“Friends to Your Souls”: Jonathan Edwards’ Indian Pastorate and the Doctrine of Original Sin

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In the summer of 1756, Jonathan Edwards preached a simple yet extraordinary sermon to his Indian congregation at Stockbridge, Massachusetts where he had served as missionary for five years. He counseled his listeners that God “advises us to be friends to our own souls” by seeking after holiness. Edwards encouraged his Indian congregants to take tender care of their souls, to “forsake wickedness and seek after Holiness” and not to “act the part of Enemies of Enemies [sic] to your soul.” This sermon could scarcely have been more different from one delivered to a gathering of the town’s English children just a month earlier, in which Edwards railed at them that he would “rather go into Sodom and preach to the men of Sodom than preach to you and should have a great deal more hopes of success.”

In this same sermon, Edwards demanded, “should I now think it worthy of my while to preach to you . . . were it not that I knew that God is almighty and he can make the word pierce your hearts tho’ it be harder than a rock?”

These sermons are remarkable in that they offer a clear view into Edwards’ feelings for his two congregations. A closer look at the long-neglected body of sermon manuscripts from Edwards’ Stockbridge days reveals that in fact, Edwards preached the same Calvinist doctrine to English and Indian alike, but he tailored that doctrine into quite different applications. In part, this difference reflects Edwards’

1. I would like to thank Kenneth Minkema, Harry Stout, Ava Chamberlain, Patricia Tracy, Emily Clark, the members of the Pacific Northwest Early Americanists group, and the anonymous reviewers at Church History for their generous help at various stages of preparing this essay.

2. Punctuation added for clarity. Proverbs 19:8, June 1756, box 13, folder 985, Jonathan Edwards Collection, General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. Hereafter cited as JEC.

3. Matthew 13:3–4, 1746, reproached May of 1756, box 6, folder 460, JEC.

4. Ibid.

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736
expectation that the English, having had the benefit of centuries of gospel learning, should show greater signs of true religion than their Indian brethren who had only recently (and belatedly, thought Edwards) been given the light of the gospel. Thus, even when indicting his Indian congregants for their sins, he never displayed the same contemptuous resentment he occasionally unleashed on his English congregation. He told the Indians of their inherent sinfulness, of their need of divine light, and of the eternal fires of hell. But he also assured them that “we are no better than you,” that Christ died for “some of all nations,” and that Christ “shall save his people from their sins.”

Edwards was fully committed to affirming Calvinist doctrine, but the ethical significance given to that doctrine for English and Indian was quite distinct. Unwittingly, in the process of working out the sermonic applications of Calvinist doctrine for his Indian audience—most notably the doctrine of original sin—Edwards reawakened the latent egalitarian undercurrent of Calvinism. His experience among the Stockbridge Indians led him to emphasize the encouraging aspects of Calvinist doctrine. And so when Edwards preached to his Indian congregation on the total depravity of humanity, he often taught that they were no worse than the English. Similarly, when he preached unconditional election, he emphasized that Christ died as well for members of all nations and all social ranks. That Edwards preached differently to his Indian and white congregations should not be at all surprising; any New England minister would have agreed that the sermon’s message should be tailored to suit the audience. But the unique circumstances of his Indian congregation and the particular trials they faced prompted Edwards to search for different lessons within the same Calvinist doctrines.

The results of this search appear in the pages of Edwards’ monumental The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended, in which human sinfulness becomes a peculiarly leveling idea. Edwards was neither a democrat nor a believer in the equal capacities of humans, yet he devoted more than three hundred pages to arguing the case that humans alike of all nations, times, and places share a common birthright of a sinful nature and thus stand in need of regenerative

5. 2 Peter 1:19, August 16, 1751. Franklin Trask Library, Andover Newton Theological Seminary, Newton Centre, Mass. (hereafter ANTS); undated fragment from baptismal sermon. Fragment on back of letter dated Dec. 28, 1756; Matthew 1:21, September 1755, box 13, folder 1036, JEC.

grace. Wrote Edwards: "All are sinners, and exposed to condemnation. This is true of persons of all constitutions, capacities, conditions, manners, opinions and educations; in all countries, climates, nations and ages; and through all the mighty changes and revolutions, which have come to pass in the habitable world." Not an endorsement of the virtue of the common man to be sure, but a reminder that the high and mighty and the low and mean were in equal need of God's grace.

There has been little scholarly agreement on the political implications of Edwards' theology. In 1927, Progressive historian, Vernon Parrington, lamented "the anachronism of Jonathan Edwards," believing his conversion to have been, in fact, a reversion to an outmoded Calvinism that inhibited the development of democratic thought.8 Writing in the aftermath of World War II and decidedly less sanguine about the inherent goodness of human nature, Perry Miller detected in Edwards' defense of original sin a hint of the democratic spirit: "the investigator of depravity, the dissector of spiders, found in the depths of sin the basis for a new definition of the brotherhood of man that merged all men into one conception, that discomfited the prosperous and the proud, the merchants and the river gods, by telling them that in the nature of things God treats them all as one, along with Negroes and Houssataunnucks."9

Alan Heimert's *Religion and the American Mind* is perhaps the most renowned and disputed work to attempt to establish a connection between Calvinist theology and revolutionary politics, a story in which Edwards, not surprisingly, figures prominently.10 More re-

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ently and less controversially, Gerald McDermott has undertaken a thorough investigation of the social implications of Edwards’ theology, concluding that Edwards’ stance on the social and political order contained both egalitarian and hierarchal elements, but on the whole less hierarchical than the liberal theology of Charles Chauncy and others. McDermott finds a degree of correspondence between Edwards’ social theory and the Country ideology of England, especially in the suspicion of political power.11 Offering an opposing view, Jon Pahl has argued that in attempting to link the Great Awakening to the Revolution, scholars have neglected the extent to which Calvinists valued order and hierarchy. Pahl maintains that in Freedom of the Will, and even earlier, in his efforts to rationalize the revivals, Edwards endorsed an “aristocracy of grace,” in which the saints were the proper rulers of earthly affairs.12

It bears noting that these various interpretations of Edwards’ theology are not as dissimilar as they may seem to be on the surface. Throughout his career, Edwards increasingly met with opposition from the social elite (ironically because they failed to defer to his ministerial authority) and so found himself allied with the socially disempowered, whether women or Indians, urging them to accept the free grace offered by a God who was no respecter of persons.13 An exploration of the social context of Edwards’ thought helps to reconcile the “aristocracy of grace” with “the new definition of the brotherhood of man.”

The intellectual context in which Edwards labored has been thoroughly and productively mined. The social context has not.14 Just as

14. Tracy’s Jonathan Edwards, Pastor is the most thorough investigation to date of the social context of Edwards’ ministry, while McDermott’s One Holy and Happy Society is the most extensive treatment of the social implications of Edwards’ theology. Other notable exceptions include Mark Valeri, “The Economic Thought of Jonathan Edwards,” Church History 60:1 (1991), 37-54; Ava Chamberlain, “The Immaculate Ovum: Jonathan Edwards and the
Edwards was influenced by the great philosophical and theological debates that spilled to both sides of the Atlantic, so too did the press of his immediate surroundings and daily duties seep into his Stockbridge study. The fact that Edwards went to his grave every bit the committed Calvinist he was in his youth should no more be occasion to assume a lack of influence by his physical surroundings than it is cause to deny the impact of outside intellectual, and often non-Calvinist, forces. The necessity of divine grace to rescue humans from depravity had long been a pillar of Calvinist theology. But in Original Sin, rather than emphasize simply the necessity of divine grace, Edwards stressed the equal need of all humans for grace as a result of original sin.\footnote{Construction of the Female Body,” William and Mary Quarterly 3rd ser., LVII (April 2000), 289–322; and especially the recently published biography by George Marsden, Jonathan Edwards: A Life (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003).}

Jonathan Edwards’ Original Sin was an innovative defense of a traditional Calvinist doctrine. To leave it at that, however, is to miss an important aspect of the work. It is often in his references to American Indians that the work’s purpose as social commentary emerges most clearly. By examining Original Sin in light of Edwards’ relationships with his English and Indian congregations and his sermons to the Stockbridge Indians, we may uncover a previously hidden, and vitally important, element of Edwards’ treatise. While the sources remain frustratingly silent in conveying details about the lives of Indian parishioners (and white parishioners, for that matter), Edwards’ sermons to the Indians and his advocacy on behalf of his Stockbridge congregation provide invaluable evidence of the social context that shaped Edwards’ theological treatises.\footnote{This is the central argument of Perry Miller’s monumental biography of Edwards. Although subsequent scholars have taken issue with Miller’s thesis—the centrality of Locke versus other philosophers to Edwards’ thought—the appreciation for the scope of Edwards’ reading and knowledge has only increased largely because of Norman Fiering’s work. Fiering, Jonathan Edwards: Moral Thought and its British Context (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).}

\footnote{Kenneth Minkema’s discussion of Edwards’ views toward the elderly offers an interesting parallel. Because of his personal experiences throughout his life with the aged, Edwards implicitly challenged the hierarchical worldview that he explicitly espoused. Similarly, I suggest here that Edwards’ personal experiences with his congregations led him to articulate his theological convictions in a way that subtly challenged his assumptions about the social order. Minkema, “Old Age and Religion in the Writings and Life of Jonathan Edwards,” Church History 70:4 (2001), 674–704.}

I. FROM NORTHAMPTON TO STOCKBRIDGE

Human depravity and God's sovereignty are hard doctrines to embrace, perhaps especially so for an ambitious and talented young man. Indeed, Edwards recalled that "from my childhood up, my mind had been wont to be full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased... It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me." 18 Having experienced God's working on his heart through the process of conversion, Edwards was able not only to make peace with the doctrine of original sin but also to embrace it as emblematic of God's excellency and justice. 19 In a Miscellany entry dated to the 1730s, Edwards reasoned that it may well be "agreeable to divine wisdom" and productive of "excellent ends" that some doctrines are so mysterious and "very difficult to reconcile with the justice of God," because the time was coming when "these mysteries will all be unfolded," and all the difficulties will be "perfectly vanished away." 20 By the time he was relieved of his pastorate at Northampton in 1750, Edwards had even more reason to find comfort in God's sovereignty and man's depravity.

