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The Material and Social Practices of Intellectual Work: Jonathan Edwards's Study

Wilson H. Kinnach and Kenneth P. Minkema

TALLES abound of the colorful techniques Jonathan Edwards, the renowned eighteenth-century New England pastor and theologian, supposedly employed to capture and preserve his thoughts. Upon returning home from riding over the countryside or walking in the fields for recreation, he had to be unpinned; that is, scraps of paper (either brief notes or mere mnemonic blank slips significant for their position only) had to be removed from sleeve and skirt before his coat could be taken away and hung up. It is also said that at night he kept candle, pen, and paper on a table near his bed so that he might record thoughts that came to him during the night on pieces of paper he then pinned to the bed hangings to be retrieved in the morning.¹ It is certain that his voluminous manuscripts contained additions pinned to them, though most of these additions were amplifications rather than nuggets of thought composed in field or bed.

Whether or not the details of the more colorful anecdotes can be confirmed, the picture of Edwards as a creature of ink and paper is accurate. The only biographer who knew and worked intimately with Edwards, New Divinity minister and reformer Samuel Hopkins, confirms that his "Mentor" carried ink and pen with him on his rural rides "to note any Thought that should be suggested, which he chose to retain and pursue, as what promised some Light on any important Subject," though Hopkins

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¹ S[ereno] E. Dwight, *The Life of President Edwards* (New York, 1830), III; William Edwards Park, "Edwardean," Jonathan Edwards Papers, Gen. Mss. 151, fol. 1668, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

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does not hint at the way Edwards preserved the notes.² Edwards's creative process is most succinctly characterized in another passage from Hopkins's memoir, which asserts that Edwards actually *thought* "with his Pen in his Hand."³ Edwards himself said so at the end of his career in his response to an invitation from the trustees of the college at Princeton to become its president:

My method of study, from my first beginning the work of the ministry, has been very much by writing; applying myself in this way, to improve every important hint; pursuing the clue to my utmost, when anything in reading, meditation or conversation, has been suggested to my mind, that seemed to promise light in any weighty point. Thus penning what appeared to me my best thoughts, on innumerable subjects for my own benefit. The longer I prosecuted my studies in this method, the more habitual it became, and the more pleasant and profitable I found it. The further I traveled in this way, the more and wider the field opened, which has occasioned my laying out many things, in my mind, to do in this manner.⁴

Pursuing a life of the mind in this way obviously required a setting more friendly to ink and paper than open fields and bedrooms, and thus it is hardly surprising to read Hopkins's attestation that Edwards had a study and that, when other duties permitted, he would spend up to thirteen hours a day in it.⁵

² [Samuel Hopkins], *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards, President of the College at New-Jersey . . .* (Boston, 1765), 40 ("to note"). On "Mentor," which is what Edwards's disciples called him behind his back (from Archbishop of Cambrai François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque* [*The Adventures of Telemachus*], first published in 1699), see for example Samuel Hopkins to Joseph Bellamy, Jan. 19, 1758, letter C141a, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online* (WJEO), vol. 32.

³ [Hopkins], *Life and Character*, 41 (quotation). Edwards's use of slips of paper evokes the early modern note closet, a rack with hooks on which excerpts and annotations written on slips of paper could be arranged and preserved. See Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, Conn., 2010), 93–102.

⁴ Jonathan Edwards to the Trustees of the College of New Jersey, Oct. 19, 1757, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16, *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn (New Haven, Conn., 1998), 725–30 (quotation, 726–27). After initial citation, each volume in the Yale University Press edition of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (twenty-six in total) will be cited as *Works* plus the volume and page numbers. Volumes in the digital *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online* (<http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse>) will be cited as WJEO plus the volume number.

⁵ [Hopkins], *Life and Character*, 40. Although there is no extant reference to Edwards calling the room his "study," the characteristically precise Hopkins does use

"The real life of Jonathan Edwards," Perry Miller famously wrote in his 1949 biography, "was the life of his mind." Where Miller presented Edwards as a disembodied intellect whose "external biography" was virtually an afterthought, the picture that emerges from an examination of his domestic intellectual environment shows that reading, writing, and publishing were very much embodied and material processes.⁶ In Edwards's study we can see the material world of an eighteenth-century intellectual through the means by which he forged and communicated ideas. We can also see the product of his labors—his writing—from a new perspective. The books on the shelf, borrowed and lent; the pens, paper, and ink; the homemade notebooks and hand-stitched manuscripts; and even the custom-made furniture where Edwards sat for those long hours all helped shape the texts Edwards left behind, publications and private writings that legions of scholars have examined for his ideas about God and man, sin and salvation, free will and divine grace. He largely fabricated the environment in which he worked and the tools he employed, using the technologies at his disposal in his provincial setting. He was also a highly disciplined and organized person who cared deeply about the manner and media in which his ideas were broadcast. But peering into Edwards's study does not just reveal the work habits and compositional methods by which this particular theologian developed his sermons and treatises. Looking closely at the objects in this room, and how they changed over time, allows us to reconstruct the ways that social and material practices helped constitute intellectual production.

The objects in his study help tell his version of a story nearly archetypal for its time and place: an early modern intellectual and religious virtuoso laboring in the provinces, hoping to make an impact upon the wider world with his pen. Edwards was an ambitious youth from the colonies who dreamed of literary fame in London, who realized those ambitions for international notoriety initially by defining a pastorate distinguished by religious revivals at Northampton, Massachusetts, and then by becoming the Sage of Stockbridge, arguably one of the greatest American philosophers.⁷ In tracing

that term, so it is likely that that was Edwards's usage (*ibid.*, 40, 43, 50). *Study*, a place for books, is a word that goes back to the time of Geoffrey Chaucer and was coming into common usage by the mid-eighteenth century. In Renaissance and early modern European culture, this term, along with *cabinet*, identified a private room, often off a bedroom, in which a person kept books and other curiosities. On the writing closet as an architectural feature of early eighteenth-century homes in British North America, see Robert Blair St. George, "Reading Spaces in Eighteenth-Century New England," in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven, Conn., 2006), 81–105.

⁶ Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 1949), xi (quotations).

⁷ On the cover of his notebook titled "Natural Philosophy," Edwards wrote in shorthand a series of rules on style, including the following: "Before I venture to publish

the material dimensions of his creative process, from sermon to sermon-series to treatise, one sees Edwards's gradually expanding view of his audience, from the perspective of a parish minister to that of a participant in the transatlantic republic of letters, as he became a major intellectual force for a pan-Protestant community.

At least since the time of the Renaissance humanists, a scholar's study—as opposed to a library or other social room—has tended to take on the character of its owner in profound and sometimes picturesque ways, and if the owner virtually lives in the study one might expect it to be even more of an embodiment of the person, a material correlative of personal tastes, habits, and foibles. Hopkins, having led his reader, as it were, to the study door of his mentor, chooses not to gossip about the interior. No other accounts describe how Edwards worked, but the surviving study materials themselves offer many clues. Happily, a significant body of Edwards's manuscripts survives, and what seem to have been the key pieces of his study furniture are still extant, though dispersed. Though his beloved books have been yet more widely dispersed, an estate inventory, his personal “‘Catalogue’ of Reading” (a list of titles he had read or wanted to read), and references in his manuscript and published writings give specific evidence about the size and composition of his working library.⁸

Edwards's death in March 1758, a few weeks after his arrival in Princeton, necessarily resulted in the death of his study as well. Fortunately, his manuscripts were properly valued by his wife and family, who secured their future as a coherent corpus more effectively than descendants often do.⁹ The estate inventory enumerates furniture consisting of a “Desk and

in London, to make some experiment in my own country; to play at small games first, that I may gain some experience in writing. First to write letters to some in England, and to try my [hand at] lesser matters before I venture in great.” See “Natural Philosophy” cover-leaf memoranda, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 10, *Sermons and Discourses, 1720–1723*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach (New Haven, Conn., 1992), 180–85 (quotation, 185). See also *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 6, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven, Conn., 1980), 192–95. Prominent biographies include Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*; George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, Conn., 2003); Philip F. Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America's Evangelical* (New York, 2005).

⁸ Virtually the entire extant manuscript corpus can be found in the Jonathan Edwards Papers, Gen. Mss. 151, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, and in the Jonathan Edwards Manuscripts, Franklin Trask Library, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Mass. For the “‘Catalogue’ of Reading,” see *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 26, *Catalogues of Books*, ed. Peter J. Thuesen (New Haven, Conn., 2008), 117–318; for sermon notebooks, see *WJEO*, vol. 36; and for theological agendas, see “Subjects of Inquiry,” in *WJEO*, vol. 28.

⁹ See for example the manuscript bequeathment of Mar. 27, 1767, in which Edwards's children assigned one of their number, Jonathan Jr., the role of guardian of their father's manuscripts, and the manuscript agreement of Oct. 7, 1890, arranging for the deposit of Edwards's manuscripts at Yale, signed by more than two dozen of his

Book Case," a "Small Book Case," a "Book Table," and a "Writing Table," together valued in 1759 at a rather pitiful three pounds, twelve shillings.¹⁰ As for books, the estate inventory lists 38 folios, 34 quartos, 99 octavos, 130 duodecimos, and 536 pamphlets. Twelve maps are also listed.¹¹ Apparently, these few items of furniture and the books of a fairly large library (for the time and place) provided the essential support for Edwards's remarkable writing life.

BEFORE EDWARDS COULD HAVE BEEN able to accumulate any furniture for a permanent study, he would have started, as early as his college years, collecting books. At his death, the size of his library was 837 items, plus 25 copies of books by Edwards himself. While not as large as the libraries of William Byrd II of Virginia or of Cotton Mather and Thomas Prince Sr. of Boston, which each numbered in the thousands, this was a very respectable collection, perhaps slightly larger than the ones kept by many New England ministers of the time.¹² In the seventeenth century, as Hugh Amory has found, a New England clergyman typically had "a few hundred titles" in his personal collection.¹³ But that number was also growing with the generations and with the increased availability and affordability of printed matter. John Sergeant, Edwards's missionary predecessor at Stockbridge, was typical in the rate at which he grew his library: when he died in 1749 at only thirty-nine years of age, he owned more than 250 books and pamphlets. The library of Edwards's father, Timothy, pastor of East Windsor, Connecticut, who died at the age of eighty-nine only a couple of months before his son, amounted to less than seven hundred titles at the time it was inventoried.¹⁴

great-grandchildren from across the United States (Edwards Papers, Gen. Mss. 151, fols. 1666–67).

¹⁰ E[dwards] A[masa] P[ark], ed., "Jonathan Edwards's Last Will, and the Inventory of his Estate," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1876, 438–47, esp. 445–46 (quotations, 445).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 445–46. On the hunt for "Edwardian relics" in the nineteenth century, see Increase N. Tarbox, ed., *Diary of Thomas Robbins, D.D., 1796–1854* (Boston, 1887), 2: 319 n. 7 (quotation), 319.

¹² See *A Catalogue of the Collection of Books and Manuscripts which Formerly Belonged to the Reverend Thomas Prince . . .* (Boston, 1870); Julius Herbert Tuttle, "The Libraries of the Mathers," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 20, pt. 2 (April 1910): 269–356, esp. 269–351; Kevin J. Hayes, [ed.], *The Library of William Byrd of Westover* (Madison, Wis., 1997).

¹³ Hugh Amory, "Printing and Bookselling in New England, 1638–1713," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Amory and David D. Hall, vol. 1 of *A History of the Book in America*, ed. Hall (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2007), 83–116, esp. 108–9 (quotation, 108). On reading and publishing in seventeenth-century New England, see Matthew P. Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia, 2007); Hall, *Ways of Writing: The Practice and Politics of Text-Making in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Philadelphia, 2008); Matt Cohen, *The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early New England* (Minneapolis, 2010).

¹⁴ See inventory of John Sergeant estate, 1750, Northampton Probates, box 129, no. 19, Springfield Public Library, Springfield, Mass. Thanks to Rachel Wheeler for

Much has been written on the nature and content of Edwards's library, the sources that influenced him, and those he used in his polemics. As important as his reading habits are to understanding Edwards, however, our attention here is on his relation to books as print media or as objects to be obtained and produced, and what that tells us about his activity in the material life that surrounded and shaped his intellectual labor.¹⁵

As Peter J. Thuesen has recently shown in his study of Edwards's book-collecting, book-borrowing, and book-lending practices, Edwards constantly sought out titles, new and old, on a broad variety of subjects that reflected his vocations as pastor, theologian, philosopher, and educator. Titles for purchase or borrowing could be identified through several means. One way he found out about books was by conversations with colleagues and friends in the ministerial and political networks that he encountered in his travels and at college commencement exercises or that he entertained at his own house. Another way a learned person such as Edwards discovered printed works, whether forthcoming or already published, was to consult advertisements, not only in newspapers such as the *New-York Gazette* but also in the back of periodicals such as the *London Magazine*, where a page or two of notices of recently published or forthcoming titles regularly appeared (Figure I). Bookshops were, of course, another option, whether for serendipitous or for prearranged purchases, though it took some effort for Edwards to get to one. Boston was a two-and-a-half-day trip on horseback from Northampton—a trip he made with surprising frequency—and New York City was at least an eight-day trek by coach and ship, but whenever in these or other cities Edwards doubtless sought out the bookshops, purchasing what caught his eye and what he could afford. Some coveted volumes, however, were only to be had by working through intermediaries, particularly merchants who sailed to England on business.¹⁶

supplying her transcript of the inventory. For an annotated list of Edwards's father's books and book references, see Appendix A: "Timothy Edwards' Library and Reading," in *Works*, 26: 363–415.

