

The extent and cause of the diverse response to Jonathan Edwards' *Narrative* in the United Kingdom

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Jonathan Edwards' *A Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, originally sent in a letter to Benjamin Colman on November 6 1736, became a pivotal piece of writing within the revival networks that were established on either side of the Atlantic in the 18th century. The piece recounted a time of God's extraordinary work from December 1734 through to May 1735 in Edwards' parish of Northampton along with another thirty-two communities in New England.¹ This involved the conversion of three hundred people in Edwards' parish alone, with a significant renewal in the practice of others who had previously belonged to the faith.² Edwards' *Narrative* provoked profound interest not only in America but also in the United Kingdom (UK). Across Britain the *Narrative* had an intricate history of publication that reflects the diversity of its reception in the decade that followed its release (1737-1745). The subsequent question asked in this paper is: what is the cause of the diversity and extent of responses in the UK to the *Narrative*? This paper seeks to discern the reason for differing levels of popularity and criticism of the *Narrative* by early evangelical publishers and their readers.

Methodologically, significant groups for investigation were identified through the complex British publication history of the *Narrative*. An extract of the *Narrative* was first published in

¹ Philip F. Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America's Evangelical* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 76.

² Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America's Evangelical*, 77.

London and reprinted in Edinburgh in 1737 with the original preface by Guyse and Watts.³ There were subsequent second editions in London and Edinburgh in 1738 of differing lengths. John Wesley published his own extraction in 1744, which was reprinted in 1755.⁴ Short sections were also reprinted in revival magazines: in *The Weekly History London* (1741) by John Lewis; in the *Glasgow Weekly History* by William McCulloch in Scotland 1742; and in the *Christian Monthly History* (1745) by James Robe.⁵ Following this was a gap in publication until 1790 in London, making the proliferation of editions in the initial period of 1737-1745 the window of investigation.⁶ To examine the reception of Edwards in Britain requires an analysis of the publication of the *Narrative* in early print in London by Watts and Guyse, the later print in London by Wesley and the events that followed the publication in Scotland.

In line with this, the inquiry into the reception of Edwards' *Narrative* will proceed in four distinct parts. Firstly, Edwards' reasons for his composition of the *Narrative* will be established as a criterion for assessing reception. Secondly, the initial response of excitement and caution from the London Congregationalist publishers will be investigated through their correspondence, editing and preface to the first London edition. This will be contrasted, thirdly, with the embrace of Edwards by Scottish correspondents, with a particular focus on how the *Narrative* was used as a pattern for Scottish revival accounts. Fourthly, John

³ Thomas H. Johnson, *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758: A Bibliography* (Ed. M. X. Lesser; Studies in Reformed Theology and History; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 4-5.

⁴ Johnson, *Printed Writings of Edwards*, 9-10.

⁵ Johnson, *Printed Writings of Edwards*, 8. John Lewis (ed.), *The Weekly History: or, An Account of the Most Remarkable Particulars Relating to the Present Progress of the Gospel* (Vol. 9; London: J. Lewis, 1741), 1-2. William McCulloch (ed.), *Glasgow Weekly History: Relating to the Late Promotion of the Gospel at Home and Abroad* (Vol. 21-22; Glasgow: W. Duncan, 1743), 8; 2-3. James Robe (ed.), *Christian Monthly History: or, An Account of the Revival and Progress of Religion, Abroad and at Home* (Vol. 3-4, Edinburgh: R. Fleming and A. Alison, 1745), 87-114.

⁶ Johnson, *Printed Writings of Edwards*, 10-11.

Wesley's critical reception of the *Narrative* will be demonstrated through his personal writing and his own editing of the work. Particular attention will be paid to the difference between various editions of the *Narrative* that were published. Overall the reception and use of the *Narrative* was dependent upon the framework of the publisher and their purpose in putting it to print.

In assessing the reception of the *Narrative* in the UK, Edwards' purpose in writing must be initially established to perceive whether his intentions were fulfilled when the work was published and read. Edwards wrote, firstly, because the news of God's work produced joy and answered a longing for renewal. An initial short version of events was sent to a long-term correspondent Benjamin Colman of Boston in 1735 after his intrigue at an earlier mention by Edwards of the event. 'In answer to your desire, I here send you a particular account of the present extraordinary circumstances of this town.'⁷ Edwards' short piece contained an outline of the general effect of revival and some notable experiences. It was the great interest in the event shown by Colman, and others he shared the brief account with, that led Edwards to write and send the full text to Colman in 1736. It was the refreshment and delight that his correspondent took in the news that led to further articulation of the events. Thus the extent and reason for the joy caused by the *Narrative* is the first criterion for the assessment of its reception.

Secondly, within the *Narrative* Edwards revealed his belief that the distribution of a document about the revival was itself a part of honouring and extending God's work.

⁷ Jonathan Edwards, 'Unpublished Letter of May 30, 1735', in *The Great Awakening* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards; Vol. 4; Ed. C. C. Goen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 99.

