

**THE METHODIST EDWARDS:
JOHN WESLEY'S ABRIDGEMENT
OF THE SELECTED WORKS OF JONATHAN EDWARDS¹**

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Among eighteenth-century evangelical figures, Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley usually rank as some of the most notable. The two men presided over tremendous religious change in their respective countries while having no personal relationship. In fact, their chief tangible connection was through the mutual relationship with George Whitefield. It is not an exaggeration to state that their ideas about the character of religious reform and revival were notably different. Edwards was the dogged defender of inherited Puritan Calvinism in the face of the challenges of the enlightenment. Wesley, on the other hand, was the most notable representative of evangelical Arminian Anglicanism, who worked out the intricacies of free will and the heritage of the Protestant Reformation. When it came to the nuts and bolts of revivalism, they shared a concern for the spread of the Gospel and the reformation of the English world. This paper will look at Wesley's abridgement of selected works by Edwards that were influenced by the underlying Calvinist-Arminian debate in England, but were ultimately adapted by Wesley to serve the end of promoting revivalism. I will first look at Wesley as a religious publisher, then move on to delineating the connections between the two men, and in the final section I will analyze the method of abridgement that Wesley adopted by looking at his editorial choices of Edwards' works. In the comments on abridgement, I will not fixate on small errata. Instead, I will make assessments of trends in Wesley's editorial work of a given piece, and bring out noteworthy examples that demonstrate his method.

Wesley the Publisher

Eighteenth-century England possessed a vibrant literary culture, but it was a house divided. There were three main issues that drove this division: illiteracy, elite culture, and price. It has been perennially difficult to gauge the literacy of the population of England at given times in the eighteenth century, usually characterized by analyzing church records (which is an arduous

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and uneven task at best).² Nonetheless, Kenneth Lockridge estimates that English literacy was around 65% in 1729.³ Patrick Collinson has further demonstrated how England became a society; after 1580 religion was increasingly experienced in print, due, primarily, to Puritan influence and the setting-in of Protestant identity.⁴ The greatest indicator of literate ability was occupation, and skilled professions were likely to entail corresponding reading ability.⁵ Literary culture was, not surprisingly, centered on elite concerns and topics. The writings of Alexander Pope, for example, were not geared to a mass audience. Literary material was, by and large, very expensive. This is not to say that families (even poor families) didn't have printed material, but books, indeed libraries, were simply out of reach for the general population.

Wesley addressed all three of these phenomena with his work as a publisher. He held sole decision-making ability over Methodist book publishing, stating that he had to make sure a given author's work was "corrected" before it went to press.⁶ He was quick, however, to remind the reader that he took blame for his errors. He was by all means a popular publisher who hated the price thresholds of books, and more so the tolerance of dull pieces for high prices.⁷ This had the unfortunate side effect on the (cheap) quality of the publishing houses he utilized, which were notorious for making errors. The pressure on the price of his *Christian Library* never won out on the side of quality or profit, and became a target for ridicule.⁸

Wesley was a "cultural middleman," who, especially through his *Arminian Journal*, provided a tangible bridge between the intellectual world of elites and the growing desire for print among an increasing literate lower class public (among which Methodists were exploding).⁹ In the face of the drawing room banter that characterized much of eighteenth-century elite literature, Wesley wrote and selected pieces about poverty, disease, drunkenness,

² David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914*, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 3-4. Church records did not require signatures or marks (that give insight into writing ability) until 1754 with Hadwick's Marriage Act. The only two regions in the world where such records were available, previous to the 1750s, were Sweden and New England.

³ Kenneth A Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England; an Enquiry into the Social Context of Literacy in the Early Modern West*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1974), 82.

⁴ Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Third Anstey Memorial Lectures in the University of Kent at Canterbury, 12-15 May 1986* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988). For Collinson, Puritans replaced a visual and sensual expression of religion for a culture of literacy wherein their religious sentiment was expressed. This, as in Scotland, led to staggering levels of literacy among Puritans. Wesley confronted, nonetheless, a large underclass that had no access to such a world primarily due to illiteracy, or a social status that typically entailed illiteracy.

⁵ Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture*, 4.

⁶ Thomas Walter Herbert, *John Wesley as Editor and Author* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1940), 1.

⁷ Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 3rd ed. (London: Epworth Press, 2002), 348-349.

⁸ Herbert, *John Wesley as Editor and Author*, 2.

⁹ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 352.

domestic abuse, slavery, the ill-treatment of animals, and most of all religion. Furthermore, Wesley established his own Sunday schools as a part of the broader Sunday school movement, in order to teach reading and writing for working-class people and their children. Taught by unpaid Methodist, Nonconformist, and Anglican teachers, Sunday schools expanded literacy to levels as high as 75% for working class children by 1851. A bookseller commented in 1804 in regards to Methodist literacy, "As the Methodists do not waste their time in idleness and diversions, they have more time to read than others . . . So that the difference in degree of knowledge between the poor Methodists and the poor in general is very remarkable."¹⁰

Wesley was a voracious reader, much like Edwards. By his death in 1791, Wesley owned 351 titles and the press had an inventory of 254,512 volumes.¹¹ The scope of Wesley's reading included such disparate themes such as the Church Fathers, medicine, science, poetry, plays, music, philosophy (with a particular love for John Locke), and, of course, religious writing. He would set up libraries for his Methodist societies, and would encourage the groups to purchase "good books." This was one of the chief ends of his *Christian Library* project—regulating a collection of books for the consumption of Methodist bands. For Wesley, it was an unalienable truth that his followers should be "reading Christians" so that they could be "knowing Christians."¹² A key aspect of getting early Methodists to read was to present good works in an accessible format. This meant that academic terminology, obscure references, and perceived redundancies were to be taken out. Otherwise, the under-educated reader would give up on reading.