¹⁵ Thomas H. Johnson, "Jonathan Edwards' Background of Reading," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, vol. 28, *Transactions, 1930–1933* (Boston, 1935), 193–222; Wallace E. Anderson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works*, 6: 1–143, esp. 6: 1–136; William Sparkes Morris, *Young Jonathan Edwards: A Reconstruction* (Brooklyn, N.Y., 1991); David D. Hall, *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst, Mass., 1996); Amory and Hall, *Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*; Brown, *Pilgrim and the Bee*; Cohen, *Networked Wilderness*.

¹⁶ On Edwards's search for books, see Peter J. Thuesen, "Editor's Introduction," in *Works*, 26: 1–113, which provides the basis for this discussion of Edwards's book habits. Available evidence shows he was in Boston in June 1723 (on two different occasions, totaling twelve days out of the month); July 1731; June 1733; January 1734; March 1735; October 1738; May 1739; April, August, and October 1742; May 1743; October 1745; May 1746; July 1749; August 1750; April–May and June 1752; October 1753; and June 1757. For intermediaries in book buying, see letters to Jacob Wendell in which

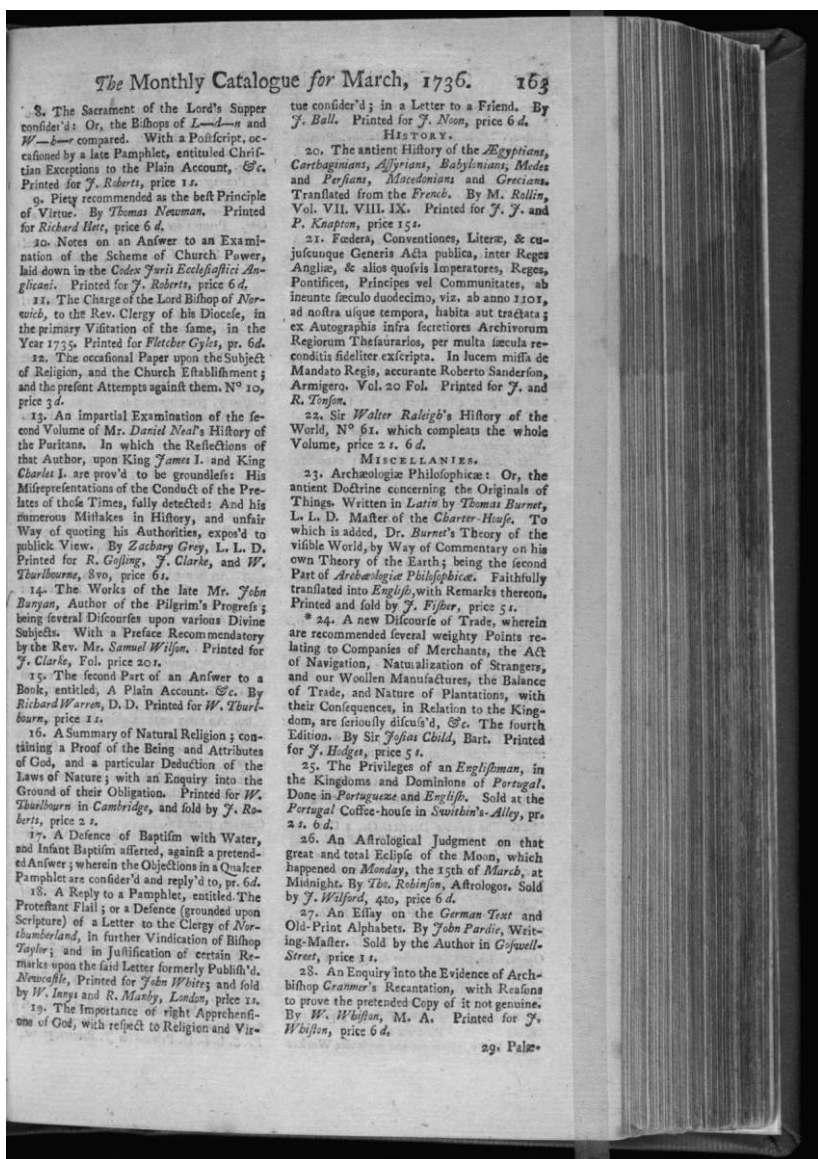


FIGURE I

Book advertisement page from the back of the *London Magazine* of 1736, an issue to which Edwards referred in his “Catalogue’ of Reading.” Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Edwards also would have been able to borrow books and other printed matter from a range of libraries. First, he would have had access to private libraries belonging to relatives such as his father; his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, whom Edwards replaced as senior pastor of Northampton in 1729; and the Pierponts, the clerical family of New Haven into which he married. The existence of a public library in early eighteenth-century New Haven points to the increasing number of circulating and club, or members-only, libraries in larger towns and cities in the British colonies. But they were not only found in urban centers; one such organization, the Philogrammatican, was established in rural Lebanon, Connecticut, by Edwards's cousin, the Reverend Solomon Williams. Edwards's home library was also augmented by the books belonging to the local association of ministers of which he was a member. Ministerial associations were loosely organized venues for meetings of area ministers that arose in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Members paid dues that were used, among other purposes, to print and purchase books. We know of only thirteen titles in the Hampshire Association's library, but several of these were expensive multivolume sets that individual ministers would have been hard put to afford. Beginning in October 1741, Edwards would have had direct access to at least some of these, since the association voted at their meeting of that month to keep part of the library at his house. Finally, Edwards could have availed himself of noncirculating college libraries, including that of his alma mater, Yale College, when in New Haven visiting family or attending commencements, or that of Harvard College when in Boston to deliver a lecture or conduct business. Starting in 1752, when his daughter Esther married the Reverend Aaron Burr, president of the College of New Jersey, Edwards would have been able to utilize the college library there, which quickly became one of the largest collections in that colony.¹⁷

Edwards sought Ephraim Chambers's two-volume *Cyclopaedia*: Edwards to Wendell, Aug. 8, 1737, in *Works*, 16: 70; Edwards to Wendell, Aug. 23, 1737, *ibid.*, 16: 71. See also Edwards's letter to Joseph Bellamy, where he wrote: "I have thoughts of sending, myself, this year, to England for a few books, and have written to Mr. [Edmund] Quincy, a merchant in Boston, about it, to desire his advice and assistance, as to the course to be taken to obtain 'em." Edwards to Bellamy, Jan. 15, 1746/7, in *Works*, 16: 216–18 (quotation, 16: 217). The presence of cosmopolitan proreival merchants such as Wendell, Quincy, and Edward Bromfield, at whose homes Edwards sometimes stayed when in Boston, illustrates their importance to the evangelical learned community. On Bromfield, see Mark Valeri, *Heavenly Merchandize: How Religion Shaped Commerce in Puritan America* (Princeton, N.J., 2010), esp. 173–76.

¹⁷ On Solomon Stoddard's book ownership, see Norman S. Fiering, "Solomon Stoddard's Library at Harvard in 1664," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 20 (1972): 255–69, which tallies eighty books Stoddard possessed when he was a tutor. The inventory of Stoddard's estate (microfilm copy at Forbes Library, Northampton, Mass.) mentions a "catalogue" of the library in the hands of Stoddard's son, Anthony, minister of Wood-

Although involved in local networks and institutions of learning, Edwards's orientation, like that of many of his peers in the clergy, was toward the London metropolis. Consider places of publication for the books he sought or owned as well as his intended audiences. Surviving books and pamphlets that contain Edwards's autograph or handwritten notes, for example, are overwhelmingly from European, and especially British, presses. Of the thirty-three titles, twenty-five (75.8 percent) were European imprints and only eight (24.2 percent) were published in North America, specifically in Boston. And while Edwards's own compositions, from *A Faithful Narrative of a Surprising Work of God* (1737) to *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer* (1748), clearly targeted readers in the revival party at home and abroad, the great philosophical pieces of the Stockbridge period, such as *Freedom of Will*, *The Nature of True Virtue*, and even *Original Sin*, were addressed to a wider audience, including the more secular readers usually associated with the republic of letters.¹⁸

EVEN WITH THE BOOKS he had been given or acquired, Edwards's "study" at the inception of his professional life in 1720 was eminently movable, probably in a small trunk or package. Edwards's first years were peripatetic,

bury, Connecticut, but regrettably that list is lost. Elise Bernier-Feeley of the Hampshire Local History Room at Forbes Library provided this reference and spent much time attempting to locate the missing catalog. On a public library to which Edwards would have had easy access, see Franklin Bowditch Dexter, "The First Public Library in New Haven," *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society* 6 (1900): 301–13. On the Philogrammatican, see *Works*, 26: 39–43. On the Williamses' conflict with Edwards, see Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 358–74; Gura, *Jonathan Edwards*, 135–64. Solomon Williams wrote *The True State of the Question Concerning the Qualifications Necessary to lawful Communion in the Christian Sacraments* (Boston, 1751), the official response to Edwards's *An Humble Inquiry Into The Rules of the Word of God, Concerning The Qualifications Requisite to Compleat Standing and full Communion in the Visible Christian Church* (Boston, 1749), his explanation of his change of position on qualifications for communion, a key text in the controversy that led to his dismissal from Northampton in 1750. These multivolume sets in the Hampshire Association's library included Paul de Rapin's *History of England* in fifteen volumes (1726–31) and *The Present State of the Republick of Letters*, published monthly from 1728 to 1736 and collected in eighteen volumes. See "The Hampshire Association of Ministers' Library," in *Works*, 26: 357–60. For college libraries, see W. H. Bond and Hugh Amory, eds., *Printed Catalogues of the Harvard College Library, 1723–1790* (Boston, 1996); James E. Mooney, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Catalogues of the Yale College Library* (New Haven, Conn., 2001). The College of New Jersey's library began with 474 books from Gov. Jonathan Belcher in 1750; see *Works*, 26: 49–50.

¹⁸ For books with Edwards's notations, see "Appendix C: Books with Edwards' Autograph or Handwritten Notes," in *Works*, 26: 423–27. Places of publication for these titles include London (17); Boston (8); Geneva (3); and Oxford, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leiden, and Utrecht (1 each). Norman Fiering established the republic of letters as an intellectual framework for Edwards in Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1981), esp. 14–23.

involving brief pastoral appointments in New York City and Bolton, Connecticut, and a stint as tutor at Yale College during which he also served as a supply preacher in Glastonbury, Connecticut. If he had a desk to use during this period, it was probably his father's when he visited home in East Windsor; otherwise, it was doubtless any convenient table. The essential materials of studying and writing were, of course, the writing equipment and paper, but even that material support was not so casually supplied as we might assume today.¹⁹

When it came to stationery ingredients and supplies, Edwards tended to rely on local products, resorting to imported ones only when necessary. None of his few surviving financial records or bills of goods from merchants mentions quills, inks, or ingredients thereof—indicating that he remained rooted in traditional, home-based technologies for writing implements, despite the growing availability of such products, which were imported from outside the colonies and even outside the British Empire and sold by Boston merchants and “stationer[s]” beginning in the mid-1730s. He did fall in with general colonial consumer trends in purchasing paper made in England, though as time went on he apparently did not have much choice in where it was made and seems not to have been concerned about that, so long as it was the quality he desired. In these respects, at least, Edwards did not wholly participate in the “consumer modernity” of his more urban colonial peers.²⁰

The popular image of Edwards coming home from a ride or walk in the woods with scraps of paper fluttering on his coat is striking, but he also used more conventional and practical ways of note taking. For example, early in his life, when he was doing a great deal of moving from place to place, he puzzled over a way to “improve” or maximize time when in transit. His solution is found in his diary for August 28, 1723: “Remember as soon as I can, to get a piece of slate, or something, whereon I can make short memorandums while traveling”—something that may have resembled the hornbooks or tablets that children used in schools to cipher.²¹

¹⁹ The following section relies on Thomas A. Schafer's section “Resources and Their Uses” in his introduction to the “Miscellanies,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, *The “Miscellanies,”* (Entry Nos. a–z, aa–zz, 1–500) (New Haven, Conn., 1994), 60–69.

²⁰ Konstantin Dierks, “Letter Writing, Stationery Supplies, and Consumer Modernity in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World,” *Early American Literature* 41, no. 3 (2006): 473–94, esp. 478–79 (“stationer[s],” 478). On the increasingly foreign sources of writing utensils and related products in the British colonies, see *ibid.* Among the earliest advertisements for writing supplies in a Boston newspaper (aside from estate sales) is that in the *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, Apr. 25–May 2, 1734, [2], where merchant John Phillips, “next Door to Mr Dolbear's the Braziers,” listed a variety of household goods, including “writing & printing Paper, Ink, Quills.”

²¹ *Works*, 16: 780. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson both used ivory table-books for making temporary notes. These were made of oblong pocket-sized pieces of

While Edwards must have used a slate pencil or a piece of chalk—something erasable—for his slate tablet, his main writing implement throughout his life was in all likelihood the quill pen, probably made from a goose feather, though feathers from swans and turkeys were used as well; for those who wanted a finer hand, crow feathers were preferred. There was much more to procuring a quill than simply going out to the barnyard and plucking one from the wing of the nearest bird. First, the feathers had to be taken at molting time, when they were loose or had fallen out. Then they were dried and baked for about an hour, sometimes in sand. Finally, they were cleansed in a boiling solution, after which they were ready to be cut using a penknife. Penknives were usually about a hand's width in length with a narrow blade that folded into a handle made of wood, bone, or even ivory; nonfolding varieties had long handles and short, leaf-shaped blades for scrape erasing. To prepare the quill for ink, the end was cut at an angle and the pith removed, followed by another cut, about half an inch farther back and halfway through the quill, which provided for an even flow of ink. When the tip of the quill dulled, split, or cracked—which resulted in uneven flow or spattering of the ink—the writer had to repeat the process, until the quill was whittled down to such a short length that it was no longer usable. Quill pens had to be kept damp between writing sessions, or sittings. For this purpose, small glass quill holders with concave bottoms were made, though Edwards may have made do with any glass cup or similar receptacle.²²

Iron-gall inks were the most popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Edwards would have had to purchase the basic ingredients for the formula, but from there the ink was home brewed. A typical recipe was one part gum arabic; two parts copperas, or green vitriol (ferrous sulfate); three parts gall; and thirty parts rainwater or white wine. Gum arabic acted as a binder and gave viscosity, and copperas served as a colorant. Gallic or gallotannic acids, which bit into and created a durable bond with paper fibers, came from oak trees on which the female gall wasp laid her eggs, around which excrescences, or galls, the size of nuts would form. To mix the ink, first the oak galls were crushed and soaked in the rainwater or wine and exposed to the sun or placed by the fire for a day or two, and then strained. Next the copperas, "beaten small," would be stirred in, and the mixture

ivory joined at one end so that they could be spread out like a fan. Slate pencils were used to write on the tablets, which could then be erased. See Kevin J. Hayes, *The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 2008), 98. Slate, wax, and sand tablets are described in Blair, *Too Much to Know*, chap. 2.