‘There is no one thing that I know of, that God has made such a means of promoting his work amongst us, as the news of others’ conversion; in the awakening of sinners and engaging them earnestly to seek the same blessing, and in the quickening of saints.’⁸

In this extract Edwards shows a twofold understanding of what the *Narrative* could accomplish published. First, it is knowledge of conversion that drives other people to want to take hold of similar spiritual blessings. Second is the notion of quickening or energising other believers in their exercise of faith and evangelism. Edwards’ conviction was that God had ordained the use of printed accounts for the purpose of fostering and furthering the work of revival. Hence, though he sent the *Narrative* within a personal relationship, he understood that its effects were more far-reaching because of its place in God’s plans.

Edwards’ understanding of the propagation of revival by the testimony of converts is also evident in the way he recounts events in the *Narrative*. Edwards notes that it was in December that ‘the Spirit of God began extraordinarily to set in, and wonderfully to work amongst us’.⁹ In particular Edwards recounts the conversion of a young woman, described as a company-keeper, and his subsequent concern that her former life would bring reproach upon the gospel. On the contrary it was the news of her change in heart that was ‘the greatest occasion of awakening to others’.¹⁰ Mr. Lord’s visit to the revival and recounting of its effects to his own congregation also ‘proved the beginning of the same work amongst them’.¹¹ This was itself remarkable, as normally a renewal would affect a centre but not the

⁸ Jonathan Edwards, ‘A Faithful Narrative, London 1737’, in *The Great Awakening* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards; Vol. 4; Ed. C. C. Goen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 176.

⁹ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative London 1737*, 149.

¹⁰ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative London 1737*, 149.

¹¹ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative London 1737*, 155.

population surrounding it.¹² Edwards understood from his experience of revival that news of conversion was vital to furthering God's work. Whether those who utilised the *Narrative* also shared this understanding of the role of accounts in God's purposes is the second criterion for assessment.

Edwards was, thirdly, prompted to enumerate a fuller account of various conversions because of controversy about how to discern a true work of God. In the initial short account to Colman, Edwards stated that some facts were misrepresented because of bizarre occurrences like vivid visions of 'Christ shedding blood for sinners'.¹³ In addition, amongst the converted there was 'manifested an extraordinary dread of being deceived' and he therefore decided to expound the nature of conversion in his full account.¹⁴ Edwards' *Narrative* carefully stated the vast difference 'in the degree, and also in the particular manner of persons' experiences, both at and after conversion'.¹⁵ Despite the diversity, he maintained there was a discernible pattern: an initial sense of a sinner's miserable state, followed by a sense of impending danger and then a complete dependence upon God's goodness and power alongside a longing for the salvation of others.

The culmination of his account in two case studies served to elucidate Edwards' emotive portrait of conversion in its various stages. The first, Abigail Hutchinson, began to read the bible and had 'an extraordinary sense of her own sinfulness' which grew into a terror at God's wrath.¹⁶ This gave way to 'a lively sense of the excellency of Christ' and 'a constant

¹² Edwards, *Faithful Narrative* London 1737, 159.

¹³ Edwards, *Letter May 30 1735*, 107; 109.

¹⁴ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative* London 1737, 177.

¹⁵ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative* London 1737, 185.

¹⁶ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative* London 1737, 192.

sweetness in her soul' as she contemplated God.¹⁷ In view of the glory of God, she said 'I am brimful of a sweet feeling within!'¹⁸ Abigail then promoted a plan to preach Christ house to house throughout the neighbourhood. Similarly, the second case of a four year old began with Phebe Bartlet in tears and bodily distress exclaiming, 'I am afraid I shall go to hell!'¹⁹ This quickly gave way to a declaration that the Kingdom had come to her and that she did 'love God'.²⁰ Her affections then turned to her siblings who were not eternally safe and wept over the love God had for her.²¹ The third criterion is how Edwards' pattern and description of conversion were perceived and used across the UK. All three objectives will subsequently serve as the criteria for assessing the reception of the *Narrative*.

Edwards' *Narrative* was initially received, particularly by the original London publishers Isaac Watts and John Guyse, within the Transatlantic network of correspondents who sought to promote religion.²² This circle was already disseminating news of God's work throughout the world by a relational network of like-minded individuals. It was in the time of revival that the channels of private communication were formalised into a news network. 'Transatlantic revival was created from a web of personal correspondence' that was later 'transformed into a large-scale media' in the form of revival magazines and newspapers that consisted of 'reprinted letters and revival narratives'.²³ Edwards' *Narrative* was originally sent to the UK

¹⁷ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative London 1737*, 194.

¹⁸ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative London 1737*, 196.

¹⁹ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative London 1737*, 200.

²⁰ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative London 1737*, 201.

²¹ Edwards, *Faithful Narrative London 1737*, 203-204.

²² John Walsh, "Methodism" and the Origins of the English-Speaking Evangelicalism', in *Evangelicalism* (Ed. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington and George A Rawkyk; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 21.