Wesley was, like Edwards, a prolific writer; once he arrived at his destination for the day and had completed his responsibilities, he would retire to write. Editing, on the other hand, was the work of the road. Wesley would perch himself on top of his horse, and take a pen to the work he was editing, crossing out what he thought was objectionable, discursive, or redundant.¹³ There is danger in trying to project a kind of scientific method to Wesley's editorial work; any analysis of his editing process must keep in mind that much of it was subjective. The best we can do is to identify themes that are woven into all of his editorial work. This is especially the case since there are only two comments by Wesley on his method, one of which is found in the preface to his abridgment of *Religious Affections*. The other is a comment on what Wesley thought of his own editing and the publishing business in general. He writes (somewhat ironically):

The Christian Library is not Mr. Wesley's writing: it is "Extracts and Abridgements of" other writers; the subjects of which I highly approve, but I will not be account-

¹⁰ Quoted in Vicki Tolar-Burton, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism: Reading, Writing, and Speaking to Believe* (Waco: Baylor UP, 2008), 22-23.

¹¹ Tolar-Burton, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism*, 235. His collection was large mostly due to his work as a publisher (thus he had multiple copies of his published works). His inventory, compiled for the sale at his death, had an estimated worth of £4,000.

¹² Herbert, *John Wesley as Editor and Author*, 27.

¹³ Tolar-Burton, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism*, 26.

able for every expression. Much less will I *father* eight pages of I know not what which a shameless man has picked out of that work, tacked together in the manner he thought good, and then published in my name. He puts me in mind of what occurred some years since. A man was stretching his throat near Moorfields and screaming out, "A full and true account of the death of the Rev. George Whitefield!" One took hold of him and said, "Sirrah! What do you mean? Mr. Whitefield is yonder before you." He shrugged up his shoulders, and said, "Why, sir, an honest man must do something to turn an honest penny."¹⁴

Jonathan Edwards' and John Wesley's Relationship

We know several things about the relationship between Wesley and Edwards. The first is that they had no personal relationship. They did not correspond, in letters, in direct disputation, or through surrogates. On the other hand, Edwards and Wesley were similar in many ways: both intensely disciplined, highly educated, and self-consciously aspired to greatness. The two men were exact contemporaries, as they were born in the same year, 1703. Wesley was first exposed to the work of Edwards in October of 1738, when he read an edition of *A Faithful Narrative* in lieu of revival experiences in and around Oxford.¹⁵ We know from Edwards' "Catalogue" of books that Edwards owned works by the Wesleys, among other notable English Evangelicals such as Issac Watts.¹⁶ There are only two other mentions of the Wesleys in the giant corpus of Edwards' writing. Edwards first mentions the Wesleys, along with Moravians, as being responsible for encouraging secession from established churches and being involved in stirring up false conversions in a letter to John Erskine on July 5th, 1750, in the aftermath of his dismissal at Northampton.¹⁷ The second mention of the Wesleys by Edwards is in the context of making sure his readers, in times of religious awakening, were not deluded into believing they are "perfectly free from sin (agreeable to the notion of the Wesleys and their followers, and some other high pretenders to spirituality in these days)." Edwards further writes that, instead, they should be more convicted of "how loathsome and polluted the soul is."¹⁸

What is curious is that Edwards did not mention Wesley in regards to the Arminian-Calvinist debate, which would figure very prominently in some of Wesley's appropriations of Edwards' works. It is unlikely, due to the mutual acquaintance of Whitefield, that Edwards was ignorant of Wesley's

¹⁴ Quoted in Herbert, *John Wesley as Editor and Author*, 26-27.

¹⁵ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 187.

¹⁶ Sermons and Discourses, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale UP), 22: 26. Hereafter *WJE*.

¹⁷ *Letters and Personal Writings*, *WJE*, 16:349: "I suspect the follies of some of the Seceders, which you mention in both your letters of September 20 and December 22, arise in considerable measure from the same cause with the follies of the Moravians, and the followers of the Wesleys, and many extravagant people in America viz. false religion, counterfeit conversions, and the want of a genuine renovation of the spirit of their minds. I say as to many of them, not to condemn all in the gross. The spirit seems to be exactly the same with what appears in many, who apparently, by their own account, have had a false conversion."

¹⁸ *The Great Awakening*, *WJE*, 4:341.

Arminianism as it was one of Edwards' central polemical tasks and vice versa. In fact, Wesley got to the point in 1778 that he enthusiastically accepted the once opprobrious moniker "Arminian" in the title of his magazine, the *Arminian Magazine*.¹⁹ Edwards' conduit for news about English Evangelicalism was typically filtered through Scotland; this may have had something to do with the lack of increased engagement with Wesley himself.

The two men shared a dominant commitment towards religious revival. Yet, their opinions on how someone came to "true religion" were, at times, diametrically opposed. We can only imagine that Edwards would have had no issue firmly setting Mr. Wesley straight if they had ever met, and Wesley, with his famous Oxford debate style, would have been happy to engage him. If Edwards' unwelcomed advice to Whitefield concerning his populism is any glimpse into Edwards' temperament, it likely would have been a bit more strident towards Wesley.²⁰ The fact remains that both men were the promoters of revivals throughout their lives, and were constantly on the defensive over the legitimacy of those revivals. Albert Outler has argued that Edwards' writing was a major source of Wesley's theology, and formed one of the four major sources of Wesley's thought.²¹ Revivalism is ultimately the great attraction that Edwards presented to Wesley, and is the reason why Wesley would exert so much effort to republish some of Edwards' works.

