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Jonathan Edwards: Educational Philosophy and Practice

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JONATHAN EDWARDS: EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

Samuel James Smith

Most narratives on Jonathan Edwards describe his life experiences, family, education, conversion, ministry, and missions work with the Indians. They identify him as an intellectual, theologian, and scientist. Some accounts note his significance as an apologist, especially as he argued against Enlightenment thought, deism, and Unitarianism. Primarily, he is presented as the famed Great Awakening preacher. There is yet, however, another prominent role Edwards has played, and that is in the field of educational philosophy. Though usually granted only token attention in typical foundations of education textbooks, Edwards' theory of knowledge and of learning is deserving of much deeper study in teacher preparation programs than it currently receives. In addition, it is worth considering the notion that Edwards' revivalism was instrumental in propagating the importance of the individual commoner in society and that—because of this—a movement was energized to educate the common person.

Background and Context

Though Jonathan Edwards is thought of as an American New Englander, biographer George M. Marsden emphasized that Edwards must be perceived primarily as a British citizen in order for his life experiences and ideas to be contextualized properly.¹ He was a child of the Enlightenment, engaging and synthesizing the philosophical arguments of his time. This grappling of ideas can especially be observed in his *Miscellanies* and *Notebooks* that he began at age nineteen and continued toward the end of his life. In them, he recorded the development of his thoughts on theology, philosophy, and science. Much of this journaling formed the basis for some of his published works—many of which reveal Edwards' engagement with European ideas of his day.²

¹ George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 2, 7-9.

² William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, eds., *Christian Apologetics: Past & Present*, vol. 1. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 219.

In addition to his status as a British citizen, Edwards' family context must also be considered. He was born to Esther Stoddard Edwards, the daughter of prominent revivalist pastor Solomon Stoddard. Esther had been well educated and was strong in theological studies. She assisted her husband in teaching all eleven of their children—Jonathan and his ten sisters. Even into her nineties, long after her husband had died, Esther continued to teach.³

Jonathan's father, Timothy Edwards, like his father-in-law, was also a revivalist preacher. Timothy served as a war-time military chaplain during Queen Anne's War. Letters home to Esther conveyed his priorities for their children—that they be educated well academically, morally, and spiritually. He reminded Esther to ensure that Jonathan not lag behind in his Latin studies and that he be instructed in morality so as not to become "rude and naughty." Having been a school teacher prior to marrying Esther, Timothy had long held education in high regard. Despite having been expelled from Harvard, Timothy did not let that deter him from returning there to earn both his B.A. and M.A.⁴ As a pastor, Timothy set aside a room in the parsonage as a classroom to prepare local boys for entrance to Harvard. He did not, however, teach only boys. He also taught his ten daughters and even tasked the four sisters older than Jonathan with tutoring him in his studies. The girls' education went beyond basic literacy as they taught Jonathan using Latin Bible commentaries and the works of Addison and Steele. Nine of the ten sisters attended Boston finishing school as had their mother.⁵

A precocious child, by age thirteen Jonathan had written letters that later became scientific articles on his observations related to the flying spider and the rainbow.⁶ He entered

³ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-25.

⁵ Michael A.G. Haykin and Dustin Bruce, "Jonathan Edwards: Influencing and Shaping the Heart," in *A Legacy of Religious Educators: Historical and Theological Introductions*, ed. Elmer L. Towns and Benjamin K. Forrest (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University Press, 2017), 18, 254.

⁶ D. Bruce Lockerbie, *A Passion for Learning: A History of Christian Thought on Education* (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publications, 2007), 223.

the Connecticut Collegiate School, which became known as Yale. He was three years ahead of most his contemporaries, who typically enrolled at sixteen. This age difference may have contributed to his struggles socially. In addition to being naturally shy, Jonathan held interests more aligned with those of adults than with his classmates, whose immature and sometimes immoral antics greatly annoyed him.⁷

In 1720, he graduated at the head of his class with his B.A. and in 1721 experienced conversion to salvation in Christ. Shortly after his conversion, he conveyed deep disappointment in his own “proud and self-righteous spirit.” To address this, he developed a list of *Resolutions*, some of which required strict discipline in habits related to eating, drinking, sleeping, and speaking.⁸ One of the resolutions relayed what was and continued to be a central tenet of his philosophy of education: “Resolved, to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently, as that I may find and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.”⁹

Between pastoring his first church in what is now lower Manhattan and his second in Bolton, Connecticut, Edwards earned his M.A. at Yale, at which time he was exposed to the writings of Newton and Locke.¹⁰ In 1727, he was ordained, married, and partnered with his grandfather in ministry at Northampton. Two years later when his grandfather died, Edwards became the pastor where he preached and led a number of renowned revivals for over a span of two decades.¹¹ Like his parents, Jonathan ensured that both his sons and daughters were educated well at home. Unlike them, however, he did not send his daughters to finishing school in Boston. The development of their souls was his highest concern. In morning devotions,

⁷ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 37-9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 45, 51-3.

