Southwestern Journal of Theology
Volume 48 • Number 1 • Fall 2005
Pages 19 – 31

LAST WERE THE MAHICANS

Jonathan Edwards, Stockbridge, and Native Americans

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Nearly a quarter of a millennium after his death, Jonathan Edwards is still probably the best known theologian in American history. In popular memory he is a fire and brimstone preacher who spoke of a God eager to fling unsuspecting sinners into the pits of Hell, due to the most famous of his works, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." As numerous writers have explored Edwards's theology and his place in American history, they have offered other perspectives on the man, but they have for the most part downplayed the last years of his life—outside, of course, famous writings like *Original Sin* and *The Freedom of the Will*, composed after leaving Northampton. Although Perry Miller sparked renewed interest in Puritan studies several decades ago, including in figures like Edwards, very few scholars have addressed Edwards's time as a missionary to the Native American settlement in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.[1] When scholars *have* referred to it, they have typically judged it as the place of Edwards's exile, the only option he had after being dismissed from his Northampton congregation, where he preached recycled sermons and holed up in his study so he could write all day. For example, Norman Pettit's analysis of Edwards's time at Stockbridge goes as follows: "Now, with no hope of gaining a popular pulpit—when no settled town close at hand dared to invite him"—the Indians received from

1. Most contemporary Native Americans and scholars of eighteenth-century American history use the terms "Native American" and "Indian" interchangeably; this essay follows their lead.

Edwards "old sermons composed at Northampton and spoken in a foreign tongue."[2] Clyde A. Holbrook expresses a similar sentiment, that after Northampton Edwards had "little hope of winning an influential pulpit, and therefore had to be content to serve the little church of Stockbridge and act as missionary to the Indians gathered nearby."[3] In contrast, George S. Claghorn summarizes and dismisses the "received wisdom concerning Edwards's Stockbridge years,"[4] as does Rachel Wheeler. As she puts it, "To Edwards scholars interested in tracing the intricacies of his thought, his involvement in local affairs [at Stockbridge] is reckoned as background noise that thankfully did not disturb his intellectual labors."[5] This presents a grossly inaccurate picture of Edwards's experience with and attitudes toward Native Americans in general and his Stockbridge congregation in particular. Modern scholarship thus seems to show less regard for the Mahicans than Edwards himself did.[6] The historical discussion provided in the following pages demonstrates that, while Edwards maintained a firm belief in the superiority of English culture over that of his Stockbridge congregation, his doctrine of the equality of humankind extended to the Native Americans, making him much more progressive than many of his contemporaries with respect to race relations.

Historical Background

While one of the stated purposes for colonizing New England was to evangelize the Native Americans, after a century of settlement the English had done little toward accomplishing that goal. Numerous factors were at play, but one of the primary ones concerns the attitude of many Puritans toward the original inhabitants of the New World. They had expected the natives simply to see the superiority of the English way of life and then to convert as a result of the envy arising from this observa-

2. Norman Pettit, editor's introduction to *The Life of David Brainerd*, by Jonathan Edwards, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 16–17.

3. Clyde A. Holbrook, editor's introduction to *Original Sin*, by Jonathan Edwards, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 20.

4. George S. Claghorn, editor's introduction to *Letters and Personal Writings*, by Jonathan Edwards, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 16 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998): 17–18.

5. Rachel Wheeler, "Living Upon Hope: Mahicans and Missionaries, 1730–1760" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1998), 136–37.

6. The settlement at Stockbridge during Edwards's tenure as pastor comprised a people who referred to themselves as the "Muhheconnuk" ("people of the flowing waters"), which the English had Anglicized into "Mohican," the name by which James Fenimore Cooper has immortalized them. However, the Dutch had a spelling ("Mahican") much closer phonetically to the native's own pronunciation. This essay will follow contemporary scholarship in using this spelling. In Edwards's time, these people were also known as the "River Indians," the Housatonics and—as they are known even to this day—the "Stockbridge Indians." See Patrick Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), xi–xv.

