

Running Head: JONATHAN EDWARDS

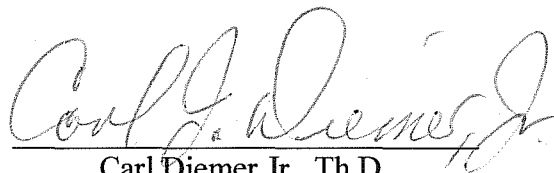
Jonathan Edwards' Life: More Than a Sermon

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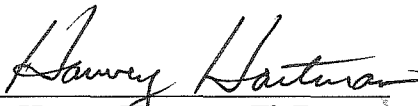
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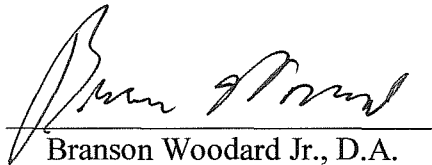
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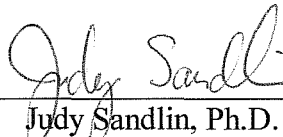
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Abstract

Jonathan Edwards, born, (1703-1758), was a great man. He is often known only for a sermon, "*Sinners in the Aands of an Angry God.*" This is unfortunate because followers of Christ should know this man's life. This paper focuses on Jonathan Edwards as a godly family man and on his missiological work.

An emphasis is not carefully analyzed by many. The research for this essay originated from the author's desire to know more about Mr. Edwards. The texts studied are *The works of Jonathan Edwards*, along with many scholarly books and essays. The main modern books used are from Perry Miller and Elizabeth Dodds. All in all, the following research adds clarity and context to Edwards' legacy and to its enduring value to Christians.

Jonathan Edwards' Life: More Than a Sermon

Introduction

Even after growing up in the church as a child, the writer did not discover the name of Jonathan Edwards until the beginning of his high school freshman year. It is quite unfortunate that Edwards, who was instrumental in changing the face of Christianity in this world, was never mentioned in the present writer's church. Edwards was taught in school when the English class discussed the Puritans. After almost bashing the Puritans for the witch trials, the class looked at the sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." When the discussion was finished, so was the studying of work by Edwards. This approach seems typical for most Christians. When Edwards is discussed, all they know is his sermon. Piper states, "Identifying Jonathan Edwards with 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' is like identifying Jesus with the woes against Chorazin and Bethsaida. This is a fraction of the whole, and it is not the main achievement" (Piper 1998, 83). A pagan teacher who seemed not to know much concerning the God Edwards was preaching about taught the class. It is a shame that this amazing sermon, about which Edwards fasted for three days, was not mentioned in Sunday school or church, but by a pagan teacher. Of course, the teacher was just teaching from the perspective of this sermon as a piece of literature. Vaughn writes on this issue:

For the instructor of American literature, the question of how to teach the Puritans often becomes one of whether to teach them. Veterans of this struggle know well how students resist these earliest figures in the canon, and the more that canon is exploded and expanded, the more difficult it becomes to meaningfully link the Puritans to later writers, such that, in doggedly insisting on including these 'ancestors' in our syllabi, we may seem even to ourselves to be teaching them out of little more than historical inertia. Thus, our students dislike the Puritans because they cannot see themselves in them, and our own efforts to broaden the landscape of early writing serve only to further discredit these least easily accessible figures in our national literature. Perhaps no figure better

exemplifies this quandary than Jonathan Edwards. Popularly known for a single, and unrepresentative text--the paradigmatic hellfire and brimstone sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"--Edwards has long been known (to more sympathetic readers, at any rate) for possessing one of the most supple and comprehensive minds of his era (Vaughn 2001, 1).

Neither the class in high school nor the teaching was enjoyable, however, the occasion did provide the current writer with a first time encounter with a special person and his ministry. This encounter would make a lifelong impression on him.

Jonathan Edwards' sermons were intriguing, as were other available literature by him. He is intriguing because he approaches God differently than do many other people today. Throughout his whole life, in all circumstances, Jonathan Edwards persevered because of his relationship with God. Not only was he a great preacher, theologian, and philosopher, Jonathan Edwards was much more. This paper is designed to show that Jonathan Edwards was an amazing, determined man of God, a family man, a missionary and one deserving more visibility in Christian churches.

His Initial Stages

His childhood. His early years reflect a clear and consistent context for spiritual formation. Jonathan Edwards was born October 5, 1703 in East Windsor, Massachusetts, was part of a pious family. His father was Reverend Timothy Edwards and his mother was Ester Stoddard Edwards, who was the daughter of Reverend Solomon Stoddard (Edwards, xi). This family was grounded in the Puritanism: "Esteem for old persons as indubitable saints was an important Puritan social concept, and Edwards grew up in a family that was earnest in its elder-veneration" (Minkema 2001, 675). Because of his upbringing, Edwards was not ignorant of the things of God even from his childhood. His diary and other books written about him, show that at a young age, he made resolutions in

his life that would help him to live more like Christ. He did not make just one or two; he made seventy. These resolutions were not unimportant records, but even later in life he regarded them as “great principles of the spiritual life” (Edwards 1998, xxii).

Not only was Edwards involved with the things of the Lord at a young age in nature, but his intense theological education also began early in his life. At age thirteen he acquired a respectable knowledge of “the three learned languages,” Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and entered Collegiate School of Connecticut (afterwards Yale College). He graduated at the head of his class and stayed in school for two years longer for the study of Divinity (Warfield 1912). To understand more accurately the way he watched over his family requires a short history of his childhood.

Throughout his childhood, nature amazed Edwards, and for his age, he had a great understanding of it. Parkes states:

Two ideas at a young age took possession of him and dominated his life: the idea that the universe was a single closely-knit system, in which even the smallest atoms performed a necessary function; and the idea that the universe, and that the God who made it, were beautiful (Parkes 1979, 36).