⁹ Haykin and Bruce, “Jonathan Edwards,” 254-5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 256.

¹¹ Lockerbie, *A Passion for Learning*, 223.

Jonathan quizzed them with age-appropriate questions on their knowledge of the Bible. Each Saturday evening, to bring in the Sabbath, he taught them the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. He ensured that they could not only recite it but that they also understood it.¹²

Unfortunately, his Northampton ministry ended in controversy as the congregation dismissed Edwards for attempting to change membership policies. This led him, however, to serve as a missionary to Native Americans in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, from 1751 to 1758. It was in his mission work at Stockbridge that he further explicated his philosophy of education and also demonstrated it in practice. Jonathan observed that Indians valued their children and were eager to educate them. He, however, rejected the traditional means by which the English educated not just Indian children but also their own.¹³

After reluctantly accepting the office of president at the College of New Jersey, which later became Princeton, he died in 1758 at the age of 44 from complications from a smallpox vaccination.¹⁴ Edwards' legacy includes many writings that impacted the time in which he lived and continue to be studied today. They include *Religious Affections* (1746), *The Freedom of the Will* (1754), *The Nature of True Virtue* (published posthumously in 1765), the sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741), and a biography of David Brainerd (1749).

Enlightenment Influence

As noted earlier, studying Newton and Locke during his M.A. at Yale was formative on Edwards' thinking. He was anxious to read the latest thoughts, to evaluate them through the lens of biblical truth, and to synthesize them into his Calvinistic worldview as was appropriate.¹⁵

After carefully scrutinizing Enlightenment ideas, Edwards was left even more confident that the

¹² Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 321-323.

¹³ See Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics*, 219; Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 323, 386-7.

¹⁴ Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics*, 219.

¹⁵ Haykin and Bruce, "Jonathan Edwards," 256.

key to a unified theory of knowledge could only be found in God's Revelation as expressed through Jesus Christ and in the Bible.¹⁶ It was in his notebooks, such as the *Miscellanies* and *The Mind*, that he expressed his synthesis of thoughts from natural philosophy. In his notebooks, Edwards asked a multitude of practical questions, such as "Why is air necessary to preserve a fire?" and "Why are no two trees exactly alike?" He expressed a special interest in both the practical properties and the spiritual dimensions of light. This dual interest in both scientific and theological dimensions of life was common among Edwards' contemporaries, as few of them found any conflict between science and theology. Some, however, such as Matthew Tindal, argued for a rational, deistic religion that relegated God's intervention in the natural world as unnecessary.¹⁷ It was this breed of rationalism that Edwards opposed in his apologetic works. For example, in Number 1340 of *Miscellanies* entitled "The Insufficiency of Reason as a Substitute for Revelation," he called deism a "gross mistake" of considering "material things the most substantial beings, and spirits more like a shadow."¹⁸

New England universities were slow to incorporate the natural philosophy, but once they did, it became quite controversial.¹⁹ When Edwards wrote *Thoughts on the Revival* in 1758, he was concerned that Harvard and Yale were "nurturing neither piety nor prophets."²⁰ Seeing the creeping influence of deism and Unitarianism, Edwards joined his Presbyterian fellow revivalist Gilbert Tennent and other Presbyterians to found the College of New Jersey with the intent that it would remain true to its Christian purpose, unlike they believed Harvard and Yale had done.²¹

Though Edwards argued for theology to remain the queen of the sciences, he was clear about his

¹⁶ Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics*, 220.

¹⁷ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 59-71.

¹⁸ Jonathan Edwards, "The 'Miscellanies': Number 1340," in *Christian Apologetics: Past & Present*, vol. 1, ed. William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 225-38.

¹⁹ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 59-61.

²⁰ Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 184.

²¹ Lockerbie, *A Passion for Learning*, 225.

support for the natural sciences to be presented in the college curriculum. He was simply being consistent that biblical studies should always be given preeminence over other truth claims.