tion.[7] When the natives did not do this, Puritans scorned them, viewing them as less intrinsically valuable than the English.[8] That the Indians had not seen what seemed obvious to the Puritans—that European clothing, architecture, and economics were superior and much to be desired—was something the Puritans could not understand.[9] Joseph Mede was not alone in concluding that the Devil had a special grip on Native Americans. Satan had led them to this isolated land in order to keep them in darkness, and since they now refused to see the light the Puritans had brought them, it was clear that the Puritans would "make no Christians there."[10]

The spiritual leaders of the native peoples, the "pawwaws," were dampening what efforts missionaries did make. Thus, it would be no sin simply to kill them off.[11] Some New England colonists were inclined to kill all the natives, not merely their leaders. Samuel Hopkins's writings on the subject are telling, as he first objected to this plan on the basis that it was not practical, and then, almost as an aside, said it probably would not be very much in keeping with the teachings of Christianity. In any case, he thought, the natives might make good allies in war against the French.[12] Indians were less than human, and thus the Puritans felt that, "to make them Christians, they must first be made Men."[13] Cotton Mather supported evangelism among Native Americans, yet called them "Animals" and "Idiots."[14] Some Puritans

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7. John B. Carpenter, "The New England Puritans: The Grandparents of Modern Protestant Missions," *Missiology* 30 (October 2002): 519–20.
8. Henry Warner Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict*, Chicago History of American Religion, ed. Martin E. Marty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 114–15.
9. James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 131–33.
10. Joseph Mede, "Mr. Mede's Answer to Twisse," cited in David S. Lovejoy, "Satanizing the American Indian," *New England Quarterly* 67 (1994): 608.
11. Lovejoy, "Satanizing the American Indian," 612–13.
12. Samuel Hopkins writes, "Some, I am sensible, will say, let us not be at any Cost and Pains to gain the friendship of such a perfidious Crew, but let us destroy them all. Quickly said indeed, but not so soon nor so easily effected. Those persons who are for destroying them would doubtless soon do it, were they first bound and delivered up to them. But one Question here is, how shall we get them into our Power? And another is, whether it would be so human, generous and Christian-like, to take away their Lives, were that in our Power, as it would be to cultivate Friendship with them, and to seek their best Good? If we should be so sanguine as to endeavor to destroy them, it would doubtless prove a vain Attempt. . . ." He then goes on to explain that the natives serve as a necessary ally against the French. See his *Historical Memoirs Relating to the Housatunnuk Indians, or An Account of the Methods Used, and Pains Taken, for the Propagation of the Gospel among that Heathenish Tribe, and the Success Thereof, under the Ministry of the Late Reverend Mr. John Sargeant, Together with the Character of the Eminently Worthy Missionary; and an Address to the People of this Country, Representing the Very Great Importance of Attaching the Indians to Their Interest, Not Only by Treating Them Justly and Kindly, but by Using Proper Endeavors to Settle Christianity among Them* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1753), 165.
13. Charles Inglis, quoted in Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 131.

questioned whether they themselves were even of the same "spiritual species" as the people indigenous to the land they colonized,[15] and some missionaries thought Native Americans would *never* be a part of God's millennial kingdom.[16] As David S. Lovejoy has written, conversion did not change this, since Christian Indians "were repeatedly reminded of their place at the bottom of the heap in God's world."[17]

Such attitudes affected Puritan dealings with Native Americans, dealings which later became a barrier to English efforts to convert them to Christianity. This is made clear by their opinion on who had a right to America itself. God, the Puritans thought, would want them to seize the land from the natives; there was no need either to pay for it or to ask permission to take it. Indians did not make use of the land in the same way as the English; if then the natives were displaced, so be it.[18] The Puritans owed them nothing. On the contrary, any debt was entirely the natives'. The Puritans, after all, had offered them Christianity, so their land was now free for the taking. Native Americans did not share this logic.[19]

