subordinating them to the pursuit of higher joys.

An even greater challenge for the young Edwards was his unruly tongue. Approximately 14 per cent of the 'Resolutions' record his effort to talk like an adult Christian man.¹ The social order in colonial New England required all persons to govern their speech according to their station. Youths were expected to speak to their parents and other superiors with deference, when they spoke at all. However, as Jane Kamensky notes, 'For boys, mute deference was but a temporary stopping point on the road to a full adult voice.' A man spoke with governed liberty, thereby signally his ability to lead his household, his community, and, in Edwards's case, his future congregation (Kamensky 1997, 25, 6). To acquire this voice of authority, he had to restrain heated speech and promote godly speech. Cautioning himself against angry, fretful, and 'ridiculous' speech, he strove to be cheerful, loving, and truthful in his conversation. Above all, his tongue should display his self-mastery, for bad speech was defined not so much by its content as by its lack of regulation. He was particularly concerned to control what he called 'evil' speech.² Perhaps reflecting on his juvenile efforts to discipline his college classmates, he resolved 'never to speak evil of any, except I have some particular good call for it' (*WJE* 16: 757, 756, 755). He understood that as family head and church pastor, he would be required to reprove others, but he recognized that this responsibility should be exercised with restraint. To govern wisely adult men should choose their words carefully.

THE EDWARDS HOUSEHOLD

Edwards's move to Northampton in 1726 marked his entrance into the community of adult Christian men. Every colonial man needed a calling that gave him economic self-sufficiency and the ability to provide for a family without dependency or debt. Although most men obtained a 'competence' through agriculture or trade, Edwards trained for the ministry and had a bright future in Northampton (Lombard 2003, 4). Stoddard was aging and as his chosen successor, Edwards was poised to become full pastor of this prestigious pulpit upon his death. He was now prepared to acquire the additional indicia of manhood. It was time for him to marry and form a household, a step he had been

¹ See 'Resolutions', nos. 8, 16, 31, 34, 36, 38, 46, 58, 66, 70 (*WJE* 16: 753–59).

² In the only 'Diary' entry containing an extended extract, Edwards quotes from a sermon by Thomas Manton on the subject of 'evil-speaking' (*WJE* 16: 774–75).

preparing to take in the manly way, with rationality, deliberation, and undoubtedly in consultation with his parents.

As a young man Edwards selected Sarah Pierpont to be his future wife and courted her for several years. She was the daughter of James Pierpont, long-serving pastor of the Congregational church in New Haven and founding trustee of Yale College, and his third spouse, Mary Hooker, the granddaughter of Thomas Hooker, founder of Connecticut Colony. When Edwards was first smitten by this eligible young girl, neither he nor Sarah were ready to wed. He was finishing up his studies at Yale and she was much too young by colonial standards to wed (Ulrich 1991, 6). It appears, however, that the two families had an informal understanding that the couple would marry at the appropriate time. One year after he had settled in Northampton, when he was 23 years old and she was 17, they tied the knot. Their union joined the Edwards family with one of the most prestigious lineages in the colonies.

Sarah Pierpont was well-suited to be the wife of an aspiring young minister. Born into an elite ministerial family, she had grown up in a parsonage and understood the duties required of a pastor's wife. Equally important, she had cultivated the inner moral virtues necessary in a companionable spouse and co-head of household. These virtues attracted the young Jonathan as much as her social status. His youthful musings on the object of his affection highlight these virtues. 'On Sarah Pierpont' is a lyrical description of her spiritual beauty, or to use Edwards's own theological language, her affectionate perception of the loveliness and excellency of divine things.³ This sign of grace was itself an important qualification for marriage. As her husband's subordinate partner in headship, a wife was also responsible for governing their little church and nurturing Christian faith in their children. While he taught their offspring the doctrines and principles of Christianity, she cultivated faith by example (Masson 1976, 306–7). For a minister's wife, who served as a model of faith for her husband's congregation, this qualification was even more important. It is therefore not surprising that Edwards was drawn to a girl who 'is beloved of that almighty Being, who made and rules the world' and who 'hardly cares for anything, except to meditate on him' (*WJE* 16: 789). But he also intimates in this paean to Sarah's early piety that she possessed other qualities young men looked for in choosing a mate.

The most important quality was passivity. Throughout this text, written when Sarah was about thirteen years old, Jonathan praises her passive, submissive nature. She was not a wilful girl. This tractable character was primarily visible in her relation to God. The 'great Being', he notes, 'in some way or other invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight.' She will 'go about, singing sweetly', and 'wander in the fields and on the mountains' conversing with this invisible being. She even anticipates being 'raised out of the world and caught up into heaven' and 'received up where he is'. In these observations, Jonathan depicts Sarah as will-less and weight-less, or effortlessly willing to be led by a superior, more powerful authority. This mortification of the will

³ The date of Edwards's composition of the text titled 'On Sarah Pierpont' is uncertain, but generally identified as 1723 (*WJE* 16: 745).

was a certain sign of grace, but it was also the fundamental attribute of a good wife. As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich explains, 'Submission to God and submission to one's husband were part of the same religious duty' (Ulrich 1991, 6). Edwards emphasizes this female virtue by repeated use of the word 'sweet' to describe facets of Sarah's character. Not only does she sing sweetly and take sweet delight in God, but she also has a 'sweetness of temper', a 'strange sweetness in her mind', a 'wonderful sweetness, calmness and universal benevolence of mind' (*WJE* 16: 789–90). To possess an amiable, pleasing, good-natured, that is, sweet, disposition, a woman had to know her place. She had to have acquired the habits of obedience, silence, and self-denial that made for an orderly household. But as her husband's subordinate partner in headship, she also had to have learned to assert her will in appropriate contexts. In her suitor's estimation, Sarah also had perfected such discretion.