Edwards praised scientists and inventors as “benefactors of the race,” and he even pursued his own studies in the medical sciences.²² Faith and reason were not contradictory for Edwards. He was confident that he could develop a theory of knowledge that would unite faith, reason, and experience under the supremacy of revelation and with a strong affective component.²³

Philosophy of Education

Edwards was an idealist, an Augustinian, and a Calvinist. These labels are offered strictly as reference points to initiate an exploration of Edwards’ general philosophy. The nuances are the results of a unique synthesis as he engaged Enlightenment ideas, particularly those of John Locke. Though Edwards did not embrace all of Locke’s ideas, he did find in Locke new categories that helped him describe the relationship between ideas and reality.²⁴ For instance, Edwards valued the use of data to draw scientific conclusions. He believed, however, that sensory perceptions had no existence apart from the mind. Because God is sovereign and the source of all knowledge, truth, and experience, an individual’s sensory perceptions do not originate within the individual but with God. Sensations, therefore, are divine ideas that are conveyed to humans by the will of God.²⁵

Moral Education

Since issues of predestination and God’s sovereignty are significant in Calvinism, the question of freedom of the will, or choice, is one that Edwards could not ignore. He and Locke shared the same general perspective—that what moves the mind to a perceived choice is the

²² Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 190.

²³ Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics*, 220.

²⁴ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 63-4.

²⁵ George P. Fisher, “The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards,” *The North American Review* 128, no. 268 (1879): 285-6.

desire of good. For Edwards, that good was ultimately God. Edwards went on to distinguish between two types of choices: voluntary and involuntary inclinations. To those who may argue that only voluntary inclinations represent freedom of will, Edwards would respond that freedom is not related to the origin of the choice but with the incident of the choice itself. Therefore, whether inclinations are voluntary or involuntary, Edwards insisted that individuals are fully responsible for their choices.²⁶

In *The Nature of True Virtue*, which was not published until seven years after his death, Edwards presented a philosophy of social ethics, in which he elaborated on the importance of the freedom of will as exercised through choice. It is the *summum bonum*, the ultimate good, that drives choices. When the *summum bonum* is God, the result is that choices benefit society. When the *summum bonum* is distorted, however, the result is a deterioration of society caused by sin. Therefore, it is important to educate children to love God above the good of self, family, nation, tribe, or race. Failing to do so will result in a society of individuals whose misplaced affections bring fragmentation in society rather than unity.²⁷

As foundational as Scripture was to Edwards' philosophy, he chose not to quote the Bible in *The Nature of True Virtue*. He did, however, refer to it as the source for his belief that affections should be directed above all to God. In *Religious Affections*, though, he cited Scripture quite liberally as he emphasized that God is love and that any good action is a display of that love. Again, he underscored the theme of harmony and the unity that comes to society when people love God and also love what He loves.²⁸ This foundation for moral education was contrary to the Enlightenment movement that sought to parallel the new natural science and to

²⁶ Fisher, "The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards," 288-90.

²⁷ Tim Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), 174-5.

²⁸ Edwards. *Religious Affections*.

establish a science of morality based on self-evident first principles rather than on revealed truth.²⁹

If one word were to represent Edwards' philosophy of moral education, it might be the word "relationships." For him, all meaning was discovered and expressed in loving relationships. This included both divine and human relationships. Human relationships could not experience the highest value unless they were subordinated by a proper relationship with God. As important as the material world was to scientific knowledge, it was temporal and was only part of what made a person educated. To Edwards, a truly educated person understood the affections, especially as they were communicated by God, and could respond appropriately to that love in right relationship with God and with others.³⁰

Theory of Knowledge and Truth

As in his philosophy of moral education, Edwards' theory of knowledge contained themes of unity and harmony. He rejected a dichotomy of reality that was divided into strictly material and spiritual elements; he instead took the extreme opposite view of Thomas Hobbes, who believed that ultimate reality was found in material substance. For Edwards, "nothing has any existence anywhere else but in consciousness," and it was in the divine mind that all the universe existed. He disagreed with Locke who started with experience and also disagreed with Descartes who started with human reason. In and of themselves, neither experience nor reason was a sufficient source of knowledge or a means to arrive at truth. God's sovereignty trumped any of the Enlightenment theories so that all truth was a concept in the mind of God that could be known fully only in a proper relationship with God. Sensory experience was valuable—just as it had been for young Edwards in his study of spiders—but it provided a limited view of reality.

²⁹ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards* 464.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 497, 503.