In the midst of all this, Solomon Stoddard, Edwards's grandfather, must have seemed radical in the extreme. In 1723, he published a discourse in which he claimed God was angry with New England for not doing more to convert the Indians. Christ had commanded that Christians spread the gospel to save people from Hell. "We should pity *Beasts* in misery," he wrote, but the natives were not beasts. They were people. "Brutish," perhaps, but "they are of Mankind, and so objects of Compassion." He reminded the people of Massachusetts of their own charter, which had evangelism as a stated goal. The natives had not converted as expected, but the Puritans had not tried very hard to convert them. The English, he claimed, had been every bit as depraved as the Native Americans before Christians brought their religion to England. It was shameful that missionaries went all the way to India but the Puritans would not evangelize their own neighbors, and what was worse, that the Catholics were having success in making converts. Stoddard even claimed that Puritans might learn something from Christian Indians.[20] According to Gerald McDermott, Stoddard advocated a multiracial congregation, and hoped someday that Northampton's church would have a blend of native and white communicants.[21]

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14. Cotton Mather, quoted in Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 133.
15. Carpenter, "The New England Puritans," 521.
16. Gerald R. McDermott, "Jonathan Edwards and American Indians: The Devil Sucks Their Blood," *The New England Quarterly* 72 (1999): 548.
17. Lovejoy, "Satanizing the American Indian," 617.
18. Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 137.
19. R. Pierce Beaver, "American Missionary Motivation before the Revolution," *Church History* 31 (1962): 217; and idem, editor's introduction to *Pioneers in Mission: The Early Missionary Ordination Sermons, Charges, and Instructions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 18.
20. Solomon Stoddard, *Question Whether God is Not Angry with the Country for Doing So Little Towards the Conversion of the Indians?* (Boston: B. Green, 1723).
21. McDermott, "Jonathan Edwards and American Indians," 543.

Edwards and the Inherent Equality of Mankind

Edwards's opinions on Native American missions were much like his grandfather's. He showed concern for Native Americans' spiritual state from early in his career. His Northampton congregation had supported mission work among Indians from its founding, and had done so heavily under Stoddard's and Edwards's leadership. In addition, Edwards had served as the representative cleric on the board of trustees for the boarding school for Indian children at Stockbridge from 1743 to 1747, one of the causes to which the Northampton church gave.[22]

In addition to material support, Edwards's preaching and writings before he moved to Stockbridge show an interest in Native American missions. In *A Faithful Narrative* defending the Great Awakening, Edwards wrote of evidences of a Christian spirit of love unlike any he had seen previously. One of these evidences was that the revival had sparked an interest in the salvation of others, including "any Indian in the woods."[23] In a sermon preached to the Northampton church in 1738, Edwards spoke out against the English people's indifference toward Native Americans. God might have blessed them with a temporary peace from war with one another, but "we have dealt very unfaithfully with God in our behavior towards" the Native Americans, he said. Evangelism was a stated intention of the English in settling New England, but this was "very little done, in comparison of what ought to have been. . . . God might justly have punished us long ago for this. . . . We have been growing worse and worse, and have greatly abused" God's mercies.[24] The sermon series, originally preached in the 1730s, which became his *History of the Work of Redemption* included assertions that Christians should expect Native Americans to be included in God's salvation plan.[25]

Edwards's most famous work on missions to Indians is *The Life of David Brainerd.* Although Edwards's main goal in publishing the diary of this missionary to the Delaware was not the furtherance of Native American missions, his admiration for Brainerd reveals something about his attitude toward the natives. Both Brainerd and Edwards believed that, since Native Americans were members of the human family, the gospel must reach them, so that all nations could be united in Christ.[26]

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22. Claghorn, editor's introduction to *Letters and Personal Writings*, by Edwards, 17–18; and Stephen J. Nichols, "Last of the Mohican Missionaries: Jonathan Edwards at Stockbridge," in *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. D. G. Hart, Sean Michael Lucas, and Stephen J. Nichols (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 49. See also Edwards's letter to Eleazar Wheelock, Northampton, July 13, 1744, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 146.
23. Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Awakening*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 4, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 104.
24. Jonathan Edwards, "Indicting God," in *Sermons and Discourses 1734–1738*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 19, ed. M. X. Lesser (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 763–64.
25. Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 9, ed. John F. Wilson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 434–35.