²² *Works*, 13: 66; Joe Nickell, *Pen, Ink, and Evidence: A Study of Writing and Writing Materials for the Penman, Collector, and Document Detective* (Lexington, Ky., 1990), 3–8. See also Lilian Baker Carlisle, "How to Make a Quill Pen," *Antiques Journal*, September 1973, 36–38, 63; Phillip Mason, "The Lost Art of Quill Pen Making," *Early American Life* 6, no. 2 (April 1975): 40–41.

kept in the sun or on the hearth for another day or two.²³ The gum arabic was then stirred in. To make the ink glossy, the concoction could be simmered over a fire after adding a small amount of sugar. The finished product was decanted into clean bottles and stoppered. We can imagine a number of such bottles, of various sizes, in Edwards's study, perhaps on a shelf in one of the bookcases.

Besides the bottles for keeping his ink reserves, Edwards would have used various receptacles when actually writing. A traditional item was the inkhorn, made from the horn of an ox or cow, sometimes with a lid or cover at the wide end for transport. The challenge with an inkhorn, of course, was that it had to be held upright, either by hand or in some sort of stand. Other receptacles for ink included inkpots, or inkwells, of earthenware or pewter, which were popular in New England during the eighteenth century; the more affluent could purchase desk sets and writing utensils made of silver and various exotic materials.²⁴

If quills and ink, aside from some ingredients, were homemade products, paper was another matter: it had to be purchased. Edwards regularly sought to purchase paper, either by corresponding with the sellers or by procuring it himself when he went to Boston or elsewhere. Invoices from December 1742 and January 1743, when he was busy writing his lengthiest and most ambitious treatise to date, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival*, show that he purchased one quire (about twenty-five sheets) each month at a cost of four shillings and sixpence each. In July 1744 he acquired a quarter ream (125 sheets, there being 500 sheets to a ream) of the "best fools Cap," at a cost of five shillings and ninepence, and a quarter ream of "Pott," which was an inferior grade of paper, coarser and darker than foolscap, at three shillings and sixpence.²⁵ Edwards used foolscap in his sent letters, in his permanent notebooks, and in early sermons, though later only as covers or wrappers (i.e., outside sheets) for sermons. To meet his ongoing need for paper, he also used the services of acquaintances who were visiting Boston for one reason or another, giving them his list and a sum of money. In 1747, for instance, he "sent to Boston by Kiah Wright for Paper & Chocolate 4£-0-0-," chocolate being a favorite confection of the Edwards family, usually served as a drink in the morning.²⁶ Doubtless Edwards was not the

²³ Edward Cocker, *The Pen's Triumph* (1658), quoted in Joyce Irene Whalley, *Writing Implements and Accessories: From the Roman Stylus to the Typewriter* (Detroit, 1975), 78, quoted in Nickell, *Pen, Ink, and Evidence*, 36.

²⁴ Nickell, *Pen, Ink, and Evidence*, 35–39, 44–57.

²⁵ Receipts in manuscript sermons on Eph. 6:11–13 (no. 750, July 1744, quotations) and Matt. 7:15 (no. 696, January 1743), Edwards Papers, Gen. Mss. 151.

²⁶ Edwards, "Account Book," entry for Oct. 20, 1747, in *WJEO*, vol. 40. Keziah Wright, born in 1702, was at the time an unmarried Northampton parishioner; she married Daniel Lewis in 1753. See James Russell Trumbull, "History of Northampton: Northampton Genealogies" (unpublished typescript), 513, Forbes Library.

only person who asked Wright for such a favor on her journey, since news of a person going to Boston, New York, or Newport would bring many neighbors to her door with their wish lists. And in 1752 Edwards recorded what was probably one of many times in which his protégé Samuel Hopkins purchased paper or other items for him: "Mr Hopkins of sheffield for a Quire of very good Paper."²⁷

Edwards, like nearly all New Englanders of his time, used paper that came from European mills. As Thomas A. Schafer discovered in his extensive study of Edwards's manuscripts through the late 1720s, the majority of the paper that Edwards used, as indicated in the watermarks, was Dutch and Flemish. The dominance of English, specifically London, watermarks in his papers beginning around 1729 or 1730 reflects the growth of the English paper trade after the first decade of the eighteenth century.²⁸ This transition is illustrated in his sermon corpus, in which his last batch of Amsterdam paper was exhausted by mid-1728.

WHILE SERMONS INTEGRATED IDEAS and offered a cosmic context spanning the eternal reality of God and the fleeting perceptions of humankind, Edwards's various specialized notebooks offered deeper, more focused explorations of particular topics and concepts. Indeed, by the late 1720s the notebooks not only grew in size but multiplied in categories: his initial folio of the "Miscellanies," his primary series of theological notebooks that eventually grew to nine volumes and more than fourteen hundred entries, had been joined by a "Notes on Scripture" quarto, a "Notes on the Apocalypse" quarto, a notebook for a treatise titled "The Mind" (probable quarto), and an "Images of Divine Things" folio.²⁹

²⁷ Account fragment, n.d. [ca. 1752], Forbes Library.

²⁸ On Thomas A. Schafer's dating methodology, see *Works*, 13: 60–90; for chronological parallels for the period 1720–31, *ibid.*, 13: 91–109; and for paper, *ibid.*, 13: 61. On watermarks, see W. A. Churchill, *Watermarks in Paper in Holland, England, France, Etc., in the XVII and XVIII Centuries and Their Interconnection* (Amsterdam, 1935); Edward Heawood, *Watermarks Mainly of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Hilversum, Holland, 1950); Thomas L. Gravell and George Miller, *A Catalogue of Foreign Watermarks Found on Paper Used in America, 1700–1835* (New York, 1983). On watermarks in the Edwards manuscripts, see *Works*, 13: 558–61; Schafer, "Watermark Tracings" (unpublished notebook, n.d.), Thomas A. Schafer Papers, Jonathan Edwards Center, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn.

²⁹ The "Miscellanies" are printed in *Works*, vol. 13; *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 18, *The "Miscellanies,"* (Entry Nos. 501–832), ed. Ava Chamberlain (New Haven, Conn., 2000); *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 20, *The "Miscellanies,"* (Entry Nos. 833–1152), ed. Amy Plantinga Pauw (New Haven, Conn., 2002); *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 23, *The "Miscellanies,"* (Entry Nos. 1153–1360), ed. Douglas A. Sweeney (New Haven, Conn., 2004); *WJEO*, vol. 30. "Notes on Scripture" is in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 15, *Notes on Scripture*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New Haven, Conn., 1998); "Notes on the Apocalypse," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 5, *Apocalyptic Writings*, ed. Stein (New Haven, Conn., 1977), 95–305; "The Mind," in *Works*,

Edwards's handwriting, as almost everyone's does, evolved over time—and for the worse. Regardless of the period, in his manuscripts we can distinguish a “private” versus a “public” hand. The private hand was the one he used for temporary notes, memorandums, drafts of letters, and nearly all of his sermons, which only he would have to use, and often only for a short time. He took little care with documents that fall in this category, resulting in some autographs that are very difficult to decipher indeed because they are hastily written and full of deletions, interlineations, relocations, and outlined passages. As time went on, his handwriting became larger and more spread out, perhaps reflecting his need for spectacles as he aged, and he rendered key subject words and phrases in capital letters, the easier to locate passages on particular topics. Edwards reserved his public hand, as the name implies, primarily for documents that would be read by others, including sent letters and fair copies of sermons and essays to be published. However carefully he may have tried to write documents intended for other eyes, his cursive script was apparently always a challenge to all but longtime correspondents.³⁰

The distinction of public and private hands extends to the different sorts of notebooks Edwards kept. Those that he planned to retain—the prime example being the “Miscellanies”—were, by and large, written in something approaching a public hand, though with abbreviations, symbols, and other features that would not be found in a document for public con-

6: 332–93; and “Images of Divine Things,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 11, *Typological Writings*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson, Mason I. Lowance Jr., with David H. Watters (New Haven, Conn., 1993), 50–130. The evolving structure of notebooks and the notebooks' relation to sermon composition are discussed in *Works*, 10: 43–74.

³⁰ For samples of Edwards's orthography, see “Appendix C: The Evolution of Edwards' Early Handwriting,” in *Works*, 13: 562–65, esp. 13: 562–64, which shows obvious changes even from 1720 to 1731. Edwards usually sent a fair copy to the printer and retained a penultimate draft, replete with deletions, insertions, and dislocations, for himself. See for example the manuscripts of “Rom. 4:5 [Justification by Faith Alone]” (no. 343), in *WJEO*, vol. 49; “Preface to Farewell Sermon,” in *WJEO*, vol. 38; and “*Misrepresentations Corrected*” Draft, *WJEO*, vol. 33, the latter of which is the most complete draft of a treatise by Edwards to survive. A rare example of a fair copy that found its way back to Edwards is the fragment from the treatise *Original Sin* (*WJEO*, vol. 34) preserving the original version of pt. 1, chap. 1, sec. 8, and the latter part of pt. 2, chap. 4, sec. 1, to the conclusion of the treatise. The first piece contains marginalia by the printer: “on page 46, in the left margin, appears a notation in a different hand, ‘p. 81G,’ that refers to the corresponding place in the printed text” of Samuel Kneeland's first edition of 1758 (Headnote to “Fragment II,” *ibid.*). A 1752 letter by Edwards, written to Joseph Paice, a prominent English merchant and director of the South Sea Company, was relayed by the recipient to Thomas Secker, the archbishop of Canterbury, because of information it contained relating to the education of Indian children. But before he sent it on, Paice copied the lengthy epistle, saying in a cover letter to the archbishop, “I would have sent the original, but it is wrote in a hand hardly Legible.” Paice to Secker, July 18, 1752, Lambeth 1123, no. 61, Lambeth Palace Library, London; for Edwards's letter, see Edwards to Paice, Feb. 24, 1751/2, in *Works*, 16: 434–47.

sumption. Edwards's notebooks fell into several distinct types. The "Miscellanies," along with other notebooks he worked on through all or most of his career, such as "Notes on Scripture," the "Blank Bible," and "Faith," are known as "substantive" notebooks because in these he recorded and developed his ideas. A second major kind is the "regulatory" notebook, which is devoted to schedules or lists regulating or planning Edwards's literary life. For the purposes of his study practices, the "'Catalogue' of Reading" is a good example. Another is "Subjects of Inquiry," a late assortment of memorandums outlining projects and study aims. Edwards also employed project-related notebooks, collections of materials that he assembled for short-term use. It was his practice, when drafting a major treatise, to construct a series of working notebooks to which he committed references, transitions, reminders, even potential chapter titles. Two extant examples of this practice are "Affections," book 7, for *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* of 1746, and "Sacrament," book 1, compiled for the writing of *An Humble Inquiry* of 1749.³¹ From internal references, we know that in the former series there were at least nine books, and in the latter at least four. These two survive because there were still some scattered passages that Edwards had not used and thought worth saving.

Paper was expensive, so Edwards did what he could to recycle and salvage paper that came into his study and household: prayer bids from his congregation, marriage bans from the town clerk, letter covers from his correspondents, children's writing exercises, bills and receipts, and other scraps are found throughout his manuscript sermons and notebooks—a

³¹ *Works*, vol. 15; *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 24, *The "Blank Bible," Part 1 and Part 2*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New Haven, Conn., 2006); "Faith," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 21, *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee (New Haven, Conn., 2003), 414–68. Ava Chamberlain suggests that Edwards may have made his "Miscellanies" available to his students as part of their training: *Works*, 18: 9–10. The notebook kept by Joseph Bellamy in 1736, while a student of Edwards, has certain parallels to contemporary "Miscellanies" entries; see MS, Special Collections, Yale Divinity School. On the pedagogical aspects of note taking as opposed to memorization in early modern Europe, see Blair, *Too Much to Know*, 75–80; Kenneth P. Minkema, "Jonathan Edwards on Education and His Educational Legacy," in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (Oxford, 2012), 31–50. On "scribal publication," see Hall, *Ways of Writing*, 29–80. On substantive versus regulatory notebooks, see *Works*, 10: 43, 52–74. "Subjects of Inquiry" appears in *WJEO*, vol. 28. Some notebooks fall somewhere between the substantive and regulatory. The "*Controversies*" Notebook, *WJEO*, vol. 27, for example, was a joining of previously discrete pieces, written from the 1730s to the 1750s, on various subjects, bound together and given a table of contents by Edwards as if they constituted a polemic agenda. On the material evidence of Edwards's creative process as represented in working notebooks, see Wilson H. Kimnach, "Jonathan Edwards' Sermon Mill," *Early American Literature* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1975): 167–78; *Works*, 10: 42–90. "Affections Notebook 'No. 7'" is in *WJEO*, vol. 37; "Sacrament Book 1" is in *WJEO*, vol. 38.

bonanza for social historians. One unusual notebook is a prime example of Edwards's frugality. The "Book of Minutes on the Arminian Controversy" is made from issues of the *Daily Gazetteer*, a London newspaper (see Plate I). He made the notebook by cutting the sheets, then folding and stitching them so that the margins of the pages were outermost. Into these margins, though they offered no more than two inches of blank space, he committed his thoughts. Late in life, Edwards came into possession of what was apparently a sparsely written, seventeenth-century theological commonplace book, on ruled octavo pages, which he cut up and used for sermons and notebooks (including the last book of the "Miscellanies"), crossing out the entries by the previous owner and turning the pages upside down.³²

Most curiously, in later years, especially after the early 1740s, Edwards began to use pieces of rice paper as thin as tracing paper. The scraps of this paper that he salvaged are oddly shaped, often with edges cut unevenly, so that notebooks made from this paper, such as the three on "Efficacious Grace," have a "butterfly effect" when laid open on the table (Figure II). Here and there a piece retains a stroke of watercolor or a bit of an ink drawing. These pieces of paper were the leftovers from the patterns that Edwards's wife, Sarah Pierpont Edwards, and their daughters used to make fans, both for their own use and, legend has it, to sell in local shops for extra income.³³ Edwards incorporated these most systematically into his sermon booklets after 1742, using pieces of foolscap in front and back to protect the delicate pages within.