A good wife should be moral, capable of discerning right from wrong and exercising sufficient self-control to choose the virtuous path. Even in her youth Sarah already displayed this mature moral character. She was a well-behaved girl, who, like her future husband, refrained from the youthful follies that amused her peers. She is 'just and praiseworthy in all her actions', he effuses, and 'pur[e] in her affections'. To emphasize her purity, he magnifies her strength of will, implicitly comparing her ability to resist temptation to that of Jesus in the wilderness. She is so detached from worldly things, he declares, that 'if you present all the world before her, with the richest of its treasures, she disregards it and cares not for it' (*WJE* 16: 790). This admirable character made Sarah a desirable mate, for a virtuous woman would be faithful to her husband. Equally important, she would model virtue to her children and instil in them the habit of right action. Her capacity for self-government equipped her to govern a household, while her submissive nature gave highest authority to her husband. This combination of self-control and deference ensured the orderly operation of their little commonwealth.

Physical beauty and sexual attractiveness were, of course, not unimportant. Edwards does not explicitly reference Sarah's appearance in his encomium, focusing instead on her spiritual beauty. But in a 'Miscellanies' entry written around the same time, he directly links the physical with the spiritual.⁴ With Sarah likely in mind, he recalls 'behold[ing] a beautiful body, a lovely proportion, a beautiful harmony of features of face, delightful airs of countenance and voice, and sweet motion and gesture'. He observes that he is 'charmed' by 'this agreeableness, these airs' because they are 'emanations of perfections of the mind, and immediate effects of internal purity and sweetness' (*WJE* 13: 278). However, he makes this connection between the physical and the spiritual not to diminish, but to enhance the perception of feminine beauty. Despite stereotypes to the contrary, Puritans enjoyed physical pleasures. 'The truth is', notes Richard Godbeer, 'Puritans celebrated sexual passion'; they 'sought not to repress their sexual instincts but to keep them within ordained borders' (Godbeer 2002, 54, 55). Within marriage, sex was extolled not simply as a means of procreation, but more importantly

⁴ Thomas Schafer estimates that 'Miscellanies', 108 was written in between Sept. 1723 and May 1724, approximately the same time as 'On Sarah Pierpont' (*WJE* 13: 156).

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as an expression of mutual love. Husbands and wives should, counselled Gouge, ‘mutually delight each in other’ and render ‘due benevolence one to another . . . with good will and delight’ (Gouge 1622, 221–2). In Edwards’s estimation, this physical union was, like physical beauty, an intimation of a higher spiritual reality, which in turn he portrayed using the language of sexual pleasure. For example, in describing Sarah’s longing for spiritual union, he observes that she will ‘dwell’ with Christ in heaven, where she will ‘be ravished with his love, favor and delight, forever’. And he is confident of this coming consummation because Christ ‘loves her too well to let her remain at a distance from him always’ (*WJE* 16: 790, 789). This vision of heavenly union has an unmistakable sexual resonance. Edwards knew that his beloved would not always be distant from him, and when penning these words, he likely anticipated his passionate union with her.

Jonathan and Sarah’s first child was born a year after the wedding. With little Sarah’s arrival the Edwards household was complete. In early America, a complete household comprised three classes of dependents—wife, children, and servants—ordered hierarchically with the husband as the head. Assembling such a household conferred upon Edwards full manhood status and a place as an adult man in his community (Morgan 1966, 150; Lombard 2003, 19, 59). Over the next two decades, he exhibited his manliness by fathering a regular succession of children, one every two or three years until 1750 when their eleventh and last child was born. In this large and flourishing household, he displayed his mastery of the manly virtues by maintaining order and wisely managing the family economy. Biographers tend to disembodify Edwards, portraying him as a fragile otherworldly man, painfully thin and sickly (Dwight 1830, 599). But according to the markers of manhood that mattered most in colonial New England he was a potent and successful family patriarch.

The Edwards household was a busy place. Having not yet developed a modern conception of personal privacy, colonial New Englanders were constantly in and out of their neighbour’s houses (Demos 1970, 46–7; Ulrich 1991, 51–2). As the Northampton parsonage, the Edwards home was the locus of even more activity. On any given day, along with the ever-increasing brood of children, it would have teemed with a variety of people. Divinity students, who were ‘rusticating’ with Edwards as they prepared for the ministry, routinely boarded with the family. Both Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins began their careers as his disciples, and the missionary David Brainerd was nursed in the household during his final illness. Itinerant ministers also sheltered with the family on their travels, as did a steady stream of relatives and friends. Townsfolk regularly consulted their minister about spiritual and pastoral matters; local matrons attended the prayer meeting Sarah organized for ladies of the parish, and children came to be catechized. Even a woman fleeing an abusive spouse once was given refuge while petitioning for divorce (Carpenter 2011, 36). Like most successful household heads, Edwards’s life was embedded in the thick web of activity that occupied his large and sociable family.

Samuel Hopkins included detailed descriptions of this family life in his biographical memoir, *The Life and Character of the Late Rev. Mr Jonathan Edwards*, which was published less than a decade after its subject’s death. As was common in biographical literature from the period, Hopkins idealized his subject. Understanding the character of both

male and female virtue in eighteenth-century New England, he portrayed Jonathan and Sarah Edwards as model family governors. Nevertheless, this portrayal was drawn from Hopkins's intimate acquaintance with the family. Although more work needs to be done to judge the accuracy of his representation, it remains an important source of information about the operation of the Edwards family and the dynamic among its members.