²³ Susan O'Brien, 'Eighteenth-Century Publishing in Transatlantic Evangelicalism', in *Evangelicalism* (Ed. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington and George A Rawkyk; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 41.

by Colman as part of his Transatlantic relationships. Hence it was received with positivity and eagerness initially, because of its place within a community longing for God's work.

Guyse and Watts, particularly, received the account with joy because of the present barren time of ministry. Colman sent an extract of the *Narrative* in 1736 and believed it would 'gratify both you and him in the general account given' and it should therefore be used for 'the good of others' as well.²⁴ Watts' and Guyse's positive response led them to request the whole of the narrative because 'many things are omitted which we long to see'.²⁵ Guyse had also read out the extract to his congregation.²⁶ The elated response to the *Narrative* is most evident in the preface to the first London edition of the book. The revival was described as unheard of since 'the first ages of Christianity' and was a vital account of God's work.²⁷ The work was particularly surprising because the Spirit had 'withdrawn from the ministration of his Word' in America and England.²⁸ A letter from Elisha Williams recounts the 'very lamentable' state of religion in England in Watts' view.²⁹ Williams was the first to relay to Watts news about the 'universal reformation of manners' in New England.³⁰ Hence it was the surprising nature of God's work that led to Watts' and Guyse's joy.

²⁴ Benjamin Colman, 'From the Rev. Benjamin Colman Boston Dec 17 1736', in *The Life, Times and Correspondence of the Rev. Isaac Watts* (Ed. Thomas Milner; London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1834), 553.

²⁵ Isaac Watts, 'Letter February 28, 1737', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 2/9 (1895): 353.

²⁶ Thomas Milner, *The Life, Times and Correspondence of the Rev. Isaac Watts* (Ed. Thomas Milner; London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1834), 530

²⁷ Isaac Watts and John Guyse, 'Preface to the First Edition (London 1737)', in *The Great Awakening* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards; Vol. 4; Ed. C. C. Goen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 130.

²⁸ Watts and Guyse, *Preface to the First Edition*, 131.

²⁹ Elisha Williams, 'From Mr. Elisha Williams May 24 1736', in *The Life, Times and Correspondence of the Rev. Isaac Watts* (Ed. Thomas Milner; London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1834), 543.

³⁰ Williams, *May 24 1736*, 547.

Watts and Guyse also understood the necessity of publishing the revival account to promote true religion and mission because of their prior commitment to the cause. Frederic Ziegenhagen understood that Watts' interest was 'to promote the interest of true Christianity'.³¹ A particular publication by Watts was printed so that ministers would 'recover themselves out of the snare and deceit' and instead preach Christ. Similarly, Watts and Guyse thought the *Narrative* instilled hope and an 'encouragement to pray, and wait and hope for the like display of his power'.³² The vital purpose of the *Narrative* was to provoke imagination that God with 'one turn of his hand' and 'one word of his mouth' could 'awaken whole countries.' In line with Edwards, they stated the need for the full account to be 'left upon the record with all its attending circumstances' and they desired to 'spread this narrative in the world'. So they published the full manuscript in London in 1737 with the understanding that it would promote the same ministry he described.³³

While Watts and Guyse discerned that the *Narrative* could be utilised to learn how the Spirit dealt 'with the souls of men, in order to convince sinners and restore them', they were apologetic about its style.³⁴ Colman had previously questioned if the entirety of the work should be printed because of the 'taste of the present day'. For example, Colman had removed both of the extended testimonies in his brief Boston print. He alluded to criticism regarding the cause, permanence and merits of the revival in the region.³⁵ Specifically, it was the 'enthusiastic excitement' that brought an 'unfavourable judgment' on some of the

³¹ Frederic Michael Ziegenhagen, 'From Frederic Michael Ziegenhagen Oct. 29 1736', in *The Life, Times and Correspondence of the Rev. Isaac Watts* (Ed. Thomas Milner; London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1834), 551.

³² Watts and Guyse, *Preface to the First Edition*, 132.

³³ C. C. Goen, 'Editor's Introduction', in *The Great Awakening* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards; Vol. 4; Ed. C. C. Goen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 36-37.

³⁴ Watts and Guyse, *Preface to the First Edition*, 132.

