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“We also Glory in Our Sufferings:” David Brainerd and the Primacy of Suffering in Early
Anglo-American Evangelicalism

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

By

Benjamin Ryan Nelson

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“We also Glory in Our Sufferings:” David Brainerd and the Primacy of Suffering in Early
Anglo-American Evangelicalism

by

Benjamin Ryan Nelson

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Craig Bryan Yirush, Chair

This dissertation assesses the significance of suffering in the formation of Anglo-American Evangelicalism primarily through the life and legacy of David Brainerd. It is my argument that an emphasis on suffering, specifically the suffering of the individual believer, became a crucial component of Evangelicalism since it stood as the best practical display of the religious activism demanded by Protestant theologies of grace. Scholars have increasingly shown that the religious movement known as Evangelicalism formed in the confluence of Protestant theology that occurred in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century, which created in the movement both a peculiar diversity and cohesion. It is my contention that evangelical beliefs about suffering and the necessity of suffering by the believer was one of the most enduring and binding components of the movement. Suffering figured prominently in almost every stage of the process of salvation, especially conversion and sanctification, and was, in many ways, the most reliable sign of assurance evidencing the work of God’s grace while the believer endured life on earth.

David Brainerd's life and relatively brief ministry and missionary activity roughly coincided with the sporadic but widespread religious revivals of the early mid-eighteenth century, which scholars widely agree mark the emergence of the modern evangelical movement. More than an influential theologian or captivating minister, Brainerd was also a sickly man and troubled soul who suffered through a mission to the Native Americans in the colonial frontier wilderness of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Brainerd's place in time, his path to and work as a missionary, and the use of his printed works by later evangelical ministers, make Brainerd a unique lens through which to study the prominence of suffering in evangelical thought and practice from its seventeenth-century origins to its unprecedented diffusion in the nineteenth century. The physical and psychic agony that Brainerd experienced throughout his faith characterized the necessity of suffering and its purpose for generations of Evangelicals.

The dissertation of Benjamin Ryan Nelson is approved.

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2016

DEDICATION

To my family, my own little ones, and the ones who have always been with me. You provided the consistent support to see me through, and just the right amount of distraction to keep me sane. I hope that the increase in my presence is enough to repay the time that you gave. Finally, to Kendra, my most stalwart partner in everything. This is yours as much as it is mine. “If ever two were one, then surely we.”

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INTRODUCTION
David Brainerd and “Costly Discipleship”

...whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it

Matthew 16:25

“Tis good for me to be afflicted:” David Brainerd’s Quest for Holiness¹

Throughout the course of his brief life and ministry, David Brainerd staunchly adhered to his belief that “it was worth the while to follow God through a thousand snares, deserts, and death itself” if only to know he was “committing [his] cause to God.”² As assessed primarily through the life, work, and legacy of colonial American missionary David Brainerd (1718-1747), this dissertation establishes the centrality of suffering in the development of Anglo-American evangelical thought and practice. Brainerd lived a life informed by physical and spiritual suffering, and by any measure, past or present, he “was not a healthy man.”³ For most of his life, Brainerd struggled greatly from what his biographer, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), described as “melancholy” and “despondency,” which Edwards worked hard to obscure and modern admirers believed, at first, “repelled” any interest in Brainerd.⁴ His mental suffering was only compounded by a life-long battle with tuberculosis, which robbed him of his life at the young age of twenty-nine. Regardless of Brainerd’s problems with melancholia, self-loathing, and

¹ David Brainerd in Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 211.

²Ibid, 210-211.

³ David L. Weddle, “The Melancholy Saint: Jonathan Edwards’s Interpretation of David Brainerd as a Model of Evangelical Spirituality,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 81 (July, 1988), 318.