Keely E. McCarthy argues that, in editing Brainerd's diary, Edwards attempted to excise passages that made Indians appear less than human in order to emphasize the universal depravity of human beings. The natives were people, every bit as human as Brainerd or any other Puritan, and thus in need of the gospel neither more nor less than anyone else.[27] In addition, as McDermott has observed, Brainerd was not the only example of a converted soul in *The Life*. A long entry describes an Indian woman who seems to have gone through the kind of conversion process which was "a textbook example of Edwardsean spirituality." In this way, Edwards at least implicitly told his world that Native Americans could be converted, if only someone would tell them how.[28]

Edwards also wanted to be personally involved in missions to Native Americans, as his decision to take the position as pastor for the Stockbridge congregation shows. Edwards had other job offers after his Northampton congregation dismissed him. Scholars who acknowledge that Edwards had other options primarily discuss his refusal of a position in Scotland because it presented too much of a difficulty in moving such a large family as the Edwardses across the Atlantic,[29] but that was not his only choice. Two large churches in New England had offered him their pastorates, and there was a request from a faction in the Northampton church for Edwards to start another church in the town, which presumably was large enough to have supported two congregations.[30] Edwards, however, had other ideas. He did not merely agree to become the pastor for the Stockbridge Indians, but appears, as Claghorn puts it, to have been "jockeying for the post."[31] Edwards wrote to Thomas Foxcroft in November of 1749, as the situation in Northampton was beginning to look grim. The letter stated that he hoped that the Commissioners would select a man "of sound principles, and a pious character" to take the place of John Sergeant, the missionary to the Stockbridge Indians, who had died not long before. This would be best for the mission's school, which was just beginning to gain students. If

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26. Pettit, editor's introduction to *The Life of David Brainerd*, by Edwards, 1–2.

27. Keely E. McCarthy, "'Reducing Them to Civilitie': Religious Conversions and Cultural Transformations in Protestant Missionary Narratives, 1690–1790" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2000), 127–28. See also Nichols, "Last of the Mohican Missionaries," 50.

28. Gerald R. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 197. See also David Brainerd, in *The Life of David Brainerd*, 369–72.

29. See Jonathan Edwards, letter to John Erskine, Northampton, July 5, 1750, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 347–59.

30. Jonathan Edwards, letter to Thomas Foxcroft, Northampton, April 10, 1751, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 368–69; see also Charles L. Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 89–90; Gerald R. McDermott, "Missions and Native Americans," in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 263; Nichols, "Last of the Mohican Missionaries," 49; and Wheeler, "Living Upon Hope," 145.

31. Claghorn in *Letters and Personal Writings*, by Edwards, 296.

the school did well, they should expect more natives to come to the settlement, and "the good effects would be very extensive." Edwards closed his letter by stating, "I hope, Sir, you will accept these hints with candor and ever remember with Christian charity and compassion before God, Your respectful son and obliged servant, Jonathan Edwards."[32]

After beginning his work in Stockbridge in 1751, Edwards continued to preach and write about the equality of natives and whites before God. As a means of contradicting the attitudes prevalent in his day, the first sermon he preached to the Stockbridge Indians after officially becoming their minister was on Acts 11:12–13, the story of Cornelius, the Gentile whose receiving the Holy Spirit made Jewish believers rethink the limits of God's salvation plan. In it, Edwards noted that someone had brought the gospel to the English, so he was able to bring it to America.[33] Other sermons expressed similar themes. Edwards assured his congregation that "God stands ready to forgive every sinner," including persons of any age or race.[34] The "beasts" were those who refused God's call. "All men all over the world are wholly inclined to sin and wickedness. There are many nations in the world that have different languages and a great many different customs, but all are alike in this respect: all are inclined to sin," Edwards said.[35] Christ's kingdom transcends national boundaries. Considering his time and culture, Edwards made a particularly radical statement when preaching to his Stockbridge congregation: "we are no better than you in no Respect."[36] "'Tis to be found with you as 'tis among the English and others who are called Christians," he said. "There are many more bad than good."[37] He explained that the English and the Indians were the

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32. Jonathan Edwards, letter to Thomas Foxcroft, Northampton, November 21, 1749, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 302.

33. Jonathan Edwards, "The Things that Belong to True Religion," in *Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 25, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 571; see also McDermott, "Jonathan Edwards and American Indians," 547; and idem, "Missions and Native Americans," 263.