As collections of entries on various subjects quickly multiplied, these all needed to be bound so as to keep the pages together and in order. In his youth Edwards compiled manuscripts, such as his diary, on loose sheets. But on January 14, 1722/3, more than a year after starting the diary, he decided it was time to bind them: "About ten o'clock in the morning, made this book, and put these papers in it."³⁴ This was before he was married, and while it has been assumed that, once he was wed, Edwards's wife (and later his daughters) did this task, all evidence points to Edwards doing his own stitching.³⁵

³² The "Book of Minutes on the Arminian Controversy" is in *WJEO*, vol. 37. See also Edwards's "Original Sin" Notebook, *WJEO*, vol. 34, made from a copy of Antoine Arnauld's *De la Frequent Communion* . . . (Lyon, France, 1739). He removed the cover, then turned the book upside down before writing in the blank margins around the text. Edwards did not read French, and thus the book was useless to him.

³³ "Efficacious Grace," bks. 1–3, in *WJEO*, vol. 21. See also Jane Greenfield, "Notable Bindings 8," *Yale University Library Gazette* 68, nos. 1–2 (October 1993): 71–73, which examines the construction of "Efficacious Grace," bk. 2. In July 1744 Edwards recorded receiving from "William Hannam's wife" 3s. 6d. "for a Fan Jerusha did." "Leaf of Accounts, 1740–53," in *WJEO*, vol. 40. Mary Hutchinson Hannam (1699–1785) married William Hannam of Northampton in 1717, and the family moved to Belchertown in ca. 1721; Jerusha Edwards (1730–47) was the Edwardses' second daughter.

³⁴ *Works*, 16: 764.

³⁵ See Greenfield, *Yale University Library Gazette* 68: 71.

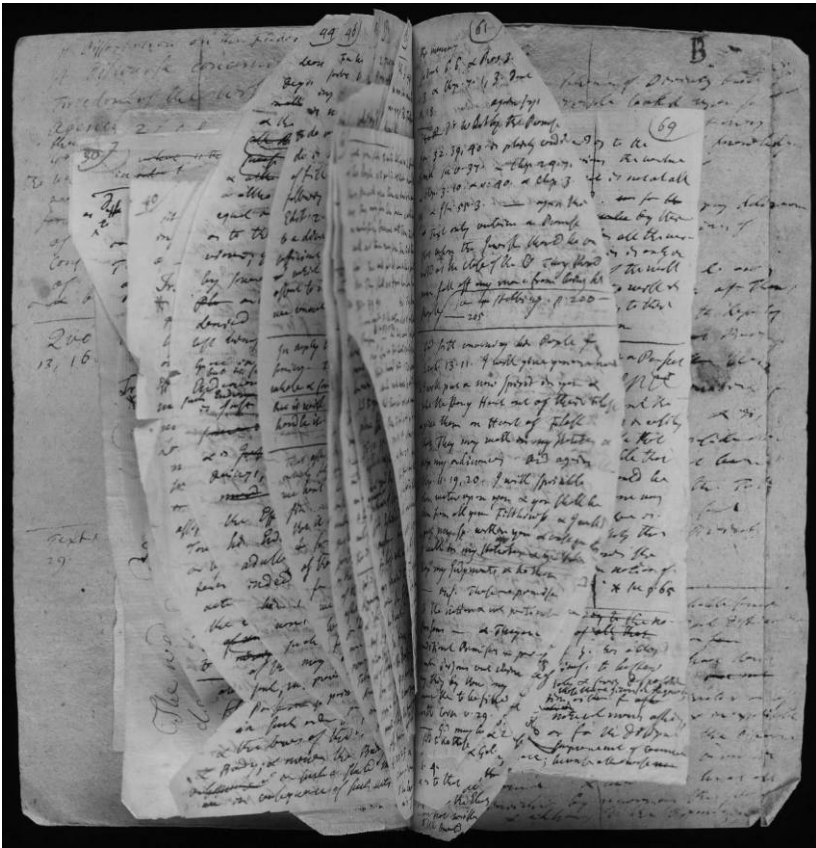


FIGURE II

“Efficacious Grace,” book 1, showing Edwards’s use of fan paper to construct temporary notebooks. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

As with the production of writing supplies, notebook construction was for Edwards a homegrown, handmade process. Although by the mid-eighteenth century bound ledgers and other sorts of blank books were becoming available for purchase, Edwards seems to have preferred to construct his own, not only to save expense but because it allowed for flexibility of size and arrangement. Edwards’s method, as was common for the time, was stab sewing, in which a needle and thread would be drawn through the assembled pages at the margin, usually in three to five holes, depending on the size of the paper, and knotted at an end hole. Sometimes, perhaps because the sheets were not bound tightly enough or the first stitching had become loose, he added a new set of stitches through different holes. He ran the

thread through the holes, connecting them, so that the thread paralleled the left edge of the paper, several millimeters from that edge.

Edwards also fabricated covers for his notebooks, often from pieces of the rugged, coarse brown wrappers in which reams of paper were sold. For ease of reference, he wrote the name of the notebook on the cover several times, back and front, and in two directions, so that no matter which way the notebook was lying on the table or in the drawer, he could know what it was at a glance. This minimized the problem of accidentally writing entries in one notebook that were meant for another, which happened on occasion, particularly as his notebooks multiplied. More eccentrically, or experimentally, he used whatever came to hand. The cover of the first volume of "Notes on Scripture" is made from a piece of oilcloth that, Stephen J. Stein conjectures, was probably originally used to wrap imported twilled fabric (Figure III). And "History of Redemption," book 1, is wrapped in a piece of wallpaper, perhaps a fragment from the lot with which one of the rooms of Edwards's house was decorated (Figure IV).³⁶

Sometimes, to stiffen a cover, Edwards pasted a piece of paper to the inside. To cite just one instance, he glued to the front inside cover of the "Faith" notebook a portion of a copy of the printed elegy for George Whitefield's publicist, William Seward, who died in October 1740 (Figure V).³⁷ Edwards began "Faith" in early 1728 but did not make the sheets into a book until at least twelve years later. This demonstrates his habit of stitching and covering pages of notes only after having collected a substantial amount of material, enough to make it worthwhile to go through the labor, and after having judged the accumulated entries worth keeping, or worth keeping together.

As time went on, he became proficient at constructing his notebooks to the point that he could be quite exact in his preferences. In the cover of the second of the four volumes of "Notes on Scripture," he wrote this memorandum: "If I live to make another book of this sort, to observe to cut the gashes for the stitching in deeper and not so near to the joinings of the stitch, that the book may open more freely and fully. And let the sheets be divided into twice so small divisions, and starch no paper in a paper cover, for that makes it crack. And if that don't do, try next stitching the backs of all the divisions of sheets to a slip of leather, and sew the cover over the leather."³⁸ The

³⁶ For an example of a misplaced entry, see "Long Series," no. 49, in "Things To Be Considered an[d] Written Fully About," which was originally mistakenly written after "Short Series," no. 24. *Works*, 6: 225, 246. On the cover of "Notes on Scripture," bk. 1, see *Works*, 15: 36, 36 n. 4. "History of Redemption," bk. 1, is in *WJEO*, vol. 31.

³⁷ *Works*, 21: 415. The other part of the broadside is glued to the inside back cover of Edwards's Hebrew and Greek Bible, in Special Collections, Firestone Library, Princeton University.

³⁸ *Works*, 15: 40.



FIGURE III

Oilcloth cover of “Notes on Scripture,” book 1, decorated with an Anglo-Dutch coat of arms. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

second volume of “Notes on Scripture” is fairly typical for thickness among Edwards’s collection of notebooks, totaling ninety-eight leaves. Early in his life, Edwards had used single sheets or folded leaves, consecutively stacked, to compose notebooks. As he became more proficient at creating notebooks and had more paper available, he would take a pile of folio sheets—in the case of the second book of “Notes on Scripture,” forty-nine of them—and



FIGURE IV

The cover of “History of Redemption,” book 1, made from wallpaper. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

fold the whole thing in half, creating what is called an infolded quire. This was an efficient way to construct a notebook because he could put his stitches through the fold. However, when he wanted to gather together several small infolded quires, the only way to make the stitch holes through the entire stack was with a knife or awl. When he cut the “gashes” for the

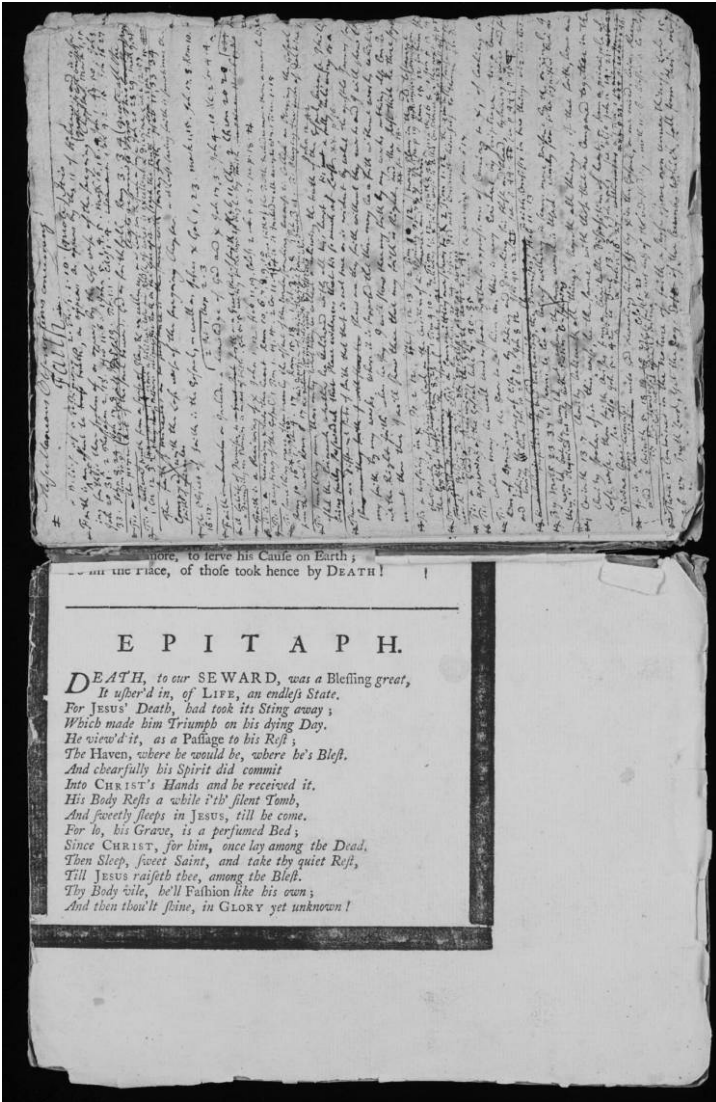


FIGURE V

The inside cover and page one of the "Faith" notebook, in quarto, with a portion of a printed elegy for William Seward pasted in. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

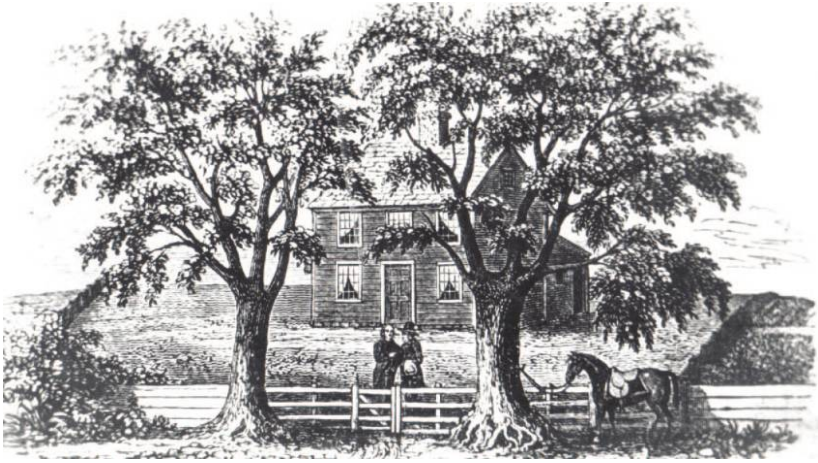


FIGURE VI

A nineteenth-century rendering of Edwards's Northampton, Massachusetts, home. [Jonathan] Edwards, *The Life of Rev. David Brainerd, Chiefly Extracted from His Diary* (New York, n.d.).

holes, therefore, he wanted to go “deeper,” or farther away from the left, or fold, of the pages. This was apparently one solution to prevent the stitch holes from being torn through to the edge of the page and yet still allow for the pages to open easily. Another way, as he describes in his memorandum, was to take a strip of leather and attach it to the separate folds, thereby creating a spine of sorts under the cover. None of Edwards's extant notebooks after “Notes on Scripture,” book 2, utilizes starch or a slip of leather, but this comment demonstrates the extent to which he was concerned about the workability of his manuscript corpus.