Beginning young, Jonathan was an ardent student of books and natural phenomena. But his upbringing and his observation of God in nature did not make him a Christian. Being a Christian is a personal relationship with Christ:

Like most sensitive children in religious environments, he had for a time a morbidly precocious interest in religion. At the age of eight he was affected by a revival in his father’s congregation, and for many months used to say his prayers 5 times a day; he also built a booth in a swampy place in the woods on the hill above his father’s house, and prayed there with two other boys. These performances gave him much pleasure. But after a while he lost interest in the next world, and stopped saying his prayers. However, he continued to be terrified of thunderstorms, which to all New Englanders were a sign that God was angry (Parkes 1979, 35).

His conversion. With today's doctrine of salvation hardly consisting of a holy God and the gospel, conversion has become one of convenience with no thought. That is why Edwards' conversion is unusual for today. His was of his mind; his thoughts and affections changed which brought about a change in his life. In his diary he puts his conversion like this:

From my childhood up, my mind has been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life; and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. But never could give an account how, or by what means, I was thus convinced, not in the least imagining at the time, nor a long time after, that there was any extraordinary influence of God's Spirit in it; but only that now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it. However, my mind rested in it; and it put an end to all those cavils and objections. And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, with respect to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that day to this (Edwards 1998, xii).

His youth. After his conversion of heart and mind, Jonathan Edwards was totally devoted to the Word of God and to prayer. Although young, he seemed to have an understanding of important things in life. Not only was he great at things of religion, but he was also quite the passionate philosopher. Parkes states, "Stimulated by his reading of Locke, the fourteen-year old boy began on his own account a series of notes on philosophical problems. The first was a definition of 'excellency' so long and elaborate that we may suppose it to have been frequent subject of meditation" (Parkes 1979, 52). It is difficult to grasp how much this young man understood. He was certainly above his age in learning. Parkes also states about this boy, "To the young dreamer, walking alone in the fields, the whole universe was a single harmony, the whole universe was beautiful" (Parkes 1979, 53). Not only did he see the universe as beautiful, but he "used the

Newtonian theory to prove that if the smallest atom were misplaced, the whole universe would, in the course of infinite time, be thrown into confusion; hence it must have had an all-wise designer” (Parkes 1979, 53).

Pastor

Edwards had to grow up quickly which most youths had to do during this time period. This time was not one in which the youth chose their career until their mid twenties. One studied for his career when young. This is also seen in Edwards’ life, because after schooling he pastored for a while in New York but then he was ordained, and installed at Northampton 15 February, 1727 (Warfield 1912). First Congregational Church, Northampton was the largest and most influential church outside of Boston and his grandfather was pastor (*The Life of Jonathan Edwards* 2002, 1).

Family Man

Although he hardly receives any credit, Edwards was a great family man, an excellent model for today’s father. Five months after Edwards’ ordination he was married to Sarah Pierrepont. The wedding took place in New Haven on February 15, 1727 (Hosier 1999), and the marriage produced eleven children - three boys and eight girls. “It was felt by Puritans that a happy home was one of the truest proofs of Christianity, and in that respect the Edwards home was exceptionally outstanding” (Hosier 1999, 57). He spent time with his children even though he would spend 13 to 14 hours a day studying. With the help of Sarah, he instilled spiritual values in the children and showed them how to walk the true walk of a Christian. Dodds (who was not biased toward Edwards, which is clearly seen in the title of her book, *Marriage to a difficult man*) says about Edwards that “the mythic picture of him is of the stern theologian. He

was, in fact, a tender lover and a father whose children seemed genuinely fond of him” (Dodds 1971, 7). Here is more indication of Edwards’ effectiveness as a family man.

Hosier suggests:

Jonathan and Sarah’s children adored them, and it was noted by many that they rarely had to punish one of their brood. An hour was spent with his family each evening, before the children went to bed and he returned to his study. It was not an hour of devotions so much as a time of good conversation in which everyone participated (Hosier 1999, 58).

Although he was not able to spend many hours with his family, he was still able to keep his eyes on their lives. This was accomplished by spending quality time with them. In *The works of Jonathan Edwards* the editor Mr. Dwight wrote that Edwards “kept a watchful eye over his children that he might admonish them of the first wrong step, and direct them in the right way” (Edwards, cixxxvi).

For twenty-three years Edwards preached at Northampton and while there he practiced what he preached. During his farewell sermon to his church which he gave after being dismissed from them (which will be discussed later in this paper), he chose to make the following point:

Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by his rules. And family education and order are some of the chief of the means of grace. If these fail, all other means are likely to prove ineffectual. If these are duly maintained, all the means of grace will be likely to prosper and be successful (Edwards, ccvi).

Even at the end of his last sermon, instead of anger and mean words, he was so concerned with family, because he was a man who loved his family and knew of its utmost importance.

To understand this great father and husband requires insight into the values and commitments of his wife. The Puritans understood, the importance of their marital bond.

Edwards had an undying love for Sarah and “in the last moments of Edwards’ life he did not speak about theology. He spoke of Sarah and their ‘uncommon union’” (Dodds 1971, 11). Elizabeth Dodds also pointed out about the marriage of the Puritans that it “was not the bloodless ones we now mistakenly associate with the word ‘Puritan.’ Alienation from the body was a Victorian aberration. The real Puritans loved well and were not ashamed to enjoy it” (Dodds 1971, 24). Dodds also quoted Samuel Hopkins about the family and their love. He said, “no person of discernment could be conversant in the family without observing and admiring the perfect harmony and mutual love and esteem that subsisted between them” (Dodds 1971, 26).

Sarah was a Proverbs 31 lady. She was a strong woman who had the ability to take care of all the children, her husband and (lastly) herself. She was a woman who did ordinary tasks but with style. Allen states, “As a minister’s wife Mrs. Edwards fulfilled the somewhat exigent ideal which the ways of a Puritan minister demanded” (Allen 1889, 47). Dodds mentioned this women in a high favor when she stated:

She was the kind of woman who took the trouble to tie her hair with a ribbon for breakfast when many wives came down tousled; who spent an extra minute to stamp a design on a block of home-churned butter; who knew how to give a flourish to simple dishes with parsley, spearmint, or sage, all grown in a square of herbs by the kitchen door; who, when she had a bowl of peas to shell, would take it out into the sunshine to garden (Dodds 1971, 31).