The circumstances of Edwards' dismissal in 1750 have received considerable attention, and the details need not be recounted here. 21 The controversy that ensued when he resolved to repeal the open communion policy instituted by his venerable grandfather Solomon Stoddard struck Edwards in a deeply personal way, leaving him feeling monumentally unappreciated and fearful that his parishioners, with his own Williams relations at the forefront, had willfully turned their backs on the gospel. 22 This perceived betrayal lurks...
behind much of Edwards' subsequent experiences with his English and Indian congregations at Stockbridge. The Northampton controversy convinced Edwards that the diseases of pride, disrespect for authority and Arminianism, were well advanced and provided immediate evidence of the reality of human corruption.

Edwards' farewell sermon preached to his Northampton congregation leaves little doubt not only that he was deeply pained by the experience but also that he was absolutely sure who was at fault. One line of the Texts suggests the tone of the whole: "Am I therefore become your Enemy, because I tell you the Truth?" The chosen doctrine minces no words: "Ministers and the People that have been under their Care, must meet one another, before Christ's Tribunal, at the Day of Judgment." In the harangue that follows, Edwards reminded his listeners that he had "spent the Prime of my Life and Strength in Labours for your eternal Welfare." He had not (as by implication they had) "neglected in Idleness, nor laid out in prosecuting worldly Schemes, and managing temporal Affairs, for the Advancement of my outward Estate, and aggrandizing my Self and Family." The result of his hard labors and his parishioners' disregard was that he "found the Work of the Ministry among you to be a great Work indeed, a Work of exceeding Care, Labour and Difficulty." His only consolation was that on the Day of Judgment, a minister and his people would stand before Christ "that he may judge between them, as to any Controversies which have subsisted between them." In closing, Edwards warned of the dangers of contentiousness and Arminianism, cautioning "'tis fit that all should beware of Self-confidence and carnal Security." If left unchecked, such errors "will threaten the spiritual and eternal ruin of this people, in the present and future Generations." Although Kevin Sweeney rightly reminds us that the issue was far too complex to be boiled down to a cosmic clash between Calvinism and Arminianism, true religion and heresy, this was indeed how Edwards viewed the matter, and it is Edwards' perception that is most important for purposes here. As a younger


24. The scripture texts were Acts 20:18, 20, 26, 27, Galatians 4:15. 16. Edwards, A Farewell Sermon Preached at the First Precinct in Northampton after the People's Publick Rejection of their Minister, and Resouncing their Relation to Him as Pastor of the Church There on June 22, 1750 (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1751), 2, 13, 19, 33, 34.

man, Edwards had had a hard time reconciling God’s sovereignty and humanity’s incapacity, but the Northampton affair provided ample evidence of the reality of original sin and rebellion against sound teaching. In fact, the hard doctrines of Calvinism offered Edwards some comfort in these difficult circumstances, for they supplied an explanation of why the flock would reject the shepherd.

It was perhaps his feeling of being unappreciated by a privileged people that predisposed Edwards to serve an underprivileged and disadvantaged congregation. The opportunity to minister to the Stockbridge Indians where “the gospel has been little understood, or attended to,” promised greater satisfactions; at the least, the Indian congregation would present a different sort of challenge. Whatever hopes Edwards may have had of a peaceful life in his new home, they were soon shattered when the Stockbridge Williamses raised vociferous objections to his selection as minister. Ephraim Williams and his children Ephraim, Jr. and Abigail (widow of former missionary John Sergeant) made known their objections and attempted to block the plan. Ephraim, Jr. protested—and not without justification—that Edwards was unsociable and thus not likely to be an effective teacher, that he was too old to learn the Indians’ native tongue, and “that he was a very great Bigot, for he would not admit any person into heaven, but those that agreed fully to his sentiments.” The rest of the Stockbridge community, English and Indian, appeared not to share these concerns, and Edwards was officially installed as the town’s minister in August of 1751.

26. By September of 1750, Edwards had received three offers including the invitation to Stockbridge. The other two were to “large churches of New England people much pleased to be worldly accommodations than the settlement at Stockbridge.” He had received an offer from his Scottish friend and minister, John Erskine, to find a settlement for him in Scotland. Edwards declined this invitation, not out of an unwillingness to “submit to the Presbyterian form of government” but because of the difficulties attending “removing with my numerous family over the Atlantic.” John McLaurin to William Hogg, November 8, 1751, Firestone Library, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.; [E] to the Reverend John Erskine, Northampton, July 5, 1750, Works, 36:395–96.

27. Quoted in [E] to Thomas Gillespie, July 1, 1751, Works, 16:387.


29. He did, however, see one advantage to Edwards’ presence—it would raise the value of his land to have a renowned theologian in their midst. He also noted besides, the remainder of the English residents seemed to be very much “set for him.” The most famous line from this letter laments the shame that a “head so full of divinity should be so empty of politics.” Ephraim Williams, Jr. to Jonathan Ashley, May 2, 1751, in Colonel Ephraim Williams: A Documentary Life, ed. Wyllis Wright (Pittsfield, Mass.: Berkshire County Historical Society, 1970), 61.

30. The minutes of the New England Company noted that “the English Inhabitants and the Indians at Stockbridge [have] express’d their desire of the Rev’d Mr. Edwards’ settling
At the time of Edwards' installation, there were roughly 250 Housatonic Mahicans and a handful of Mohawk Indians in residence. The English population had swelled to thirteen families.31 Fifty-five Indian students regularly attended the day school run by longtime schoolmaster Timothy Woodbridge. A separate boarding school, built under John Sergeant's tenure, was under the management (or mismanagement, as Edwards would soon discover) of Martin Kellogg, the rather undependable longtime friend of the Williams family.32 What might have appeared from the outside to be a burgeoning young New England town and successful mission was in many regards a shambles.

Just six months into his tenure, Edwards saw in Stockbridge signs of the same diseases he had sought to combat in Northampton: contention and neglect of Christian duty. The general state of colonial missions was dismal, and the particular state of Stockbridge was enough, confessed Edwards, "to make one sick." He feared the worst. "I expect," he wrote, "nothing but perpetual dissensions, undermining, and counterworking of one another among the inhabitants of the town, which probably will soon bring all to the ground."33 There was no doubt in Edwards' mind that the root of the problem was the Williams family.34 The Indians shared Edwards' contempt, harboring,

among them." "Minutes of the Meetings of Boston Commissioners," April 1, 1751, NEC.

31. The mission was founded in 1735, and the town of Stockbridge was incorporated in 1739 as an Indian township. Missionary John Sergeant had invited four English families, including Ephraim Williams, Sr. to settle in Stockbridge as models of English civilization and Christian living. See Rachel Wheeler, "Living Upon Hope: Mahicans and Missionaries 1730–1760," (Ph.D. diss.: Yale University, 1998), chapter 1; and Patrick Frazier, The Mohicans of Stockbridge (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), chapters 3 and 4.

32. Kellogg's two recommending assets included his knowledge of the Mohawk language gained when he was held captive and his efforts to secure Eunice Williams' return to New England. Sweeney, "River Gods," 461. According to Edwards, Kellogg was "a man of pretty good understanding for one that was being an illiterate man, and a man in years," yet he could not be "persuaded to set up a school or turn out of his own disorderly way." JE to Jasper Mauduit, March 10, 1752, Works, 16:453. Samuel Hopkins, Historical Memoirs Relating to the Housatonic Indians (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1753), ii, 143. JE to Secretary Andrew Oliver, February 18, 1752, Works, 16:425-28.

33. Edwards suspected the Williamses of attempting to "pillage the town of all that stands in their way" from which he knew he would not be exempted, being considered "a great nuisance here." JE to Andrew Oliver, February 18, 1752, Works, 16:428.