34. Jonathan Edwards, "God Stands Ready to Forgive Every Sinner upon His Heartily Confessing and Forsaking His Sin," in *The Blessing of God: Previously Unpublished Sermons of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Michael D. McMullen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 124.

35. Jonathan Edwards, "All Mankind of All Nations, White and Black, Young and Old, Is Going in One or the Other of These Paths, Either in the Way That Leads to Life or the Way That Leads to Destruction," in *The Blessing of God*, 228.

36. Jonathan Edwards, sermon on 2 Peter 1:19, cited in McDermott, "Jonathan Edwards and the American Indians," 552; see also Rachel Wheeler, "'Friends to Your Souls': Jonathan Edwards' Indian Pastorate and the Doctrine of Original Sin," *Church History* 72 (2003): 737.

37. Jonathan Edwards, "So None Ought to Come into the Christian Church but Good Men," in *The Blessing of God*, 235. Kimnach transcribed this line differently, but the general meaning is still the same: "'tis feared that 'tis with you as 'tis amongst the English and others that are called Christians. There are many more bad than good." Jonathan Edwards, "Heaven's Dragnet," in *Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 579.

same, that at some point in the past the English, like the Indians, had been without the light of Christ, but that "Christ has died that all who believed, of whatever nation, should be saved and that he who believed not should be damned."[38] Moreover, in his sermons Edwards often expressed disappointment in his fellow Englishmen, who had not given enough attention to sharing the gospel with the natives.[39]

Rachel Wheeler believes one should approach *Original Sin*, first published in 1758, in light of Edwards's Stockbridge sermons. While many have assumed Edwards wrote *Original Sin* merely as a polemic against Arminian and Deist denials of humanity's total depravity, Wheeler argues that it was also a "treatise on the bond of equality that joins all humankind,"[40] and an "oddly egalitarian text."[41] *Original Sin* emphasizes the equal need all humans have for God's grace. Indeed, Edwards does point to the Native Americans over and over again in *Original Sin* as evidence that people are incapable of virtue on their own, though usually in a list with other groups as well, including Europeans.[42] Edwards did not embrace a harsh God anxious to throw sinners into Hell at every turn, who had sent the Native Americans away from the light of the gospel because he had already rejected them, but rather one who provided opportunities to people from all nations to be saved.[43]

Edwards's behavior also demonstrates a belief that the Native Americans were intrinsically equal to the English. When the Edwardses

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38. Jonathan Edwards, "What Is Meant by Believing in Christ?" in *The Blessing of God*, 238. See also Edwards's "Sermon II," in *Selections from the Unpublished Writings of Jonathan Edwards of America*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992), 194; George M. Marsden, "Jonathan Edwards, the Missionary," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 81 (2003): 12; and Rachel Wheeler's analysis of Edwards's Stockbridge sermons in "Living Upon Hope," 188–91 and "Friends to Your Souls," 745–47.

39. Marsden, "Jonathan Edwards, the Missionary," 12; and Wheeler, "Friends to Your Souls," 746. See also Edwards's criticism of those who are unfaithful stewards of the fact that they have the Bible in their "mother tongue" in "That Hearing and Keeping the Word of God Renders a Person More Blessed Than Any Other Privilege That Ever God Bestowed on Any of the Children of Men," in *The Glory and Honor of God: Volume 2 of the Previously Unpublished Sermons of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Michael D. McMullen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 190–207.

40. Wheeler, "Living Upon Hope," 164.

41. Wheeler, "Friends to Your Souls," 765.

42. For example: "How comes it to pass, that the free will of mankind has been determined to evil, in like manner before the flood, and after the flood; under the law, and under the gospel; among both Jews and Gentiles, under the Old Testament; and since that, among Christians, Jews, Mohametans; among Papists and Protestants; . . . among the Negroes and Hottentots in Africa, the Tartars in Asia, and Indians in America, towards both the poles, and on every side of the globe; in greatest cities, and obscurest villages; in palaces, and in huts, wigwams and cells under ground? Is it enough, to reply, it happens so, that men everywhere, and at all times choose thus to determine their own wills, and so to make themselves sinful, as soon as ever they are capable of it . . . and universally to choose never to come up half way to their duty?" in Jonathan Edwards, *Original Sin*, 194; see also pp. 160, 183, and 185; and Wheeler, "Friends to Your Souls," 763.