³⁵ Thomas Milner, *Life and Times of Isaac Watts*, 529.

published experiences. The preface hence apologised about the 'sentiments to the style of the relater, or his inferences from matters of fact' which were not agreeable to every reader.³⁶ There appears to be some issue over his selection of the two longer, emotional case studies over other examples 'of more significancy'. The main issue was that the enthusiasm of the account meant its legitimacy could be questioned.³⁷

The caution of Watts and Guyse was justified in view of the criticism they received 'both in conversation and in newspapers'. Because of this it 'was necessary to make some alterations of the language' in the second, slightly shorter, 1738 London edition so that they would not be 'exposed to much more contempt and ridicule'. Watts continued to state that 'tis not a little of that kind we have both met with'.³⁸ The criticism and interest led to inquiries for further evidence for the revival.³⁹ In line with this, Watts asked Colman for an 'eye and ear witness' and Williams also for 'further evidence'.⁴⁰ Colman, in October 1738, sent an attestation from six ministers that verified the account.⁴¹ However there were so few books remaining, in June 1739, that it would need to be attached to the next edition.⁴² Watts also stated in the same letter that 'no new edition is demanded', suggesting that the high demand for the work had now ceased, and so the attestation did not appear on a London edition until

³⁶ Watts and Guyse, *Preface to the First Edition*, 136.

³⁷ Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America's Evangelical*, 88.

³⁸ Isaac Watts, 'Letter May 31 1738', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 2/9 (1895): 360-361.

³⁹ Goen, *The Great Awakening*, 39-40.

⁴⁰ Watts, *Letter Feb 28 1737*, 353. Isaac Watts, 'Letter June 7 1738', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 2/9 (1895): 335.

⁴¹ William Williams, Ebenezer Devotion, Stephen Williams, Peter Reynolds, Nehemiah Bull and Samuel Hopkins, 'Attestation from six Hampshire ministers', in *The Great Awakening* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards; Vol. 4; Ed. C. C. Goen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 143.

⁴² Watts, 'Letter to Colman May 31 1738', 364.

1791. The contention over the initial edition of the *Narrative* demonstrated the new subjective and emotional perspective on conversion that Edwards elaborated.⁴³

Additionally, Edwards' corrections to the first London edition highlight some further differences of opinion especially regarding conversion. There was the basic geographic error of 'not distinguishing the Province of New Hampshire from the County of Hampshire' for which Watts apologised.⁴⁴ A more significant alteration was regarding the gradual or instantaneous nature of conversion.⁴⁵ The first London edition stated that sinners who trust in themselves 'cannot unlearn this practice all at once'.⁴⁶ However in the Boston edition of 1738 Edwards stated that in this case they only 'think they have done it' but continue to trust themselves 'under a new disguise'.⁴⁷ Edwards clearly wanted conversion to be understood as an instantaneous rather than progressive event. Edwards also objected to the apologetic nature of the preface and maintained that everything he had seen was a work of God.⁴⁸

Hence, though the *Narrative* was received with the intended joy and purpose of promotion of the first two criteria, there were significant issues regarding the examples of conversion. In the 16th and 17th centuries there is plenty of evidence of a similar shape to conversion and the close examination of the experience of divine grace.⁴⁹ Despite this, it is widely credited that Edwards not only revived this understanding but his descriptions became to some extent

⁴³ Gura, *Jonathan Edwards America's Evangelical*, 90.

⁴⁴ Watts, 'Letter to Colman May 31 1738', 360.

⁴⁵ Goen, *Introduction*, 43.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton Towns and Villages of New Hampshire in New England* (2nd ed.; London: John Oswald, 1738), 41.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton Towns and Villages of New Hampshire in New England* (3rd ed.; Boston: S. Kneeland, 1738), 26.

⁴⁸ Goen, *Introduction*, 39.

⁴⁹ Coen, *Introduction*, 26.

normative.⁵⁰ However the new element that Edwards presented was not the shape but the intuitive and volitional nature of repentance that prompted fervent criticism. It was precisely the novelty of the emotive understanding of this morphology that was difficult to accept. This appears to be the reason behind the cautious approach of Watts and Guyse and the criticism they received.

In contrast to the cautious initial response of the London publishers, the joyful response of Scottish pastors to Edwards is evident in the warm correspondence they initiated across the Atlantic.⁵¹ John Maclaurin, Edwards' first connection to Scotland and catalyst for other relationships, used the Narrative in weekly meetings as part of his purpose to 'procure and communicate' well-attested renewal accounts in order to promote vital religion.⁵² William McCulloch of Cambuslang was inspired to persevere in ministry through reading the *Narrative*. McCulloch both read the *Narrative* from his pulpit and published parts of it within his revival periodical the *Glasgow Weekly History*.⁵³ Deep warmth toward Edwards was also clear from Maclaurin's remarkable effort to supply Edwards with funds following his dismissal from ministry.⁵⁴ James Robe of Kilsyth's respect for Edwards is demonstrated in Edwards' reply concerning the 'undeserved testimonies of respect from servants of the Lord'

⁵⁰ Coen, *Introduction*, 29.

⁵¹ Christopher W. Mitchell, 'Jonathan Edwards' Scottish Connection', in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Movements, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons* (Eds. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney; University of Southern California: University of Southern California Press, 2003), 227.

⁵² John Gillies, 'Some Account of the Life and Character of Maclaurin', in *The Works of the Rev. John Maclaurin* (Vol. 1; Ed. W. H. Goold; Edinburgh: John Maclaren, 1860), xvii.