34. Edwards provided further detail to his Scottish friend William Hogg, explaining "Another source of difficulty is this. In the case of the late great controversy at Northampton, there was a number of gentlemen belonging to other towns, of a certain family of considerable note in New England, which had long manifested a jealous and unfriendly spirit towards me, at least some of them (This need not for me to say what I think were the first causes of this unfriendliness,) who on occasion of the aforesaid controversy, sat in on the side of my opponents, were their chief counselors during the
he wrote, "a very ill opinion" and "the deepest prejudice" against the Colonel, "he having often molested 'em with respect to their lands and other affairs, and, as they think, done very unjustly to 'em." Becoming more and more candid in his correspondence as time went on, Edwards complained in a 1753 letter to Commissioner of Indian Affairs at Boston, Andrew Oliver, that Ephraim Williams was embarked on a campaign to set the Indian children against him by telling them that his previous people "had thrown him away," and the "poor Stockbridge Indians" had been willing to take him, but they had best send him away in exchange for a "good minister." According to Edwards, Williams went so far as to ply the children with wine in the unsuccessful effort to get them to sign a petition against him. It seemed quite clear to Edwards that the Indians (and he) would suffer if the designs of the Williams family and others were not stopped. In a letter to English correspondent Joseph Paice, Edwards lamented New England's paltry missionary efforts (especially compared with French-Catholic successes) and speculated that God "will make them [the Indians] a sore scourge to us as a just punishment of our cruelty to their souls and bodies, by our withholding the Gospel from 'em,

whole continuance of the controversy. One or two of the inhabitants of Stockbridge were of the same family, who when my coming to settle here was first talked of, greatly opposed it. But when they saw the stream was too strong for them seemed to concur in it, and appeared very friendly. But since the forementioned gentleman of the General Court's Committee has married into the family, they have thrown off the appearance of friendship in a great measure, and act entirely in concert with him in his opposition, and are abetted and upheld in it by some gentlemen of note in other places, of the same family, the same that fomented the contention at Northampton." JE to William Hogg, November 25, 1752; Works, 16:550–51.

35. JE to Secretary Androse Oliver, February 18, 1752, Works, 16:423–24. The Indians' contempt for Williams predated Edwards' arrival. John Sergeant noted in his diary, "Lieut. Senkwewasubbeek [Umpachensee] was "giving himself up to drinking, talking against me, and Capt. Williams and in general against the English and throwing stumbling blocks in the Indians way." And a month later Sergeant noted that Umpachensee was still in an "ill Temper," saying he has "no heart for reformation and insisting that "Capt. Williams and I were the occasions of his Apostacy," John Sergeant, diary entries dated October 21, 1739 and November 29, 1739, Stiles Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. See also the petition from several Stockbridge Indian residents to the General Court in September 1750 protesting that Williams had encroached on their land. Petition dated September 26, 1750, Massachusetts Archives, vol. 32, pp. 61–64. Williams requested that the petition be dispersed as "exasperations and groundless." vol. 32, pp. 72–73. The Court found that "it would be inconvenient for sd Williams not to have it" and so rejected the petition. October 13, 1750, vol. 32, p. 76. For the full extent of the Williams family's involvement in alienating Indian lands, see Leon Miles, "The Red Man Dispossessed: The Williams Family and the Alienation of Indian Land in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, 1736–1818," New England Quarterly 67 (1994), 46–76.

36. JE to Andrew Oliver, April 13, 1753, Works, 16:590. By the fall of 1752, according to Kevin Sweeney, Ephraim Williams, Sr. was beginning to show signs of failing mental and physical health. Sweeney, "River Gods," 475.
defrauding them of their goods, prejudicing them against Christianity by our wickedness; and killing of multitudes of them, and easily diminishing their numbers with strong drink." The colonists indeed would be fit objects of God's wrath.

Edwards often conveyed his deep shame and disappointment over paltry mission efforts in his sermons to the Stockbridge Indians. He recalled for his Indian audience how the colonists had been too wrapped up in worldly affairs to devote proper attention to true religion and the spreading of the gospel. Simultaneously, he stressed that the colonists were inherently no better than the Indians, and that the English would suffer all the more in hell for their neglect of Christian duty; with all their advantages, they should know better.

Edwards affirmed that the Europeans too had once been without the light of the gospel: "So it was with the English and French and Dutch. They formerly were Heathen but after that they were brought into the Light." Exposure to the light of the gospel however was no guarantee of escape from the darkness of sin: "it is not only the Heathen, but all are Children of darkness. Wicked men that live under the gospel that are Children of darkness as well as the heathen." His resentment nearly bristled (perhaps he had his Northampton congregation in mind?) at those given so many opportunities to be tutored in true religion: "Though the Light shines round about 'em clearly yet it never shines into their Hearts. The wickedness that is in their Hearts shuts out the Light. They hear of God and of Jesus Christ and of Heaven and Heavenly things but they have no right understanding of these Things. They see nothing. They don't see the certain Truth of these Things and see nothing of their goodness and Excellency."

37. IE to Joseph Prince, February 24, 1752, Works, 16:434–47.
38. 1 Thessalonians 5:5, December 1751, box 14, 11:18, JEC. In all likelihood, the Northampton affair was much on Edwards' mind when he preached the Thessalonians sermon. He was at the same time working on his Misrepresentations Corrected, begun in the spring of 1752, an answer to Solomon Williams' The True State of the Question, published in May 1751. David Hall, "Editor's Introduction," Works, 12:73–74. For other sermons that emphasize the prior heathen state of Europeans, see Acts 11:22–13: "So that after a while a great many nations turned Christians and after this the English nation had the Gospel preached to 'em and turned Christian who before were Heathen." January 1751, box 14, folder 109, JEC. Edwards pursued this same logic in a sermon delivered at the ordination of Edward Billing in Greenfield, suggesting that "This owing to him [Paul] Chiefly under Christ that the Nations of Europe and most other nations that Profess the Christian Religion are at this day any other than Pagans and gross Idolaters as they all formerly were." This sermon is particularly interesting given the context. Billing had lost his position in Cold Spring because he sided with Edwards in the controversy. The central message of the sermon was that ministers should exert themselves and suffer as Christ and his apostles did in their business of promoting true religion, even though they will meet with derision and persecution. "Prepared for the
Access to revelation was a necessary but not sufficient cause of salvation. Because of original sin, even those long exposed to the light of revelation did not necessarily “improve the opportunity” and open their hearts to divine grace. 39 Edwards castigated Europeans for shutting out the light of the gospel and encouraged Indians by reminding them that they were no more inherently cursed than the Europeans. “We are,” Edwards assured a gathering of Mohawks, “no better than you” except that God had been pleased “to give us more Light and now we are willing to give it to you.” The English too, had once been in the same condition as the Indians (which Edwards found pitiable): “it once was with our Forefathers as ‘tis with you.” The British peoples had lived in darkness for a great time, knowing “no more than the Indians.” That the light had been brought to the English placed them under the obligation “to shew the Kindness to you.” 40 Edwards clearly hoped his Indian congregation would do better than his Northampton congregation in heeding the light of the gospel.

The fact that the Stockbridge Indian congregation was increasingly antagonized and swindled by the same family that had led the charge against Edwards in Northampton most certainly served to strengthen Edwards’ sympathy for the Indians and his commitment to protect their interests. 41 In fact, over the course of his tenure at Stockbridge,

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39. Edwards used some variant of this phrase in many of his sermons. See for example Hebrews 9:27, January 1751: “God gives you an opportunity by bringing you here to this Place therefore Improve this opportunity,” box 14, folder 1127, JEC. John 1:12, February 1751: “And God has brought you here where you hear the Gospel preached and now you have a good opportunity therefore now burden to counsel and improve your opportunity,” box 14, folder 1079, JEC. 2 Corinthians 4:10, August 1751: “men that had good opportunities once and would not improve ‘em are now in Hell,” box 14, folder 1110, JEC.

40. 2 Peter 1:19, August, 1751. ANTS. Edwards delivered the sermons at a conference in Albany called to reaffirm the relations of the British colonies with the Six Nations. He had been asked by the Massachusetts contingent to go along and do his part towards cementing the good will of the Mohawks by reiterating an old invitation to settle at Stockbridge and partake of the benefits of a Christian education. A number of Mohawks did in fact settle at Stockbridge in the early 1750s, but most had left by 1754. Many of Edwards’ letters from his early years at Stockbridge refer to the Mohawk affair. Clearly, Edwards shared in the general belief in the importance of the Iroquois to the colonial rivalry between Britain and France. He often pleaded with Massachusetts officials, requesting them to expend more resources in attaching the Iroquois to the British interest to counter the French influence. See especially IE to Speaker Thomas Hubbard, August 31, 1751, Works, 16:394–405.