A notable difference between the two men is that Wesley was committed to being accessible to the point that he was often criticized for pandering for the attention of the masses. Sir Walter Scott heard Wesley preach as a twelve-year-old boy, and commented that he was surely a person worth respect but too colloquial (though his stories were excellent).²² Wesley took the plain style farther than what many persons were comfortable with, especially among his more educated followers who yearned for respectability. Wesley, nonetheless, was committed to making religious writing accessible for the common reader; for example, he was rather explicit on what he thought of Edwards' more philosophical musings: "he heaps together so many curious, subtle, metaphysical distinctions, as are sufficient to puzzle the brain, and confound the intellects, of all the plain men and women in the universe; and to make them doubt of, if not wholly deny, all the work which God had wrought in their souls."²³

Abridging Jonathan Edwards

Wesley had no qualms about taking extensive liberties in publishing

¹⁹ Herbert, *John Wesley as Editor and Author*, 33-34. Wesley's *Arminian Magazine: Consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises on Universal Redemption* evolved into the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, which has the distinction of the longest continuously published religious periodical in the world.

²⁰ George M Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003), 211-212.

²¹ Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford UP, 1964), 16.

²² Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 344.

²³ See note 55.

other's works. This was not an uncommon attitude during the period, and editing was not an occupation foreign to Edwards either. Edwards was the editor of David Brainerd's journals, which grew to be one of his Edwards' most smashing successes. Edwards was attuned to the issues and advantages of editing the works of others; he, of course, presented David Brainerd's Yale debacle in a positive light. That notwithstanding, Edwards was primarily an author, not a disseminator of the works of others. Wesley, on the other hand, was very much a publisher. Wesley saw five works by Edwards through to publication: *Faithful Narrative* (1744), *Distinguishing Marks* (1744), *Some Thoughts* (1745), *Life of David Brainerd* (1768), and *Religious Affections* (1773).²⁴ In fact, Wesley and his followers would oversee the greatest reproduction of some of these works in the decades following their initial publication. It is, furthermore, important to note that all five of these works involve topics concerning revivalism and evangelism.

A Narrative of the Late Work of God, at and near, Northampton in New-England (1744)

The *Faithful Narrative* offers a clear example of Edwards' opinion about the editing process. After reading over a copy of the London 1737 edition of the *Faithful Narrative* on a visit to Yale, Edwards made immediate marginal annotations, not being entirely pleased with either Benjamin Coleman's initial abridgement or Isaac Watts' subsequent compilation, as both "published some things diverse from fact." Edwards' reticence over the abridgement might also reflect his growing uneasiness with his initial assessments of conversions.²⁵ It is probable that Wesley used the 1737 Watts edition with the problems that Edwards objected to, since the next edition printed in London would not be until 1791.²⁶

The *Faithful Narrative* is the only instance where we have a record as to Wesley's reaction to reading an Edwards work for the first time. Wesley first encountered the book while traveling from London to Oxford on October 9, 1738. He wrote enthusiastically in his journal: "Surely, 'this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'!"²⁷ This excitement evidently led to pursuing the publication of the work. Wesley's edition whittled down the London edition from 127 pages to 44.

²⁴ Dates refer to the John Wesley (JW) publication dates. Also, JW's abridgements of *Religious Affections* and *Distinguishing Marks* were reissued together as *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Human Heart* (1841). Thomas Herbert Johnson, *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758; a Bibliography* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1940), 9n. Commonly used abbreviated titles of JE works are used, though the titles differ in JW editions (i.e., *Religious Affections* over *Treatise on the Religious Affections* . . . , etc.).

²⁵ C. C. Goen, Introduction, *Faithful Narrative*, *WJE* 4: 39-41. Some of the errors may have been more to do with simple factual errors, such as their mistake of placing Northampton in New Hampshire, rather than Hampshire county—an evidently annoying thing for New Englanders.

²⁶ Goen, Introduction, *Faithful Narrative*, 41.

²⁷ W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial edition, Volume 19: Journal and Diaries II (1738-1743), (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 16.

Wesley's abridgment changed the *Faithful Narrative* from the form of a letter to a numbered account of the content of the letter. Wesley summarized succinctly the first three pages of the narrative: "The town of *Northampton* in *New-England* contains about 200 Families. After a more than ordinary Licentiousness in the People here, a Concern for Religion began to revive, in the Year 1729."²⁸ Apparently Wesley was not interested in either Edwards' account of how Northampton's inland location had partially shielded it from seaport-associated vices, or the "harvest" legacy of Solomon Stoddard. Similarly, the long paragraph concerning the young people's receptiveness to end their Sunday evening "mirth," is summarized from the longer description ending with "... there was a thorough reformation of these disorders thenceforward, which has continued ever since" to simply "Where there was a General Reformation of Outward Disorders, which has continued ever since."²⁹ Wesley, despite summarizing large sections of the beginning of the *Faithful Narrative*, still used parts of Edwards' original words to do it.

Although it would have been interesting to know how Wesley might have felt about Edwards' discussion of the encroaching threat of Arminianism (i.e. Edwards writes that "the friends of piety trembled for fear of the issue."), it is not surprising that this portion, and all Arminian references, were eliminated by Wesley.³⁰ The *Faithful Narrative* remained a very personal work for Wesley's own spiritual understanding. Richard Steele comments that reading the *Faithful Narrative* provided Wesley with the tools to process his Aldersgate experience, and as such remained important in his appropriation of the famous "strangely warmed" incident.³¹

The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God (1744)

The *Distinguishing Marks* would prove to be as important a piece for Wesley in defending the Methodist revivals as it was for its original author. Although Methodist revival would be a bit less bipolar in its English context, Wesley found himself, like Edwards, on the defensive over the validity of the religious movement against, what C. C. Goen calls, "rationalists and eccle-

²⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *A Narrative of the Late Work of God, at and near Northampton, in New-England: Extracted from Mr. Edwards's letter to Dr. Coleman, by John Wesley* (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1744), 2. Hereafter in this section as [Bristol Edition].

²⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Suprizing Work of God . . .* (London: John Oswald, 1737) in *Text of the Faithful Narrative, Great Awakening*, *WJE*, 4: 147. Hereafter in this section as [London edition].