IT SEEMS LIKELY that Edwards did not acquire his own study room and its chief piece of furniture, a desk, until after his 1726 remove to Northampton, Massachusetts, to begin his twenty-four-year pastorate, initially as a colleague of his grandfather Solomon Stoddard. Upon his marriage in the summer of 1727, town records indicate he was provided the wherewithal to purchase a fitting “Mansion house,” or principal residence, on King Street (Figure VI).³⁹ The desk at the heart of that complex apparatus, now called “the Jonathan Edwards desk,” was probably then acquired to fit out a study. It is a slant-lidded desk of the William and Mary type, constructed of dovetailed boards in New England between 1700 and 1730, and it has four draw-

³⁹ James Russell Trumbull, *History of Northampton Massachusetts from Its Settlement in 1654* (Northampton, Mass., 1902), 2: 47–48 (quotation, 2: 48), 45.

ers, two in-line over two graduated drawers.⁴⁰ Red maple wood is used on the sides of the desk, but the front is a more elegant American black walnut; the drawers have stamped brass cotter pin bail pulls, and the two long drawers also have central brass escutcheons. The drawers are flanked and separated by double half-round molding that continues onto the canted sides flanking the lid and around the sides and rear of the top. Below the lowest drawer, the desk has applied base molding above shoed reel-and-bun feet. This base molding originally continued on the sides of the desk, although it later had to be removed for Edwards's modifications (Figure VII).

When the slant lid is lowered upon its lopers, revealing the interior, a center section appears. Fitted with five pigeonholes with scalloped valances (the center one of greater width and depth) above three corresponding drawers in line, this center section is flanked by open, stepped compartments with scalloped partitions, and the front area of the desk interior houses a well covered by a sliding lid. A twentieth-century restoration has replaced much of the desk, including the brasses, slant lid, well cover, valances, projecting partitions and shelves of the open compartments, and rear feet; however, the character and function of the desk have remained clear and unimpaired.⁴¹

That Edwards would have found such an elegant desk—perhaps accompanied by a separate bookcase or chest of books and a comfortable chair—quite adequate to his needs at the beginning of his Northampton pastorate seems likely. His purchasing of a desk at this time would have put him at the forefront of a stylistic trend, since desks did not begin to appear in inventories in the Connecticut River valley in any significant numbers

⁴⁰ The desk is in the collections of Jonathan Edwards College, Yale University, and is on display in the Master's House. Penelope Laurans, Master of Edwards College, kindly allowed the authors to photograph and measure the desk. Edwards called the desk his "scrutore," his rendering of *escritoire*. References by Edwards to manuscripts in his desk include one entitled "Original Sin," which appears at the end of "Miscellanies," no. 384: "See a loose paper in one of the shelves of the scrutore upon this subject" (*Works*, 13: 452–53 [quotation, 13: 453]); in "Miscellanies," no. 606, on the subject "Regeneration Not Baptism," he simply writes, "See a paper laid up in one of the shelves of the scrutore" (*Works*, 18: 143); and in the "*Controversies*" *Notebook*, in the section on "Regeneration" regarding infant annihilation, he notes, "See paper in my scrutore" (*WJEO*, vol. 27). For references to manuscripts in the drawers of the desk, see a "Blank Bible" entry on 1 Cor. 15:29: "See this text more fully spoken to, in answer to a question proposed to be answered before the Association, in one of my drawers." *Works*, 24: 1062–63 (quotation, 24: 1063); "Catalogue," no. [716]: "see Mr. Hopkins Letter to Capt. Hubbel of Jan. 13. 57 in my drawer" (*Works*, 26: 316); "Efficacious Grace," bk. 3, inside back cover: "See two sheets concerning free will and efficacious grace in the drawer" (*Works*, 21: 290).

⁴¹ An account of the desk's restoration in the twentieth century is in C[harles] N[agel] Jr., "The Jonathan Edwards Desk," *Bulletin of the Associates in Fine Arts at Yale University* 6, no. 2 (June 1934): 27–29. See also Gerald W. R. Ward, *American Case Furniture in the Mabel Brady Garvan and Other Collections at Yale University* (New Haven, Conn., 1988), 329–30. We have consulted in-house reports from the Garvan Collection archives, mainly analyses of woods used in the desk, to supplement our own observations. Thanks to Katherine Chabla of the Yale Furniture Study for her assistance.



FIGURE VII

Jonathan Edwards's central desk, Jonathan Edwards College, Yale University. Photograph by the authors.

until after the 1750s. The piece would have served not only as a work surface but also as a statement of status.⁴²

Examining Edwards's working methods during these first years in Northampton reveals that some of his practices demonstrably interacted with the character of his desk. In the foregoing years, Edwards had composed his sermons in octavo booklets, writing out the texts fully and carrying the booklets into the pulpit to be read (Figure VIII). Although in later years Edwards would partially outline his ordinary sermons, he returned to a fully written-out text for all special occasions. He always considered this lack of trust in his memory—or his inability to effectively extemporize—to be a defect, and it must have been particularly annoying at the outset in Northampton when, for two years, his grandfather was sitting behind him as he preached. Stoddard had published a critique of preaching just two years before his grandson's

⁴² Kevin M. Sweeney, "Furniture and the Domestic Environment in Wethersfield, Connecticut, 1639–1800," in *Material Life in America, 1600–1860*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Boston, 1988), 261–90, esp. 271, 284–85. Another symbol of status that Edwards purchased early in his ministry was a slave named Venus; see Kenneth P. Minkema, "Jonathan Edwards's Defense of Slavery," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 4 (2002): 23–59.

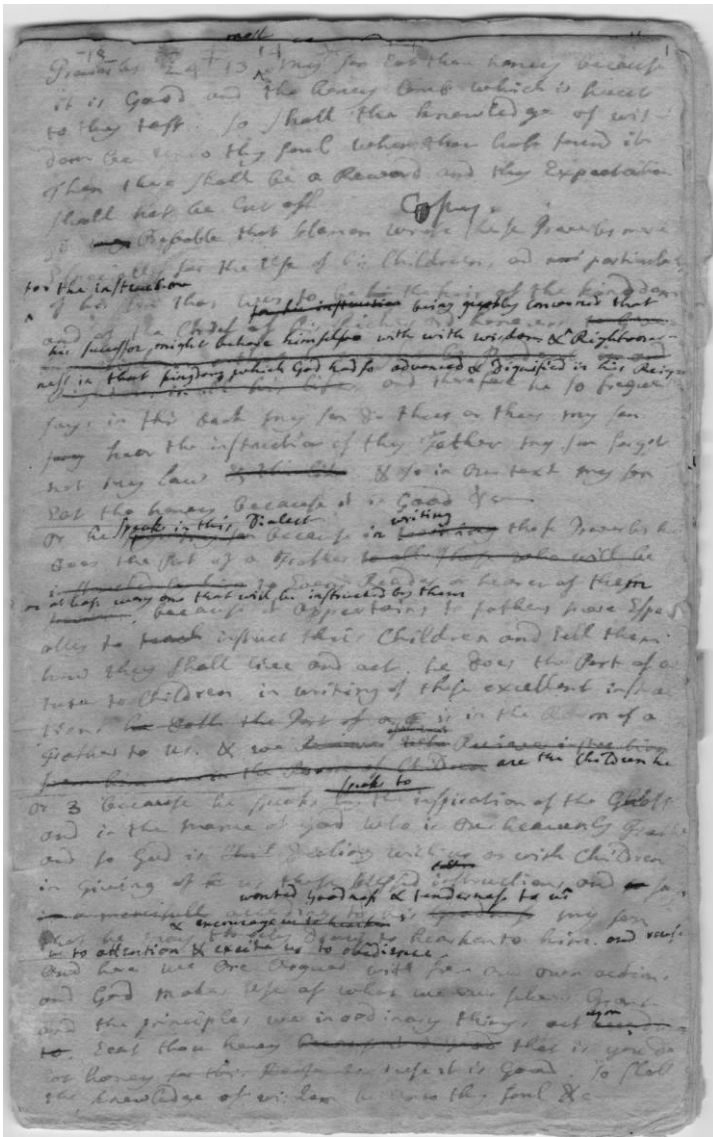


FIGURE VIII

Manuscript sermon on Proverbs 24:13-14 (ca. 1723-24), an example of an early octavo sermon with shorthand repreaching notations at the top. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

arrival in which he declared with his usual finality that reading sermons in the pulpit was so uninspiring that “ordinarily it is not to be allowed.”⁴³ The octavo sermon booklets that Edwards had been using since 1720 measured roughly four by six inches and would be quite visible to the congregation when opened in the hand of the preacher. Significantly, after a few months with Stoddard, Edwards changed his booklet form from octavo to duodecimo, measuring about four inches square, when he composed new sermons. The duodecimo was much easier to palm, or conceal in the hand, than the octavo and thus would make Edwards’s continued reading of the sermons less visually obtrusive.

At the time of his move to Northampton, Edwards had a library of about fifty octavo sermons, and he drew on them to substantially furnish his contribution to the joint pastorate with his octogenarian grandfather. The sermon booklets probably were tied in bundles to be sorted through when another sermon was called for. However, as his collection grew, Edwards soon must have realized that if his sermons were to be a resource for pulpit and study, they would have to be better organized. Edwards’s many note-book references to particular sermons indicate that the sermons were eventually stored in a file by biblical text, written at the top of each booklet’s first page. If the sermon booklets were stood on end in a row, like file cards, it would be relatively easy to recognize a sermon by text, date, and preaching history. As it happens, the two top drawers of Edwards’s new desk were a generous four inches in depth, just allowing for such a file of duodecimo manuscripts (though not of octavos). It is noteworthy that scholarly dating of the early, undated sermons (composed before 1733) has revealed that Edwards’s change from octavo to duodecimo format occurred during the summer of 1727, the most likely time for his acquisition of the desk.⁴⁴ The depth and width of the top drawers would have permitted four rows of sermons horizontally or three rows front-to-back in each drawer. By the end of his sermon-writing career, Edwards would have had enough duodecimo sermon manuscripts to fill about ten linear feet when stood on end; the desk drawers provide eight linear feet when sermons are stored in three rows, or ten linear feet when stored in four. So there were two good reasons for Edwards’s switch to duodecimo booklets in 1727, even though his great sermon library was in the early stages (Figure IX).

Though we know the contents of many private libraries, large and small, from early America by virtue of estate inventories, book lists, and printed catalogs, we know little about the spaces in which they were usually housed—that is, the studies of their owners. Take Cotton Mather, hands

⁴³ Solomon Stoddard, *The Defects of Preachers Reproved in a Sermon Preached at Northampton, May 19. 1723* (New-London, 1724). Samuel Hopkins relates Edwards’s own reservations about reading his sermon notes in [Hopkins], *Life and Character*, 48–49.

⁴⁴ *Works*, 10: 90–94.

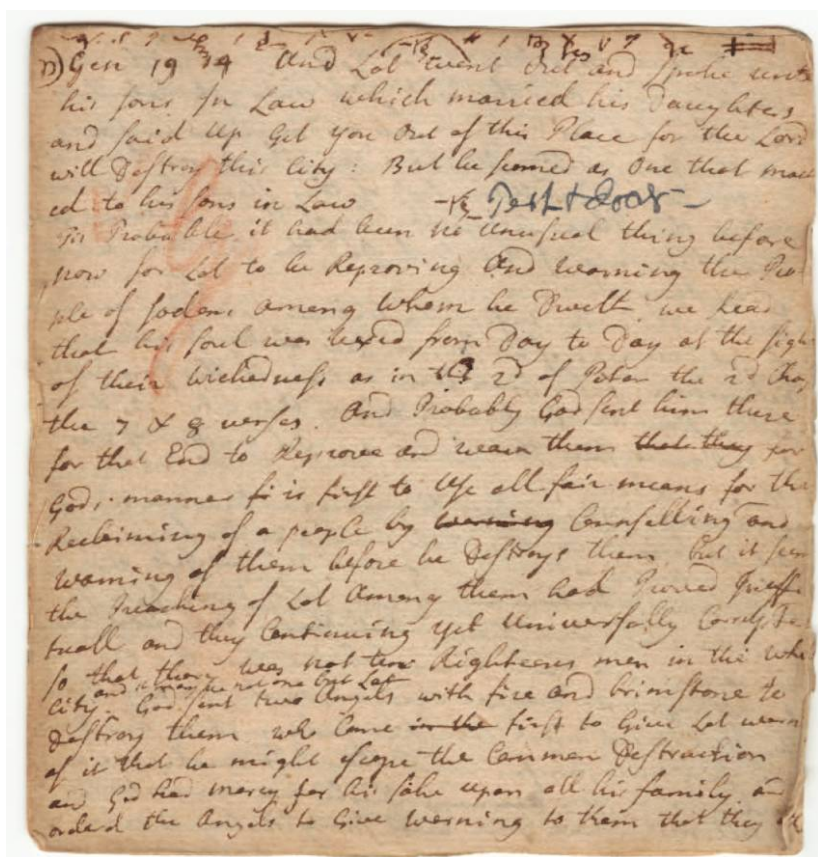


FIGURE IX

Manuscript sermon on Genesis 19:14 (ca. 1727), Edwards's first duodecimo-sized sermon. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

down the single most published writer of the British North American colonies. Regrettably, the large brick house on Hanover Street in Boston in which he lived was torn down long ago, as is the case with the houses in which Edwards resided. Mather's study was the center of his house, and there—with the motto above the door reminding visitors to “Be Short”—he spent many hours each day, composing sermons on a “Table-Book” of slate while kneeling on the floor before a chair, or reading seated in a “very easy Chair.”⁴⁵ For all we know, Edwards may have seen this

⁴⁵ See Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York, 1985), 262 (“Be Short,” “easy Chair”), 195 (“Table-Book”). Reiner Smolinski, general editor of Cotton Mather’s “Biblia Americana,” generously provided references to Mather’s study. For the inaugural volume of this publication, see Cotton Mather, *Biblia Americana*:

room as a young man, since Mather was a relative and had lent money to Edwards's father, who had attended Old South Church while a student at Harvard.⁴⁶ The estate inventory of Mather's household goods is, as Kenneth Silverman describes it, meager at best—many items were marked “old” and “broken.”⁴⁷ From Mather's diary, we can only glean spare details about his retreat. However, in one key statement in 1702, he observed: “My Study, is tho' a large, yett a warm chamber, (the hangings whereof, are boxes with between two and three thousand Books in them;).”⁴⁸ Note that Mather refers to “boxes,” which suggests that book “cases” were at the time enclosed and points to the evolution of book containers from trunks to boxes to breakfronts to open shelves.