43. Wheeler, "Friends to Your Souls," 759. See also McCarthy, "Reducing them to Civilitie," 105–106.

moved to Stockbridge, they lived among the Indians, as no other white settlers in that town had ever done.[44] His children played with native children.[45] Jonathan Edwards Jr. spent so much time with the Mahicans that his fluency in their language exceeded his fluency in English. Edwards encouraged his son to develop proficiency in Native American languages, hoping the boy would eventually become a missionary to them like his father.[46] In accepting the natives as "familiar and ordinary," Cynthia Moore writes, Edwards was attempting to achieve "the erosion of their demonization."[47]

In addition, Edwards fought against European exploitation of Native Americans throughout his time in Stockbridge. His letter to Joseph Paice in February 1751/2 ended up in the hands of the Archbishop of Canterbury.[48] Edwards complained that English traders consistently cheated the Native Americans, and that money donated to aid in mission work actually ended up fueling the battle between Anglicans and dissenters in England.[49] This had caused the Iroquois to distrust the English and to fear that, if they sent their children to English schools, the white men would enslave them.[50] Closer to home, Edwards fought against the exploitation of his own congregation by his constant antagonists throughout his Stockbridge years, the Williams family. In letters to public officials, he detailed the Williams clan's misappropriation of funds donated for the education of Native American children for their own gain, in addition to the past unethical land deals in the Williams'

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44. See Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 107; and George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 394. Compare this to the living arrangements of seventeenth century Puritan ministers and missionaries to Native Americans as described in Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions*, 116.
45. Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 94.
46. The younger Edwards writes, "The Indians being the nearest neighbors, I constantly associated with them; their boys were my daily school–mates and play–fellows. Out of my father's house, I seldom heard any language spoken, beside the Indian. . . . It became more familiar to me than my mother tongue. I knew the names of some things in Indian, which I did not know in English; even all my thoughts ran in Indian. . . ." He also explains how his father's plans were thwarted when, after sending him to learn another native language, war broke out and he had to return after only six months. See Jonathan Edwards Jr., *Observations on the Language of the Muhhekaneew Indians* (New Haven: Josiah Meigs, 1788), reprinted as *Observations on the Mahican Language*, American Language Reprints, ed. Claudio R. Salvucci, vol. 25 (Bristol, PA: Evolution, 2002), 9–10.
47. Cynthia Marie Moore, "'Rent and Ragged Relations': Puritans, Indians, and the Management of Congregations in New England, 1647–1776" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York, Stony Brook, 1999), 99.
48. Claghorn, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, by Edwards, 435.
49. Jonathan Edwards, letter to Joseph Paice, Stockbridge, February 24, 1751/2, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 435–36.
50. Marsden, "Jonathan Edwards, the Missionary," 13. This appears to have been a common fear among New England's Indian population during Edwards's time. See William R. Hutchinson, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 31.

favor, all of which had contributed to the Stockbridge Indians' suspicion of whites. He hoped the officials would remedy the situation.[51]

Edwards and the Superiority of English Culture

Ephraim Williams Jr. had criticism for Edwards as well. Williams had attempted to block Edwards's appointment as missionary to the Stockbridge Indians by writing to Jonathan Ashley in 1751 that Edwards was too old to learn the language of his congregation, and furthermore that he was "a very great bigot, for he would not admit any person into heaven but those that agreed fully to his sentiments. . . ."[52] At least part of this has merit. Edwards never did learn Mahican. He explained this as being "a waste of time."[53] While Edwards possessed the ability to learn languages—he used Greek, Hebrew, and Latin throughout his life—he did not want to devote any extensive amount of time to learning the Stockbridge dialect. In a letter to Sir William Pepperrell, he asserted that it was better for the Stockbridge Indians to learn to speak English: "Indian languages are extremely barbarous and barren, and very ill-fitted for communicating things moral and divine, or even things speculative and abstract. In short, they are wholly unfit for a people possessed of civilization and refinement."[54] Edwards did communicate in broken Mahican after some time in Stockbridge,[55] but never actively attempted to learn it. He always preached in English, using an interpreter, and always believed that English was superior to Mahican.