⁵³ Mitchell, *Scottish Connection*, 230.

⁵⁴ Gillies, *Character of Maclaurin*, xlvii.

that Robe had sent to him.⁵⁵ There is a vast difference in the unqualified reception of Edwards by the Scottish and his earlier reception in London.

In addition, Edwards was strongly received because of the perceived connection between the revivals of Scotland and New England. Scotland until that point had a barren time of little conversion or conviction.⁵⁶ John Willison, in his preface to Edwards' *Distinguishing Marks*, equated the 'extraordinary work there at present' to be of the 'same kind' as in the Scottish regions.⁵⁷ He referred to 'a glorious ministration of his Spirit with Word; first in America...then in Britain itself and particularly in several parts of the West of Scotland'.⁵⁸ Edwards, likewise, wrote to McCulloch that he perceived the work of revival as connected across the continents. 'We live in a day wherein God is doing marvellous things; in that respect we are distinguished from former generations.'⁵⁹ Another letter by Edwards, in 1745, conjectured to be for Maclaurin, referenced the goodness of the growing unity and concert in prayer across the two continents.⁶⁰ Hence the Scottish pastors considered the *Narrative* as a precursor to the same work of God in their own region and that Edwards was a partner with them in the same work.

The Scots embraced Edwards' understanding that news of revival would further promulgate the work of God by emulating his work in revival literature. James Robe wrote his revival

⁵⁵ Jonathan Edwards, 'To the Rev. James Robe of Kilsyth, Scotland, May 12 1743', in *The Great Awakening* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards; Vol. 4; Ed. C. C. Goen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 535.

⁵⁶ John Willison, 'Preface to the Scots Reader', in *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1742), iii.

⁵⁷ Willison, *Preface*, vi.

⁵⁸ Willison, *Preface*, iv.

⁵⁹ Edwards, *May 12 1743*, 539.

⁶⁰ Jonathan Edwards, 'To a Scottish correspondent', in *Letters and Personal Writings* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards; Vol. 16; Ed. George S. Claghorn, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 180.

accounts of Kilsyth and Cambuslang to stimulate the operation of grace in a culture that no longer called sinners to faith.⁶¹ Robe's longing was for the narrative to spread, 'alarming every unconverted sinner'.⁶² He considered the accounts 'needful to many in this country' so that he observed everything with 'scrupulous niceness' when he compiled details.⁶³ This was necessary because the experience of revival made it their 'duty to transmit the history of them to posterity, that they may reap the greater benefit by them'.⁶⁴ Robe called upon the Holy Spirit to 'accompany the *Narrative* with his powerful influences, that it may promote the Redeemer's interest'.⁶⁵ Thus Robe considered that the writing of accounts of God's power could lead to more of the same renewing work.

This purpose is similarly evident in the publication of Scottish evangelical magazines. McCulloch reprinted two extracts of the *Narrative* in the *Glasgow Weekly History* that depict the widespread effect of the revival and how it speedily spread as its news was announced.⁶⁶ Robe considered the publication of the *Christian Monthly History* to be an extension of his work in the revival accounts.⁶⁷ Robe in particular was careful to distinguish his purpose from the earlier magazines in the UK, stating the need to be a 'faithful historian to narrate every fact with the strictest truth' and carefully promote and defend the work of God.⁶⁸ Edwards praised Robe's publications which had 'refreshed and served' the church. There is a debt that future generations would owe Robe for his contribution in this way. In the wake of

⁶¹ James Robe, *Narratives of the Extraordinary Works of the Spirit of God, at Cambuslang, Kilsyth, Begun 1742* (Ed. James Robe; Shropshire: Quinta Press, 2010), 54.

⁶² Robe, *Kilsyth*, 52.

⁶³ Robe, *Kilsyth*, 71.

⁶⁴ Robe, *Kilsyth*, 73.

⁶⁵ Robe, *Kilsyth*, 11.

⁶⁶ William McCulloch (ed.), *Glasgow Weekly History: Relating to the Late Promotion of the Gospel at Home and Abroad* (Vol. 21-22; Glasgow: W. Duncan, 1743), 8; 2-3.

⁶⁷ Susan Durden, 'Study of the First Evangelical Magazines, 1740-1748', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27/3 (1976): 270.

⁶⁸ James Robe cited in Durden, *Evangelical Magazines*, 271.

disappointments and obstacles to the work of renewal that had been experienced in New England they gave Edwards confidence that God would 'revive his work again before long'.⁶⁹ Hence though Watts and Guyse aligned with Edwards' purpose in extending revival, the appropriation of this aim by the Scottish was far greater.