Reason could serve to correct limited experience, but reason too was flawed. Scripture must serve as the foundation of all knowledge and then work in tandem with experience and reason.³¹

Edwards' Platonic leanings are revealed as he described the language God uses to convey truth. Because everything exists as an archetype in the Divine Mind (which is reminiscent of Plato's forms existing in the Absolute Mind), humans can only know reality through God's language of signs and shadows. Where Edwards differed from Plato is that God's language was manifested in Scripture, in persons (specifically the persons of the Trinity), and in relationships with those persons. These distinctions set Edwards theory of knowledge apart from Platonists and deists. What was true, right, and real could be experienced through harmony—a right relationship—with God. An analogy he often used to illustrate this concept was music. Music required harmony, proportion, and complex relationships for it to be experienced. Music, therefore, played both a theoretical and practical role for Edwards as he implemented it in the homeschooling of his children and in the mission school to Native Americans.³²

Rationalism versus Emotionalism

Regarding a 1737 Northampton revival, Jonathan Edwards wrote the following description:

The Congregation was alive in God's Service, every one earnestly intent on the Publick Worship, every Hearer eager to drink in the Words of the Minister as they came from his Mouth; the Assembly in general were from time to time, in Tears while the Word was preached; some weeping with Sorrow and Distress, others with Joy and Love, others with Pity and Concern for the Souls of their Neighbours.³³

His wife Sarah Pierrepont Edwards recounted her reaction to the sermon of preacher Samuel Buell in 1742:

³¹ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 76-81.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Jonathan Edwards, "Jonathan Edwards Describes the Awakening in His Congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts, 1737," in *Major Problems in American Colonial History*, 3rd ed., ed. Karen Ordahl Kupperman (Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), 272.

[It] moved me so exceedingly, and drew me so strongly heavenward, that it seemed as it were to draw my body upwards, and I felt as if I must necessarily ascend thither. At length, my strength failed me, and I sunk down; when they took me up and laid me on the bed, where I lay for a considerable time, faint with joy, while contemplating the glories of the heavenly world.³⁴

These descriptions by both Jonathan and his wife Sarah, illustrate the emotionalism of the Great Awakening. It was, however, much more than just an emotional movement; it was also a grass-roots intellectual movement. The revivals were sparked in New England where, with the exception of Indians and Africans, literacy was already common. As emotions were stirred, New Light followers applied their reading ability to deepen their understanding of spiritual matters by studying the Bible, theological works, and devotional materials. This aided in the further development of cognitive skills and the desire to explore a variety of new ideas available in Enlightenment literature. Ironically, while the Great Awakening drew many to submit to God's sovereignty, it may also have sparked some in their intellectual pursuits to follow deism or agnosticism.³⁵

The Old Lights ridiculed what they perceived to be shallow emotionalism: "weeping, crying out, twitching, and falling down during worship."³⁶ They accused the revivalists of disparaging "humane reason and rational preaching."³⁷ Edwards acknowledged the increasing emotional expressions and even admitted that extremists had, in some instances, perverted the revival.³⁸ Nevertheless, he defended the emotionalism as acceptable and even necessary. This was a grass-roots movement in which the common person was central. Despite gender, race,

³⁴ Sarah Pierrepont Edwards, "Sarah Pierrepont Edwards Recounts Her Religious Experience, 1742," in *Major Problems in American Colonial History*, 3rd ed., ed. Karen Ordahl Kupperman (Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), 273.

³⁵ Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 88-9.

³⁶ Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America*, ed. Eric Foner (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 352.

³⁷ See Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1783* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 318; Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 269.

³⁸ Taylor, *American Colonies*, 351.

social status, or educational level, a dramatic conversion was available to all. The typical New Englander was at least nominally Christian, attended church, and had a high level of biblical literacy. Therefore, few were in need of an intellectual conversion to the gospel. They were extremely open, however, to a spiritual and emotional conversion to an experience with God that they had not to that point known.³⁹ In a unique way, the Great Awakening took the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers to a higher level. The Reformation opened the commoner to the truth of Scripture; the Great Awakening opened the commoner to an intimate relationship with the Author of that truth.

Various dichotomies thematically reoccur in Edwards' works: head-heart, reason-emotion, thinking-feeling, sensual-spiritual, science-revelation, notional-sensible, and understanding-affections. Critics of the revivalist movement, such as Charles Chauncy, accused New Lights of neglecting the former in each of the above pair while overly emphasizing the latter. There may be some legitimacy to the allegation of anti-intellectualism. For example, Gilbert Tennent, an Awakening preacher, encouraged his followers to assume that education weakened a minister's faith. He called educated ministers "Letter-Learned Pharisees" and "Dead Dogs that cannot Bark."⁴⁰ These sentiments, however, were not representative of those espoused by most Awakening proponents—Jonathan Edwards' *via media* being a prime example.