This woman had to be amazing, because Mr. Edwards was busy all the day long, with sermons on Sunday and Thursday, all of which were long. Jonathan had to have a special woman because she had to be able to do many things. Samuel Hopkins, who was a family friend, stated, “It was a happy circumstance that he could trust everything...to care of Mrs. Edwards with entire safety and with undoubting confidence” (Dodds 1971, 34). He went on to describe Mrs. Edwards: “She was a most judicious and faithful

mistress of a family, habitually industrious, a sound economist, managing her household affairs with diligence and discretion...and rendering everything in the family pleasant” (Allen 1889, 47). After years of marriage one would think that the mundane and repetition of life would create a stagnant environment for the Edwards’, but this was not the case. Elizabeth Dodds writes after marriage comes familiarity and for the Edwards couple, “familiarity bred respect. The real test of feeling of one person for another is in the daily encounters...This period of homely testing disclosed to the couple that they were permanently committed to one another” (Dodds 1971, 32).

Mrs. Edwards was a great support for Jonathan, as all wives should be for their husbands. It is something beautiful about marriage when each partner can lean on the other for the tangible support needed to endure a hardship. She was a woman on whom Edwards leaned with his speech, which is naturally cathartic. For most people being able to talk about something calms and heals their hurt. Dodds wrote, “All of Edwards’ heights and depths were brought to his wife...Her husband treated her as a fully mature being--as a person whose conversation entertained him, whose spirit nourished his own religious life, whose presence gave him repose” (Dodds 1971, 35).

In regard to the care of the children, Mrs. Edwards modeled Christian womanhood. To have eight girls must at times have been a challenge, but she taught them the essentials of their time. These children grew up being taught manners. Allen states, “She addressed herself to the reason of the children, was in the habit of speaking but once, and was cheerfully obeyed. It was the children’s manner to rise when their parents entered the room and remain standing until they were seated” (Allen 1889, 49). The girls were able to knit, embroider, and quilt. Each girl was able to grow in her ability

at housework. As often is the case with children, each excelled in her own capacities. “Ester gardened. Mary claimed that she was the champion maker of chocolate. The family consumed this treat in such quantities that most of Edwards’ shopping lists contained a reminder to buy chocolate” (Dodds 1971, 46).

These children were not only taught how to do house chores; Jonathan valued education, and put an important emphasis on it with his children. Because of the education he received, he had the same high standards for his children. Girls were not to be educated during the period in which Edwards lived, but unlike most people his girls were educated. He “expected all the children to know Jewish and Church history, the chronology of Biblical events, and how to correlate passages in the Old and New Testaments” (Dodds 1971, 47). Within this learning came questions and a child “never knew when, at the dinner table, he would be called upon to give a crisp answer to some such question as “How long was it after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar until Babylon was destroyed by Cyrus?” (Dodds 1971, 47). Because of their upbringing based upon their father’s intimate relationship with God, they were taught to fear God.

Edwards cared so much for his children that he saw the necessity of spending time with them. Although he was a busy man, “an hour was spent with his family each evening, before the children went to bed and he returned to his study. It was not an hour of devotions so much as a time of good conversation in which everyone participated” (Hosier 1999, 58). Edwards was also ahead of his time by letting his daughters travel with him on preaching engagements. “The Northampton ladies marveled at how much each girl was allowed to travel. Edwards tried to take a daughter with him on each trip, letting the child ride on the pillion--the cushion behind the saddle” (Dodds 1971, 50). In

regard to having so many daughters, Miller states, “The marriage was a true and a deep one; with eleven children, they were an affectionate family, where a preponderance of girls made for strain, but where Edwards was lord of the household and utterly adored” (Miller 1977, 202).

The importance of family is seen not only in the time which Edwards spent outdoors with his children, but what was also done inside the “small church,” the house. On Saturday nights the family “sang a psalm together, had prayers, and went upstairs to bed” (Dodds 1971, 53). The spiritual aspect of the children’s life was crucial to Edwards. Parkes states “Mr. Edwards is bowed down by the fear that even one of them may go to hell, and cares infinitely more about their spiritual welfare than about the health of their bodies” (Parkes 1979, 127).

Jonathan was a rock of strength not only for his children but also for his wife. It was true that she did much of the housework and caring for the children while he was in his study working on knowing his God, but he also supported his wife. “Sarah depended on Edwards for her own spiritual replenishment. She would dart into his study during the day, confident that no matter how intent he was on his writing, he would put down his pen and turn to her with lighted face” (Dodds 1971, 96). This is how a marriage is supposed to work. When one is tired, the other is able to lean on the partner for strength through this life, and Edwards was able to use his theology to help his wife. Edwards “came to be looked up to as a spiritual teacher and guide (of the house)” (Allen 1889, 48). The role of a godly man in a marriage is to be the spiritual foundation for all of his family and this is what Edwards was able to accomplish. “She fed on his leadership of family prayers and on the quiet time she and Edwards spent together on devotions after

the children were in bed, the time that put a benediction on all the bustle of the daylight hours” (Dodds 1971, 96).

This family was well respected, even revered. The New York Genealogical and Biographical Society asserts: “Probably no two people married since the beginning of the 18th century have been the progenitors of so many distinguished persons as were Jonathan Edwards and Sarah Pierrepont” (Dodds 1971, 204). To understand more fully this point revert to appendix I which describes in detail Edwards’ family line. It is quite clear according to Scripture that the man is responsible for the home and especially for teaching the children the way of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4 says, “Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” As a testimony of the care and guidance with which Jonathan gave his family:

The first event in the lives of all the children was when their father wrote down the date of their birth in the Bible. That Bible had been a wedding gift, and it was the core of the Edwardses’ life together. Every life within that house was entrusted, from its first hour, to the care of the One who was, they were confident, the Living God. As a result their household was one in which heaven and earth were near together (Dodds 1971, 214).