Running this household required constant labour. As its female head, Sarah ensured that all the activities that contributed to its economy—such as cooking, cleaning, spinning, and gardening—were performed properly. This female labour was integral to successful housekeeping, and Hopkins indicates that Sarah skilfully performed these multifaceted duties. 'She took almost the whole care of the temporal affairs of the family', Hopkins observes, 'without doors and within.' This domestic space was the 'housewife's domain'. As Ulrich explains, 'a woman's environment was the family dwelling and the yard or yards surrounding it', which typically housed a variety of livestock as well as a substantial vegetable garden (Ulrich 1991, 13). Sarah was an efficient manager of her domestic realm. 'She was a good œconomist', Hopkins reports. 'She was laborious and diligent' and 'very careful that nothing should be wasted and lost.' He also praises her cheerful disposition, observing that she would not 'put on a dejected or sour countenance' as she laboured, even when suffering 'under bodily disorders and pains' (Hopkins 1765, 95). Sarah's 'meek and quiet Spirit' likewise impressed George Whitefield when he visited Northampton during the Awakening. Seeing her to be 'such a Help meet for her Husband', he renewed his prayers that God would 'send me a Daughter of Abraham to be my wife' (Whitefield 1741, 46).

Of course, Sarah did not run the household without assistance. Families of the Edwardses' status routinely employed servants to assist the mistress in her household chores, and at times owned slaves. Edwards owned a series of enslaved persons over the course of his lifetime. He supported the institution of slavery as ordained by the Bible, although, as Kenneth P. Minkema has argued, he condemned the slave trade (Minkema 1997, 824; 2002, 38). Only a few years after setting up his household, he travelled to Newport, Rhode Island, the centre of the New England slave trade, to purchase a woman who had been given the name 'Venus'. And evidence indicates that one or two Africans routinely resided in the household to perform the heavy labour necessary to supply the family with their basic needs (Minkema 2002, 26; 1997, 825). Sarah took an active interest in the purchase of these domestic workers. Minkema observes that she 'aggressively searched out potential slaves', for example, directing her husband on one occasion to obtain 'one that is a good Hand at spinning fine Linnen; for she shall have occasion to employ her in that Business, part of the Time' (Minkema 2002, 43; *WJE Online* 32: A65a). These enslaved persons lightened Sarah's daily burden and enhanced her status as the household's female head. By governing not only children but also slaves, who occupied the lowest and most vulnerable position in the family hierarchy, she displayed her skilful ordering of the domestic economy.

As male household head, however, Edwards was ultimately responsible for regulating its operations and controlling its members. To emphasize his manly virtue, Hopkins praised his mentor for maintaining proper domestic order. 'In his Conduct in his Family',

Hopkins observes, 'he practiced that conscientious exactness which was perspicuous in all his Ways.' First, Edwards was master of himself. He 'lived by Rule,' notes Hopkins, 'and herein constantly practiced great Self-denial'. Following the resolutions made in his youth, he strictly regulated his time, his diet, and his tongue. He started his day early, well before sunrise, 'to redeem Time in his Study', and as Hopkins famously reports, 'commonly spent thirteen Hours every Day in his Study'. He also 'was very careful and abstemious in eating and drinking' and kept tight reins on his speech, striving 'never to sin with his Tongue; or to improve it in idle, trivial and impertinent Talk' (Hopkins 1765, 42, 40, 41). Such rigorous self-control was necessary for effective family government.

Edwards displayed his domestic mastery in his relation with each class of dependents comprising his household. Because the spousal relation formed the foundation of an orderly household, Edwards first demonstrated manliness by his comportment toward his wife. 'He maintained a great esteem and regard for his amiable and excellent Consort,' Hopkins writes. 'Much of the tender and kind was expressed in his Conversation with her and conduct towards her.' In turn, she 'paid proper deference to [him], and treated him with decency and respect at all times' (Hopkins 1765, 42–3, 94). This companionate union modelled the Puritan ideal that 'expected marriage to be simultaneously hierarchical and affectionate' (Porterfield 1992, 20). The husband was his wife's governor, but a mature adult man exercised his rule with love. Love was the expression of his ability to govern with rationality and self-control. Loveless headship, on the other hand, betrayed an incapacity for government and led to abuse of power. Husbands are 'bound to love their wives most of all,' counsels Gouge, for authority without 'love will soone turne into tyrannie'. By treating his wife with tenderness and kindness, therefore, Edwards demonstrated his manly virtue and fitness for headship. Likewise, Sarah's affectionate submission to her husband conformed to the role of the virtuous goodwife. However, as the husband's authority was not tyranny, the wife's subjection was not servility, 'for of all degrees wherein there is any difference betwixt person and person, there is the least disparity betwixt man and wife' (Gouge 1622, 351, 271). This near equality positioned Sarah as co-head of the household, commanding her own authority. Having mastered the art of female deference, she earned the right to govern her subordinates in the domestic domain.