41. This sympathy was never manifested as an interest in individuals or in Indian culture. Only a very few mentions of Indian individuals can be found in the vast body of Edwards’ writings from his Stockbridge tenure. It is important to remember, however, that mentions of his white congregants are equally elusive. By his own admission, Edwards was not especially socially adept. Patricia Tracy’s biography clearly exposes
Edwards proved to be a diligent advocate for Indian rights, as his dozens of letters to mission backers and Massachusetts officials attest. Despite the near constant struggles with the Williams family in Stockbridge, in ministering to the Indian congregation, Edwards seems finally to have found a degree of satisfaction and gratification that had eluded him at Northampton. In a note to his father, Edwards remarked with a sense of relief, "the Indians seem much pleased with my family." "Here, at present," he declared, "we live in peace; which has of long time been an unusual thing with us." A year and a half later, when feuding over the management of the mission had reached a pitch, Edwards gloated in a letter to Scottish correspondent Thomas Gillespie, "my people, both English and Indians, steadfastly adhere to me, excepting the family with whom the opposition began and those related to that family." Yet despite the "innumerable means" used to alienate "one and another, young and old, men and women, Indians and English," his opponents were "greatly disappointed." 

II. JONATHAN EDWARDS, PASTOR TO THE STOCKBRIDGE INDIANS

Battles between Edwards and the Williams family flared, war between the French and English loomed, and through all, Edwards ascended the pulpit week after week to preach to his Indian congregation. Although the English and Indian members of the town technically belonged to the same congregation, the sermon manuscripts suggest that Edwards preached separately to the two groups. The Stockbridge sermons have been assumed to be little more than simple Sunday school lessons, often recycled from the body of Northampton sermons. But if, as Wilson Kimmach has persuasively argued, the

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42. See especially his correspondence with Isaac Holles, Andrew Oliver, Joseph Paxton, Thomas Foscroft, and Thomas Hubbard. Works. 16.
43. JE to Timothy Edwards, January 27, 1752, Works, 16:420.
44. Edwards happily reported that Stockbridge schoolmaster Timothy Woodbridge, together with a number of other Stockbridge residents, had taken the time to write to English benefactor Isaac Holles in his defense. JE to the Reverend Thomas Gillespie, October 18, 1753, Works, 16:610.
45. JE to Major Ephraim Williams, Jr., and others. September 18, 1753, Works, 16:404. Gideon Hawley, schoolmaster to the Stockbridge Indians and friend of Edwards, commented in his journal that he "was pleased with both his [Edwards'] discourses. The first to the Indians was from John 10:27." Hawley, July 14, 1754. The Papers of Gideon Hawley, American Congregational Library, Boston. There is indeed a manuscript sermon from July of 1754 on the text John 10:27, box 14, folder 1087, JEC. Sermons preached to the two congregations can be distinguished not only by stylistic markers, but also by his headings. Edwards labeled the sermons to the Indians "St. Ind." followed by the date and the Text. Those without the "St. Ind." were clearly preached to the English congregation, as is apparent by the different style and vocabulary.
sermon served as the laboratory for Edwards' treatises, then his Stockbridge sermons are a potential gold mine. Indeed, I would suggest several conclusions based on an analysis of the Stockbridge sermons: Edwards was actively engaged in his pastorate to the Indians of Stockbridge, and this engagement is visible in the distinctive style of the sermons; while Edwards preached the same uncompromising Calvinist doctrine to his Indian congregation, he often stressed equality in depravity in a way intended to encourage his Indian congregants; and finally, this distinctive application, particularly in sermons related to human sinfulness and the process of redemption, became an important building block for his defense of original sin.

Much can be learned from the form and substance of these sermons, both of which indicate the extent to which Edwards undertook to adapt his preaching style and message to his new audience. In what is perhaps the only description of Edwards' pulpit manner before the Indians, Stockbridge schoolmaster Gideon Hawley recalled that Edwards was "a plain and practical preacher" whose delivery was "grave and natural." He refrained from displaying "any metaphysical knowledge in the pulpit" and took care to use sentences that were "concise and full of meaning." Hawley's observations are borne out by the manuscripts. When these sermons are compared to sermons preached to English congregations, both at Northampton and Stockbridge, the distinctiveness of these sermons is immediately apparent. Although he never learned the Mohican language, Edwards attempted to deploy the English language in a way that would reach straight to the experience of his auditors.

Numbers can tell us something about the form and content of the sermons. Of the roughly 1,200 sermons in the Edwards collection, 187 of these were original compositions for the Stockbridge Indians. If we add the sermons repreached at Stockbridge from earlier compositions, then Edwards preached roughly 233 sermons to his Indian congrega-

46. Kinnach also suggests that there is little novel or interesting about the Stockbridge sermons. Many of them are indeed bare outlines and some are based on earlier sermons, but I would urge that they not be dismissed for they still contain the central elements of the form: text, doctrine and application. Kinnach, "General Introduction to the Sermons," in Works, 10:3, 66.


48. There are roughly 25 sermon manuscripts that represent original compositions for the English congregation at Stockbridge. Other evidence suggests that the majority of the English population at Stockbridge sided with Edwards, while the Williams clan opposed his ministry. See also, JE to Isaac Hollis, July 17, 1752, Works, 16:504–9.
tion. Presumably, not all of Edwards' sermons have been preserved. Even a conservative estimate of 250 sermons preached over the full seven years from January 1751 to January 1758 results in an average of three times a month in the pulpit.

One distinctive feature of the Stockbridge sermons becomes immediately apparent with a simple review of the Texts: they are overwhelmingly drawn from the New Testament with a heavy reliance on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Indeed, New Testament Texts outnumber Old Testament Texts by a ratio of five to three, as compared to a nearly equal balance in those preached to his English congregations.49 A look at the content of these sermons suggests why Edwards may have found New Testament Texts particularly appealing in preaching to the Indians. Drawing on the parables of the New Testament, Edwards preached of sowers of seed, of fishermen, of ground too dry for a seed to take, of trees fed by rivers that never ran dry, and of briars and thorns that impeded a traveler's way. It is clear in his earlier sermons that Edwards understood the power of story and imagery, yet in his Indian sermons, this imagery becomes all the more pronounced because it is freed from Edwards' explicit first-person commentary.50 In his Indian sermons, Edwards no longer intruded into the sermon to narrate the journey for his listeners. He no longer used such phrases as "when it is said in the text that some of the seed fell among thorns it is as much as to say that some fell on uncultivated unplowed land; ... from this text I would speak to these two Propositions."51 In a sermon to the Indians on the same text, Edwards simply stated, "some that have the word preached ... are like ground that was never planted/all over run with thorns."52 He

49. This number includes 187 original compositions, 34 reproached from earlier sermons, and 12 Stockbridge Indian sermons preached on two occasions. This average is inclusive and does not exclude months when Edwards was known to be away from Stockbridge. Of the 185 sermons marked as preached to the English congregation at Stockbridge, only 29 were original compositions. All numbers are drawn from an analysis of the finding aid to the collection written by Elizabeth A. Bolton, 1995.


51. The first was preached in Northampton, JE on Matthew 13:7, November 1740, box 6, folder 469, JEC. Edwards continued to use the same sort of scaffolding in preaching to English congregations. See, for example, 1 Corinthians 10:17, January 1751 preached at Stockbridge in which he comments, "in the Text four things may be observed." Box. 14, folder 1104, JEC. See also the sermon preached for the installation of EdwardBilling, Acts 20:28, March 28, 1754, box 9, folder 676, JEC in which he preached, "The method in which I shall by divine Help persecute this design is to observe what there is in Christ's shedding his blood." Many other examples could be cited to show that Edwards continued to use this method when preaching to English audiences.

52. JE on Matthew 13:7, March 1752, box 6, folder 470, JEC.
attempted so much as possible to let the power of imagery and story carry the weight of his message.

The distinctive style of the Stockbridge sermons may be attributed to several factors, some pragmatic, some philosophical. Given that Edwards had to rely on a translator to convey his message, he no doubt attempted to simplify his delivery and avoid complex constructions that he believed would be difficult to render in Mahican, for Edwards believed that “there are not many good philosophers” among the American Indians. Further, Edwards believed “the ordinary method of teaching among the English” contained “gross defects” that were only magnified when catechizing Indian pupils. By emphasizing rote learning, standard educational practices failed to ensure that “the ideas properly signified by the words” would be “naturally excited in their minds.” Edwards’ proposed solution was to feature biblical stories prominently in teaching, a method he believed would be better suited to evoking the proper ideas signified by the words. Although no comparable statement of Edwards’ philosophy of preaching to his Indian congregation is known to exist, the style of the Stockbridge sermons suggests that he felt an especial concern to deploy evocative language.

One of the most striking examples of Edwards’ Stockbridge style is a sacramental sermon preached in August 1751 on Psalms 1:3 and the doctrine “Christ is to the Heart of a true saint like a River to the Roots of a tree that is planted by it.” In the sermon, Edwards graphically described Christ’s love:

As the waters of a river run easily and freely so the love of Christ. [He] freely came into the world, laid down his life and endured those dreadful sufferings. His blood was freely shed. Blood flowed as freely from his wounds as water from a spring. All the good things that Christ bestows on his saints come to ‘em as freely as water runs down in a river. The chief and most excellent things that Christ bestows are the influences of his Spirit on their hearts to enlighten and sanctify and comfort. These all come freely from Christ like the waters of a River. Christ willingly gives his people that look to him and trust in Him light and life in their souls. There is an abundance

of Water. Christ is like a river in the great plenty and abundance of his love and grace. . . . The tree that spreads out its roots by a river has water enough—no need of rain or any other water. So the true saint finds enough in Christ. Great plenty of water enough to supply a great multitude of persons with drink to satisfy all their thirst, to supply the roots of a multitude of trees. 53

Here were central tenets of Calvinism—unconditional election and the all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice—couched in powerful imagery and free of metaphysical reasoning and explanatory scaffolding. Edwards' transformed style represented a conscious effort on his part to adapt to the perceived needs of his Indian audience. Likewise, he adapted the lessons of Calvinist doctrine to the circumstances of the Indians. Indeed, to the Stockbridge Indians, Edwards preached a doctrinally consistent Calvinism, but it was a Calvinism transformed by both the style of presentation and by the applications drawn for his Indian congregation.