Edwards believed that the minister by office is to be the guide and instructor of his people. To that end he is to study and search the Scriptures and to teach the people, not the opinions of men-of other divines or of their ancestors, but the mind of Christ (Hosier 1999). This man’s studying was not to get outlines for sermons, or notes from another; he would study thirteen to fourteen hours a day. He would “rise at four or five in the morning, and Edwards would ride in the summer and chop wood in the winter to stay in shape and clear his mind for later study. Edwards understood solitude and the beauty of nature. Gilpin states, “solitary spiritual disciplines, such as reading and walking, interact with visionary images of solitude in nature so as mutually to reinforce

one another” (Gilpin 2002, 2). And this is what Edwards did faithfully for his twenty-three years of service at the church in Northampton. Edwards may not make a great pastor today because he did spend so much time studying but,

Though Edwards did not make the trivial call just to be popular, he was right there with his people in time of genuine crisis. When the Lyman house burned and two children died, he gave the family full support, and even shaped his sermon for that week around the event...Edwards responded humanly to a human need. But most of the time, he studied (Dodds 1971, 72).

The amazing fact is his ability by God’s grace to overcome obstacles and trials in his life. We know that trials make us stronger and that we should endure them no matter what the temporal pain. Edwards experienced many trials which came with his job as pastor. His responsibility was not an easy task because of all the pressure that came. Miller states, “Edwards was not only a son...of Yale, he was the grandson and heir of Solomon Stoddard, of the ‘Pope’ who for over half a century had ruled Northampton and from it built an empire, like some Biblical Pharaoh” (Miller 1977, 9). Because of all the pressure William Williams prayed that Elijah might rest upon the grandson and successor, “under the weight of so much Work as is now rowl’d upon him” (Miller 1977, 14). A major trial occurred in the later part of Jonathan Edwards’s tenure as shepherd in the late 1740’s.

First Major Trial

The trial pertained to Edwards removal from the church in Northampton because of the Lord’s supper which was seen as a “converting ordinance.” One of the few flaws that Edwards’ grandfather Solomon Stoddard made while he was pastoring the church in Northampton occurred in the year 1704. Mr. Stoddard, who was by far the most famous preacher in the area, made the ordinance of the Lord’s supper a converting ordinance.

When he did this, he allowed people who were not saved to partake of the supper making the church now a place for saved and unsaved people to “worship” God. This was not an issue early in Edwards' ministry, but years later after much study, he came to the conclusion that those participating in the Lord's supper should be professing a real conversion. Edwards' thought was against Mr. Stoddard because in Edwards' eyes the Lord's supper was not done to bring about a change of heart, but was done after the change had taken place. The church was supposed to be a company of saints by calling (Warfield 1912). Mr. Warfield goes on to say:

It is not necessary to go into the details of the controversy regarding a case of discipline, which emerged in 1744, or the subsequent difficulties (1748-1749) regarding the conditions of admission to the Lord's supper. The result was that after a sharp contest running through two years, Edwards was dismissed from his pastorate on 22nd June 1750 (Warfield 1912, 5).

Miller expresses the condition of the people of the church by stating in 1735 and 1741 they “reached the pinnacle of praying for the conversion of their enemies and turned like a pack of animals upon him who had twice led them up the slopes of the delectable mountains,...cursed from one end of the valley to the other” (Miller 1977, 212).

This situation is ironic because the man who had labored for so many years to properly divide the word of truth so the flock could be fed, was dismissed because of the ordinance of the Lord's supper. Even more irony has emerged since then: “It had become clear to history that in expelling Mr. Edwards the town had come as near as they could, under the circumstances, to a crucifixion” (Miller 1977, 104). The pain he must have felt goes beyond anything imaginable because of the closeness he had with the congregation. Edwards stated, “When a minister and his people are united in love, no earthly connection, if we except that of marriage and those subsisting between the nearest

relations by blood, is so near and intimate” (Dodds 1971, 137). He was dismissed because he rightly divided the word of truth and concluded that only those who knew the Lord personally could partake of His supper. Edwards cared so much for correctly understanding the truth that over two hundred years later Piper states, “Again and again when I am dry and weak, I pull down my collection of Edwards’s works and stir myself up with one of his sermons” (Piper, 1996, 39). Here is what was written on the issue in

Jonathan Edwards: The Great Awakener:

In writing about this dismissal from Northampton, Sereno Dwight explains as follows: “The question in controversy, between Edwards and his people, was one of vital importance to the purity and prosperity of the Christian church. Wherever the lax method of admission has prevailed, all distinction between the church and the world has soon ceased, and both have been blended together. This question had never been thoroughly examined; and it needed some mind of uncommon power, to exhibit the truth with regard to it, in a light too strong to be ultimately resisted.” Jonathan Edwards had that kind of mind albeit he came to his conclusion slowly, reluctantly, empirically, that is, based on experience and observations as to what had been taking place for far too long (Hosier 1999, 122).

Still a father of eleven, Edwards job and income were taken from him. The struggle is clearer with understanding of the Edwards’ family income. How did Mr. Jonathan Edwards pay for his expenses after the dismissal? When he began his pastorate, “three hundred pounds was allotted for settlement initially, and Jonathan used it to buy a homestead on King Street in which he and Sarah and their offspring would live for the next twenty-three years. His salary would be one hundred pounds a year, and more if the value of money declined or if his family increased” (Hosier 1999, 57). He went on to describe the terms of their contract by stating, “there were also ten acres of pastureland and forty acres up the river. A month after his ordination the sum for settlement was increased eighty pounds, and three years later, when Solomon Stoddard died, one hundred pounds was added to the salary” (Hosier 1999, 57).