The upbringing of the children also exemplified Jonathan and Sarah's domestic partnership. In an orderly Puritan household the father and mother both had a duty to provide what Gouge calls 'provident care' of their children (Gouge 1622, 498). In the Edwards household, the routine nurture of the children was Sarah's responsibility. '[S]he was sensible,' notes Hopkins, that 'the chief care of forming children by government and instruction, naturally lies on mothers'. But as was fitting for the family's female head, she 'was wont to apply to Mr. Edwards for advice and assistance' when the children required a firm male hand. Edwards exercised parental authority in the manly way. According to Hopkins, '[h]e was careful and thorough in the Government of his Children,' expressing self-control and affection in his application of discipline. His approach to childrearing supports the claim that Puritans focused on 'breaking the will' of their offspring (Greven 1977, 35). 'When they first discovered any considerable degree of Will and Stubbornness,' Hopkins observes, 'he would attend to them till he had thoroughly subdued them and

brought them to submit.' Such strict discipline, however, should not require the regular whipping of children. According to early modern childrearing theory, parental discipline ultimately aimed to teach children how to control their own passions. To achieve this goal parents should exercise restraint and love, using corporal punishment only as a last resort. 'Though it was better to be whipped than damned', writes Edmund Morgan, 'it was still better to be persuaded than whipped' (Morgan 1966, 105). Edwards, who wrote extensively on the nature of genuine submission, knew better than most parents that its source was not fear but right affection. Accordingly, he disciplined his children 'with the greatest Calmness, and commonly without striking a Blow'. By controlling his own wilful passions, he 'effectually established his parental Authority, and produced a cheerful Obedience ever after' (Hopkins 1765, 96, 43).

Education of the children was likewise shared jointly. As might be expected, Edwards took the lead in the religious education of his offspring. Hopkins commends Sarah for 'constantly and earnestly' praying for her children, 'even before they were born'. However, as the head of their little church Edwards ensured that all his dependents engaged daily in activities to cultivate their faith and train them in Christian doctrine. He set aside time for family prayers, Bible-reading, and religious instruction in the early morning, before everyone 'entered on the Business of the Day', and ended each day with family prayer. He required the household to maintain strict Sabbath discipline and reserved Saturday evenings for intensive religious instruction, when he would listen to his children recite the Westminster Catechism and question them about the meaning of each doctrine. 'He took much Pains to instruct them in the Principles of Religion', Hopkins notes, 'not merely by taking care that they learned it by Heart; but by leading them into an understanding of the Doctrines therein Taught' (Hopkins 1765, 96, 43-44).

Edwards's regular presence in the home facilitated his role as household head. Although spending long days in his study, he was not an absent patriarch. This study itself expressed the integration of male workspace and female domestic space common in pre-industrial America (Ulrich 1991, 38-9). Some of Edwards's most important work of family government took place in this room. He frequently admitted Sarah into the study to 'converse freely with her on Matters of Religion. And he used commonly to pray with her in his Study, at least once a Day', typically right before bed. He also held individual conferences with his children in the study, whose book-lined walls and imposing desk surely impressed upon the little ones a seriousness of purpose. Moreover, he performed important pastoral work in the study. In times of revival, it 'was throng'd with Persons to lay open their spiritual Concerns to him, and seek his Advice and Direction'. Young people also visited the study, where he would 'pray with them & treat with them in a manner suited to their Years & Circumstances' (Hopkins 1765, 43, 50, 49). Far from being an exclusively male domain, whose door was shut to all but an elite few, this room was the beating heart of his family and his parish.

Edwards was a man of society. His habitual reserve and reluctance to call on his parishioners led some to judge him 'stiff & unsociable', a reputation he had carried since his youth (Hopkins 1765, 49, 41). Attention to his family life, however, reveals a man whose habitat was his home. A model Puritan patriarch, he skilfully governed this little

commonwealth, which buzzed with all the noise and motion of a thriving household enterprise. This domestic space was the environment in which his intellect flourished; it was the ground on which his pastoral ministry was built and from which his theological creativity grew. Sarah and the children, together with an assortment of servants, African slaves, ministerial students, parishioners, itinerant revivalists, and missionaries, formed the external physical reality that embodied his internal mental life.

AN UNCOMMON UNION

In 1758, just as the family was making a fresh start in a new location, a rapid series of events brought their life together to a tragic end. At the beginning of the year Edwards had moved to Princeton as the newly appointed president of the College of New Jersey. Coming after his humiliating dismissal from the Northampton pulpit and his self-imposed exile in the Stockbridge wilderness, this new post was welcome recognition of his many accomplishments as a revivalist and theologian. The first shock came soon after his arrival with word that Edwards's 89-year-old father had died (Dwight 1830, 577). This not unexpected event was soon followed by two more grievous losses. In February both Edwards and his daughter Esther, who had moved to New Jersey some years earlier, received smallpox inoculations in an effort to avoid contracting a life-threatening case of the disease. About a month later, on the 22nd of March, Edwards died from a secondary infection that set in following the treatment, and soon thereafter his daughter died from a similar cause. Sarah was not at her husband's bedside when he died, for she had remained in Stockbridge to prepare the family for the move to New Jersey, but she did not long outlive him. Traveling to Philadelphia in September of that year to care for Esther's two children, she contracted a fatal case of dysentery and died three days short of her late husband's 55th birthday (Hopkins 1765, 80, 88, 93).

This rapid decline is a poignant reminder of the fragility of family life in colonial New England. Although the Edwardses had mostly been spared the losses that commonly afflicted families in this time period, they were well prepared when death struck. Their Christian faith counselled all believers to live their lives in preparation for death. Recognizing his time was near, Edwards conveyed to his family the appropriate spiritual directions. He asks his daughter to 'give my kindest love to my dear wife,' and to encourage her to 'submit cheerfully to the will of God.' Addressing his children who, he bluntly observes, 'are now like to be left fatherless,' he instructs them 'to seek a Father, who will never fail you' (quoted in Hopkins 1765, 81). Sarah, who had cultivated over a lifetime a habit of submission to her husband and her God, responded in kind to this difficult blow. 'O,' she exclaims, 'what a legacy my husband, and your father, has left us! We are all given to God; and there I am, and love to be.' Daughter Susannah similarly embraced her father's counsel, praying 'that we, who are young in this family, may be awakened and excited to call more earnestly on God, that he would be our Father and friend forever' (quoted in Dwight 1830, 581). This unsentimental approach to death was a hallmark of the traditional religious worldview that had guided the Edwards family since its inception.