³⁰ [London edition] in *WJE*, 4:148. We do have a reference to Wesley's latter opinion (1755) of this kind of treatment, "... [in reference to Scottish divines] Many of them became 'wise in their own eyes'; they seemed to think they were the men, and there were none like them . . . Many of them were bigots, immoderately attached either to their own opinions or mode of worship. Mr. Edwards himself was not clear of this. But Scotch bigots were beyond all others; placing Arminianism (so called) on a level with Deism, and the Church of England with that of Rome . . . No marvel then that the Spirit of God was grieved. Let us profit by their example." In John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), 130.

³¹ Richard B. Steele, "Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue" According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Meutchen: Scarecrow, 1994), 188.

siocrats of the establishment.”³² Evidently this was the Edwards work that was the most important to Methodists. Not only were four editions printed during Wesley’s lifetime (the most of any other), but the work went through forty-six reprints, most through the auspices of Methodist publishers (in the form of the Wesley edition, of course). Out of the twenty separate editions of the work, twelve were Wesley editions.³³

Wesley’s abridgement was probably based on the 1742 London (Watts and Guyse) edition, but this determination is made due to geographical proximity. A positive determination is complicated since an original manuscript has not survived, and the text of the 1741 Boston edition is almost identical to the London edition apart from the typical spelling difference here and there. The London edition is different in the setting of the text, a different order of contents, and in that it includes letters from Benjamin Colman, similar to the *Faithful Narrative*’s London edition. Wesley trimmed the work from 78 pages in the London edition to 47 pages in his own edition.

Wesley takes out the preface by William Cooper, which shortens the length considerably. He also removes some of the supposed redundancies in the text, which is typical of his editing of other works. For example, Edwards writes, “The extraordinary and unusual Degree of Influence, and Power of Operation, is in its Nature” Wesley trims it down to “The extraordinary Degree of Influence is in its Nature”³⁴ The first paragraph deletion by Wesley is not until twenty pages into the work, and it is in the context of Edwards offering a second example of the validity of “calling out” in religious gatherings.³⁵ The first seemingly theological edit is on page 28 of the 1744 Watts edition, where Wesley removes two paragraphs on the persistence of “Blindness and Corruption” among the devout. Wesley, especially at this time in his career, would have been more confident about the possibility of moral perfection (albeit still limited), and may have thought an *excursus* on the persistence of sin among the devout was out of place for a work trying to affirm conversions. There are, interestingly, seemingly political and typological edits as well:

[London 1744 Watts edition]³⁶

[London 1746 Wesley edition]³⁷

So in <i>England</i> , at the Time when vital Religion did much prevail in the Days of King <i>Charles I.</i> the <i>Interregnum</i> , and <i>Oliver Cromwell</i> , such Things as these abounded. And so in the Beginning of <i>New-England</i> , in her purest Days, when vital Piety flourished,	And so in the Beginning of <i>New England</i> , when vital Piety flourished,
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³² C. C. Goen, Introduction to *Great Awakening*, *WJE*, 4:91.

³³ Johnson, *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards*, 22-30.

³⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *The distinguishing marks of a work . . .* (London: S. Mason, 1742), 16., Jonathan Edwards, *The distinguishing marks of a work . . . extracted from Mr. Edwards . . . by John Wesley* (London: W. Strahan, 1744), 7.

³⁵ [1742 Watts edition] 20, [1744 Wesley edition] 11.

³⁶ [1742 Watts edition] 31.

³⁷ [1744 Wesley edition], 19.

-Continued-

[London 1744 Watts edition]

[London 1746 Wesley edition]

such kind of Things as these broke out. Therefore the Devil's sowing such Tares is no Proof that a true Work of the Spirit of God is not gloriously carried on.	such Things as these broke out. Therefore the Devil's sowing such Tares is no Proof that a true Work of the Spirit of God is not carried on.
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Unfortunately such edits did not come with critical commentary. Wesley's edit was too short to address a possible space issue, nor does it seem to be a reading fluency edit either. Wesley seems to have purposely excised any English reference from the comment. It would have been intriguing to hear Wesley, famous for his affection for the monarchy, explain why the time of Oliver Cromwell was not worth mentioning as a time of increased piety. It is typical, however, for Wesley to excise much of Edwards' millennial and dispensational commentary. He did not seem to share Edwards' fascination with typological history.

Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England (1745)

Wesley's adaptation of Edwards' *Some Thoughts* likely used the Edinburgh 1743 edition, as this was probably the most readily available at the time³⁸ Especially in relation to Scottish excitement over the work, Wesley probably had learned of it through his Scottish connections, which during the 1740s were fairly genial.³⁹ *Some Thoughts*, along with the *Faithful Narrative* and *Distinguishing Marks*, were Great Awakening texts, which were formative for Wesley's own view of the revival model. Initially reticent about the "signs" exhibited by persons in religious gatherings, he was calmed and confirmed by Edwards' accounts.⁴⁰ Wesley's decision to publish these revival texts was primarily aimed at clarifying the bounds of legitimate religious experience, which is similar to Edwards' intent. Experience would become a constant issue during Wesley's life, as he tried to affirm a more Aristotelian model of sanctifying morphology against the emphasis on singular conversion events by other Methodist revivalists.⁴¹

Wesley's abridgement of *Some Thoughts* was rather drastic. Edwards' 1742 Boston edition weighed in at 378 pages, whereas Wesley's 1745 London edition was a mere 124 pages. This work, unlike *Distinguishing Marks*, did enjoy at least one reprint as the Edwards edition in Edinburgh in 1743; Wesley and his successors reprinted the book frequently—1745, 1795,

³⁸ See note 42.

³⁹ Crawford, *Seasons of Grace*, 223

⁴⁰ Crawford, 149-150.