The Edwards family has been well taken care of, but they needed every penny for their large family. Therefore, when Edwards was dismissed, they did not know where they would get the large income needed to support their family. Along with this large income, it was clear to Edwards that he was a unique man who was made for one thing, study. He stated to his friend Erskine, “I am now...thrown upon the wide ocean of the world and know not what will become of me, and my numerous and chargeable family....I am fitted for no other Business but study” (Dodds 1971, 153.) Yet showing their great character the Edwards family did not crumble or lose hope in their God. This character was instilled in them by their head, Jonathan Edwards, once again showing that he practiced what he preached. Hopkins who was a close friend of the family said on this issue about Edwards that his “behavior in these hard months: The calm sedateness of his mind, his meekness and humility...his resolution and steady conduct...were truly wonderful” (Dodds 1971, 155.) There were a few months when the family did not know what they were going to do, but God opened another door which took care of their finances.

Missions: Part One

The door that was opened was not one that Edwards thought would be open. God had greater plans for Edwards because He was God and in control. “Samuel Hopkins, Edwards’ friend made the recommendation (for Edwards to be the missionary in Stockbridge) to the Boston Commissioners” (Hosier 1999, 127). Then, “After a few months he was removed to the little frontier hamlet (there were only 12 white families resident there) of Stockbridge as missionary of the Society in London for Propagating the Gospel in New England and the Parts Adjacent” to the Housatonic Indians gathered there,

and as pastor of the little church of white settlers (Warfield 1912). This place called Stockbridge was “as deep into America as though in 1851 a man had gone” (Miller 1977, 231).

Stockbridge is on the western boarder of Massachusetts and Edwards served there from 1751-1757 (*The Life of Jonathan Edwards* 2002, 2). “He felt more and more drawn to Stockbridge, sensing, no doubt, that a ministry there would lead to a fulfillment of his own long-standing prayer (which he had shared with David Brainerd) for the advancement of the gospel among the Indians”(Hosier 1999, 137).

Most Christians know of Edwards as the great theologian or as the pastor who was the catalyst of the Great Awakening. He was more than this. Edwards was also an avid missionary. Christians with missiological interests should know that Edwards had a number of connections with missionaries, especially missions to North American Indians. “Edwards was deeply committed to world evangelization and cared as much (or more) about the advance of the kingdom among unreached peoples of the world as he did about the morals of Northampton, Massachusetts” (Piper, 1998, 100). This was not just a view that men who have studied Edwards have concluded, but it is an evaluation straight from Edwards’ hand where he wrote to George Whitefield in 1740:

May God send forth more Laborers into his Harvest of a like Spirit, until the kingdom of Satan shall shake, and his proud Empire fall throughout the Earth, and the Kingdom of Christ, that glorious Kingdom of Light, holiness, Peace and Love, shall be established from one end of the Earth unto the other (Piper, 1998, 100.)

“He edited David Brainerd’s journal for publication after the latter’s death, and the resulting volume became one of the most influential missionary biographies ever written” (Davies 1997, 1). David Brainerd was the missionary to the Indians in New Jersey. While he was sick with tuberculosis, he stayed with the Edwards family.

Although he was sick, the Edwards family showed their hospitality by taking him in. While at their home, he passed on and went to be with the Lord. This man had a great passion for God and missions, and Piper states, “The absence of Brainerd’s passion for God is the great cause of missionary weakness in the churches” (Piper, 1993, 37). Piper adds,

The list of missionaries who testify to the inspiration of Jonathan's Edwards's influence through the labor of love he expended in writing *The Life of David Brainerd* is longer than any of us knows: Francis Asbury, Thomas Coke, William Carey, Henry Martyn, Robert Morrison, Samuel Mills, Fredrick Schwartz, Robert M'Cheyne, David Livingstone, Andrew Murray. A few days before he died, Jim Elliot, who was martyred by the Aucas in 1956, entered in his diary, ‘Confession of pride-suggested by David Brainerd’s Diary yesterday--must become an hourly thing with me.’ For 250 years Edwards has been fueling the missionary movement with his biography of David Brainerd (Piper, 1998, 61).

Second Major Trial

Aside from the ordeal with his church, Edwards had to persevere through another tragedy in his life. As previously mentioned, he let David Brainerd stay in his house while he was sick and eventually die in his home on October 4, 1747. While David Brainerd was in his house, Jonathan’s daughter cared for him. According to Miller, Jerusha was betrothed to David Brainerd. While caring for David, Jerusha contracted the disease and died at the age of 18 the following February (Miller 1977).

Jerusha, who had nursed Brainerd for nineteen weeks, then caved in herself and the whole grim matter had to be endured again. Her resistance was greater, and she was acutely ill only five days. But on February 14, Valentine’s Day, Jerusha died. It happened at 5 a.m. on a Sunday and on that day, for the first time in his life, Edwards preached out of his ‘barrel’ to his own congregation. He used one he had given seven years before, on The Book of Job. So for the first time there was a small stone bearing the Edwards name in that peaceful knoll in the cemetery at Northampton (Dodds 1971, 128).

This must have been extremely difficult for Jonathan because he was close to Brainerd and extremely close to his daughter. It would have been very easy for him to

advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and my secret prayer used to be, in large part, taken up in praying for it. If I heard the least hint of anything that happened in any part of the world that appeared in some respects or other to have a favorable aspect on the interests of Christ's kingdom, my soul eagerly caught at it; and it would much animate and refresh me" (Davies 1997, 2).

Edwards never just sat on the sidelines twiddling his thumbs. He did not just preach, but his Christianity was active. The same was true in the case of his missionary interests. Not only was he a man given to prayer for the nations, but he also took action: "In 1734 Edwards was involved in the establishment of a new missionary venture, the Stockbridge Mission, where 17 years later he would himself serve" (Davies 1997, 3). As mentioned, Edwards edited David Brainerd's journal for publication while Brainerd was on his deathbed. This act was of devotion to Brainerd "and to the great cause of world evangelization that his short life stood for. The reverberations for the sake of world missions in the following 250 years have been incalculable. The book has never been out of print" (Piper, 1998, 60).

What is not usually mentioned is that when the dying missionary asked Edwards to take care of his diaries and prepare them for publication, Edwards was already working on a major treatise, *The Freedom of the Will*, which he felt to be of prime importance because of the theological climate of New England. "However, he laid this aside and gave himself to this new task, a measure, surely, of the importance he placed upon it" (Davies 1997, 3). This shows Edwards' heart for the mission and how much he respected David Brainerd and his work with the Indians.