Most importantly, in Scotland the *Narrative*, together with *Distinguishing Marks*, became the paradigm that preceded revival and the means by which it was 'conducted and interpreted'.⁷⁰ Its fundamental impact was on the understanding and practice of mission in the Scottish church. Edwards assumed a role in the redefinition of Scottish evangelicalism to be mission-oriented rather than simply catechetical. Robe, in response to some objection to revival, explicitly stated that Edwards' writing in *Distinguishing Marks* 'satisfyingly answers and takes off the foresail objections'.⁷¹ Robe quoted William Cooper, saying that 'God has evidently made use of example and discourse in carrying it on.'⁷² Robe perceived an act of providence that Edwards 'preached and published it before this appearance of the Lord in his glory and majesty amongst us'.⁷³ Within Robe's publication of the *Christian Monthly History* there is a clear familiarity with Edwards, who is continually cited as authoritative in the matters of revival.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Edwards, *William McCulloch May 12 1743*, 540.

⁷⁰ Mitchell, *Scottish Connection*, 223.

⁷¹ Robe, *Kilsyth*, 57.

⁷² William Cooper, 'To the Reader', in *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1742), xv-xvi.

⁷³ Robe, *Kilsyth*, 57.

⁷⁴ Durden, *Evangelical Magazines*, 272.

The use of the *Narrative* as a pattern is exhibited in the similarity of structure in Robe's accounts and that of Northampton.⁷⁵ Robe's work concerning the revival at Cambuslang cited the prior increase of concern in religious things as Edwards also did.⁷⁶ He described a comparable state of apprehension and agitation in the population regarding the 'state of their souls' following a sermon on salvation.⁷⁷ This was followed by his description of the 'reformation of the lives of persons who were formerly notorious sinners'.⁷⁸ In addition there were similar emotive descriptions of 'ardent love' for scripture, 'vehement thirsting' for worship and 'earnest desires' for private instruction.⁷⁹ Like Edwards he then laid out the geography of the ministers nearest to the event.⁸⁰ Hence there is a discernible shape to the account which originates from Edwards.

Perhaps more essentially, Robe used a similar emotive understanding of the process of repentance and conversion. In the Cambuslang narrative Robe sought to present the facts with ample attestation and did not describe the 'inward exercises and attainments' of experiences in reaction to criticism about overly emotional revival details.⁸¹ However, in the Kilsyth account he described the 'great mourning' in the congregation that led to weeping and crying out for God's mercy with a subsequent longing for others to experience the same grace.⁸² Robe then carefully moved through a wide range of differing experiences of conversion with a number of case studies that 'extended to some of every denomination and kind'.⁸³ Like

⁷⁵ Mitchell, *Scottish Connection*, 229.

⁷⁶ James Robe, *A Short Narrative of the Extraordinary Work of Cambuslang* (Shropshire: Quinta Press, 2010), 7-8.

⁷⁷ Robe, *Cambuslang*, 9.

⁷⁸ Robe, *Cambuslang*, 11.

⁷⁹ Robe, *Cambuslang*, 11.

⁸⁰ Robe, *Cambuslang*, 14-15.

⁸¹ Robe, *Cambuslang*, 12.

⁸² Robe, *Kilsyth*, 33-34.

⁸³ Robe, *Kilsyth*, 267.

Edwards, Robe explicated an overall movement from fear to a longing for mission, but maintained that this occurs through a great variety of experiences. Edwards and Robe were not simply trying to announce one shape of conversion, but in their work were careful to express the variety within the same working of God's Spirit.

The attestations that Robe supplied revealed that his understanding of conversion was in accordance with the pastors in the greater region. John Willison elaborated upon the bewailing of those who saw their corruption and then were 'overcome with a sense of the...loveliness of Jesus Christ'.⁸⁴ Matthew Connell was adamant regarding the genuine godly sorrow he witnessed.⁸⁵ John Hamilton declared a movement from 'deepest exercise of soul' to a love of scripture, worship and other people.⁸⁶ William Hamilton added the longing of young people who were touched by the revival to bring others to 'acquaintance with Christ'.⁸⁷ The revival was labelled 'the surprising work' of God because of its unexpected nature in a difficult time of ministry.⁸⁸ The concordance and agreement between attestations is evidence of a convergence of framework and morphology that was revived by Edwards' own writing about revival.

Furthermore, the attestations demonstrate the Scottish propensity to understand and differentiate the finer emotional and volitional distinctions of conversion. The Scots uniquely received Edwards because they shared his interest in the inward experience of grace in a way that the earlier London population did not. This is clear in Maclaurin's chief concern for

⁸⁴ Robe, *Cambuslang*, 15.

⁸⁵ Robe, *Cambuslang*, 21.

⁸⁶ Robe, *Cambuslang*, 21-22.

⁸⁷ Robe, *Cambuslang*, 26.