Perhaps Edwards believed the language could not communicate things divine or abstract because of the influence of his predecessor, Sergeant, and Brainerd. Sergeant had spent five years studying Mahican, and had managed to preach in it, but as Samuel Hopkins reported in *Historical Memoirs*, "When Mr. Sergeant had, by a vast Deal of Labour, made himself Master of this *strange Language*, he found it to be a dry, barren, and imperfect Dialect, and by no Means sufficient to convey to his Hearers the Knowledge of divine things. . . ."[56] Brainerd had studied a similar dialect,[57] referring to it as "very defective," due in part to the way the Delaware expressed family relationships. The language did not permit one to express an absolute, such as "*the*

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51. Jonathan Edwards, letter to Andrew Oliver, Stockbridge, February 18, 1751/2 and letter to Thomas Hubbard, Stockbridge, August 29, 1752, both in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 422–34, 528–33.

52. Ephraim Williams Jr., letter to Jonathan Ashley, Stockbridge, May 2, 1751, cited in Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 92–93.

53. Jonathan Edwards, letter to William Pepperrell, Stockbridge, January 30, 1753, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 562.

54. Jonathan Edwards, letter to William Pepperrell, Stockbridge, November 28, 1751, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 413. One ironic bit of trivia in light of this statement is the nineteenth century translation of Edwards's most famous sermon into Choctaw, a Native American dialect in the Muskogee language family. See *Hatak Yoshuba Uhleha Hut Chihowa Anukhobela Ya Innak Foyuka* ("Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God") (Park Hill, Cherokee Nation: Mission, 1845).

55. Gerald R. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 164.

Father," but rather, a word like "father" had to be tied to a son or a daughter. "Hence they cannot be baptized in their own language in the name of *the* Father, and *the* Son, &c.; but they may be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and *his* Father, &c."[58] This was also true of the dialect spoken in Stockbridge. Interestingly, Edwards's son did not agree with the assessment that one could not express abstract or divine concepts in Mahican.[59] Edwards, however, does not appear to have ever explored the possibility of a Mahican translation of the Bible, though in more than one sermon he did tell his congregation that they needed to read it and must therefore learn English.[60]

For Edwards, English was more than merely a language. It had the power to "civilize" the "savages"—that is, to make the Indians live like Englishmen. This was his main goal in encouraging its use. While Edwards never precisely explained why "their being brought to the English language would open their minds and bring 'em to acquaintance and conversation with the English, and would tend above all things to bring that civility which is to be found among the English,"[61] he probably agreed with most Puritans, who expected Christian Indians to live, dress, and work exactly like themselves. That had been Sergeant's motivation for building a school in Stockbridge, "for to *civilize* will be the readiest way to *Christianize* them."[62] Puritans viewed the Mahican way of life, wherein the men hunted and fished while the women did agricultural work, as evidence of emasculate laziness on the part of the men, and as unfair to the women, who never had the opportunity to gain a proper grasp of "the arts of 'housewifery.'" Furthermore, Mahicans raised their children much differently than Puri-

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56. Hopkins, *Historical Memoirs*, 155. The words "strange Language" are italicized in the original. See also Jonathan Edwards, letter to William Pepperrell, Stockbridge, January 30, 1753, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 562, where Edwards cites Sergeant's low opinion of the language as a reason for not learning it.
57. Brainerd studied Delaware, to which Mahican was closely related, both being Algonquinan languages. See Salvucci's preface to Edwards, *Observations on the Mahican Language*, 1.
58. David Brainerd, Second Appendix to "Mr. Brainerd's Journal," reprinted in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 2:421.
59. "It has been said also, that savages never abstract, and have no abstract terms, which . . . is another mistake. . . . I doubt not but that there is in this language the full proportion of abstract, to concrete terms, which is commonly to be found in other languages." Edwards, *Observations on the Mahican Language*, 23–24.
60. Jonathan Edwards, "The Things that Belong to True Religion," in *Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 574; and idem, "Sermon II," in *Selections from the Unpublished Writings of Jonathan Edwards*, 195.
61. Edwards cited in McCarthy, "Reducing them to Civilitie," 3. This echoes Cotton Mather's claim: "The best thing we can do for our Indians is to Anglicize them in all agreeable Instances; and in that of Language, as well as others. They can scarce retain their Language, without a Tincture of other Salvage [sic] Inclinations, which do but ill suit, either with the Honor, or with the design of Christianity," as quoted in Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions*, 98.
62. Lion G. Miles, "The Red Man Dispossessed: The Williams Family and the Alienation of Indian Land in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, 1736–1818," *New England Quarterly* 67 (1994): 48.