One does not know how much their life is going to impact future ones. This is so for Jonathan Edwards. "This impact on the modern missionary movement was not planned by Jonathan Edwards, as most of the turns in our lives are not planned by us"

(Piper, 1998, 61). Accordingly, “Missionary historians are aware that Edward’s writings were extremely influential in the beginnings of the modern missionary movement in Britain, including the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 and the London Missionary Society three years later” (Davies 1997, 1).

Men and women who serve and love the Lord are going to go through hardships and trials throughout their whole lives. In 1 Peter the apostle discusses this. If there were ever a godly man since the New Testament times, it would be Edwards. If it were shown by his devotion and hours of study, it would be Edwards. Obviously Edwards went through many trials when his own congregation disowned him and was mean-spirited toward him, but he also had trials from almost the moment he arrived at the Indian mission in Stockbridge. These trials faced by the Edwards family came from many different situations.

One of the oppositions and catalysts for the trials that Edwards went through at Stockbridge was in dealing with the Williams family. You would not think that one family would cause the Edwards problems, yet they did. “By the time he had been at Stockbridge two years, Edwards concluded that events were fast shaping ‘to establish a Dominion of the family of Williams over Stockbridge affairs’” (Hosier 1999, 146).

What was happening was a complete dominion of the white family ruling over the Indians. This raises a question. How could a person reach a nation with the gospel and love of Jesus while acting this way? The author truly feels that this was the concern of Edwards and one of the reasons that God providentially had all the problems occur with Northampton. He could be there to put a stop to the problems and to this misuse of the “missionary.” Edwards was true and he really had a heart for the Indians. The Williams

family was making their own settlement of whites and making a fort, and then having the Indians to be on the other side. Their only concern for the Indians was monetary:

“Edwards was an evil genius to those who were using the Indians for their private emolument” (Allen 1889, 280). Allen goes on to say “No man of affairs could have been better fitted than he was to detect the avariciousness which crippled the Indian mission, and to follow it through all its disguises” (Allen 1889, 280).

What could be done in regard to this opposition from another white family who had the dominion of this new place in which the Edwards family “invaded”? Would Edwards back down? No, he would not: he wrote letters to his superiors and “for two years or more he carried on the hard fight, till he was rewarded by seeing the man who was the chief source of the trouble abandon Stockbridge, and leave the field a free one for the friends of truth and righteousness” (Allen 1889, 281). So one of the battles at Stockbridge had been won.

Other opposition and trial that came to Edwards and his work with the Indians was the French and Indian War. “With the outbreak of French and Indian War in 1754 the entire mission situation changed abruptly” (Hosier 1999, 150). One instance occurred at home in the mission and it had many effects on the people. Hosier states:

The reality of war hit close to home in Stockbridge one Sunday morning in September 1754, when some Indians from Canada, doubtless sent by the French, broke in upon worshippers, between meetings, and fell upon an English family, killing three of them. An hour later these same Indians killed another man. Writing a letter, Jonathan reported, “We are divided into a great many distinct governments, independent one of another, and, in some respects, of clashing interest...[making us] an easy prey to our vigilant, secret, swift and active, though comparatively small enemy (Hosier 1999, 151).

The effects of the war would affect morale in the mission but then things would get back on track by God’s grace.

Another factor that caused Edwards' pain and trial was his health. Edwards was always in poor health. "In June 1754, he was taken with a severe fever which lasted until the following January and greatly weakened his constitution" (Howard 2000, 33).

Edwards was also sick during the before-mentioned war. According to Hosier:

Contributing to the troubled milieu at Stockbridge, at the time of the war's outbreak, Jonathan was suffering from ill health. In his letters can be found these words: "I am still weak that I can write but with a trembling hand, as you may easily perceive." He referred to his problem as "fits of ague [that] exceedingly wasted my flesh and strength, so that I became like a skeleton." It is felt that this was probably malaria with intermittent high fevers and shivering (Hosier 1999, 152).

Because Edwards cared about the Indians and did not want to use them like others already mentioned, he had to learn the culture in which he ministered. This is a common problem for those on the mission field. Not only was it difficult to learn the culture, he was so busy the time to learn was little. "He would preach two sermons on the Sabbath to the whites and one to the Indians" (Allen 1889, 278). But he still made his chief responsibility to the Indians and "Jonathan continued to work hard to adapt and simplify sermons for the Indians, and the work was bearing fruit. In one letter to Erkshine, he noted, "Some of Stockbridge Indians have of late been under considerable awakenings, two or three elderly men that used to be vicious persons" (Hosier 1999, 154). Therefore the hard work was paying off and he was staying faithful to the task he was given at Stockbridge.

There is no greater way to more fully comprehend and sum up the events and years for Edwards at Stockbridge than through an excerpt from one of the essays. Davies suggests:

Life at Stockbridge for Edwards was anything but easy. The troubles that had plagued him in his last years at Northampton continued with the Williams family

in Stockbridge. There were periodic attacks by bands of marauding Indians, and on one occasion Edwards and his family members were the only whites who remained in the settlement, after all the others had fled for safety elsewhere. Illness continued to lay him low for months on end. He continued his writing, preparing books for publication, and filling more notebooks with Scripture insights and plans for future works. Amid all of this, he preached regularly to the Indians, catechized their children, visited the day school and boarding school, sorted out problems and complaints, fought for the rights of the Indians against avaricious whites who, contrary to the declared policy of the government, were depriving them of their land, wrote to the Boston Commissioners and to sponsors in England to get more support for the Indian work, and planned and worked out strategies for further missionary thrusts in other places! When Gideon Hawley went into Indian country a second time to develop a new initiative planned by Edwards and him together, Edwards sent his son Jonathan Jr. to learn the Indian language and so be of more use in the Indian work (Davies 1997, 10).