⁴¹ JW's understanding of sanctifying morphology was informed by his understanding of moral psychology, of which Edwards was influential. See Kevin Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda: A New Paradigm for Wesleyan Virtue Ethics* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 159.

and as a part of the *Christian Library* in 1827.⁴² Some of Wesley's edits were rather small, seemingly for fluency reasons:

[Edinburgh edition]⁴³

[London edition]⁴⁴

<p>... why he hath made it thus, or why it has pleased him to take such a Course, and to use such and such Means, before we will acknowledge his Work, and give him the Glory of it. This is too much for the Clay to take upon it with respect to the <i>Potter</i>.</p>	<p>... why he made it thus, or why it has pleased him to use such and such Means, before we will acknowledge his work. This is too much for the <i>Clay</i> to take upon it with Respect to the <i>Potter</i>.</p>
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Other redactions are larger. For example, on page 107-109 of the Edinburgh edition Wesley takes out an entire page and subsequent whole paragraphs of Edwards chastising those who oppose the awakenings, while keeping the discussion of how the Devil resists the good work of God. The following example is furthermore illustrative of Wesley's method.

[Edinburgh edition, p. 52]

[London edition, p. 37]

<p>When God manifests himself with such glorious Power in a Work of this Nature, he appears especially determined to put Honour upon his Son, and to fulfill his Oath that he has sworn to him, that he would make every Knee to bow, and every Tongue to confess to him. God hath had it much on his Heart, from all Eternity to glorify his dear and only begotten Son; and there are some special Seasons that he appoints to that End, wherein he comes forth with omnipotent Power to fulfill his Promise and Oath to him. And these Times are Times of remarkable pouring out of his Spirit, to advance his kingdom; such a Day is a Day of his Power, wherein his People shall be made willing, and he shall rule in the midst of his Enemies; these especially are the Times wherein God declares his firm Decree that his Son shall reign on his holy hill of <i>Zion</i>: and therefore those that at such a Time don't kiss the Son, as he then manifests himself, and appears in the Glory of his Majesty and Grace, expose themselves to <i>perish from the way</i>, and to be <i>dashed in pieces with a rod of iron</i>.</p>	<p>When GOD manifests himself with such glorious Power, he appears especially determined to put Honour upon his Son, and to fulfill his Oath, that he would <i>make every Knee to bow, and every Tongue to confess him</i>.</p> <p>Such a Day is a Day of his Power, wherein he shall rule in the midst of his Enemies; these especially are the Times wherein GOD declares his firm Decree, that his Son shall <i>reign on his holy Hill of Zion</i>: And therefore those that at such a Time do not <i>kiss the Son</i>, as he then appears in the Glory of Majesty, expose themselves to <i>perish from the Way</i>, and to be <i>dash'd in Pieces with a Rod of Iron</i>.</p>
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⁴² C. C. Goen, Introduction to *Great Awakening*, *WJE*, 4:90-91.

⁴³ Jonathan Edwards, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England* . . . (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1743), 2. [Edinburgh edition]. The 1742 Boston edition and the 1743 Edinburgh edition are identical except for spelling differences (i.e., "honour" vs. "honor"), and increased capitalization (for emphasis?) in the Scottish edition. My assessment that Wesley used the Edinburgh edition is based on identical capitalization, spelling, and probable access to that edition.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England*, *Abrieg'd by John Wesley* (London: W. Strahan, 1745), 4. Cited in this section as [London edition]

We can surmise several things from these selections. First, Wesley was more diligent than either Edwards or his printers were about using italics for quotes, usually from Scripture. Second, Wesley took out sections that he felt were either rambling or too intellectual for the lay Methodist reader. Third, he made changes to improve the fluency of the text. And fourth, he made theological edits of Edwards' blatant Calvinism and typological interest. In the above quoted example from page 52 of the Edinburgh edition, Wesley excises the Supralapsarian tinged "God hath had it much on his Heart, from all Eternity to glorify his dear and only begotten Son." Wesley had a profound distaste for anything that smacked of divine decree. All of these edits had a clear aim of aiding the lay Methodist reader, and in Wesley's eyes, not confusing them.

An Extract of the Life of the Late Rev. Mr. David Brainerd (1768)

Quantifying the impact of Edwards' preeminent editing project had on the evangelical missionary movement is difficult. For Methodists, it was vast. Wesley's edition of the work went into seven editions from the initial publication of his version in 1768 until 1800.⁴⁵ Brainerd was an immediate example of the quintessential Methodist symbol—the horse riding itinerant preacher.⁴⁶ That early Methodists in England, America, and beyond identified with Brainerd was no accident. Francis Asbury lamented in 1798 that he had failed to publish the work in America, "I reflected with pain, that we had never reprinted, in America, the life, labours, travels, and sufferings of that great man of God, David Brainerd, of gracious memory; it would be a book well fitted for our poor, painful, and faithful missionaries."⁴⁷ Asbury's lament was rectified with *Brainerd* in 1815, but what was the appeal of such a work?

Despite being a scrubbed edition, the work gave insight into the inherent struggles of missionary work. Brainerd's success was little, his hardship great, his desire for God constant, and the obstacles profuse. He exhibited a cultural superiority towards his Indian congregates, but also displayed the frustration of cross-cultural communication which would have been well known to his missionary readers. In the end, it was disease that killed him, but not before rewarding his effort with some results among the Indian populace. Fortuitously for Brainerd's legacy, he died in the household of Jonathan Edwards, where the pastor was able to capably record the good death that rewarded such agonizing missionary effort. Brainerd was surely hagiographic at times in Edwards' *Life*, but he was also intensely real.

Perry Miller stated that *Life of David Brainerd* was Edwards' attempt

⁴⁵ Johnson, *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards*, 73. Seven out of nine editions during the period 1768-1800 were published as Wesley editions.

⁴⁶ Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990), 236-241.