Michael Haykin suggested that Edwards' *via media*—his balance between extreme ways of knowing—may be his greatest contribution to the philosophy of education.⁴¹ Unlike his contemporaries Charles Chauncy and James Davenport, who respectively followed extremes of reason and of emotion, Edwards argued in *Religious Affections* that true religion engages the believer holistically—both rationally and emotionally:

³⁹ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 269.

⁴⁰ Lockerbie, *A Passion for Learning*, 224.

⁴¹ Haykin and Bruce, "Jonathan Edwards," 262-4.

As on the one hand, there must be light in the understanding, as well as an affected fervent heart, where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart; so on the other hand, where there is a kind of light without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light, that knowledge is not true spiritual knowledge of divine things.⁴²

The head and heart are interrelated so much so that, in order for there to be true understanding, there must be an experience of holy affections. This was true in his theology, but it was also true in his philosophy and practice of education.

Edwards also expounded on his *via media* in his *Miscellanies*. In his apologetic against Matthew Tindal, he outlined the limitations of reason and experience as valid ways of knowing in and of themselves. He argued that it goes against common sense to claim that reason alone, without the aid of revelation, can be held up as authoritative truth. Reason cannot explain the metaphysical world, nor can it demystify how a physical being can display perception, understanding, thought, volition, love, hatred, etc. Also, human experience cannot be relied upon without the verifying testimony of history, tradition, memories, senses, or the corroboration of other people's experiences.

Educational Theory into Practice

A primary result of the revivalist movement was the salvation and spiritual renewal of common people. A secondary result was social reform carried out at the grass-roots level by those same transformed people. Reformers were driven by their belief that, by bettering the condition of humanity, they would be ushering in a millennial reign of a utopian society that would precede the return of Christ. Many were convinced that America was the "New Jerusalem" and that they were God's chosen people to bring about this societal transformation.⁴³ Just as laypeople had become more active in the revivals by initiating prayer meetings, Bible

⁴² Edwards, *Affections*, 49-50.

⁴³ Thomas W. Hagedorn, *Founding Zealots: How Evangelicals Created America's First Public Schools, 1783-1865* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2013), 85-71.

studies, and exhortations, they also became more active in social reform.⁴⁴ One of those reforms was education for the common person. Jonathan Edwards advocated for common learning for the poor in his *Thoughts on the Revival*:

Great things might be done for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ at this day by those who have ability by establishing funds for the support and propagation of religion . . . by searching out children of promising abilities, and their hearts full of love to Christ, but of poor families (as doubtless there are such now in the land), and bringing them up for the ministry; and by distributing books that are remarkably fitted to promote vital religion and have a great tendency to advance this work. — Or if they would only bear the trouble and expense of sending such books into various parts of the land to be sold, it might be an occasion that ten times so many of those books should be bought as otherwise would be — by establishing and supporting schools in poor towns and villages; which might be done on such a foundation as not only to bring up children in common learning but also might very much tend to their conviction and conversion and being trained up in vital piety. Doubtless something might be done this way in old towns and more populous places that might have a great tendency to the flourishing of religion in the rising generation.⁴⁵

The above quote supports Thomas W. Hagedorn's argument in his 2013 book *Founding Zealots* that, more so than Horace Mann, the seeds planted in the Awakenings deserve credit for being the impetus behind the common school movement that eventually led to free public schools for all children.

Edwards' interest in education was not strictly theoretical from the pen and the pulpit. He held strong convictions about the practice of teaching and implemented them in his role as tutor at Yale, in the homeschooling of his own children, in his parsonage school for future ministers, and in his Stockbridge mission school to the Indians. He decried the methods of instruction used by the English not just to the Indians but also to English children themselves. They focused far too much on the ability to sound out words rather than on the ideas represented by those words. Understanding was key, and to that end, he advocated for what he called a

⁴⁴ Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 103.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England, 1740; To Which is Prefixed, A Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in Northampton, Mass., 1735* (New York: American Tract Society, 1800), 225-6.