If Mather had a desk, it perhaps was removed from his house, along with his valuable library, by family members before the contents could be inventoried. Only a couple of tables were listed, one or more of which Mather may have used in his study. As for Edwards, it is likely that at some point in his life, perhaps even before he acquired his desk, he incorporated into his study what is called in the estate inventory a “Writing Table.”⁴⁹ This term is so nondescript that the object could have been from any of a broad range of table types, from what is typically called a tavern table with a stretcher bottom, drummed into service from another part of the house, to a more primitive trestle-style piece, to something more formal resembling period tables explicitly designed for writing. In any case, chances are that Edwards would have chosen a table with as large a top as possible to allow for open books, manuscript notebooks, candles, and other items. Indeed, this table may have been the one that functioned as his first desk. It provided more surface area to work on and to keep multiple projects going at once.

It was doubtless an awareness of a need to move easily between his notebooks and sources that inspired Edwards to acquire something that posterity would have trumpeted more loudly had it been produced for a Benjamin Franklin or a Thomas Jefferson: the lazy Susan book table (Figure X).⁵⁰ Con-

America's First Bible Commentary, A Synoptic Commentary on the Old and New Testaments, vol. 1, *Genesis*, ed. Smolinski (Tübingen, Germany, 2010).

⁴⁶ In 1717 Cotton Mather wrote in his diary that “a Minister of *Windsor*, somewhat remotely related unto me, is under peculiar Difficulties and Temptations; a Variety of Services and Kindnesses, I propose to do for him,” which included loans. [Worthington C. Ford, ed.], *The Diary of Cotton Mather*, vol. 2, 1709–1724 (Boston, 1912), 457 (quotation), 231–32.

⁴⁷ Silverman, *Life and Times of Cotton Mather*, 428. Mather died intestate; see “An Inventory of the Estate of Dr. Cotton Mather,” Aug. 5, 1728, Judicial Records, Massachusetts Archives, Columbia Point, Mass.

⁴⁸ Tuttle, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 20: 295. See also “Inventory of the Estate of Dr. Cotton Mather,” Aug. 5, 1728, Judicial Records, Massachusetts Archives.

⁴⁹ P[ark], *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1876, 445.

⁵⁰ The lazy Susan table is 48.5 inches across at its widest point and 26.5 inches from the floor to the bottom of the canted panels. Because it was painted (probably in the



FIGURE X

Edwards's six-sided lazy Susan table. Photo courtesy of the Historical Collection, Stockbridge Library Association, Stockbridge, Mass.

structed on an ornately turned yet sturdy base consisting of a central pillar supported by four angled braces mortised into an equilateral cross base terminating in four bun feet, the tabletop is divided into six canted panels topped by a flat hexagonal surface. The bottom edge of the tabletop has an attached molding so that books can be rested on the six canted panels. The overall appearance is that of a central music stand for a sextet set on the underpinnings of a substantial tea table, two polite furniture forms joined into one. In any event, the result is a rotating rack that could hold Edwards's manuscript folios, quartos, or reference books as needed; moreover, it is sturdy enough to hold heavy tomes and be leaned upon or used as a writing surface (Figure XI).

The deep Jacobean turnings of the book table's base contrast sharply with the top's Shaker-like simplicity.⁵¹ Although the table base's ornate

nineteenth century), the types of wood used to construct the piece are unknown. Barbara Allen, curator of the Historical Collection, kindly provided access to the table and allowed detailed photographs.

⁵¹ The base and top date from two different periods: the central support earlier, the canted panel construction before 1750. Conservator's notes, n.d., Stockbridge Library Association.



FIGURE XI

The underside of the lazy Susan table, showing the rotation point. Photo courtesy of the Historical Collection, Stockbridge Library Association, Stockbridge, Mass.

style appears to have predated the style of the top, the base's composition also suggests something that might have been constructed ad hoc: it seems to be composed of joint stool legs, four smaller ones for the braces, four larger ones for the cross, and a slightly larger one for the center post. Although a late seventeenth-century table might have been so constructed and thus ready to hand once its top was removed, such sturdy components (new or recycled) might have been stocked by a carpenter or cabinetmaker and put to use to fabricate a base adequate for the large rotating top. The top reflects what material culture scholars call a vernacular plain style of architecture and furniture design—perhaps a material expression of the rhetorical plain style that distinguished Connecticut Valley preaching—that arose in mid-eighteenth-century New England, an aesthetic implemented by growing numbers of artisans moving into rural areas from seacoast cities.⁵²

⁵² On the stockpiling of premade parts by journeymen, see Robert Blair St. George, *Conversing by Signs: Poetics of Implication in Colonial New England Culture* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998), 321. On the rise of a “plain style” and the proliferation of a craftsmen class, see Kevin M. Sweeney, “High-Style Vernacular: Lifestyles of the

Edwards and Jefferson are rarely mentioned together, unless perhaps to note their divergent religious persuasions. But they shared a love of innovative study furniture. Jefferson's "Cabinet," as it is preserved and presented at Monticello, reflecting his retirement years, features a leather armchair pulled up to a writing desk, under which is an ottoman—apparently Jefferson liked to keep his legs raised when he wrote (Figure XII). Undoubtedly, Jefferson's domicile was much more formal and richly furnished than Edwards's, but there are intriguing parallels. Jefferson (at least late in life) and Edwards did not write exclusively at their desks. And beside Jefferson's writing table is a four-sided, revolving bookstand with side pallets that folded out, on a slant, and one on top that folded up, to hold as many as five volumes.⁵³ Jefferson invented his tabletop bookstand, and Edwards's lazy Susan table, though larger in scale, was custom-made, doubtless to Edwards's own specifications. In the revolving bookstand, both authors found a similar solution to the problem of how to keep a maximum number of books and manuscripts open before them without having to shift their chairs around.

Precisely when Edwards came into possession of his book table is unrecorded, yet its invention may have had something to do with another acquisition, his great interleaved Bible (called the "Blank Bible"). Around 1730 Edwards inherited a thick quarto volume of originally blank leaves interleaving a small octavo King James Bible. The blank pages were each divided into two columns by a red line so that the page offered a space corresponding to the double-columned Bible page facing it (see Plate II). It is a beautiful workbook for one who loves to study the Bible and develop his reflections with the pen, verse by verse, as Edwards was wont to do. The Bible had always been the center of Edwards's meditations, and he had notebooks of speculations on the scriptures, but this new tool enabled him to anchor all his strands of thought directly to a biblical text. Inevitably, this new workbook became the logistical center of the expanding web of Edwards's recorded speculations and of his mental life, and as such it became the center of his cross-references, an index of indexes in his study. Once his process of thought was embodied concretely in his working papers, it was but a step for Edwards's lively imagination to conceive of such a material embodiment of the process as his revolving book table, a tool he probably acquired by at least 1733. With its aid, he could enter parallel or closely related entries in the interleaved Bible, his notebook on

Colonial Elite," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, Va., 1994), 1–58, esp. 8–10; David Jaffee, "The Ebenezer's Devotion: Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Consumption in Rural Connecticut," *New England Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (June 2003): 239–64, esp. 246, 252.

⁵³ Hayes, *Road to Monticello*, 566.



FIGURE XII

Thomas Jefferson's "Cabinet," or study, at Monticello, including his bookstand. © Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello, photograph by Robert Lautman, www.monticello.org.

types, a "Miscellanies" volume, or whatever half-dozen sources and repositories he needed, with a slight pull of his hand; conversely, he could study and cross-reference previous writings in much the same way.⁵⁴

All of this efficiency was needed, for the rapid flow of Edwards's thought was ultimately to fill many notebooks with about five thousand pages of manuscript text. And then there were the twelve hundred sermons, the drafts of treatises, many letter drafts, and special project notations on random packets of scrap paper or odd pieces of reused paper. His corpus of working papers became so substantial that he had to prepare indexes and tables of various sorts.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ It is interesting to note that Edwards received the "Blank Bible" from his brother-in-law, Benjamin Pierpont, a failed ministerial candidate. Sarah Pierpont Edwards may have had a role in passing this valuable item from her brother to her husband. *Works*, 24: 1. The process of reference cycles is analyzed and illustrated in *Works*, 10: 74–90.

⁵⁵ The most ambitious of these indexes and tables is his table to the "Miscellanies," which comprises a separate notebook; it is printed in *Works*, 13: 125–50. Individual

The ensuing termination of Edwards's Northampton ministry in 1750 cast Edwards and his "numerous and chargeable family" adrift.⁵⁶ Despite offers of positions in churches on both sides of the Atlantic and from Virginia to Connecticut, he chose to leave the conventional ministry and headed for the Indian mission outpost of Stockbridge, perhaps inspired by the vision of David Brainerd he had recently created in his edition of the deceased missionary's diary.⁵⁷

Edwards's study was finally moved to Stockbridge, along with his family and all his worldly possessions, in the fall of 1751. He purchased John Sergeant's original house, built in 1737 before Sergeant built a new one for his bride, Abigail Williams, three years later (Figure XIII). There on the first floor, in the southwest room and its two small anterooms, or closets, flanking the gable-end fireplace, the study was reassembled, containing Edwards's newly signed and dated books, his manuscript notebooks and sermon hoard, and his furnishings. Much of Edwards's time was soon occupied by a running skirmish over the conduct of the Indian mission and schools that embroiled him in seemingly endless correspondence with patrons and government officials, not to mention the difficult personal relations with those whose roles in the mission he wished to limit or eliminate. But his last years in Northampton had provided some evidence that Edwards had a remarkable ability to compartmentalize his activities, and his first years in Stockbridge would only enhance this impression. Letters to John Erskine, his primary Scottish correspondent beginning in the summer of 1748, clearly delineate his inclination to undertake a major critique of significant authors—published not in Boston but in London—even if it meant attacking one of his first English literary patrons, Isaac Watts.⁵⁸ In the perspective

lengthy "Miscellanies" entries that warranted their own tables or indexes include nos. 1349, 1350, and 1351, in *Works*, 23: 429–32, 459–61, 480–81, and nos. 1067 and 1068, in *WJEO*, vol. 30. Thematic notebooks such as "Images of Divine Things" were also given subject and scriptural indexes (*Works*, II: 136–42).

⁵⁶ Jonathan Edwards to John Erskine, July 5, 1750, in *Works*, 16: 347–56 (quotation, 16: 355).

⁵⁷ David Brainerd, who worked among the Indians in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, died in 1747 of tuberculosis at Edwards's home and, because of Edwards's publication of his diary the following year, became a self-sacrificial model for future missionaries. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 7, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit (New Haven, Conn., 1985).

⁵⁸ The Stockbridge house, though altered, was still standing in 1871, when N. H. Eggleston described it as situated on the main street of the village, facing south. "The room on the left hand, as one enters the door-way, is pointed to as the library, perhaps serving also as parlor. On either side of the ample chimney there was, until quite lately, a closet, in dimensions about four feet by six. Tradition had it that the closet in the southwest corner of this room, with its one little window looking toward the west, was Edwards's study—his intellectual workshop." Eggleston, "A New England Village," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, November 1871, 815–30 (quotation, 822). This tentative identification of Edwards's use of the "closet" in the southwest corner of the house is supported by an entry in his "'Catalogue' of Reading" not dating before early 1753 and



FIGURE XIII

A sketch of Edwards's home in Stockbridge, Mass. N. H. Eggleston, "A New England Village," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, November 1871, 822. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

of his life, Edwards was now turning from his Northampton saga and his tracts on the awakenings analyzing religious experience to the major works of his great writing period, *Freedom of Will*, *God's End in the Creation*, *The Nature of True Virtue*, and *Original Sin*.

He was doubtless happy enough to once again immerse himself in his sanctuary in this remote outpost where visitors and committee meetings would be less frequent; however, his study may have begun to seem a little smaller as books accumulated and his writing projects expanded. Serendipitously, when he had first visited Stockbridge in January 1751, Edwards had paid a social visit to Abigail Sergeant in her fashionable mansion on the hill, and there he had apparently seen an intriguing piece of furniture. It is still in what is now called the Mission House: a walnut-stained pine chest of drawers, or dresser, resting on small bun feet (Figure XIV).

regarding John Gillies's *Historical collections relating to remarkable periods of the success of the Gospel* . . . , 2 vols. (Glasgow, 1754), in which he reminds himself to "see the proposals for printing in a shelf of the Closet next the Street." "Catalogue," entry no. [633], in *Works*, 26: 287. Many of the surviving books from Edwards's library with his signature in them are dated by him "1751," which indicates not when he acquired them but when he moved to Stockbridge. On Isaac Watts and Edwards, see *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, Conn., 1957), 96–99. Watts, who had sponsored the English edition of Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighbouring Towns and Villages of New-Hampshire in New-England* (London, 1737), was one of Edwards's targets in *Freedom of Will*.