⁴⁷ Francis Asbury, *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury: In Three Volumes* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 2:154.

to “rebuke to both enthusiasts and Arminians.”⁴⁸ What did that mean to Wesley, England’s preeminent evangelical Arminian? The answer was that Wesley was enthralled. His abridgement of Brainerd, unlike other works by Edwards, was more for ease of reading than theological dispute. It is likely that since Edwards was merely the editor, Wesley was less suspicious of Brainerd’s theological orientation. Nonetheless, Wesley tells his ministers, “Let every preacher read carefully over the ‘Life of David Brainerd’. . . Find preachers of David Brainerd’s spirit, and nothing can stand before them.”⁴⁹ Wesley had absorbed the Brainerd text so much that he often used Brainerd for interpretive references in his journals and diaries.⁵⁰ Although Wesley faulted Brainerd for “applauding himself and magnifying his own work,” he still pushed the book among Methodist leaders.⁵¹ Francis Asbury rhapsodized over Brainerd as “that model of meekness, moderation, temptation and labor, and self-denial,” and saw in his writings something “so Methodistical.”⁵² Thomas Coke felt the same, “His humility, his self-denial, his perseverance and his flaming zeal for God, are exemplary indeed.”⁵³

Wesley, once again, seems to have edited primarily for brevity. There are a few omissions, however, that could be seen as theological. For example, Wesley excises a section in Part I of the Boston edition where Brainerd suffers very Edwardsian *angst* over the state of his soul:

⁴⁸ Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York: W. Sloane Associates, 1949), 246.

⁴⁹ W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial edition, Volume 22: Journal and Diaries (1738-43), (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 98.

⁵⁰ For example, on a trip to Utrecht, Wesley had to use an interpreter when preaching to a group of “respectable ladies,” and hoped “God might bless this poor way of preaching to the Dutch, as he did that to the Indians by David Brainerd” (Ward and Heitzenrater, eds. *Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial edition, Vol. 20, 415). Wesley uses Brainerd to assess the impact of the work he was doing. From Darlington in 1777, Wesley writes: “I have not lately found so lively a work in any part of England as here. The society is constantly increasing and seems to be all on fire for God. There is nothing among them but humble, simple love—no dispute, no jar of any kind. They exactly answer the description that David Brainerd gives of his Indian congregation” (Ward and Heitzenrater, eds. *Works*, Vol. 23, 48). Brainerd also comes up in the odd encounter Wesley has with Margaret Barlow, a woman who saw visions of a female angel who would predict the future, and specifically predicted an apocalyptic end. (After the predicted end failed to materialize, most of her followers, disgraced, went to America and joined the Shakers). Wesley writes: “But what she had most earnestly and frequently told me is that God will in short time be avenged of obstinate sinners and will destroy them with fire from heaven. Whether this will be so or no, I cannot tell. But when we were alone, there was a wonderful power in her words, and, as the Indian said to David Brainerd, ‘They did good to my heart’” (Ward and Heitzenrater. *Works*, Vol. 24, 91-92).

⁵¹ Ward and Heitzenrater, eds. *Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed., Vol. 20, 315. (Monday, 4th of December). Wesley’s particular problem with Brainerd was that he perceived his own missionary work above “that which God had wrought in Scotland or among the English in New England; whereas in truth the work among the Indians, great as it was, was not to be compared to that at Cambuslang, Kilsyth, or Northampton.” Here Wesley places the revival that Edwards oversaw as one of the most notable revivals of the time.

⁵² Francis Asbury, *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, 3:218, 1:427. Asbury had a deep regard for Brainerd, arguably more so than Wesley. Brainerd comes up in Asbury’s journal when things are going badly; Asbury turned to Brainerd for comfort from the persistent “anguish” of the itinerancy.

⁵³ John A. Vickers, ed., *The Journals of Dr. Thomas Coke* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 27.

Once, I remember, a terrible pang of distress seized me, and the thoughts of renouncing myself, and standing naked before God, stripped of all goodness, were so dreadful to me . . . I daily longed for greater conviction of sin, supposing that I must see more of my dreadful state in order to a remedy, yet when the discoveries of my vile hellish heart were made to me, the sight was so dreadful, and showed me so plainly my exposedness to damnation, that I could not endure it.⁵⁴

Wesley, of course, would have chosen to emphasize the potential for holiness over Puritan wallowing. Yet, Wesley allows similar sections later, so it may be an exaggeration to make too much of this edit in this instance.⁵⁵

In other places, Wesley edits to speed up reading, to remove uninteresting sections, and to excise references unfamiliar to his Methodist readers. For example, Wesley excises Brainerd's second letter to a special friend, and the second letter to his brother for November 24, 1746; he also removes Edwards' institutional references in the preface to Part III.⁵⁶ Wesley provides what appears to be his own summary—which does not appear in either the Edinburgh or the Boston editions—of a longer section in *David Brainerd* just after Part V, describing in detail Brainerd's geographical situation.⁵⁷ Wesley was wont to summarize sections, typically employing many of the author's own words, rather than completely rewriting them.

There is evidence that Wesley had access to some fragments of the work that had been published separately. For example, there are sections included in *David Brainerd* that were in the original manuscript, but which didn't appear in the 1749 Boston edition. Wesley clearly used an Edwards edition as the backbone of his edit, however, keeping Edwards' preface, marking editorial comments in brackets, and retaining basic structure. The sections not found in the Boston edition were probably pasted from a 1748 Edinburgh Doddridge abridgement of Brainerd's journal. It is interesting that Wesley would have taken the time to add from the Edinburgh edition to the Edwards edition. Edwards omitted the parts of the text that had been previously published, so this difference makes sense.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Life of David Brainerd* WJE 7: 109-110; in reference to John Wesley, *An Extract of the Life of the Late Rev. Mr. David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians* (Bristol: William Pine, 1768). Since Wesley does not mention where he bought the book or from whom it was obtained in his inventory, my best guess is that he either used the 1749 Boston edition or the 1754 Glasgow edition (which is identical). For a copy of Wesley's inventory, referenced occasionally in this paper, see Appendix B in Vicki Tolar Burton, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism: Reading, Writing, and Speaking to Believe* (Waco: Baylor UP, 2008).