Though things were at times rough on the frontier, Edwards endured and persevered. “Edwards had the best interest of these Indian boys at heart. He had the compassion of a father toward them. In all of this he was motivated by Christian love” (Hosier 1999, 157). Although things had been rough, because he persevered, “his years had been fraught with conflict, both internal and external, but at the same time God had granted him a place to gather himself together again” (Hosier 1999, 158). While Edwards was doing the work of the Lord, he received an unexpected invitation.

Princeton

This change in Edwards life once again came surprise, but it was another door which the Lord in His sovereignty used to further His kingdom. “When the Princeton invitation came, Edwards did not seize on it as a legitimate excuse to get out of a difficult and uncongenial situation. He accepted, and then with tears, only when a group of ministerial friends whom he consulted urged him to accept” (Davies 1997, 10). It was time for Edwards to move on: “Edwards’ short residence at Stockbridge is in beautiful contrast with the fever and tumult which marked the last years at Northampton” (Allen

1889, 377). During this time of choosing to go to Princeton, it was not without trial and the trial was in Edwards himself. “He was greatly perplexed as to whether he should give up his church and mission work in Stockbridge, where he had been for six years” (Howard 2000, 34). The amazing thing about Edwards is that he would go not so much where he wanted or where people wanted him, but where the Lord wanted him.

His Last Major Trial

He went to Princeton as their president on February 23, 1758. An epidemic of smallpox was going around in the college so Edwards was inoculated. His last trial occurred a few days later. On March 22, 1758, after contracting smallpox, Edwards died (Howard 2000). On his grave a Latin inscription reads: “Do you ask, traveler, what manner of man he was?...The college weeps for his loss, the Church weeps, but Heaven rejoices in receiving him” (Dodds 1971, 199).

Conclusion

Christians must walk in this present life as pilgrims and strangers in this world. They must also keep in mind that we are one day going to a better place. They also need to remember that only the things which we do for eternity will last. Christians need to make their lives count. Edwards’ did these. Sereno Dwight said that “perhaps there never was a man more constantly retired from the world (Edwards, cixxxvi), adding that “Few individuals ever appeared in the church of God who have merited, and actually received, higher tributes of respect than Jonathan Edwards” (Edwards, xi).

This man was a great man. He was a man of discipline. Edwards was not only retired from the world but he was able to hold his tongue, something that only wise men accomplish. Edwards was not a man of many words because he resolved to never sin

with his tongue. “His mouth was that of the just, which bringeth forth wisdom and whose lips dispense knowledge” (Edwards, cixxxi). Edwards said that “the work of redemption is thus the chief way in which God’s chief end is accomplished, and the work of redemption includes the preaching of the Gospel to all people as the means by which men and women are brought to become new creatures, and thus to the fulfillment of God’s chief end in creation” (Davies 1997, 5). This sums up Edwards’ life. Knowing that everything was about Christ is what helped him get through all the trials and tough times.

Edwards “was committed to vindicating his beliefs before the foreign luminaries of the Enlightenment by recasting Calvinism in a new and vital way that synthesized Protestant theology with Newton’s physics, Locke’s psychology, the third earl of Shaftesbury’s aesthetics, and Nicolas Malebranche’s moral philosophy” (Edwards, 1). Edwards “had the heart of a humble man who would do what he was called to do and say what he felt God would have him say” (Hosier 1999, 136). This humility was found, as Gilpin states, in solitude because it overcame “two great interlocking threats to the self: first, that worldly concerns would divert his attention from life’s true and single aim, the glory of God, and second,...human pride and ambition would displace from the heart...humility before the absolute God” (Gilpin 2002, 5). There are many thoughts by scholars about Edwards. To many, Edwards was an anachronism. F.J.E. Woodbridge says:

He was distinctly a great man. He did not merely express the thought of his time, or meet it simply in the spirit of his traditions. He stemmed it and molded it. New England thought was already making toward that colorless theology which marked it later. That he checked. It was decidedly Arminian. He made it Calvinistic...His time does not explain him.

Others say that Edwards was “the metaphysician of America” and declare that “in the power of subtle argument, he was, perhaps, unmatched, certainly unsurpassed among men” (Howard 2000, 39). Hatch and Stout say, “Judged over the last two centuries, Jonathan Edwards stands forth as one of America’s great original minds, one of the very few individuals whose depiction of reality has known enduring attraction” (Hatch and Stout 1988, 3). Miller also says that Edwards, “would not compartmentalize his thinking. He is the last great American, perhaps the last European, for whom there could be no warfare between religion and science...He was incapable of accepting Christianity and physics on separate premises” (Miller 1977, 72).

Bruce Kuklick describes Edwards as a theologian who:

Was embarked on a heroic endeavor--to reinterpret early modernist ideas in a way that would make them compatible with his inherited Calvinism. No other divine in the English--speaking world could have accomplished this goal with the success that Edwards achieved, and the achievement is far greater if one considers how impoverished American intellectual life was in the middle of the eighteenth century (Kuklick 2001, 8.)

It is studied in psychology that the environment in which a child grows up shapes that person into what he will be in the future. Mr. Edwards’ environment was one where he read and learned and strove to be holy as God is holy. “Early on he struck a theological note that occupied him throughout his lifetime, namely, the attempt to distinguish authentic religion from false, to discover the signs of true godliness, to describe and analyze the nature of true virtue” (Toulouse and Duke 1997, 55).

Edwards was a great man who was a great metaphysician, theologian, preacher, father, and an almost forgotten missionary. Edwards had great concern for the Indians and his achievements with them are often minimized or ignored. Mr. Jonathan Edwards deserves the title “grandfather of modern Protestant missions, on both sides of the

Atlantic” (Davies 1997, 2). The true character of a man is not shown in the beginning of his life or in the middle. It is how he finishes.

Mr. Jonathan Edwards began as a great child who cared about the things of the Lord while being raised in a godly home. As he grew he served Christ with his whole heart, pastored and raised a family to God’s glory. Then as he finished his life here on this earth, he had every right to get upset at the things that were going wrong. He could have been upset that he got sick and was dying because he went to serve the Lord as president and got smallpox from an inoculation for the disease. But he finished strong serving the Lord wherever he went and was faithful to the one who had called him and saved his soul. This was a great man, whose legacy will continue for years to come.