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Love, another hallmark of this faith, tempered these stern last words. On his deathbed, Edwards also conveyed a message of comfort and hope to his wife. '[I]t seems to me to be the will of God, that I must shortly leave you,' he observes, but just as Jesus promised not to leave his disciples comfortless, he reminded Sarah that their separation will not be long lasting: '[T]he uncommon union, which has so long subsisted between us, has been of such a nature, as I trust is spiritual, and therefore will continue forever,' he assures her (quoted in Hopkins 1765, 81). The phrase 'uncommon union' referenced more than the exceptional nature of their domestic partnership. Edwards had regularly used the term 'common' in his theological writings as a synonym for 'natural' and to describe a quality lacking the redemptive influences of supernatural grace. Accordingly, his uncommon union with Sarah was one formed by more than the natural love between husband and wife; it was also spiritual, an image of the eternal union between Christ and his church. As he lay dying Edwards undoubtedly contemplated the consummation of this heavenly union with Christ, which he hoped soon to experience. This was the union that he trusted would last forever, and that he longed to share once his wife was glorified by Christ in heaven.

In these final moments Edwards may also have sensed that this union was uncommon in a more ordinary sense of the word. The dynamics of family life in colonial New England were changing in the mid-eighteenth century. During this period, a family structure based on passion and sentiment began to supplant the traditional structure based on headship and mutual duty. Although Jonathan and Sarah formed their household during this transitional moment, their mutual commitment to the traditional Puritan worldview anchored it firmly in the older hierarchical model of family relations. Nevertheless, the emerging model influenced their domestic life in decisive ways. New ideas about gender roles created conflicts over family government that contributed to Edwards's dismissal from Northampton. In addition, evangelical idealization of female piety hastened the reconstruction of gender relations and the transformation of family life. Edwards's depiction of his wife's religious transports as a 'pure and unmixed' exemplar of genuine religious affections represented the leading edge of this change (*WJE* 4: 341). Her extraordinary piety likely enhanced the uncommon nature of their domestic union, but it also signalled the coming demise of the very social location in which it had flourished.

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CHAPTER 2

PARISH MINISTRY

HARRY S. STOUT

FOR decades scholars of Jonathan Edwards have concentrated on his theological and philosophical writings. But for his contemporaries and followers such as Samuel Hopkins and Joseph Bellamy his most enduring qualities were as a biblical exegete and pastor. Philosophy was central to Edwards to be sure but only insofar as it stood in service to his vocational identification as a pastor whose chief concern was the saving of souls. To this end he would bend and shape his inherited Puritan dogma to speak to a radically different eighteenth-century audience. This essay will be particularly concerned with Edwards the pastor to four congregations in New York, Bolton, Connecticut, Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and, especially, Northampton, Massachusetts.

BACKGROUND AND EARLY YEARS: NEW YORK AND CONNECTICUT

In exploring Edwards's career as a pastor, it is clear that he came with some deep-set emotional and personal problems. Some of these he inherited from his father, Timothy, the long-standing pastor of East Windsor, Connecticut. While growing up in his father's parish Edwards observed the trials and tribulations of a colonial pastor first-hand. Timothy was ordained in 1694 as East Windsor's first minister (Minkema 1988, 6, 15–147). He would arrive with his precocious wife Esther Stoddard (daughter of Solomon) and remain there for the rest of his long life. He enjoyed some success as a preacher, delivering accomplished, if not inspiring, sermons to his congregation. But in his personal relations with his congregation his life descended into frequent and acrimonious conflicts, most often over his salary. As a pastor he assumed aristocratic authority over his listeners. He was, in the famous words of the Rev. Samuel Stone, 'a speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent democracy'. But his congregation thought otherwise and held the purse strings to leverage their own authority, thus setting the

stage for unending confrontation and resentment. Timothy often complained of low salary, 'country pay' in green corn, and bad bills of credit leaving him perpetually in need.

Besides his salary issues, Timothy also fought with his congregation over his endorsement of the Saybrook Platform of 1708, which created a Presbyterian form of church government aimed at tilting authority in the direction of the minister rather than the congregation. Powerful regional synods and councils could override local autonomy, which previously governed the 'Congregational Way', whereby no outside authority was superior to the local, sovereign congregation. Perhaps unwisely, Timothy chose to take the new powers created in the Saybrook Platform as a rationale for granting himself an absolute veto over church admission and discipline and sole authority to determine the agenda of congregational meetings. Predictably his congregation bitterly resented what they perceived as a raw power grab in violation of Congregational privileges leading to a standoff in which Timothy denied the Lord's Supper to his congregation for three years.

Jonathan grew up in the midst of all this and it would shape his understanding of the ministry in colonial New England. At the same time, there was never a doubt that he would follow his father's steps into the ministry. Congregational strife together with his own prodigious intellect led him to avoid socializing and to prefer the abstract engagement with scripture, doctrine, and philosophy to interpersonal relationships with his congregations. Had there been a profession of 'public intellectual', Edwards might well have chosen that path, concentrating his efforts on theological and philosophical pursuits. But such a profession would not emerge until the nineteenth century, leaving ministry as the closest approximation to a life of the mind. He was a British colonist his entire life and absorbed the conservative and aristocratic bearing of a social superior.