FIGURE XIV

Bookcase, 1710–20, with provenance to John Sergeant, Mission House, Stockbridge, Mass., cat. no. MH.A.A.I. Photograph by the authors, courtesy of Trustees of Reservations of Massachusetts (www.thetrustees.org).

It is not like most dressers, however, in that it is only fourteen inches in depth and has two cupboards with four paired, fielded, paneled doors on the lower level and a set of six drawers above, arranged as three pairs. Three of the drawers are divided inside into four sections, one is divided into two sections, and two are undivided. But most unusual, for a dresser, is the tier of four dovetailed, boxlike shelves on its top, each a little smaller than the one below and each equipped with two doors that slide in grooves and are opened by handholds created by a small circular sinkage on one end and a strip of double half-round molding at the other. These long boxes are not fastened to one another or to the dresser. It seems evident that while this piece is not a desk, it was intended for the storage of books and papers of various sizes and formats. It also stood in the room that John Sergeant used for consultations with Indians and members of his congregation.⁵⁹

After the interview, Abigail Sergeant wrote to her friend Ezra Stiles that Edwards was “learned, polite, and free in conversation, and more catholic [i.e., broad-minded] than I had supposed.”⁶⁰ Is it possible that, after complimenting her on her fine mansion and admiring her cultivated taste, Edwards inquired about the making of that fine cabinet in the office? It is very likely that the same cabinetmaker who worked for the Sergeants also set about amplifying the resources of Edwards’s desk.⁶¹ Moreover, it is probable that the job was done within weeks of the desk’s arrival in Stockbridge in October 1751. It was a busy time for Edwards, but he would not have had to give up his original desk for more than a day or two inasmuch as the expansion surrounds the original desk rather than modifying it physically.

The only thing that really had to be done to his original desk was the removal of base moldings on the two sides so that two new cupboards could be placed snugly against each side. These cupboards closely resemble those in the Sergeant piece, each having a pair of the fielded paneled doors on the bottom with the same wooden-knobbed latch at the top of each outside door. The pair of doors is surmounted by a single drawer with a brass bail pull, then an open shelf, and finally an attached box with two sliding doors. In this case, however, the body of the cupboard is canted at the open shelf to follow the lines of the original slant-top desk. Finally, three dovetailed, double-book boxes or closed shelves that together constitute the “great

⁵⁹ The authors wish to thank the Trustees of Reservations of Massachusetts, for allowing them to measure and photograph the Sergeant chest, and Mark Wilson, director of the Trustees of Reservations’ Research Center, and Tammis Coffin, Mission House Education Coordinator, for their kind assistance.

⁶⁰ Abigail Sergeant to Ezra Stiles, Feb. 15, 1751, Ezra Stiles Papers, General Manuscripts, Correspondence, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. See also Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 380.

⁶¹ A carpenter who worked in Stockbridge was Japheth Bush, who was hired to build the Indian girls’ school; since little is known about him, we can only speculate that he was the artisan who built the bookcases. See *Works*, 16: 511.

bookcase" are stacked on the attached boxes in the same fashion as the Sergeant cabinet, completing the large square facade of the new desk (Figure XV).⁶² Edwards further emulated the Sergeant chest by having partitions installed in the cabinet drawers, creating two spaces for folio notebooks in the left drawer and four for quarto notebooks in the right. Although the new cupboards and the graduated shelves are—like the Sergeant cabinet—made entirely of white pine, the whole ensemble was stained walnut to match the original desk. To further unify the piece, the base molding on the front of the desk was extended across the cupboards and down the outside ends; double half-round molding was applied to the front edges of the cupboards and bookcases and to one vertical edge of each pair of sliding doors, matching the same decoration on the original desk. Finally, the shoed reel-and-bun feet, also of white pine and aspen, appear to have been made and applied to the old and new portions of the desk at the same time; if not, the match is remarkable.

Edwards's expanded desk, like the book tabletop, reflected the colonial gentry's turn in the mid-eighteenth century from a baroque to a plain, or unadorned, aesthetic, a combination of local materials and craftsmanship with cosmopolitan, even transatlantic, sensibilities. The woods, grown locally, were stained to look like a higher grade. The double half-round molding, which might at first blush seem merely decorative, serves to unify the whole in a rather pragmatic, understated manner. Most of all, the desk with its cabinets and bookcases combined taste with function, serving Edwards's needs for composing, for storing and filing different kinds of materials, and even, if need be, for quick transport of books and manuscripts.

Seated at his new desk, Edwards must have resembled a seventeenth-century organist at a console built into the facade of organ pipes. Of course, here the pipes were papers, notebooks, and books, but the ensemble must have been an impressive organic machine nonetheless. His full study now included the enlarged desk, comprising the "great bookcase" to which Edwards's notes refer, his rotating book table, his writing table, and a "small bookcase," the configuration of which is yet unknown.⁶³ By this

⁶² Ibid., 13: 136 (quotation).

⁶³ Ibid. ("great bookcase"); P[ark], *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1876, 445 ("small bookcase"). In his table to the "Miscellanies," under the entry "Hell," Edwards had noted to himself, probably around 1748, to consult on the topic "a loose paper in one of my drawers." After moving to Stockbridge, however, he interlined in this entry, apparently in 1753 or 1754, that the paper was now in the "great bookcase at the right hand," indicating that he added this object to his study furniture at his new location. See *Works*, 13: 136 (quotations). A couple of years later, probably in 1756, writing in "Miscellanies" no. 1349, a wide-ranging collection of materials on the divinity of Christ in which at one point he considered 2 Peter 1:1, he noted: "See Mr. Foxcroft's sermon on that text, pp. 27 ff., in the short box at the left hand of the larger bookcase, a pamphlet with a blue cover" (*Works*, 23: 424, referring to Thomas Foxcroft, *Like precious Faith obtained, through the Righteousness of our God and Savior, by all the true Servants of Christ* . . . [Boston, 1756]). The "short box" is the one with sliding doors on top of the cabinet to the left of the desk.



FIGURE XV

Detail of bookcases on Edwards's desk. Jonathan Edwards College, Yale University. Photograph by the authors.

time Edwards would also have possessed most of those books enumerated in his estate inventory. And while the inventory's list of books and pamphlets gives no indication of the volumes' thickness, surveys of typical eighteenth-century books in each of these size categories indicate that Edwards must have needed about thirty linear feet of book storage for printed books and pamphlets alone, not to mention his library of his own manuscripts. Folios would not have fit into his shelves with sliding doors and were probably stored in the cupboards and quite possibly in the small bookcase, which may have consisted of only two or three widely separated shelves. The desk itself now offered him about twenty-five linear feet of book shelving for the smaller volumes (see Plate III).

That Edwards added a "great bookcase," in the form of the long boxes on top of the desk, to his study furniture after his move to Stockbridge adds some details to the portrait of his transition from a pastor of a local (albeit prestigious and even famous) congregation to a writer of treatises aimed at the transatlantic learned community. During the Stockbridge years, Edwards apparently found, despite his frontier situation, that his library was growing at a faster pace than previously. He was increasingly in contact with pastor-scholars and literati in England and Scotland, particularly Erskine. Over the years, the oilcloth-covered packages from Scotland included long letters as well as a total of at least fifty-four books and pamphlets. So Edwards's book collection had a significant—and cost-free—inlet courtesy of his correspondents. Also, the number of titles he recorded in his "'Catalogue' of Reading" is weighted toward the postdismissal period at Northampton and the Stockbridge years. During the 1730s he entered approximately one hundred titles into the notebook, and during the 1740s, about sixty-five; however, in the 1750s (which for him effectually ended in late 1757), he recorded more than two hundred.⁶⁴ If he was coming into possession of even just a fraction of these, along with books not listed in the "Catalogue" or received from Erskine, it is small wonder he would have needed another, more capacious, set of shelves.

The study was filled with more than one project at a time during the Stockbridge years, and rotation among these closely related projects was inevitable. Although Edwards's *Freedom of Will* of 1754 was largely worked up in notebooks during the Northampton period, Sereno E. Dwight, Edwards's great-grandson and early nineteenth-century editor, claims that the final writing took only four and one-half months, sometime between August 1752 and the spring of 1753, and it is clear from previous writing projects that once Edwards formed his concept of what was to be written, the actual composition made the study hum with his efficient application of the flying quill.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ See "Table 2. Dating of Select 'Catalogue' Entries (Based on Internal References and Book Publication Dates)," in *Works*, 26: 111. Based on dating landmarks in the "'Catalogue' of Reading," the entry ranges for the decades, while not exact, break down to the following: 1730s: nos. [335]–[435]; 1740s: nos. [436]–[505]; 1750s: nos. [506]–[719].

⁶⁵ Dwight, *Life of President Edwards*, 533.

We do not know what kind of chair or seat Edwards employed at his desk. There are, however, a couple of items with traditional links to Edwards that at least give a hint. First, at the Mission House in Stockbridge is a small, stretcher-based, tavern-style table on which Edwards is reputed to have written *Freedom of Will* (Figure XVI).⁶⁶ Given the low height and small size of the table (twenty-two inches high, twenty-four inches long, eighteen inches wide), it is doubtful he actually wrote *on* it. It is not inconceivable, however, that he used it in his study, perhaps alternating with an armchair or side chair, to sit on while writing. A small table without a back would have given him more flexibility, even if such might not have been desirable for thirteen-hour days, and the table would have fit comfortably under the desktop, which when lowered is 28.5 inches off the floor. Such a table, functioning as a stool, would have allowed him to swing around to face desk, book table, and writing table with ease. That Edwards did indeed use it partly as a chair is suggested by the top's unusually beveled edges, apparently rounded off with a knife or other hand tool. Second, in Princeton University's Maclean House, the back part of which Edwards inhabited during his short time at the College of New Jersey, is an armchair that he is purported to have used (Figure XVII). If so, Edwards was most likely provided with this chair, since it is not something he would have brought to Princeton on the back of his horse. But it does give us an idea of the sort of chair he may have preferred in his leisure hours.

EDWARDS'S EARLY LITERARY EFFORTS were intended primarily for his listeners, but as he aged, he also sought a larger audience outside the parish bounds. The organon of Edwards's study was gradually manifested through his efforts to have his discourses, essays, and dissertations printed. The number of printers was growing during the first half of the eighteenth century in British North America, in Massachusetts in particular, and in Boston most of all.⁶⁷ Among the many printers, publishers, and booksellers in that city, Edwards, if he had a say in the matter, went with Samuel Kneeland and Timothy Green, who set up for business in 1718 "at the lower End of Queen-Street," and who were generally supportive of moderate New Light writers such as Edwards.⁶⁸ In 1749 the partners separated, and it was with

⁶⁶ According to a note left on the underside of the table by the donor, Prof. Bernard Hoffman, the piece was in Edwards's former Stockbridge home when Hoffman purchased it in the late nineteenth century.

⁶⁷ On the proliferation of printers in the colonies and the Boston book trade, see Worthington Chauncey Ford, *The Boston Book Market, 1679–1700* (Boston, 1917), 62–64; Hugh Amory, *Bibliography and the Book Trades: Studies in the Print Culture of Early New England*, ed. David D. Hall (Philadelphia, 2005), 105–45; Hall, John Bidwell, and James Raven, "The Atlantic World," in Amory and Hall, *Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, 152–98, esp. 152–55; Valeri, *Heavenly Merchandize*, 140–41.

⁶⁸ *A Catalogue Of Rare and Valuable Books, Being the greatest part of the Library of the Late Reverend and Learned, Mr. Joshua Moody, And part of the Library of the Reverend & Learned, Mr. Daniel Gookin, Late of Sherbourn, Deceas'd* . . . (Boston, 1718), title page (quotation).



FIGURE XVI

Table, 1700–1730, with provenance to Edwards's Stockbridge home, now at The Mission House, Stockbridge, Mass., cat. no. MH.D.A.II. Photograph by the authors, courtesy of Trustees of Reservations of Massachusetts (www.thetrustees.org).

Kneeland that Edwards stayed, using him for his major treatises. Not that he was always entirely pleased with Messrs. Kneeland and Green. Though there is an enduring image of Edwards as an ascetic untroubled by material things, his repeated and sustained concerns about the quality of his publications show that he had an aesthetic sense for the physical elements that went into printing and binding. Writing in the summer of 1754 to his close colleague Thomas Foxcroft, minister of First Church, Boston—who, interestingly enough, served as associate pastor to Edwards's antirevival nemesis, Charles Chauncy—Edwards opined that Kneeland “binds the books poorly. The covers are so apt to warp that they will warp as they lie upon the table.” Through Foxcroft, who became his literary representative and editorial assistant in Boston, Edwards expressed his preferences for the size in which his writings were to be printed. For example, when *Freedom of Will* was in press, he wrote to Foxcroft in early March 1754, “I should prefer such a page as that of my answer to Mr. [Solomon] Williams,” meaning *Misrepresentations Corrected* of 1752, printed on octavo-sized pages (Figure



FIGURE XVII

Chair reputed to have been used by Edwards while president of the College of New Jersey. Maclean House, Princeton University. Photograph by Carole Kimmach.