Viewed as a whole, the Stockbridge sermons present a survey of Calvinist doctrine. Edwards described for his Indian congregants the fall of humanity from its original holy state and the consequent depravity of humankind. He demonstrated the absolute insufficiency of human reason to move the sinner even a few small steps on the path toward salvation. He clarified their need for a savior to rescue them from misery and eternal damnation. He detailed the all-sufficiency of Christ, the power of his death and resurrection to atone for human sin, despite the absolute undeservedness of such salvation. And he also emphasized the love of God and Christ to sinners and the desire of God to save sinners from destruction. 56

53. Psalms 13, August 1751, box 13, folder 955, JEC.
56. In part, this represents a common practice of Calvinist theologians who toned down some of the harsher doctrines when they left their studies and entered the meetinghouse. Tracy, Jonathan Edwards, Pastor, 76. William Breitenbach makes a similar point about Calvinist preachers who commonly mitigated their belief in the absolute sovereignty of God that they professed in ministerial circles, but who preached a more tempered version to their congregations that allowed some room for human striving. William Breitenbach, "The Consistent Calvinism of the New Divinity Movement," William and Mary Quarterly 3rd ser. 41 (1984), 245. In his account of the revival in Northampton in the mid 1730s, Edwards described the need for a balance between arousing terror and providing encouragement "And yet those that have been under awakenings have oftentimes plainly stood in need of being encouraged, by being told of the infinite and all-sufficient mercy of God in Christ: and that 'tis God's manner to succeed diligence and to bless his own means, that so awakenings and encouragements, fear and hope may be duly mixed and proportioned to preserve their minds in a just medium between the two extremes of self-flattery and despondence, both which tend to slackness and negligence, and in the end to security." Edwards, "Faithful Narrative," The Works of Jonathan Edwards, 4, The Great Awakening, ed. C. C. Goens, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), 167–68.
While the style of the sermons is spare and simple, the doctrine is complex.

When Edwards began his pastorate to the Stockbridge Indians, he began at the beginning, with a sermon on Genesis 1:27 in which he expounded on human nature before and after the fall. Edwards explained to his audience that when first created by God in His image, man had “a principle of holiness in his heart,” and “his mind was full of Light.” Created in God’s image, humans initially possessed the divine principles of reason and holiness, which God reserved for his human creatures. Reason allowed humans to “know what is right and what is wrong” and rendered them “capable of knowing what the will of God and his duty is.” Thus, “our first Parents” were able to secure “eternal life by perfect obedience.” In this condition, with their minds “full of light,” the first humans were “in a very happy condition.” This blissful state did not last long, for “when man sinned against God he lost his Holiness and then the Light that was in his mind was put out.” When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, they lost the divine light, and “a darkness came on ’em.” With the fall “a sorrowful alteration was made,” whereby man lost the divine image and “lost all his goodness and holiness” and became “a mean, low, miserable creature.” Though humans still had reason after the fall, now “men naturally have the image of the devil in their souls” and therefore are given to “sin and wickedness.” “Every body as they are at first,” instructed Edwards, “are not good; . . . all are born with wicked hearts.” The just consequence of the fall was that humans were deprived of ready access to divine light. They were left with reason, but “if men have reason without holiness they ben’t the better for it.”

Having lost the light of divine holiness and sunk “down more and more into darkness,” humans would be forever dependent on divine revelation. Lacking the light, humans apostatized. Some came to

57. This sermon was preached in August 1751. Edwards was installed as missionary on the second Saturday of that same month, although he had been preaching to the Stockbridge Indians on a temporary basis since January of that year.
58. Genesis 1:27, August 1751, box 13, folder 934, JEC; 2 Peter 1:19, August 16, 1751, Trask Library.
59. Titus 2:2, December 1751, box 14, folder 1122, JEC.
60. 2 Peter 1:19, August 16, 1751, Trask Library.
61. 1 Thessalonians 5:3, December 1751, box 14, 1118, JEC.
62. Genesis 1:27, August 1751, box 13, folder 934, JEC.
63. Lecture to the Indian Children, February 1751, Trask Library.
64. Edwards in this sermon explained the meaning of being created in the image of God. “Therefore holiness is the chief thing that is meant by the image of God that therefore this holy image of God is a more excellent [thing] than reason and understanding.” Genesis 1:27, August 1751, box 13, folder 934, JEC.
worship the sun and moon, others “serpents and other Beasts,” and still others worshipped the devil. Human existence in this state was one of uninterrupted misery. God pitied his creation and to relieve their suffering “gave ‘em the Holy Spirit to teach men to be in this world as a light shining.” The Holy Spirit appeared first in the form of prophets, beginning with Moses, whom he commanded to begin work on the Bible. Humans continued in this state, losing more and more knowledge of true religion, until a new prophet appeared, but always the reprieve was temporary, and “after many ages He sent his own Son into the world to die for sinners and more fully to instruct the world. . . . This was about 1750 years ago.” This son, Jesus Christ, directed his apostles “to write this now in a more clear manner and so the Bible was finished.” Christ further commanded that his word should be made available to all the nations. Those nations that have received the written teachings “enjoy Light.” But those who have no knowledge of the gospel “live in great darkness” where the “prince of darkness rejoices over them.” In just a few sermons, Edwards had outlined the history of Creation, the Fall, and the history of revelation.

In his first year at Stockbridge, Edwards preached a great deal on the corruption of humans and their inability to effect their own salvation in an effort, presumably, to bring his listeners to a conviction of their sinfulness so that they might be ready to receive Christ’s saving grace. He was at no loss to describe what awaited such sinners in hell. In one of his earliest sermons at Stockbridge, reminiscent of his famous Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, Edwards warned his listeners that “He knows you are a poor miserable creature ready to drop into Hell. . . . You don’t deserve that this glorious person, the King of Heaven that comes to you; . . . you deserve that He should hate you and trample you under his foot.” Sinners “shall be cast into a furnace of fire,” warned Edwards, and their souls will burn in hell until the Day of Judgment when they will be reunited with

65. 2 Peter 1:19, August 16, 1751, Trask Library. He preached a similar sermon at Stockbridge in January of 1751, Acts 11:12, 13, with more emphasis on the role of the minister and less on pre-Christian history, box 14, folder 1091, JEC.
66. See for example, Luke 19:10, June 1751, box 14, folder 1076, JEC; Titus 2:2, December 1751, box 14, folder 1122, JEC; 1 Thessalonians 5:5, December 1751, box 14, folder 1118, JEC; Deuteronomy 32:39, July 1752, box 13, folder 940, JEC; 1 John 3:10, March 1756, box 14, folder 1137, JEC. In so doing, Edwards was using the style of preaching he had learned from his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, and used to good effect in Northampton, in which the minister preached terror from the pulpit, in order “to make the consciences of sinners tender.” Tracy, Jonathan Edwards, Pastor, 31. See also Kenneth Minnema, “Editor’s Introduction,” The Works of Jonathan Edwards, 14, Sermons and Discourses, 1720–1733, ed. Kenneth P. Minnema, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 1427–30.
67. Revelation 3:20, February, 1751, box 14, folder 1141, JEC.
their bodies, “and then their bodies will be as full of fire as within and without as ever a red hot iron was in the midst of a fierce fire.” Few people would escape this horrible fate, and many would “never wake up till they wake in Hell and then ‘tis too late.”