tans did, and while they were well-behaved for the most part, they did not demonstrate what Puritans believed to be the proper deference to their parents.[63]

Edwards proposed several measures to change the Indians' way of life. The Mahicans should be encouraged to give their children to English families for a few years, so they could learn the ways and language of the English. This would be "absolutely necessary, at least at first," though there would be need of some sort of incentive for the parents; then they might enter boarding school with a few English children interspersed among them.[64] The Edwards family participated in this plan, taking Indian children into their own home.[65] In addition, the natives should learn to sing, because this "would in several respects have a powerful influence, in promoting the great end in view, of leading them to renounce the coarseness, and filth and degradation, of savage life, for cleanliness, refinement and good morals."[66]

Conclusion

When Edwards left Stockbridge to become president of Princeton College in 1758, he did so against his own wishes. His congregation had encouraged him to call a council of ministers to decide how to respond to Princeton's offer, and Edwards was not at all happy with the council's decision. Hopkins wrote that Edwards, a man not given to emotional outbursts, began to cry when he heard their advice. George M. Marsden has cynically noted that Edwards never objected to moving to Princeton on the basis of wanting to stay among the Stockbridge Indians,[67] but perhaps Edwards felt that was merely to be understood. Edwards preached a sad farewell to those he had come to call "my people" on January 15, 1758,[68] assuring them that "whether we shall ever see each other in this world is uncertain but remember that we must meet again at the last day."[69]

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63. Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*, 96–97; and Lovejoy, "Satanizing the American Indian," 614–15. See also Stoddard, *Question Whether God is Not Angry*, 11. Carpenter argues that this insistence on Puritan ways was actually an affirmation of the belief in Native American humanity and equality—they were just treating them the way they would have wanted to be treated had they been in their place—in "New England Puritans," 521–24.

64. Edwards, letter to Thomas Hubbard, Stockbridge, August 31, 1751, and letter to William Pepperrell, Stockbridge, November 28, 1751, both in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 404, 413.

65. Edwards, letter to Thomas Prince, Stockbridge, May 10, 1754, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 638. See also Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 390, and "Jonathan Edwards, the Missionary," 14.

66. Edwards, letter to William Pepperrell, Stockbridge, November 28, 1751, in *Letters and Personal Writings*, 411.

67. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 431.

68. McDermott, "Jonathan Edwards and American Indians," 553.

69. Jonathan Edwards, "God's People Should Remember Them That Have Been Their Ministers," in *Sermons and Discourses 1743–1758*, 714. See also Wheeler, "Living Upon Hope," 211.

Edwards may not have been able to look beyond his culture for what it meant to live the Christian life, and therefore he may not have been able to see virtue in any cultural expressions other than English ones, but he articulated a theology that affirmed the value of all people before God, and thus the humanity and inherent equality of the English colonists' Native American neighbors. In so doing, he brought the egalitarian side of Calvinism to light. If everyone is the same, Christian ethics demand that everyone be treated equally, out of respect for each person's humanity. Edwards did not take the Stockbridge pastorate because it was the only place he could go, and leaving did not bring him to tears merely because it would mean he spent less time in his study. Very few of Edwards's contemporaries shared his affection for Native Americans, but his work left a lasting impression on generations of missionaries.[70] It is time for modern scholarship to acknowledge this aspect of Jonathan Edwards's life and thought.

70. Ronald E. Davies, "Jonathan Edwards: Theologian of the Missionary Awakening," Evangelical Missionary Alliance Occasional Paper no. 3 in *Evangel* 17 (1999) and Hutchinson, *Errand to the World*, 40–41.