Despite the advantages of education and powerful family connections, Edwards periodically suffered bouts of depression and 'melancholy,' that rendered his pastoral ministry all the more difficult. Prior to his return to Yale as a tutor in 1724, his 'Diary' and 'Resolutions' reveal recurrent depression and efforts to overcome it through sheer will power—efforts that would prove unequal to the challenge (*WJE* 16: 753–86). Part of his problem was certainly dispositional and would follow him at points through his life, but part of it was also spiritual, driven by uncertainty about his conversion experience. As late as 1725 and September 1726 he reported a 'low, sunk estate' that had persisted for almost three years (Tracy 1980, 60; Marsden 2003, 101–13). Edwards would find some relief in preaching. While witnessing to members of his congregation he was, in a sense, preaching to himself and finding some solace in the process. Only after his role in ministry became formalized would his efforts move from preoccupation with himself to a more outer-directed concentration on his congregation.

Before he arrived in Northampton in 1726, Edwards enjoyed some experience as a pastor with brief sojourns in New York City and Bolton, Connecticut. In New York, Edwards preached to a small congregation that had split from a larger Presbyterian church in the city. Little is known about the circumstances of his ministry there where he preached from September 1722 to April 1723, though he registered no unhappiness

and appeared to have a good relationship with the people. The circumstances of his leaving remain largely hidden, though the shadow of his overly protective father loomed large. From New York, Timothy arranged for his son to come closer to home (and supervision) in late 1722 with a pulpit in Bolton, Connecticut, a small town close to East Windsor. From his 'Diary', it is clear that Edwards's departure from New York was unhappy on two counts—leaving New York behind, and arriving in Bolton, where he was painfully close to his father's oversight. Whatever his misgivings, Edwards agreed to preach in Bolton 'on trial' and soon signed a settlement agreement on November 11. His unhappiness with the appointment is clearly evident in the fact that he did not even mention it in his 'Diary'. Edwards apparently appreciated Bolton less than his father (or perhaps because of his father) and his ministry there was also short-lived. He returned to Yale as a tutor for two years before his call to Northampton. Those years too were darkened by the responsibilities he assumed and the lack of a rector, leaving many of the administrative responsibilities to Jonathan. The appointment of his former mentor Elisha Williams as rector did little to ease the anomie Edwards endured. While at Yale he became gravely ill and never really resumed his duties as tutor. By the time he was invited to Northampton, doubts plagued him, after such a lacklustre series of pastoral experiences, with little resolution in sight.

Early Northampton Years

When Edwards arrived in Northampton, he found himself junior colleague to a legend, the 83-year-old Solomon Stoddard. It is impossible to understand Edwards's complicated relationship with his Northampton congregation without understanding his relationship with Grandfather Stoddard (Marsden 2003, 114–32; Gura 2005, 47–69). Outside of Boston, Stoddard was probably the best-known pastor and revivalist in New England. He was also a skilled polemicist who battled with Boston's esteemed preacher Increase Mather and his son Cotton. Stoddard redefined cardinal principles of ministerial authority, church membership, and the Lord's Supper that had prevailed for two generations in colonial New England. On the question of ministerial authority Stoddard questioned the traditional power of church members and set himself as sovereign of equal status with clerical synods.

In her classic biography, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor*, Patricia Tracy recognized that twenty-one years after Stoddard's death, when Jonathan was locked in battle with his congregation, Stoddard 'and not his grandson Edwards, was still the Patriarch. Edwards's [pastoral] career was a drama played out—in his own mind and that of his congregation—on the stage of Solomon Stoddard's Northampton' (Tracy 1980, 11). For example, Edwards followed his grandfather's advice about encouraging revivals, but he also was criticized by old Stoddardean converts for trying to change the terms of church admission.

Northampton did not meet the model of the typical seventeenth-century 'New England Town' described by historian Kenneth Lockridge as a 'Christian Utopian Closed Corporate

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Community' (Lockridge 1970, 16). It was settled in 1654 above the rich meadowlands of the Connecticut River adjoining present day Hadley in western Massachusetts. The founders, though nominally 'Puritan', were drawn to the area less by any religious consideration of forming a Puritan congregation than by travellers' accounts of abundant tillable land and (for a time) ease of trade with local Indian tribes. The town rapidly grew as a trade and marketing centre for the Connecticut River Valley and soon produced wealthy merchants known as the 'river gods' of the Valley.

The settlers of Northampton did not hire their first minister, Eleazar Mather (son of the esteemed patriarch Richard Mather of Dorchester) until 1658, and the church was not formally 'covenanted' until June 1661. Mather had little success with his congregants and fought openly with them over the Half-Way Covenant established by the Synod of 1662 whereby the children of second generation parents who were not formal church members could be baptized and placed under the discipline of the congregation. Despite Mather's opposition, Northampton became one of the first churches in Massachusetts Bay to adopt the new, more liberal polity. When Mather died in 1669 the congregation hired a new minister, Solomon Stoddard who, after a three-year trial, was ordained in September 1672. Stoddard was an enthusiastic supporter of the Half-Way Covenant and soon endorsed even more radical views on the Lord's Supper. After 1677 Stoddard stopped distinguishing between full and half-way members and listed all members 'in full communion' without any vote by the congregation. All he required as a 'historical faith' constituted by 'a knowledge of Principles of Religion and not scandalous by open sinful living' (Taylor). In his first major treatise on *The Safety of Appearing at the Day of Judgment in the Righteousness of Christ*, published in 1687, Stoddard questioned whether any human could look into another's soul for evidence of saving grace. Without any possibility of certainty regarding another's saving faith there was no reason why anyone living a scandal free life couldn't participate in the Lord's Supper. As a consequence, the requirement of conversion for participation in the Lord's Supper made no sense. Instead of limiting participation to the 'visible saints' (an impossible judgment), Stoddard shifted the meaning of the Lord's Supper from a sacrament limited or 'fenced' around the saints to a 'converting ordinance' that proved to be the means of salvation rather than the consequence.