XVIII). He also had his own idea of the right typeface: "With respect to the character, I should be glad the book might be printed in the best character Mr. Kneeland has, and that it should be done every way in as handsome a manner as may be."⁶⁹

Once the initial typesetting was done, the printed sheets, or galleys, had to be checked. This was hardly a simple affair; during those periods when Edwards had to slug, or proofread word-for-word, the advance copy, we can picture the floor and every surface of his study covered with galley sheets and pages from his copy of the manuscript.⁷⁰ Writing to Foxcroft in June 1752 about the production of *Misrepresentations Corrected*, Edwards pleaded that "particular care may be taken that the printer don't skip over a whole line as they sometimes do."⁷¹ For *Freedom of Will*, he worked up a list of errata and sent it to Kneeland. Despite all efforts, mistakes still appeared in the final version. As much as Edwards was concerned about the aesthetics of books, he was even more concerned, as a wordsmith, about the accuracy of language. Nearly all of his treatises contain an errata sheet (usually at the back), drawn up by him.

Promotion of a work was another aspect of the publication and post-publication process. One duty that often fell to an author was securing subscribers for a work, with each subscriber promising to buy one or more copies. To begin this process, commonly the printer would issue a run of

⁶⁹ Edwards to Thomas Foxcroft, Dec. 20, 1754, in *Works*, 16: 654–55 ("binds the books," 16: 655); Edwards to Foxcroft, Mar. 6, 1754, *ibid.*, 16: 624–25 ("I should prefer," 16: 625); Edwards to Foxcroft, May 24, 1753, *ibid.*, 16: 595–96 ("With respect," 16: 596). On bookbinding, see Hannah Dustin French, "Early American Bookbinding by Hand," in *Bookbinding in America*, ed. Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt (Portland, Maine, 1941), 3–127, esp. 8–47. Edwards goes on to say in his May 24, 1753, letter to Foxcroft that he preferred, once again, the character used in *Misrepresentations Corrected, And Truth vindicated . . .* (Boston, 1752) as opposed to that used in *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (Boston, 1746). His wishes were heeded: both *Freedom of Will* and *Original Sin* were octavo and used the same font and pitch as *Misrepresentations Corrected*. Samuel Kneeland had been promising the arrival of a new set of type since 1749, when he ended his partnership with Timothy Green. Kneeland to Joseph Bellamy, Sept. 4, 1749, letter C85a, in *WJEO*, vol. 32. Citing the four most frequent publishers-printers by author: of 27 works by Edwards that we have surveyed, 16 were published by Kneeland and Green or by Kneeland alone, 4 by John Rogers and Zechariah Fowle, and 1 by Thomas Fleet, as compared to 51 works by Charles Chauncy that we have surveyed, of which 14 were published by Kneeland, 11 by Fleet, 8 by Rogers and Fowle, and 6 by John Draper.

⁷⁰ See manuscript sermon on Luke 12:35–36 (1742), containing the galley for page 206 of the *Discourses on Various Important Subjects*, as cited in *Works*, 10: 117 n. 8. Another set of proofs, this one showing no corrections, is found in "History of Redemption," bk. 1, in *WJEO*, vol. 31; these are printer's galleys of Edwards's and Joseph Bellamy's prefaces to Bellamy's *True-Religion delineated; or, Experimental Religion . . .* (Boston, 1750). At the bottom of page vi of his own preface (page 2 of the notebook), Edwards wrote "corrected," and at the bottom of page vii from the author's preface (page 15 of the notebook), he wrote "This a proof."

⁷¹ Edwards to Thomas Foxcroft, June 30, 1752, in *Works*, 16: 486–87 (quotation, 16: 486).

MISREPRESENTATIONS

Corrected,

And *TRUTH* vindicated.

I N

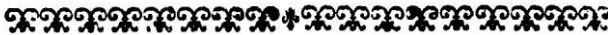
A Reply to the Rev. Mr. SOLOMON WILLIAMS'S Book, intitled, *The True State of the QUESTION concerning the QUALIFICATIONS necessary to lawful Communion in the CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS.*

By JONATHAN EDWARDS, M. A.

Minister of the Gospel at *Stockbridge.*

Prov. xii. 17. *He that speaketh Truth, sheweth forth Righteousness.*

Chap. xxii. 20, 21. *Have I not written to thee excellent Things in Counsels, and Knowledge; That I might make thee know the Certainty of the Words of Truth, that thou might'st answer the Words of Truth to them that send unto thee?*



B O S T O N : N . E .

Printed and Sold by S. KNEELAND, opposite the Prison in
Queen-Street. 1752.

FIGURE XVIII

Title page of *Misrepresentations Corrected, And Truth Vindicated* . . . (Boston, 1752).
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

broadside proposals, with room at the bottom of each sheet for subscribers to give their name, location, and number of copies they desired (Figure XIX). These sheets would be circulated, signed, collected, and returned to the publisher, either directly or through the author or designated intermediaries (Figure XX).⁷² Lists of subscribers were printed for some works of note, and we have them for several of Edwards's treatises; indeed, subscribers' lists are often valuable for indicating colonial and transatlantic loyalties. His treatise *Freedom of Will*, for example, initially garnered orders totaling 772 copies from 301 individuals, including more than 50 from Scotland. But it was the *Life of David Brainerd* that attracted the most attention: 1,953 subscribers from Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and even a lone individual from South Carolina. Besides subscribers, advertising was another means that printers and authors had at their disposal for maximizing sales, and Edwards was no exception here either. For the *Humble Attempt*, a full-column notice of nearly nine hundred words, composed by Edwards, appeared in the *Boston Weekly News-Letter* for August 20, 1747, describing the proposed volume to be printed in octavo, totaling "about 12 Sheets."⁷³ As an incentive, those ordering more than twelve copies would receive one gratis.⁷⁴ Edwards's associates assisted with advertising his publications. Two deserve special mention: Joseph Bellamy and Foxcroft. Writing to Foxcroft in May 1749 regarding *An Humble Inquiry*, Bellamy urged the Boston-based minister to ensure lots of lead time in the newspapers. "When the book is printed," Bellamy wrote, "I wish it might be advertised 5 or 6 weeks going in the public prints. (To this day I believe not half the Country have ever so much as heard of Mr. Edwards peice upon the Scotland Concert). [I]f the News effectually gets thro' the Country I doubt not they will Sell."⁷⁵

EDWARDS'S INTELLECTUAL WORK—his "life of the mind"—was grounded in social and material practices. He traded books with local ministers and exchanged ideas within correspondence networks. He made his quills,

⁷² Alternatively, the author could have made master lists from collected subscription sheets, as seems to have been the case with Edwards and *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* in 1746. Fragments of several subscription sheets, with original signatures of subscribers, are to be found in Edwards's manuscript sermons on Matt. 12:41 (no. 861), on Matt. 12:42(a) (no. 862), and on Titus 3:2 (no. 864), all from May 1747 and all in *WJEO*, vol. 65.

⁷³ *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, Aug. 20, 1747, [2].

⁷⁴ *Works*, 5: 84; *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, Aug. 20, 1747, [2], Sept. 24, 1747, [2], Jan. 21, 1748, [2].

⁷⁵ Joseph Bellamy to Thomas Foxcroft, May 6, 1749, letter C84, in *WJEO*, vol. 32. Edwards's "peice upon the Scotland Concert" is *An Humble Attempt To promote Explicit Agreement And Visible Union Of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer . . .* of 1748.

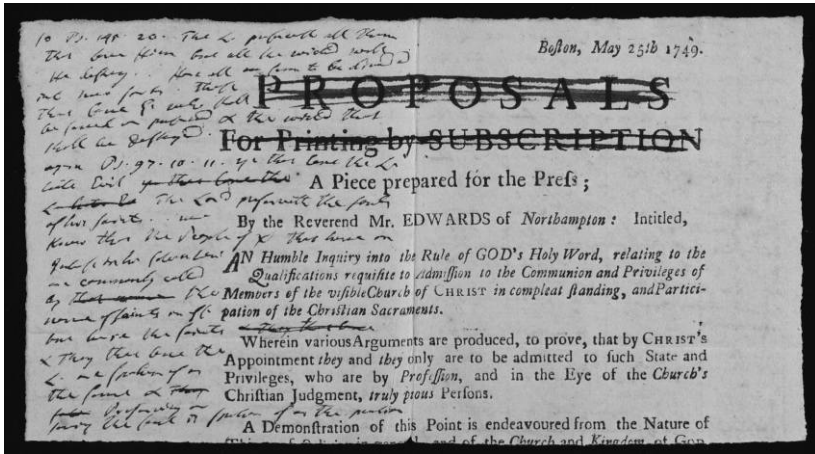


FIGURE XIX

A fragment of the proposals for *An Humble Inquiry* (1749) incorporated into a sermon. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

brewed his ink, cut his paper, and bound his notebooks; he chose and adapted pieces of furniture, such as a writing table, desk, small bookcase, and, at Stockbridge, a table that doubled as a stool. In these respects he was quite traditional and preindustrial, not yet caught up in the emerging consumer culture. Edwards no doubt had a hand in designing the rotating book table and the expansions to his desk, and he certainly was active in shaping the physical makeup of his published writings and their dissemination. In these ways he reflected and shaped emerging, selective tastes and forms among the provincial gentry of which he was a part.

In the organization and development of Edwards's study, intellectual practices were embodied in material forms. The study concretizes the social and cognitive processes of literary production. At the center of it all was the interleaved Bible, the sacred text surrounded by his annotations, the textual commentaries indexed to the sermon collection, and the various notebooks. Beginning with the Word, or pulling a book—shipped from a correspondent in Scotland, perhaps, or borrowed from a clerical colleague in the Connecticut River valley—or taking up a note that had been pinned to his coat the day before, or consulting notebooks propped on the lazy Susan, Edwards developed his ideas. Week after week he composed his sermons, in good Puritan fashion, by explaining a short biblical passage, elaborating the doctrine it taught, and then applying the divine message to life. After being palmed in the pulpit and then filed in the desk drawer, the sermons became another resource in the creation of his philosophical and theological treatises.

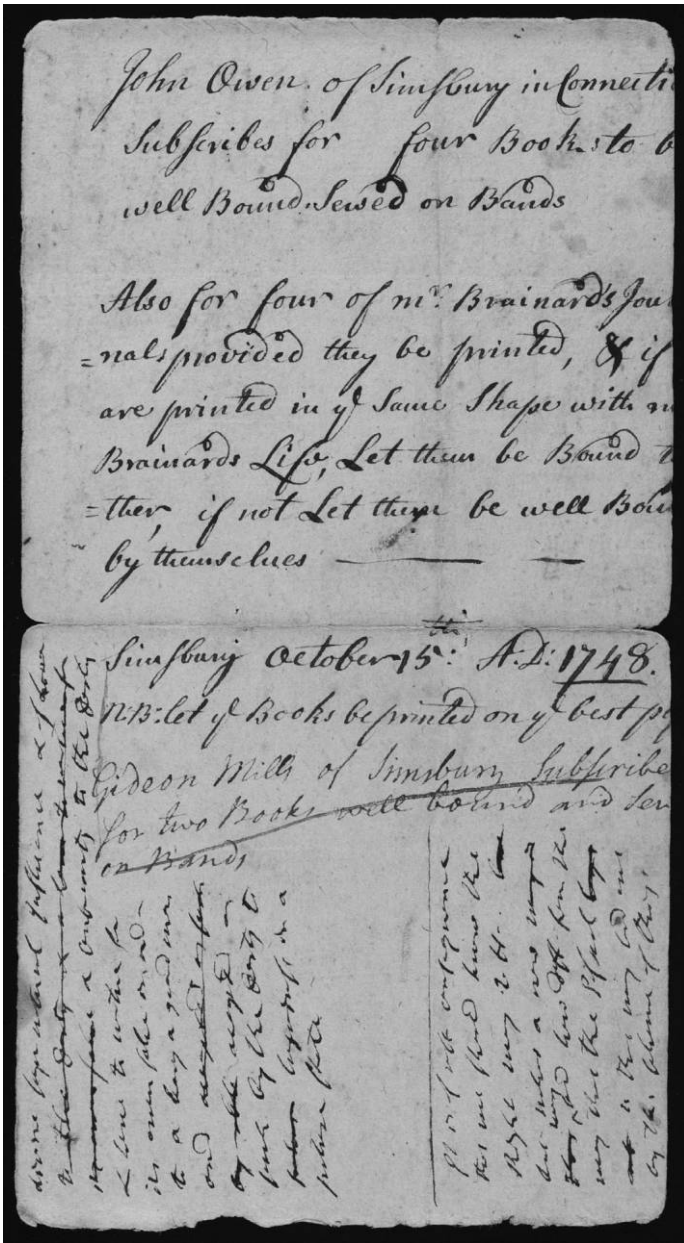


FIGURE XX

Fragment of a list of subscribers for *An Humble Inquiry*. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Form was wedded to function, and the published products bore the marks of the processes that produced them.

Scholars of Edwards are fortunate that so much of the customized apparatus that made up his study has survived, since all the houses he called home have been destroyed and there are thus few remaining material “relics” of his working life to contextualize his writings. What we can learn from Edwards’s study, and Edwards *in* his study, is that as a member of the clergy and its ancient tradition of Puritan intellectual leadership, he was not abandoning his role but rather seeking ways to shore up the authority of the Christian religion as he saw it and of the ministers who propagated it, even as the midcentury revivals, which he did so much to encourage, undermined both the message and the messengers. As he matured, and particularly once he became a cultural outlier at Stockbridge, he embraced writing as the way to remain a cultural arbiter and maintain his role as an intellectual and spiritual leader. What is more, his literary organization and output, as reflected in the design, fabrication, and use of his desk, tables, bookcases, and other pieces he assembled as his center of operations, enabled him to realize his youthful social aspiration of becoming a participant in the international exchange of scientific and religious thought and winning a place in the transatlantic republic of letters.