⁵⁵ Edwards edition, 111, Wesley edition, 9.

⁵⁶ Edwards edition, 490-491, 492-493, 175.

⁵⁷ Wesley edition, 44. Wesley's summary reads, "The place, as to its situation, was sufficiently lonesome, and unpleasant, being encompassed with mountains and woods; twenty miles distant from any English inhabitants; six or seven miles from any Dutch; and more than two from a family that came, some time since from the Highlands of Scotland, and had lived there about two years in this wilderness. In this family I lodged about the space of three months, the matter of it being the only person with whom I could readily converse in these parts, except my interpreter; others understanding very little English."

⁵⁸ Norman Pettit, Introduction, *Life of David Brainerd*, WJE 7: 74.

An Extract from a Treatise Concerning Religious Affections: In Three Parts (1773)

According to Kevin Lowery, *Religious Affections* was key to the development of Wesley's mature thought.⁵⁹ This is the last abridgement of Wesley's to come into print, but a self-standing edition would only appear ten years after his death; it had appeared during his lifetime in volume 23 of Wesley's *Works* (1773).⁶⁰ This work is also the only one of Wesley's abridgements to be analyzed by scholars: John E. Smith in the introduction to the *Religious Affections* volume of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards*; Gregory Clapper in an article in *Wesleyan Theology Today* (which later appeared as a chapter in a separate monograph entitled *John Wesley on Religious Affections*); and Kevin Lowery in *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda*. Smith, Clapper, and Lowery agree that Wesley had used the William Gordon edition of 1762, the first edition of the treatise published abroad and a significant abridgement in and of itself.⁶¹ Yet, the Gordon edition appears to have been abridged, not for theological reasons, but rather for length. Wesley's treatment of *Religious Affections* is the most radical of all his abridgements, inasmuch as he takes the most liberties with this text; it is the only one in which he comments directly on Edwards' content. His comments in the section "To the Reader" is worth quoting in its entirety:

1. *The design of Mr. Edwards in the treatise, from which the following extract is made, seems to have been (chiefly, if not altogether) to serve his hypothesis. In three preceding tracts, he had given an account of a glorious work in New England; of abundance of sinners of every sort and degree, who were in a short time converted to God. But in a few years, a considerable part of these turned back as a dog to vomit. What was the plain inference to be drawn from this? Why, that a true believer may make shipwreck of the Faith. How then could he evade the force of this? Truly by eating his own words, and proving, (as well as the nature of the thing would bear) that they were no believers at all!*

2. *In order to this, he heaps together so many curious, subtle, metaphysical distinctions, as are sufficient to puzzle the brain, and confound the intellects, of all the plain men and women in the universe; and to make them doubt of, if not wholly deny, all the work which God had wrought in their souls.*

3. *Out of this dangerous heap, wherein much wholesome food is mixt with much deadly poison, I have selected many remarks and admonitions, which may be of great use to the children of God. May God write them in the hearts of all that desire to walk as Christ also walked!*

BRISTOL, Sept. 1, 1773.⁶²

⁵⁹ Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda*, 163.

⁶⁰ The stand-alone version of RA was published in 1801, but the work appeared as early as 1773 in the 23rd volume of the initial collection of the *Works* of JW. The earlier abridgement was, according to Frank Baker, a hasty edit, which was later corrected by JW resulting in the 1801 edition. Frank Baker, *A Union Catalog of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley* (Durham: Duke UP, 1966) entry 294. Yet, it should be noted that although Wesley cleaned up the edition that would subsequently appear self-standing in 1801, he had no direct editorial control over the 1801 edition, published after his death. This earlier edition has not been acknowledged by other scholars. Smith states that "there is evidence that the edition did not appear in his own lifetime," John E. Smith, Introduction, *Religious Affections*, WJE 2: 80. Johnson in *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards*, also omits mention of the work appearing in print before 1801, 47-52.

⁶¹ John E. Smith, Introduction, *Religious Affections*, WJE 2: 79.

⁶² Jonathan Edwards, *An Extract from a Treatise Concerning Religious Affections: In Three Parts in The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M. Volume XXIII* (Bristol: William Pine, 1773), 178-179.

Wesley, here, does much of our work for us. He tips his hand towards his method of abridgement, along with providing reasons for doing so. As Smith comments, Wesley's intent was to "enable the simple to be wise," by taking out the dangerous and the bewildering for the common reader.⁶³ This reaffirms our findings in Wesley's other abridgements.

Wesley's end product was a mere sixth of the original size of *Religious Affections* (Gordon's edition was two thirds of the original). He takes out the preface completely, and removes the second, third, and fourth of the twelve positive signs. The second ("first objective ground of gracious affections is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of things") and third ("loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things") signs seem to be taken out primarily because Wesley deemed them to be redundancies of the idea that divine perfection, beauty, and excellency should be the object of religious affections. The deletion of the fourth sign ("Gracious affections do arise from the mind's being enlightened rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things") is more curious. As Clapper comments, the deletion "asserts something which Wesley would not want to deny—the intellectual component in the affections."⁶⁴ It is indeed odd that Wesley deleted the fourth sign, but he did so probably because he felt that the section on the fourth sign was potentially too "subtle" for his lay readers. Just because Wesley would have found resonance with Edwards' point of the intellectual appropriation of religious experience, does not mean that he felt his intended audience would have found it equally engaging. It is important to mention that Wesley kept all of Edwards' criteria for false affections, which seems to be an indication of Wesley's use of the work to qualify religious experience among his followers.⁶⁵

Did Wesley miss the true *raison d'être* of *Religious Affections*? He evidently viewed *Religious Affections* as a way for Edwards to explain away the backsliding that he had observed. According to John E. Smith, Edwards did not intend an *apologia* for embarrassing decline in Northampton, but rather as a constructive framework for determining false and true piety.⁶⁶ It seems that Wesley was right nonetheless that the composition of *Religious Affections* was affected by the false piety that so consternated Edwards. But, Edwards was surely not trying to back away from the general validity of conversions during the awakening.