In yet another power grab, Stoddard exercised a veto on church admissions, while at the same time listing virtually every inhabitant over fourteen as a church member. By bringing virtually every adult into the church membership (and discipline), Stoddard effectively enhanced his own power as pastor.

To complete his assault on traditional New England Way, Stoddard argued in *The Doctrine of Instituted Churches* that the church was not circumscribed by individual church covenants that limited membership within communities. Instead, he argued, the true basis of any church was defined by geography—a proposition more akin to the parish system in the Church of England where everyone within a specific border was part of a 'society of saints' joined together by geography for purposes of worship and sacrament, akin to the original Congregationalist blueprint. The effect of these revisions

was virtually to scuttle the whole idea of Congregational polity as defined in the *Cambridge Platform* of 1648. Instead of church membership depending on the judgment of the members it was left solely to the pastor alone. Overseeing the local congregations would be a Presbyterian-like synod of regional ministers empowered to rule over individual congregations.

Alongside Stoddard's authoritarianism was another, more pastoral, side that emphasized highly emotional preaching and evangelism. With one hand Stoddard could insist on the aristocratic prerogatives of the minister, while with the other issue impassioned sermons that combined terrifying descriptions of the eternity of hell's torments with emotional appeals to the hearts and affections of his listeners as they 'closed with Christ' in saving faith. For Stoddard, as later for Edwards, experience became the ultimate criterion of true spirituality.

Stoddard's highly emotional preaching became paradigmatic for other preachers. He codified his homiletics in his 1714 *Guide to Christ*, a manual really for other preachers to master the art of guiding souls through the process of conversion. In all, Stoddard presided over five 'harvests' in which large numbers of souls were brought into the church (*WJE* 4: 146).

Stoddard's innovations in church membership and sacraments were resisted by the older generation of church members in his congregation until their deaths in the 1680s. Thereafter his innovations won widespread approval among the rising generation and youth who relished challenging their elders. The young people coming of age in the early eighteenth century faced serious challenges not encountered by their parents. Most notable was the scarcity of land and lack of unallocated land good for farming. Young people could no longer be certain of a living off the soil or land ownership. The rising generation had only two options for land of their own: inheritance or purchase. With some of the longest life expectancies on the face of the earth, colonial children faced long waits before their parents would pass an inheritance on to them. The lack of currency meant many lacked any means to purchase lands of their own, transforming the face of families and dependencies. Many of them delayed marriage and remained 'adolescent' dependents well into adulthood. Without land they were forced to remain in their parents' home and under parental direction well into their twenties and early thirties. It was in this environment that Stoddard's policy of open communion and expanded church membership allowed young people to have some measure of autonomy in lives that were otherwise dominated by authoritarian, long-lived parents.

By the time that Stoddard died in February 1729 the small village of Northampton had grown from fifty-five families in 1661 to two hundred families. Social stratification grew rapidly as well so that by 1700, the richest ten per cent of male inhabitants owned a quarter of all the land, while the poorest ten per cent held less than two per cent of the land. (Tracy 1980, 38, 46). Increasingly the distance between rich and poor widened, creating greater inequality, and with it, greater psychological tension and conflict between the haves and the have nots. Stoddard was clearly among the haves and stood as the thirteenth largest landowner with an estate of 78 acres plus £1126 in personal property.

With Edwards's appointment as successor to the much-loved patriarch Stoddard he entered a vocation fraught with opportunity and danger. At that time he was undoubtedly in awe of his grandfather and a relative stranger to him. There is no evidence of a close relationship before his ordination. Clearly the town appointed him for his abilities and not primarily for his connections. He was, as his later biographer Sereno Dwight Edwards noted, 'a young man of uncommon promise' (Tracy 1980, 51). By 1727, Edwards had already demonstrated the awe-inspiring intellectual acuity of a rising star who had mastered the physics of Isaac Newton and the epistemology of John Locke in advance of many of his senior peers who were unfamiliar with the 'New Learning' of the Enlightenment (Marsden 2003, 59–81; Zakai 2010; Goodman 2015, 8–47).

Upon succeeding Stoddard as the pastor of Northampton, Edwards's life fell into a familiar pattern common to eighteenth-century New England clergy. By 1729, Edwards knew the town well and knew the challenges he faced succeeding 'Pope' Stoddard at the relatively young age of 26. In his treatise *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, published in late 1735, he provided a rosy—perhaps overly rosy—description of the town of Northampton in ways that would further the mystique of his grandfather. The town, he observed, was filled with people who were 'sober, and orderly', and largely spared the theological heterodoxy that plagued many other New England towns. This he attributed both to Northampton's remove from corrupting seaports and to Stoddard's strict enforcement of orthodox doctrine. Both of these factors contributed to a state of relative harmony without the divisions that overtook other communities like Dedham or Salem. In fact, Northampton was not spared divisions and quarrels, but for the young pastor eager to engraft himself onto the legendary persona of Stoddard, Edwards chose to see Northampton in its best light. Years later, bitter disputes with his congregation would cause him to change this bright portrait, but in the beginning he was eager to create a harmonious picture that he hoped would come to define social and ecclesiastical realities in the larger community (*WJE* 4: 144–5).