⁴ See Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 89-98; Richard Ellsworth Day, *Flagellant on Horseback: The Life Story of David Brainerd* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1950), 14-17.

physical debility, Edwards's biography the *Life of David Brainerd* would go on to become an "evangelical classic" which secured Brainerd "an exalted position in evangelical hagiography."⁵ Today Brainerd remains most well-known as an inspirational figure among evangelical Christians, with a still growing body of works celebrating Brainerd and Edwards's biography of him.⁶

His continued presence in Christian devotional literature has, until recently, done little to reverse the scholarly neglect of Brainerd, but, as historian of theology David Weddle notes, "Brainerd is... 'an extremely important patient for Christianity.'" ⁷ Brainerd's importance, Weddle argues, is that he "waged a life long struggle with melancholy, manifested in morbid self-condemnation, obsessive self-interest, and the glorification of death." All of these struggles became, according to Weddell, "elements of the subsequent evangelical tradition" as well as issues that Edwards selectively combed through to fit his own theology of religious experience.⁸

⁵ The full title of Edwards's biography is *An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd, Minister of the Gospel, Missionary to the Indians, from the honourable Society in Scotland, for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, and Pastor of a Church of Christian Indians in New-Jersey. Who died at Northampton in New-England, Octob. 9th 1747. in the 30th Year of his Age: Chiefly taken from his own Diary, and other private Writings, written for his own Use; and now published, by Jonathan Edwards, A.M. Minister of the Gospel at Northampton* (Boston 1749). In this dissertation I will refer to Edwards's work as the *Life of Brainerd*. Joseph Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work: 'The Life of David Brainerd' and the Nineteenth Century Evangelical Culture," *Church History* 54 (June, 1985), 189 and 190.

⁶ Conforti, 188 fn1, includes a long list of "admiring accounts written from an evangelical perspective," some of which are: Jesse Page, *David Brainerd: The Apostle to the North American Indians* (London: S.W. Partridge, 1903); Ellsworth Day, *Flagellant on Horseback*; and David Wynbeek, *David Brainerd: Beloved Yankee* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1961). Three more recent works not included by Conforti, but still from an "evangelical perspective" are Reverend Marcus L. Loane, *They Were Pilgrims* (Sydney: Angus & Roberston, 1970); Denise C. Stubbs, *Burning and Shining Light: The Life and Ministry of David Brainerd* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997); and John Piper, *The Hidden Smile of God: The Fruit of Affliction in the Lives of John Bunyan, William Cowper and David Brainerd* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001). Most recently I have come across an "updated" version of Edwards's *Life of Brainerd* edited to be read on an audio "book on tape." The book, Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd: Chiefly Taken from his Diary*, ed. Scott B. Chaplin (San Marcos, CA: Hovel Audio Inc, 2005), is available as a free download at www.christianaudio.com.

⁷ Weddle, "The Melancholy Saint," 298.

⁸ Ibid.

For scholars like Weddle, Brainerd's sorrow and morbid disposition became a noticeable feature of the character of future evangelical Christians. Weddle's stance is correct in that all evangelical Christians agreed they were to emulate Christ as the "man of sorrows," but Brainerd's suffering in his missionary and evangelistic endeavors, in the face of mental and physical illness, challenges any charge of "obsessive self-interest," and his suffering even helped shape influential evangelical ideologies of reform, such as "disinterested benevolence."⁹

More directly important for Evangelicalism, Brainerd's ministry allowed subsequent generations of theologians and laymen to amend the inherited theological ideas of conversion, assurance, and sanctification to fit current needs and shape an increasingly nuanced and active path to salvation for evangelical Christians that often came to center on the suffering of the believer. In this dissertation, I argue that Brainerd and his experience of suffering are pivotal for understanding the development of early Anglo-American Evangelicalism, from its beginnings in the revivals of the 1730s-1740s through its consolidation and expansion into the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Brainerd's experience and understanding of suffering not only provided a link to past expressions of faith, specifically Puritanism, they also showed how a Christian should behave in a new religious context devoted to revivalism and the harvest of souls.

When calls for revival were challenged by much of the clerical establishment in the 1740s, Jonathan Edwards began a defense of revivalism that fashioned Brainerd and his sacrificial ministry into the embodiment of Edwards's "experiential religion." I will show that suffering is the key to understanding Edwards's theology and that Edwards's use of suffering to

⁹ I discuss disinterested benevolence in detail in both chapters 4 and 5. For an excellent introduction to David Brainerd and disinterested benevolence, see Joseph A. Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, and American Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 62-86.