⁸⁸ Robe, *Cambuslang*, 28.

inward religion.⁸⁹ Maclaurin wanted to ensure that the Scottish revivals were 'very deep and penetrating' and from 'rooted dispositions of the heart'.⁹⁰ Maclaurin and Edwards in particular shared a concern for the increase of true religion and how the grace of God operated on the hearts of men.⁹¹ Thus Robe also published his journals in the *Christian Monthly History* and also in the *Glasgow Weekly History* that exhibited case studies of how grace operated.⁹² Edwards suggested that Robe's detailing of conversion was more careful and deliberate than his own work in the *Narrative*.⁹³ Robe had to further substantiate and differentiate conversions because of the criticism around the excessive bodily symptoms that occurred in the Scottish revivals.⁹⁴ The positive reception of Edwards in Scotland was not simply due to his clear Calvinistic convictions but also to his articulation of the nature of the subtle experiences in conversion.⁹⁵

Finally, John Wesley received the news of revival in New England with similar enthusiasm to the Congregationalists in London and the Scots. Wesley originally read the *Narrative* while travelling from Oxford to London and commented in his Journal, 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'⁹⁶ Wesley also extracted an element of the narrative and sent it to a friend regarding those who were 'weak in faith.' The rest of the journal entry

⁸⁹ Gillies, *Character of Maclaurin*, xvi.

⁹⁰ John Maclaurin, 'Attestation by Mr Maclaurin, 18th January, 1743', in *The Works of the Rev. John Maclaurin* (Vol. 1; Ed. W. H. Goold; Edinburgh: John Maclaren, 1860), xli.

⁹¹ Mitchell, *Scottish Connection*, 222.

⁹² William McCulloch, *Glasgow Weekly History: Relating to the Late Promotion of the Gospel at Home and Abroad* (Vol. 23-31; Glasgow: W. Duncan, 1743), 1-6; 4-6; 4-7; 1-5; 6-8; 1-4; 1-3; 5-8; 1-3.

⁹³ Edwards, *James Robe 1743*, 536.

⁹⁴ Robe, *Kilsyth*, 89.

⁹⁵ Mitchell, *Scottish Connection*, 222.

⁹⁶ John Wesley, *The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley* (Ed. John Emory; Vol. 1; New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1837), 111.

concerned the need for a believer to examine their standing in the Lord. Wesley followed this with a catalogue of elements that accompany faith: acknowledging fallenness, turning from worldliness, and new actions that flow from new desires.⁹⁷ This rumination suggests that Wesley found value in Edwards' detailing of the effects of conversion. In addition, when Wesley later read Edwards' edition of David Brainerd's journal he commented that the work among the Indians did not compare with Cambuslang, Kilsyth or Northampton.⁹⁸ Hence Wesley considered the *Narrative* to be a unique testament to a special work of God that became the measure of revivals that followed.

However it is also clear that Wesley, outside of the Transatlantic network of correspondence, received Edwards with considerably less warmth and regard because of his theology and style of writing. In a letter, Wesley described Edwards as 'a dry, unpleasing writer' and that in view of his Calvinistic theology his main design was 'to justify God in damning all the Heathens'.⁹⁹ It is in Wesley's preface to Edwards' *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, which he published in 1773, that his opinion was most clearly pronounced. He regarded Edwards, in considering the backsliding of faith after the revival, to be 'eating his own words' in admitting that some conversions were not of real substance.¹⁰⁰ Within the many metaphysical distinctions which bring doubt about God's work, Wesley perceived that 'much wholesome food is mixed with deadly poison'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Wesley, *Journal*, 112.

⁹⁸ Wesley, *Journal*, 472.

⁹⁹ John Wesley, *The Works of Reverend John Wesley* (Ed. John Emory; Vol. 7; The Works of the Reverend John Wesley; New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), 80.

¹⁰⁰ Wesley, *The Works of Reverend John Wesley*, 557.

¹⁰¹ Wesley, *The Works of Reverend John Wesley*, 557-558.

Despite these reservations Wesley considered the *Narrative* of sufficient value to publish his own edition in 1744. Wesley's edition of the *Narrative* was calculated to fit on two sheets of paper with twelve pages on each side, half the length of the 1737 editions.¹⁰² His edition of Edwards' *Distinguishing Marks* was extracted to the same length. This made Edwards' narrative cheap and easy to transport for ordinary members of the Methodist movement.¹⁰³ To achieve this, Wesley's edit removed the preface and a lot of the general history of the ministry in the region and focused instead upon the movements of revival and conversion that began with the young people of the region.¹⁰⁴ Wesley was careful to keep enough of the geographic movements of revival in order for the reader to perceive its widespread effect.¹⁰⁵ The examples of Edwards' *Narrative* also accords with Wesley's preference to publish works that concerned the practicalities of the life of faith and provided concrete examples of how it was undertaken.

At the heart of Wesley's life as a publisher was a willingness to put to print those he disagreed vehemently with in order to supply material of benefit for ordinary faith.¹⁰⁶ This was based on Wesley's conviction that 'a reading people will always be a knowing people' and they should therefore have access to a variety of writers and examples to grow in faith.¹⁰⁷ This was not necessarily a novel practice but was common from the time of the Reformation.

¹⁰² D. Bruce Hindmarsh, 'The Reception of Jonathan Edwards by Early Evangelicals in England', in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Movements, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons* (Eds. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney; University of Southern California: University of Southern California Press, 2003), 204.