Edwards was certain that the awakenings were legitimate, even though his initial hopes had been tried by the vagaries of human nature. Wesley in 1773 was hypersensitive as the Calvinist and Arminian debate had reached a fever pitch, and he had felt burned by the dogmatism of Scottish evangelicals.⁶⁷

⁶³ Smith, Introduction to *Religious Affections*, *WJE* 2:80.

⁶⁴ Gregory S. Clapper, "'True Religion' and the Affections: A Study of John Wesley's Abridgement of Jonathan Edwards's Treatise on Religious Affections," *Wesleyan Theology Today* (1985): 418.

⁶⁵ Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda*, 163.

⁶⁶ Smith, Introduction to *Religious Affections*, *WJE* 2:79-80, 80f.

⁶⁷ Clapper, "True Religion," 418.

This is evidenced by the fact that *Religious Affections* is the abridgement that most consistently excises Edwards' Calvinism. All mentions of the "elect" are removed, as well as other specifically Calvinist sections, evidently being the "poison" that Wesley alludes to in his "To the Reader." Wesley did not merely oppose Edwards' Calvinism simply out of an emotional response; he thought that Edwards was genuinely theologically wrong, and as such he would not have been inclined to pass on Edwards' perceived error.

In the end, however, Wesley had much appreciation for Edwards' project in *Religious Affections*. It is the work for which Wesley seems to have taken the most time making editorial choices; he recognized that his first attempt at editing the work had been hasty, and so he returned to his project to fix it for a proper self-standing publication that only appeared after his death. Wesley and Edwards both came to the position where they saw, as Clapper says, "the rough contours of felt experience are where the gospel either grows or dies."⁶⁸ The affections were necessary to proper fulfillment of the love commandments, and Edwards' use of empirical categories as a guide resonated with Wesley's own affection for Lockean empiricism. Furthermore, Wesley would have seen Edwards' work as expressing a constant theme in his own work: the befuddling interaction of the affections and the intellect.⁶⁹

Conclusion

John Wesley found an ally for revivalism in the writings of Jonathan Edwards, but he was not willing to let Edwards stand on his own feet. Edwards' writing style, theological presuppositions, and theoretical exactitude were all things Wesley saw as extraneous to the true value of the given work. Wesley had problems with several theological concepts that confronted him in his reading of Edwards. First, Wesley had no taste for predestination, and as such he cut portions that are seemingly supralapsarian. Wesley wanted to uphold, above all else, that salvation was available to all who would have it, and that faith could be had legitimately and later lost. Secondly, Wesley did not seem to share the same enthusiasm over Edwards' excursions on typological history. He edited more often than not Edwards' comments that drew out a broader dispensational picture. Finally, a theological point that was often excised is Edwards' reminders of humanity's perpetual moral degeneracy. Wesley's belief in prevenient grace and the perfecting power of the Spirit seems to have made him uncomfortable with Edwards' constant reminders of moral decrepitude.

As for editing beyond theology, Wesley tightened up Edwards' language, deleted seeming tautologies, and trimmed down Edwards' demonstrative examples (usually down to one example as opposed to the multiple ones Edwards often employed). Wesley would occasionally take the time to summarize a section, but he usually would trim down a given section to retain the original wording (probably since this could be done with a stroke of the pen).

⁶⁸ Clapper, "True Religion," 422.

⁶⁹ Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda*, 177.

Wesley had no real interest in Edwards' desire to make his mark philosophically. If Wesley felt a particular section was too cerebral, it would be cut. This meant that he would take out the overly "subtle," in order to keep the attention of his popular reader. It is important to stress that his editorial work was done primarily towards one specific audience—Methodists. Methodists were a group that spanned all classes, but found the most support among the working class. In order that Methodist Christians would be "knowing Christians" by being "reading Christians," Wesley wanted to make sure access to good religious books was possible. This meant tailoring his abridgements so as not to lose the attention of the reader, many of which had no formal education and had only recently acquired literacy.⁷⁰

Wesley's abridgement of Edwards was, despite all of the liberties taken, an exercise of admiration. Wesley seems to have developed a bond with Edwards through his writing despite having no personal relationship with the man. Furthermore, as Lowery and Outler have pointed out, Edwards' work was formative in Wesley's own intellectual development. Edwards was explicit that religious revival was both necessary and valid, which resonated with Wesley's own view. Beyond revivalism alone, Wesley found in Edwards an attempt to approach "true religion" empirically, while not discounting the importance of the affections along the way. Like Edwards, Wesley was beset with the challenges of the old guard to the dynamism of evangelical revival. And, both men were concerned about what signs constituted a real work of God versus mere enthusiasm.

This study raises some interesting questions that are of no small importance in the early nineteenth century, when revivalism was re-ignited by Methodists and by followers of Jonathan Edwards in significantly different ways: (1) To what extent did Wesley's popularization of Edwards' works in England and America affect Edwards' legacy—particularly in light of the fact that, in many cases, Wesley's editions were the most extensive reprints of Edwards' selected works? Asbury's lament over the lack of publishing of *Life of David Brainerd* was, like Wesley's other abridgements, quickly rectified. (2) Did Edwards appear as an Arminian popular revivalist, as a Wesleyan Methodist? Or did he emerge as the Puritan Enlightenment revivalist he truly was. Those interested in the long-term legacy of Jonathan Edwards in American religion will find these questions worth further development.

⁷⁰ Herbert, *John Wesley as Editor and Author*, 27.