¹⁰ See Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism in America* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003); David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 2005).

explain his theological positions clarifies why Edwards used Brainerd to exemplify true “Christian practice.” After the revivals slowed and Evangelicalism began to cohere, Edwards’s experiential theology, as exemplified by Brainerd, stood as the essence of true faith and practice. Following Edwards’s lead, many of the inspired colleagues and admirers of Brainerd, such as Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790) and Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), created an outline of true faith and the path to salvation that made suffering a requirement for future generations to follow, and the best way to understand both the reception of God’s grace and the right uses of that grace. Through the work of these theologians, self-sacrificing ministries like David Brainerd’s became the embodiment of Christian discipleship for evangelical Christians. From the evangelical perspective, Christian discipleship was consistently defined as the endurance of suffering by the believer in the pursuit of Christ and for the glory of God. Suffering, as Brainerd experienced it, became both the essence of discipleship and the way in which a believer could measure his or her devotion to God on the way to sanctification.

For much of the history of Christianity, before either Brainerd or the rise of Evangelicalism, ministers and theologians produced general guidelines for the faithful to follow that outlined any number of requirements of Christian practice, from sacramental participation to fasting, that matched with specific theologies of salvation. Twentieth-century German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes that much of the history of the Christian Church is marked by the peddling of two competing theologies of grace –“cheap grace” and “costly grace.” Cheap grace, Bonhoeffer explains, is “the grace we bestow upon ourselves...preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship,”

or grace without demands and sacrifice.¹¹ By contrast Bonhoeffer argues that true grace or “costly” grace is “the gospel which must be *sought* again and again...such grace is *costly* because it costs a man his life, and it is *grace* because it gives a man the only true life.” True grace or “costly” grace is grace received through discipleship, which for Bonhoeffer entails “submitting to the yoke of Christ and following him.”¹² For all evangelicals, submitting to and following Christ meant making converts by taking on Christ’s example even to the point of great suffering.

This work largely follows Bonhoeffer’s criteria for Christian discipleship. Discipleship is taken to mean the disciples’ endurance of suffering and sacrifice, both in terms of internal strife and actual physical suffering. Bonhoeffer’s voice came from within Evangelicalism, so it offers an insider’s perspective of what the details of Christian discipleship are. Like Brainerd, Bonhoeffer is not very well known outside of evangelical circles, but within those circles, his suffering and poignant religious writings have earned such great admiration that his definition of discipleship may be seen as today’s standard evangelical one.¹³ Bonhoeffer maintains that the submission to costly grace guarantees suffering at the hands of men, but he also assures fellow Christians that “there is a miraculous power latent in this suffering...since this suffering will forward their testimony” and the will of God.¹⁴ In this dissertation, I will argue that Brainerd,

¹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1963), 45.

¹² *Ibid*, 47 and 48.

¹³ For an introduction to Bonhoeffer’s influence within evangelicalism as well as some of the scholarly interest he has generated, see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, eds. Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson (New York: Harper Collins, 1990); Martin E. Marty, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Letters and Papers from Prison: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 238. Bonhoeffer goes on to explain that the Reformation’s greatest achievement was making available to all what monasticism had kept hidden to a few: remembering that “grace costs, that grace means following Christ” (49). Bonhoeffer’s problem with monasticism was that the “mass of the laity could not be expected to emulate Christ...thus limiting the application of the commandments of Jesus to a restricted group of specialists” (49-50).

and the early evangelicals who exalted him submitted to an applied theology of “costly grace” that required suffering or true discipleship in order to further the will of God.