“familiar” method of teaching. He drew from the Socratic method of questioning and from John Locke’s emphasis on the significance of personal experience in the learning process.⁴⁶

In a letter to Sir William Pepperrell, a financial supporter of Stockbridge’s Indian mission, Edwards wrote, “Children should never read a lesson without the master or mistress taking a care that the child be made to attend to, and understand, the meaning of the words and sentences which it reads.” He believed this could be done through “familiar” questions presented conversationally and through an invitation for students to pose their own questions. This would lead to what he identified as the chief cognitive faculty—understanding. Without understanding, the student could not judge, discern, or speculate. His “familiar” method also featured story-telling, which Edwards began to implement not just in his classroom instruction at Stockbridge but also in his sermons to the Indian congregation.⁴⁷

Edwards’ school at Stockbridge was innovative for a number of reasons. He engaged the community in school activities by inviting the public to attend assemblies where students would share what they had learned in class and receive awards for their achievements.⁴⁸ He placed great emphasis on the affective aspect of teaching. Because emotions were critical to learning, he proposed that teachers should influence the heart of their students. He perceived students holistically with the mind, will, and heart interacting as one impacted the other. Students are motivated by love; therefore, teachers should display sincere affection for them. Students are also motivated by pleasure; therefore, teachers should cultivate a classroom atmosphere that is “pleasant, entertaining, and profitable.” Teachers should welcome new knowledge and model

⁴⁶ Kenneth P. Minkema, “Jonathan Edwards on Education and His Educational Legacy,” *Oxford Scholarship Online* (2017): 32, accessed March 23, 2018, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199756292.003.0003.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴⁸ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 390.

for students what it means to be a researcher and a life-long learner.⁴⁹ These concepts were not typical for schools in the eighteenth century, and—even today—these ideas would more likely be attributed to Romantic European thinkers, such as Jean-Jacque Rousseau, Johann Pestalozzi, and Friedrich Froebel, than to the preacher of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*.

Also innovative for his time was the integrative, holistic aspect of his curriculum. He provided a rich context for the study of the Bible by immersing students in ecclesiastical history, chronology, and geography of the Middle East with the intent that students would grasp how individual incidents fit into the larger biblical narrative. He included both boys and girls and even mixed English and Indian students together. He integrated music into the curriculum for two reasons. First, he believed music engaged learners in the harmony and beauty of truth. Second, he perceived that music had the power to “to change the taste of the Indians . . . off from their barbarism and brutality.” This harsh language reflected common English notions of the Indians at the time.⁵⁰ Although Edwards saw great capacity for Indians to learn and complemented them as “discerning people,” he was pessimistic about their culture. Unlike John Eliot, who had learned Indian languages and translated English works into native languages, Edwards worked through translators and required Indians to learn English because their own languages were “ill-fitted for communicating things moral and divine, or even things speculative and abstract.”⁵¹ To immerse them into English culture, he encouraged Indian families to allow their children to live with an English family for a year. His own family hosted at least one Indian boy.⁵²

⁴⁹ Haykin and Bruce, “Jonathan Edwards,” 267, 271-2.

⁵⁰ Minkema, “Jonathan Edwards,” 34.

⁵¹ See Haykin and Bruce, “Jonathan Edwards,” 268-9; Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 390.

⁵² Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 390.

Because of the significance of relationships in his philosophy of education, personal mentoring was a key aspect of Edwards' teaching. Through the years, he had mentored a number of future ministers as they lived with him and his family in what came to be known as a parsonage school. Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins are just two of those he mentored. Kenneth P. Minkema, in his 2017 article on Jonathan Edwards' educational legacy, noted that Edwards began a tradition of parsonage-school mentoring that continued for generations and that led many in the New Divinity movement to be involved in higher education. Minkema lists Jonathan Edwards, Jr., (Union); Timothy Dwight (Yale); Edward Dorr Griffin (Williams); Samuel Austin (Union of Vermont); Moses Stuart and Edwards Amasa Park (Andover); Nathaniel William Taylor (Yale); and Mary Lyons (Mt. Holyoke).⁵³

Conclusion

When asked to name an individual who impacted the development of education in America, students in teacher preparation programs will most readily name Horace Mann or John Dewey. These names are certainly afforded more ink in the foundations of education textbooks. It may well be argued, however, that Jonathan Edwards' philosophy of education was much more influential than Mann's or Dewey's. His synthesis of Enlightenment ideas with Calvinist theology provided a *via media* that served as a framework for curriculum in New England and early American schools. It may also be argued that the lifting up of common laypeople in the Great Awakening served as an impetus that eventually led to the nineteenth-century common school movement.

⁵³ Minkema, "Jonathan Edwards," 39-40, 49-50.

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