Classic revival preaching, yes, but upon closer examination and comparison with the Northampton sermons, important differences emerge, which provide clues to the nature of Edwards’ relationship with his two congregations. A look at the sins Edwards found each congregation prone to is especially suggestive. The overlap is notable—both populations were prone to mirth and jollity, licentiousness, revenge, malice, pride, worldliness, and neglecting worship. But even more striking are the differences. The ones that stand out as distinctive in the catalog of Indian sins are “drunkenness,” “hatred of those that injure,” and “talking against others.” The last two are especially interesting, for they provide further evidence that Edwards was aware of Indian complaints against their English neighbors. Unique to the Northampton list are those sins involving a lack of respect and deference to religious authority in general, whether the minister’s or parents’. The absence of these sins from the Stockbridge list further suggests that Edwards did not suffer the same crisis of authority with his Indian congregants as he had with his Northampton parishioners. Also interesting is that all of these sermons are from Edwards’ first year at Stockbridge, and sermons emphasizing sin and the torments of hell became increasingly rare, signifying perhaps both the progression

68. 2 Corinthians 4:18, August, 1751, box 14, folder 1110, JEC.
69. John 1:12, February 1751, box 14, folder 1029, JEC. For other examples of hellfire preaching to the Indians, see Matthew 7:13–14, January 1751, box 13, folder 1024; JEC; Hebrews 9:27, January 1751, box 14, 1127, JEC; Revelation 17, February 1751, box 14, folder 1140; Luke 16:22, July 1751, box 14, folder 1072, JEC.
70. According to Edwards, the Indians were prone to the sins of drunkenness, lascivious behavior, pride, malice, revenge and quarreling, murder, talking against others, fornication, adultery, laziness, breaking the sabbath, unbelief, disregarding counsels, backsliding, stealing, cheating, lying, sloth and negligence in religion, hatred of those who injure, self-righteousness, “vain jollity and frolicking,” and “hallowing and dancing.” This list of sins is drawn from Genesis 127, August 1751; Luke 16:22, July 1751; 2 Corinthians 4:18, August 1751; Ecclesiastes, 9:10, December 1751; Matthew 16:24, January 1752, box 6, folder 490, JEC; 1 Peter 4:7, January 1, 1752, box 14, folder 1135, JEC; and Ephesians 4:22–24, June 1752, box 14, folder 1112, JEC. The Northampton sins included licentiousness, night walking, frequenting the tavern, lewd practices, “conventions of both sexes, for mirth and jollity,” indecency of carriage at meetings, contentiousness, jealousy, professing the sabbath, “foasting your lusts,” absence from meetings, lack of family worship, disobedience to parents, revenge, malice, envy, pride, hatred, worldliness, vain dressing, “hallowing in sensual filthiness,” intemperance, and “self-pollution.” Edwards, “A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God,” Works, 3:146; and “The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners,” The Works of Jonathan Edwards, 19, Sermons and Discourses, 1734–1738, ed. M. X. Lesser, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 348–49.
of a preaching campaign that moved from human sinfulness to the process of salvation, as well as Edwards’ developing sense of the specific pastoral needs of his congregation.\textsuperscript{71} While Edwards seemed to be somewhat softer on Indian sin, there was one category of sinner that evoked Edwards’ ire in Stockbridge as in Northampton: those who had had good opportunity of hearing the gospel and yet still did not repent.\textsuperscript{72}

Balanced against Edwards’ exhortations to abandon sin were assurances that Christ was ready to serve as shelter for all who came to him, of whatever nation or social rank. Edwards emphasized that Christ stood ready to protect and shelter his people. Even before he took human shape, preached Edwards, Christ “delighted in the thoughts of saving poor sinners before ever the world was made” because he had formed a covenant with God to save sinners. Christ, out of love to God and to sinners, delighted to take human form and die. Christ’s reward was that he would be “raised from the dead./ascend/reign/judge the world.”\textsuperscript{73} In this world, Christ was like a house, sheltering and defending the saint from “the wrath of God and from all evil,... from the devil and all the enemies of his soul.” Edwards thus counseled his listeners to turn to Christ as their “hiding place in time of trouble.”\textsuperscript{74} Having found shelter, the soul then began to be united to Christ: “the soul of a good man does as it were grow to Christ.” With this growing together, the “good man” becomes one with Christ and is “in Him as a branch is in a tree or a hand or face is in the body.” “You,” preached Edwards, “are members of his body.

\textsuperscript{71} Relevant sermons dealing with the process of salvation include I John 3:10, February 1751, box 14, folder 1137, JEC; Revelation 3:20, February 1751, box 14, folder 1141, JEC; John 1:12, February 1751, box 14, folder 1079, JEC; Luke 19:10, June 1751, box 14, folder 1076, JEC; Acts 16:9, August 1751, box 14, folder 1003, JEC; Luke 24:47, October 1751, box 14, folder 1078, JEC; Titus 1:2, December 1751, box 14, folder 1122, JEC; I Corinthians 11:23–25, January 1752, box 14, folder 1105; Matthew 16:24, January 1752, box 6, folder 490, JEC; Proverbs 8:31, March 1752, box 13, folder 981, JEC; Ephesians 4:22–24, June 1752; Matthew 11:28, August 1752; Matthew 11:29–30, August 1752, box 13, folder 1031, JEC; Matthew 5:8, August 1752, box 13, folder 1021, JEC; Luke 14:16, November 1752, box 14, folder 1112, JEC; I Timothy 3:16, February 1753, box 14, folder 1121, JEC; 1 Peter 1:8, October 1753, box 14, folder 1132, JEC.

\textsuperscript{72} Works, 3:183. “And if you go on in drunkenness and other wickedness the Gospel will be in vain. You will be the devils People and will go to Hell notwithstanding and you will have a worse Place in Hell than those that never heard the Gospel preached.” Acts 16:9, August 1753, box 14, folder 1090. “Take heed that you dont Refuse to hearken to the Gospel you have heard the Gospel, it will be worse with you than other Indians.” Matthew 10:14–15, March 1755. See also Luke 13:7, June 1753.

\textsuperscript{73} Proverbs 8:31, March 1752, box 13, folder 981, JEC.

\textsuperscript{74} 2 Corinthians 5:17, September 1751, box 14, folder 1131, JEC.
and flesh of his bone." In mirror imagery, Edwards preached that God "lives in their souls," which served as "God's house" and, therefore, "we should glorify God in our Bodies and in our Spirit." The opportunity to be joined to Christ, to find protection in his embrace was independent of race or nationality, for "kings and poor men are alike men" who will be "brought down to the dust." Although in this world "good men have Enemies" who "hurt 'em and afflict 'em," in heaven they "shall be set on high out of the reach of all their Enemies" where nothing can hurt them, and "all Tears shall be wiped away from their Eyes." "God is willing," promised Edwards, that all "whose hearts are joined to Christ should have Christ and his blood to wash 'em from sin." If repentance is earnest, "there is forgiveness offered to all nations," for Christ "did not die only for one nation" but made it clear "his design of making other nations his People" even those that "had been Heathens." Christ offers himself "readily and freely" to suffer for sinners, "let 'em be who they will of what nation soever they are." In a baptismal sermon Edwards preached, "'tis the will of Christ that all nations shall be taught." Christ recognized "no difference" among the nations; Christ had "died for some of all/need/all alike." The offer of salvation is open to all: "for God is a merciful God and would have all men saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." On another occasion, Edwards' evoked a bleeding Christ standing at the door and knocking: "He invites you all men and women, young and old. You that have been the greatest sinners, drunkards, quarrellers, Lyars. If any of you have been guilty of fornication adultery murder or whatever

75. Edwards' use of images here is remarkably similar to his argument for original sin based on humanity's shared constituency with Adam, but here he asserted for his Indian audience that they shared in Christ's nature. 2 Corinthians 5:17, September 1751, box 14, folder 1111, JEC. "Some things, being most simply considered, are entirely distinct, and very diverse; which yet are so united by the established law of the Creator, in some respects and with regard to some purposes and effects, that by virtue of that establishment it is with them as if they were one. Thus a tree, grown great, and an hundred years old, is one plant with the little sprout, that first came out of the ground, from whence it grew, and has been continued in constant succession; though it's now so exceeding diverse, many thousand times bigger, and of a very different form, and perhaps not one atom the very same: yet God, according to an established law of nature, has in a constant succession communicated to it many of the same qualities, and most important properties, as if it were one." Works, 3:367-98.
76. 1 Cor. 6:19–20, February 1754, box 14, folder 1143, JEC.
77. Hebrews 9:27, January 1751, box 14, folder 1127, JEC.
78. Luke 24:47, October 1751, box 14, folder 1076, JEC.
79. Revelation 3:20, February 1751, box 14, folder 1143, JEC.
80. n.d. fragment from baptismal sermon, Fragment on back of letter dated Dec. 28, 1756, JEC.
81. 2 Peter 1:19, August 16, 1751, Trask Library.
wickedness.” However great the sin, “the great Saviour the King of Heaven and Earth” is now “come to your door.” All that was needed was “to let Him in.” Those who let Him in would “have this God to be their Friend.” The message was clear: God did not privilege members of particular nations in election. Acknowledging the abuse suffered by the Stockbridges, Edwards counseled his listeners to “have a humble and quiet heart when others abuse us, to have a quiet heart under afflictions and troubles, to be willing that God’s will should be done and not our own.” On a sadly prophetic note, Edwards warned his listeners that sometimes it is necessary “to wait till we get to another world before we have our reward.”