Several paragraphs into the *Faithful Narrative*, Edwards abruptly shifted keys and moved from the town's ideal harmony under Stoddard to a denunciation of the defects he found upon his arrival. Despite its lofty origins, Northampton was lapsing into a state of moral and spiritual degeneracy just as he inherited the pulpit. Instead of spiritual zeal and saving faith, Edwards found 'extraordinary dullness', social conflict, a 'licentiousness' 'among the youth of the town'. In particular, he complained, 'Many of them very much addicted to night-walking, and frequenting the tavern, and lewd practices, wherein some, by their example exceedingly corrupted others.' During evening 'frolics', he continued, the youth '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' (*WJE* 4: 146). Edwards would make it his mission to bring the young people into conformity with the rule of godliness. The sources of this misbehaviour were located in a clear lack of piety. Though loathe to criticize his grandfather in the early years, Edwards implied that declension had set in among the young people as Stoddard grew old and disengaged from the day-to-day habits of the youth, thereby

becoming 'not so able to observe them' (WJE 4: 146). Having firmly surmounted his bout with melancholy and a physical breakdown in 1729, Edwards dedicated the years 1730–5 to evangelism, in particular of the youth. Beyond misbehaviour, Edwards was committed to continuing his grandfather's crusade to battle the 'liberalism' of many clergy who were departing from the strict orthodoxy of the 'New England Way'.

In his early ministry Edwards followed his grandfather's strategy of open communion to turn the sacrament into a 'converting ordinance'. The intent was to bring as many inhabitants into the church and then, through evangelistic preaching and proper doctrinal instruction, to bring them to a conversion experience and saving faith. In the meantime, he urged his listeners to act as if they had had a conversion experience and to control the sinful impulses of their hearts. But the results were disappointing and Edwards could not help admonishing his congregation for ignoring Christ's invitation to the communion table. Throughout Edwards scrupulously followed traditional Reformed assertions that faith and not meritorious works was the only true road to salvation. In the end, Edwards even more than his predecessors would stress the fallen nature of humankind and their absolute dependence on a sovereign God. In a 1734 published sermon entitled *A Divine and Supernatural Light*, Edwards insisted that saving faith was imparted to sinful humanity through the supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit, without which there was no possibility of salvation. The sermon is notable on many accounts, not least for its lyrical qualities that characterized so much of Edwards's preaching. Edwards was particularly taken with the sensational psychology of Locke's epistemology and the word 'sense' overwhelmed his pulpit language. As represented in *A Divine and Supernatural Light*, conversion entailed a new and 'true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the Word of God'. The truly converted, he asserted, 'don't merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart' (WJE 17: 413).

To judge from church membership lists in the early 1730s, Edwards's preaching met with little success. Casting about for the causes of his failure, Edwards began to rethink his grandfather's policies and consider introducing more exclusive requirements that would make them more sensible of their fallen estate and their dependence on the Word (and authority) of God's messenger. Fifteen years would pass before Edwards translated these thoughts into firm policies, but the seeds of uncertainty were planted in the early resistance of his congregation to his conversionist preaching.

Stoddard's innovations were only part of the problem Edwards faced. Like Stoddard, Edwards was alarmed by the steady progress of 'Arminianism' in the 'land of light'. A new generation of liberally trained clergy were rejecting the strict doctrines of Calvinism in favour of a softer theological reality premised on human ability and the essential goodness of humankind. Arminians rejected the strict doctrine of predestination and affirmed the possibility of universal salvation. They believed that in order for God rightly to condemn sinners for their unbelief they had to be free to unbelieve without any determining action on God's part. In other words, Arminianism affirmed the liberty of humankind while delimiting the sovereignty of God.

The Revival Years

To combat Arminianism and spiritual dullness, Edwards preached a sermon series on *Justification by Faith Alone* in the winter of 1734/5. The effect of these sermons led many in his congregation to take a more critical censure of Arminianism because of ‘fear that God was about to withdraw from the land, and that we should be given up to heterodoxy and corrupt principles’—corrupt principles that challenged the sovereignty of God (WJE 4: 148). Those sermons together with his strictures against godless living and affirmation of a ‘new sense of the heart’ led to the most surprising consequence of his young ministry: a full-fledged revival that would bring hundreds into church membership. By spring 1735 the stark fears and bright hopes that Edwards forcefully brought home in his preaching led to a fever of enthusiasm, especially among the youth. All were asking with fear and trepidation: What must I do to be saved? The answer: justification by faith in God’s sovereign grace alone. Edwards’s earnest preaching reached receptive ears who found Arminianism unsatisfying. For Edwards human ability was of no use. Only when sinners confronted their own complete inability to save themselves would God’s grace reach through their sinful souls and draw them to Himself. Within six months, 160 new communicants were added to the membership roster. Once drawn into the church, baptisms occurred with regularity. In contrast with other parishes, the new members in Northampton were significantly younger than other congregations, reflecting Edwards’s strategy of focusing on the youth (Winiarski 2017, 73, 110).

Soon passions inflamed by Edwards’s preaching and his local clerical imitators spread throughout the Connecticut Valley. A new generation of inhabitants uprooted from traditional habits and norms found in the highly individualistic and emotional imprecations of the revivalists, led by Edwards, a new register that spoke to their social and spiritual alienation. Not surprisingly the hearers most affected by the gospel calls were the ones most threatened by the changing world they inhabited. Patricia Tracy has demonstrated that the most responsive to revival preaching were young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six—a phenomenon that she plausibly attributes to a crisis of adolescence brought on by socioeconomic changes literally reshaping the eighteenth-century landscape and cutting young people off from traditional vocations and community life. Conversion offered a familiar solution to unfamiliar problems previous generations had not encountered (Tracy 1980, 91–3).

The hidden drivers of heightened anxiety among the rising generation were explosive population growth and acute land shortage. The eighteenth century witnessed the beginnings of striking population growth. Historical demographers working from painstaking examinations of vital records in villages and towns throughout Europe and America have documented a demographic revolution. Simple replacement of the population from generation to generation gave way to sustained, geometric expansion in population size. Improved nutrition and more effective control of diseases and plagues were part of it. But the chief cause was a drastic reduction in child mortality. In North America the population doubled every generation through natural increase

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