¹⁰³ Isabel Rivers, 'John Wesley as Editor and Publisher', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (Eds. Randy Maddox and Jason E. Vickers; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 158.

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *A Narrative of the Late Work of God at and Near Northampton* (Ed. John Wesley; Bristol: Felix Harvey, 1744), 3.

¹⁰⁵ Edwards, *Narrative Wesley 1744*, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Rivers, *Wesley as Editor and Publisher*, 159.

¹⁰⁷ Rivers, *Wesley as Editor and Publisher*, 150-151. John Wesley, *The Letters of John Wesley* (Volume 8; Ed. John Telford; London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 247.

However this process involved Wesley placing a definite authoritative editorial stamp on all of his printed materials with little regard, at times, for the original intentions of the author.¹⁰⁸ Hence to examine his reception of the *Narrative* requires an identification of the elements he removed from the London edition of 1738 that were motivated by more than his thrift and desire to produce an economical print.

Numerous elements that Wesley elided from the London edition of the *Narrative* demonstrate his divergence from the Calvinistic theology of conversion. Wesley removed Edwards' comments regarding the need to correct the Arminian doctrine that was causing controversy in the region.¹⁰⁹ The phrase 'the wonderful, free, and sovereign Grace of God, his glorious work in the conversion of a soul' was removed from a declaration of the excellence of Christ while retaining the rest of the section.¹¹⁰ Likewise, he removed the notion of delight in the 'glory of God's sovereignty in the exercises of his grace'.¹¹¹ In another section Wesley retained a description of people waiting patiently but excluded Edwards' phrase 'till God shall see fit to make all effectual... he will in his own time do it for them'.¹¹² Perhaps this is most clearly seen in Wesley's omission of Edwards' definition of conversion: 'Conversion is a great and glorious work of God's power.'¹¹³ Wesley kept the fact that sinners need 'absolute dependence on his sovereign power and grace'.¹¹⁴ However there is a significant difference in the understanding of God's work in conversion that underlies his editing of Edwards' *Narrative*.

¹⁰⁸ Rivers, *Wesley as Editor and Publisher*, 153-154.

¹⁰⁹ Edwards, *Narrative London 1738*, 10.

¹¹⁰ Edwards, *Narrative London 1738*, 16.

¹¹¹ Edwards, *Narrative London 1738*, 58.

¹¹² Edwards, *Narrative London 1738*, 55-56.

¹¹³ Edwards, *Narrative London 1738*, 63.

¹¹⁴ Edwards, *Narrative Wesley 1744*, 14.

Wesley extended the reach of Edwards' *Narrative* to a greater number of the population and received the work of God with joy. However the Edwards he published differed significantly from the one who initially penned the narrative to Benjamin Colman. Hindmarsh described how the *Narrative* hit at the right 'psychological moment' for the Methodist movement at a time when the Wesley brothers were beginning to form their ministry.¹¹⁵ The *Narrative*, without its Calvinistic frame, was useful to propel activism in evangelism and promote human agency in winning the lost.¹¹⁶ The *Narrative* was thus able to stimulate the activism and conversionism at the core of the Methodist movement and evangelicalism in Britain.¹¹⁷ Wesley received Edwards' *Narrative* as a practical means of exhortation to the efforts of evangelism and faith.

In summary, the diversity in reception of the *Narrative* in Britain was the result of divergent frameworks of conversion and differing levels of appropriation of Edwards' aims. The *Narrative* was, firstly, received across all groups with the joy that Edwards intended, because of a longing for a reversal of the barren season of ministry. Notably, it was only in Scotland that this amounted to an especially warm embrace of Edwards himself. Secondly, Edwards' understanding that the published *Narrative* would itself promote the work of God was actively taken up by all groups. The extent of this varied remarkably; the Scots, especially Robe, adopted and extended Edwards' purpose. Wesley saw the immense practical value of the *Narrative* in energising ministry, while shifting its emphasis because of his theological deviation from Edwards.

¹¹⁵ Hindmarsh, *Reception*, 204.

¹¹⁶ Hindmarsh, *Reception*, 206.

¹¹⁷ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 7; 10.

However it was, thirdly, the morphology of conversion that proved the greatest point of variation. The Scots, due to their prior focus upon true religion, used Edwards' emotive portrait of conversion to both interpret and manage the subsequent revivals. The early Congregationalist publishers were more conservative in their approach and apologetic about the more novel emotive aspects of Edwards' account, which hindered its full acceptance. Wesley had slightly different reservations about Edwards' theology of conversion but still valued the vivid examples that Edwards supplied. However he did not consider the finer distinctions Edwards made to be beneficial. Hence it was the framework and dispositions of each group which were influential in the way they received and set out to use Edwards' stirring account of God's work. Overall it is clear that Edwards' *Narrative* was vital for the mission and evangelistic culture that spread across the UK through the 18th century.

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