Here it is particularly notable that Edwards brought back an actively saving God in his sermons to the Stockbridge Indians. In her analysis of Edwards’ Northampton pastorate, Patricia Tracy demonstrated that as his relationship with the congregation deteriorated, Edwards shifted away from preaching the “sweet reasonableness” of religion and the love of God, and emphasized instead divine passivity and even indifference to the fate of sinners. Tracy argued that just as he depicted a God in withdrawal, so too Edwards entered into retreat from his congregants. In preaching to the Stockbridge Indians of salvation, Edwards depicted a God genuinely concerned for the well-being of his children, arguably reflecting Edwards’ own engagement with his new congregation. One particularly poignant sermon preached in August 1756, in the midst of the French and Indian War, captures Edwards’ encouragement offered to sinners and his empathy for the plight of his Indian congregants. “You that are poor you that have but few Friends,” urged Edwards, “if any of you are weary of sin, if you are weary of seeing so much wickedness in the world,” or

82. Revelation 3:20, February 1753, box 14, folder 1141, JEC. Edwards used the same image in another sermon preached the same month. “Jesus Christ offers himself and his salvation to all them that hear the gospel preached and all good men. Jesus comes to men’s doors and knocks and tells them that if they will open the door he and let ’em [him] in he tells ’em. He will give Himself and all that He has to them. Christ came down from Heaven and stands and calls at the door and knocks and offers this privilege to all that will let Him in.” John 1:12, February 1753, box 14, folder 1079, JEC.
83. Job 9:4, January 1753, box 13, folder 947, JEC.
84. Edwards never endorsed universalism—the idea that all people will eventually be saved—but he did maintain, if only in his Stockbridge sermons and his private notebooks, that the offer of salvation was open to all. McDermott discusses the “hidden” Edwards of the Miscellanies and the lengths to which Edwards went to counter critics of Calvinism who argued that it made God a monster by damning to hell those who had died without receiving word of Jesus Christ. McDermott, Jonathan Edwards: Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion and Non-Christian Faiths (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially Part III.
85. Luke 9:23, August 1753, box 13, folder 1061, JEC.
86. Tracy, Jonathan Edwards, Pastor 133–35.
“weary of seeing others drunk, weary of contention,” then do not
“walk in the ways of drunkenness [sic] and do the works of darkness”
but instead “chose [sic] heaven as your house. . . . Trust in Christ.” In
heaven, the saints would find “bounty without deformity . . . friends
and no enemies . . . and nothing but peace and love and no contention.”

Two points bear noting in these sermons. First, Edwards did not
compromise the hard doctrines of Calvinism in preaching to his
Indian congregation. Second, in applying Calvinist doctrine Edwards
consistently emphasized the desire of God to save sinners, rather than
his indifference to their fate. To be sure, he preached to the Indians
that they were inherently wicked and destined for hell if they failed to
repent for their sins. He warned them too that access to the gospel
brought greater obligations: “you had better know your duty more
than others and God has done more for you than others and therefore
if you don’t do your duty you will have a better place in Hell than the
Heathen that never heard of Jesus Christ.” But Edwards often bal-
anced these harsh bits of Calvinist doctrine with assurances that
sinfulness was the natural state of all humanity, and therefore Indians
had as good a chance of being saved as any others who had heard the
gospel. The hard doctrines of Calvinism were couched in a gentler
way so that original sin became the guarantor of spiritual equality,
rather than that which doomed the spider to dangle.

In their simplicity, the Stockbridge sermons represent a distillation
of Edwards’ theology. Whether Edwards’ complex body of theology
survived translation into Mahican is impossible to know, but it is clear
that Edwards believed it was possible to convey essential doctrine and
for his Indian congregants to attain a saving faith, for among the
surviving manuscripts is a collection of six Indian professions of faith.
These professions suggest not only that Edwards held to the practice
that had resulted in his dismissal from Northampton, but also that at
least six Indian residents of Stockbridge demonstrated signs of saving
faith to Edwards’ satisfaction. Given Edwards’ willingness to lose his
Northampton post rather than relinquish his scruples about member-
ship requirements, it seems unlikely he would have accepted a pro-

87. Revelation 22:3, August 1756, box 14, folder 1149, JEC. A letter from Edwards to former
Stockbridge schoolmaster and missionary to the Iroquois, Gideon Hawley, in October
of 1756 provides a further glimpse into Edwards’ state of mind at this time. He wrote,
“God indeed is remarkably blessing upon us everywhere: our enemies get up above
us very high and we are brought down very low. . . . Many things that have happened
doubtless make us very contemptible in their [the enemies’] eyes, and in the eyes of
almost all nations of Indians on the continent.” J.E. to Gideon Hawley, October 9, 1756.
Works, 16690.

88. The manuscript provides no further hints as to the occasion or date of the lecture.
ession he did not believe to represent a thorough and heartfelt conviction. 89

By contrast, while Edwards preached to the Indians of Christ's great desire to save them, he often preached of an arbitrary, indifferent, and wrathful God to the English. 90 In one sermon preached at Stockbridge in 1751, Edwards took aim directly at the rich and powerful. From Proverbs 3:16–18, Edwards drew the doctrine, "true religion is no other than the true method of becoming really and durably rich and honourable and joyful." Edwards warned that earthly honors would come to nothing: "and those that obtain the [highest] degree of worldly wealth and honour and enjoy the most pleasure in their carnal enjoyments can retain them but for a moment all suddenly vanishes away like a vapor that is dissipated by the winds." 91 Even in his sacramental sermons, occasions on which Edwards usually described the great love of Christ to humans, he recalled the scriptural warning: "I will tell you who they be that eat unworthily," who are

89. Indeed, he cautioned his Indian congregants "don't come [to communion] 'til your hearts are changed." Psalms 78:36–37, December, 1751, box 2, folder 162, JEC. One of these professions was signed Cornelius and Mary Murroweausamuck. These sources are written in Edwards' hand and the language is obviously Edwards'. However, these were no more (or less) Edwards' creations than the professions he expected his Northampton parishioners to present. Edwards presumed that he should oversee the composition of the professions. Interestingly, the Indian professions are significantly more detailed than the bare minimum he was willing to accept from his Northampton parishioners in the midst of the communion controversy. One of the Indian professions reads as follows: "I hope I do truly find a Heart to give up my self wholly to God according to the Tenour of that Covenant of Grace which was seal'd in my Baptism and to walk in a way of that Obedience to all the Commandments of God which the Covenant of Grace required as long as I live." Thanks to Kenneth Minkema for this citation. Box 21, folder 1249. See also Hall, "Editor's Introduction," Works, 12:62. An even more distant hint of Edwards' lasting influence is a short letter from Hendrick Auppaust, future chief of the Stockbridge Indians to Timothy Edwards, son of Jonathan. The eighteen-year-old Auppaust wrote that he "should be thankful if you would lend me a Book. The Authors is your Father—Concerning Affections or if you hasn't such—wish to have the other mention—the Will." Hendrick Auppaust to Timothy Edwards, 1755, typescript at Historical Room, Stockbridge Public Library, Stockbridge, Mass.

90. See lecture on Luke 1:77–79, delivered in New Haven July 1739 and reprinted November 1756 at Stockbridge, box 7, folder 541, JEC. The lecture is meant to demonstrate the absolute insufficiency of human understanding to obtain knowledge of divine truths. The piece seems extreme in its emphasis on the arbitrary nature of divine revelation. Presided Edwards, "arbitrary revelation alone can make known what God's arbitrary pleasure is."

91. Proverbs 3:16, 1731, box 3, folder 199, JEC. (Also preached 1750 at Middletown, Windsor, and Salem Village.) Mark Valeri divides Edwards' economic thought into three phases. The first, lasting until the Northampton revival, followed traditional Puritan teachings. During the second phase, from 1734–43, Edwards preached to the godly, believing that social change must begin with the elect. And finally, from 1744–50, Edwards abandoned the preaching campaign to the saints and reverted instead to seeking external controls. Valeri, "Economic Thought," 39–40.
"guilty of murdering the body and shedding the blood of Christ." 92
And in the passages quoted at the beginning of this essay, Edwards
warned the English children at Stockbridge that he thought he would
have greater success preaching to the Sodomites than to them. He
went on to exhort the children, "now seek that you may be converted
while young otherwise you will be more [illeg,] and your hearts will
be harder than the hearts of the children of Indians that never heard
the Gospel preached in their lives." 93

III. THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF ORIGINAL SIN

While Edwards was scaring English children and comforting his
Indian congregation, he was also at work on his defense of the "great
Christian doctrine of Original Sin." Turning to the treatise with
Edwards' pastoral relationships in mind casts a different light on the
text. The treatise was Edwards' answer to the growing number and
vendemence of challenges to Calvinist doctrine by those who found the
idea of a God casting sinners into hell without the chance of saving
themselves repulsive in an enlightened age. But Original Sin was also
in some measure the theological exposition of the doctrinal applica-
tions Edwards had worked out in his Stockbridge Indian sermons. In
it, Edwards stressed the equal inability of all humans, whether En-
GLISH, Indian, or African to reach any understanding of true religion
by virtue of reason alone. Yet emerging from this emphasis on uni-
versal depravity was a substantially different message depending on
where one stood in the world. Behind this argument lurked a leveling
message Edwards himself did not fully recognize or elaborate.