This man’s life stands as an amazing testimony. It is one thing to talk and have nothing to back it up, but this was not the case with Jonathan Edwards. Oh, he was by no means perfect, but he lived his life in such a way with such a heart as to show his care for the things of the Lord. He had an amazing life, attending Yale at 13, took his first pastorate when he was only 22, then two years later became a tutor of Yale. Mr. Miller describes this position when he states, “As senior tutor at Yale, Edwards was effectually in charge. There was still no president, and with but one colleague he instructed sixty students” (Miller 1977, 39). He then, after almost a quarter century of pastoring one church went to the mission field. While there he was led to become the third president of Princeton. So it is not as if by worldly standards this man had not a great resume, but he was so much more than these titles.

Christians must teach our children about Jonathan Edwards. Otherwise they will hear about this great man in the public schools from those who know not the God of

Edwards. Christians must use him as an example for them to use their minds and also to be godly parents with a missionary heart and the ability to rest in God through adversity.

Christians as Protestants must heed Miller's words about Edwards when he states, "Puritanism is the essence of Protestantism, and Edwards is the quintessence of Puritanism" (Miller 1977, 301). People must think of Edwards and his wife as George Whitefield expressed, "A sweeter couple I have not seen...She...talked feelingly and solidly of the things of God, and seemed to be such a help meet for her Husband that caused me to...[pray] God, that he would be pleased to send me a daughter of Abraham to be my wife" (Dodds 1971, 87).

Christians must discuss Edwards because he understood his God. He understood His supremacy and could drink from the Living Water. Our culture and society is choking on the things of this world and not having a want for this food, so we must show them. John Piper says about Edwards and his influence on him that although he may not have been the "ideal pastor, since he studied too much and mingled too little. But... he has been a pastor to many of us hungry shepherds. And because of that I am sure the disgruntled saints of Northampton have long since forgiven him" (Piper, 1998, xvii.) Jonathan Edwards was not perfect while walking upon this earth because he had clay feet, but he is one that Christians should study. There is a need in the church for the things of God. Christians must learn and teach Jonathan Edwards so that a public school teacher does not distort the correct view of him to youth, the youth of the church.

Appendix

Quietly carrying the drudgery that freed her husband to study, Sarah Edward's also managed to train a brood of children whose social contribution is a phenomenon to American history. In 1900, A.E. Winship tracked down fourteen hundred of their descendants and published a study of the Edward's children in contrast to the Jukes family, the notorious clan who cost New York State a total of \$1,250,000 in welfare and custodial charges. Jukes wasn't actually the name of the other family. The word means "to roost," and it was used about them because the family were social floaters, with no home or nest. They all originated with one immigrant who settled in upstate New York in 1720 and produced a tribe of "idleness, ignorance, and vulgarity."

Winship learned that a descendant of the Edwardses presided over the New York Prison commission in 1874 when it conducted an inquiry into the Jukes matter. Only 20 of the 1,200 Jukes had ever had gainful employment (the others were either criminals or lived on state aid). Whereas the Edwards family had contributed astonishing riches to the American scene. "Whatever the family has done it has done ably and nobly," Winship contended. "And," he went on, "much of the 1,400 of the Edward's family is due to Mrs. Edwards."

By 1900 when Winship made his study, this single marriage had produced

- 13 college presidents
- 65 professors
- 100 lawyers, and a dean of an outstanding law school
- 30 judges
- 66 physicians and a dean of a medical school
- 80 holders of public office:
 - three United States senators

mayors of three large cities
 governors of three states
 a Vice-President of the United States
 a controller of the United States Treasury.

Almost all the men had college degrees and many completed graduate work in a time when this was unusual. The women were repeatedly described as “great readers” or “highly intelligent,” although girls were not sent to college then. Members of the family wrote 135 books, ranging from *Five Years in an English University* to a tome on *Butterflies of North America*. They edited eighteen journals and periodicals. They entered the ministry in platoons and sent one hundred missionaries overseas, as well as stocking many mission boards with lay trustees. One maverick married the daughter of a South Sea Island chieftain but even that branch reverted to type, and its son became a clergyman.

As Winship put it: “Many large banks, banking houses and insurance companies have been directed by them. They have been owners or superintendents of large coal mines... of large iron plants and vast oil interests... and silver mines... There is scarcely any great American industry that has not had one of this family among its chief promoters.... The family has cost the country nothing in pauperism, in crime, in hospital or asylum service; on the contrary, it represents the highest usefulness.”

The line still continues to be vigorous, intelligent, enlivening to society. Yet all this achievement came out of a family with no large inherited fortune. All the children’s accomplishments were the result of their personal initiative.

This is not to blink at one naughty son and a grandson who was so sensationally shady that the Edward’s traits seem to be printed on him in reverse, like the negative of a film.... In each of these cases, however, the way the child turned out was the result of

exterior circumstances, beyond the control of Sarah Edwards. Has any other mother contributed more vitality to the leadership of a nation?

How children turn out is always a reflection on their mother. In the Edwards' case, where the mother had unusual responsibility for managing the household, the children are particularly revealing. Daughters catch their view of what it means to be a woman from their mother's view of her own femininity. The Edwards girls were exceptionally attractive to men, and fortunate in their choices of men to marry. (The talent for choosing the right mate is not one that distinguishes every famous family.) Winship states that "the family has never lost tone through marriage, for its members have chosen men and women of like character and capacity."

Every account of the Edwards' house has the same ring. All visitors seem to have been impressed that eleven children managed to be lively and individual as personalities, yet could act courteously with one another and function as a coordinated unit. There may be a key to the many puzzlements of a parent today in a scrutiny of the way Sarah Edwards helped her children become strong characters. Her way was not at all permissive. The requirements were completely clear. But she at the same time allowed the children areas of flexibility that were unusual for that day, and she certainly managed to produce a line of remarkable people (Dodds 1971, 37-39).

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