Following John Taylor's attack on original sin, Edwards' defense
focused on two issues: the universality of sin and the justice of
imputing Adam's guilt to all of humanity. In making his case, Edwards
rallied evidence from diverse sources including Scripture, history, Locke's philosophy, and personal observation. It is this last
source that has received least attention in treatments of Edwards'
work, but it is also the source responsible for lending an egalitarian
undercurrent to the text. His experience among the Stockbridge In-
dians was arguably what led Edwards to argue for human equality
forged in universal depravity. His sympathy for the Stockbridge Indians and his antipathy for the socially powerful, such as the
Williams family, spurred Edwards to critique ideological stances that
could serve to justify the status quo. Edwards' defense of the doctrine
of original sin served as an attack on any logic that wrote off the lowly

92. 1 Corinthians 11:27, January 1751, box 14, folder 1065, JEC.
93. Matthew 13:3–4, 1743, reprinted May of 1756, box 6, folder 463, JEC.
as suffering the just consequences of a failure to exert their God-given reason to discern religious truth.

Taylor’s main thesis held that Adam’s sin was his alone and could not be justly imputed to all of humanity. Sin, therefore, was not inherent to the human condition, but the result of external circumstances and a weak will. 94 For Taylor, the idolatry of the heathen world was an example of the dire consequences of choosing sin. Taylor (here quoted by Edwards) believed “heathen idolators” were justly damned and “inexcusable in not glorifying him [God],” for they had “that clear and evident discovery of God’s being and perfections” though they were without written revelation. 95 Although Taylor granted a common humanity to non-Christians and believed they partook of a divinely ordained capacity for reasoning to divine truths, he asserted that failure to discover these truths was their fault alone. Edwards found Locke guilty of the same offense as Taylor—he unjustly damned the unenlightened. Edwards quoted from Locke’s Essay on Human Understanding: “I judge it as certain and clear a truth, as can anywhere be delivered, that the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understo009200d by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.” 96 Edwards objected to the assertion that eternal truths were open to the apprehension of all because it falsely magnified human capacities and thereby wrote off those who seemed most bereft of saving knowledge.

Edwards found no evidence of the advance of true religion in an age of reason that Locke or Taylor’s theories would suggest, but instead discerned a downward spiral despite all the advantages granted by God. Despite the great truths God made manifest in the Reformation, Edwards lamented, “but how is the gold soon become dim! To what a pass are things come in Protestant countries at this day, and in our nation in particular! To what a prodigious height has a deluge of infidelity, profaneness, luxury, debauchery and wickedness of every kind, arisen! The poor savage Americans are mere babes and fools (if I may so speak) as to proficiency in wickedness, in comparison of multitudes that the Christian world throngs with.” 97 All about him Edwards found support for the covenantal view of history he had elaborated in his sermons to the Indians. God through the ages made divine knowledge available to humans, first through

95. Taylor quoted in Works, 3:149.
96. Quoted in Works, 3:149.
prophets and later through Christ and the gospel, but after each covenant or dispensation, humanity fell into corruption.

For Edwards, sin was an inescapable part of human nature, not a blemish that might be easily removed by an exertion of free will. For support, he turned in part to a historical argument. People, argued Edwards, have always sinned, no matter the nation, the race, gender, or era. If not by virtue of a sinful nature, asked Edwards, why then are humans determined to evil

in like manner before the flood, and after the flood; under the law, and under the gospel; among both Jews and Gentiles, under the Old Testament; and since that, among Christians, Jews, Mohametans; among Papists and Protestants; in those nations where civility, politeness, and learning most prevail, and among the Negroes and Hottentots in Africa, the Tartars in Asia, and the Indians in America, towards both the poles, and on every side of the globe; in greatest cities, and obscurest villages: in palaces, and in huts, wigwams and cells under the ground?99

The argument of free will was unpersuasive. If humans exercised free will and were not predisposed to evil, then why were examples of goodness so hard to come by and evil so prevalent? The answer could only be a natural disposition to sin.

Edwards reasoned that if John Taylor and other rationalists were correct that God had given humans the natural light to apprehend divine truths without direct divine assistance (whether through direct revelation in ancient times or through the written revelation of the gospel since Christ’s time), then “even the heathen in all parts of the world, yea, every single person in it (which must include every Indian in America, before the Europeans came hither . . .) has the ability, light, and means sufficient, to do their whole duty.”99 Were the natural light of reason enough, then even the heathens of America who had never encountered the gospel nor experienced grace should have knowledge of true religion. Edwards could not accept the implication of Taylor’s theory, which suggested, in Edwards’ words, that it was “bad instruction and example”—and not an innate depravity common to all humans—that “hinder[ed] the heathen world . . . from emerging out of their corruption.”100

When Edwards surveyed the world, the one constant he saw was human sinfulness. If humans were capable of exerting their God-given reason to attain knowledge of true religion, reasoned Edwards, then

98. Works, 3:194.
100. Works, 3:196.
there ought to be examples of true religion among heathens, yet he found none.\textsuperscript{101} Pointing to the "multitudes of nations" of North and South America, Edwards asked, "What appearance was there when the Europeans first came hither, of their being recovered, or recovering, in any degree from the grossest ignorance, delusions, and most stupid paganism?\textsuperscript{102} Human nature, concluded Edwards, was naturally disposed to idolatry and depravity, and thus humans could always be expected to work contrary to their own happiness. The native residents of the Americas were proof for Edwards of the deficiency of the human understanding in discerning divine truths without divine aid.

The American Indians, reasoned Edwards, should serve as an example of the natural state of humanity, for they lacked knowledge of divine truths due to their great physical and chronological distance from the sources of revelation, a common theme of Edwards' Stockbridge sermons. Any advances out of heathendom the English had experienced could not be attributed to natural ability but only to revelation and grace. Were true religion available by the light of human reason, then the Indians should have made some progress. Edwards' insistence on a unified human nature rendered it impossible for any to take credit for advances out of heathendom. God alone was the author of progress through the working of his grace.

Edwards differed little from other European and American thinkers in classifying the Indians as a heathen and degraded people. Yet his explanation for the difference between heathen and Christian set him apart from his opponents. Edwards' argument for a common constituency of all humanity in Adam meant that none could claim advance out of darkness as their own accomplishment: the fall had rendered all humanity equally incapable of even the slightest advance toward true religion without assistance from God.\textsuperscript{103} He maintained that it was the Indians' shared constitution with all of humanity—not any innate difference—that explained their unenlightened state. Thus, in Original

\textsuperscript{101} As Gerald McDermott has demonstrated, Edwards followed other authors in his embrace of \textit{prima theolog}, the idea that certain central truths of Christian belief had been espoused by the ancient Greeks and other "heathens." He accounted for these glimpses of "true religion" by suggesting that they were remnants of religious truths revealed through God's prophets. Geographical and chronological distance from the original source of revelation accounted for the corruption of true religion. No prophets had appeared on American shores, and the written gospel had only recently arrived, and so the heathens of America were in even worse straits than the heathen of ancient Rome, who at least benefited from a geographical proximity to events of direct, divine intervention. McDermott, \textit{Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods}, chapter 5. Edwards presented this logic in his sermon to the Indians at the treaty in Albany, 2 Peter 3:19, August 16, 1751, ANTS.

\textsuperscript{102} Works, 3:151.

\textsuperscript{103} Edwards' argument for the common constituency of all humanity in Adam can be found in Works, 3:388–412.
Sin, while the American Indians, together with other examples of "pagan" peoples, serve as examples of the absolute necessity of divine revelation in acquiring knowledge of "true religion," the conclusion to be drawn was that all humanity would be in a similar state were it not for the grace of God. Europeans had not shown a lesser tendency toward sin. Rather, God’s grace had been more readily available.

Edwards’ view of original sin harbored important social and political undertones, which on occasion rise to the surface of the text. Near the end of his treatise, Edwards takes up the practical implications of his understanding of the doctrine of original sin. Far from resulting in "an ill opinion of our fellow-creatures" thereby promoting "ill-nature and mutual hatred," as his opponents argued, the affirmation of the doctrine of original sin would in fact induce a welcome humility. By contrast, to disown "that sin and guilt, which truly belongs to us," in Edwards’ view, leads only to a "foolish self-exaltation and pride." Acceptance of the doctrine would have the salutary effect of teaching "us to think no worse of others, than of ourselves," and convincing people that "we are all, as we are by nature, compassion in a miserable helpless condition." This, in turn, "tends to promote a mutual compassion." Belief in human reason does more to promote ill will toward one’s fellow humans, for it teaches "that the generality of mankind are very wicked, having made themselves so by their own free choice, without any necessity, which is a way of becoming wicked, that renders men truly worthy of resentment." 104

IV. CONCLUSION

Jonathan Edwards believed the world would be a better place if God’s saints were in charge. But the Northampton controversy had convinced him that ought was not is—men of worldly honor and wealth were not necessarily saints. Encountering a radically different congregation from his Stockbridge pulpit, Edwards faced the challenge of conveying Calvinist doctrine in a way that suited the Indians’ special circumstances and needs. In the course of preaching to the Indians, Edwards developed a novel application of the doctrine of original sin. While there was always an egalitarian dimension of the Calvinist belief in universal damnation, Edwards pushed this element to the forefront in preaching to the Indians. He preached original sin to the Indians in a way that encouraged the lowly and humbled the mighty. This application of the Calvinist doctrine of original sin, first worked out in his sermons to the Indians, was further developed in his monumental treatise. Viewed within its social context, Jonathan Edwards’ Original Sin emerges as an oddly egalitarian text.

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