Given that the origins of Evangelicalism rest most comfortably within Reformed Protestantism, discussing suffering and discipleship within the context of grace and the struggles with it is entirely appropriate since grace is arguably the lynchpin of all of Reformed theology. Grace bestowed by God – that is manifest in either faith or works – is and always has been the ultimate saving power in evangelical Christianity, and the eighteenth-century patriarchs of Anglo-American Evangelicalism, Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (1703-1791), while often at odds, would have agreed that it was the great motor of faith as well. As the writings of eminent twentieth-century Reformed theologian Karl Barth show, the belief that sinners are “Saved by Grace” remains the fundamental cornerstone of modern evangelical theology.¹⁵

When ministers like Edwards and missionaries like Brainerd approached suffering, it was almost always within the context of grace. Crucially, I will show that one of the main threads that connected Anglo-American evangelicals across time, from its origins in Puritanism to its rapid

Limitation to a few rather than to all is contrary to the scriptures, Bonhoeffer argues, and “following Christ is not the achievement or merit of a select few, but the divine command to all Christians without distinction” (50). This way of thinking was embraced by evangelicals such as Brainerd and showed that the laity, just as the clergy, were to submit to discipleship whatever the cost and to endure suffering for the sake of receiving true grace and salvation. Bonhoeffer has another observation crucial to this project. While he affirms that the message of “justification by faith” or more appropriately “justification by grace” not works is the proper concept of receiving salvation, the evangelical theory of justification by faith has led to the spread of the doctrine of cheap grace, meaning salvation without discipleship. Bonhoeffer explains that men like Luther understood the ideas of costly grace and when he “spoke of grace, Luther always implied as a corollary that it cost him his own life, the life which was now for the first time subjected to the absolute obedience of Christ. Only so could he speak of grace. Luther had said that grace alone can save; his followers took up his doctrine and repeated it word for word. But they left out its invariable corollary, the obligation of discipleship...The justification of the sinner in the world degenerated into the justification of sin and the world. Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship” (53). I will argue that Christian thinkers, both lay and clerical, have recognized this dilemma and have sought to re-introduce “costly grace” or proper Christian discipleship. Brainerd and those who followed him and wrote about him were such Christians, and while they suffered the charge of advocating salvation through works, these believers were actually working within the Reformed tradition and trying to keep alive what they saw as a key component for Christianity, actual discipleship. These followers may have also believed, like Bonhoeffer, that the “word of cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any commandment of works” (59).

¹⁵ See Karl Barth, “Saved by Grace,” in *Deliverance to the Captives* (New York: Harper & Brothers Press, 1961), 35-42.

expansion in the nineteenth century, was the belief that suffering in faith was one of the most reliable signs for believers to know if grace had been bestowed.

I will also argue that suffering became a way for evangelical ministers, especially those who came after Jonathan Edwards and the early eighteenth-century revivals, to show if the actions or the requirements of a church or religious movement were orthodox. I argue that the use of suffering to test orthodoxy began with Puritans like Thomas Shepard (1605-1649), but was perfected by the efforts of Edwards when he also used suffering to show that the revivals and revivalism were not products of enthusiasm or heterodoxy, but were thoroughly orthodox. To do so, Edwards turned to Brainerd. He showed that Brainerd's youthful displays of enthusiasm were natural results of conversion and spiritual growth, but that the marrow of his sound faith lay in his willingness to suffer at the hands of his enemies, and, most especially, the willingness to suffer to enlarge the kingdom of God. If ministers wanted to temper the brash tendencies that occurred during the first stages of revival and conversion, or needed to root out hypocrites, they found that advocating a suffering discipleship was their best tool. As I will show, the audience in the pews of the church of Thomas Shepard in 1640 and a participant in a revival meeting led by Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) in 1840 would have been told that their faith "held weight" if they suffered in and for it.¹⁶ Later, when Edwards defended the revivals of the Great Awakening against those weary of the wild displays of faith, he argued that while there were "pretenders," the true believers were those who remained faithful "under great persecution, and in suffering the loss of all things." Finally, David Brainerd knew that he would only be able

¹⁶ See Thomas Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins* in *The Works of Thomas Shepard*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 302.

to make converts “in the midst of affliction” since it was in a fellowship of suffering that his sincerity and concern for his prospective converts would be shown.¹⁷

Brainerd’s willingness to suffer to enlarge the kingdom of God was ultimately the primary source of the admiration that evangelical Protestants of all stripes expressed for him – so much so that the experiential affliction became a, if not the, cornerstone of applied evangelical theology. Some, like John Wesley, believed Brainerd’s Calvinism was problematic, but Brainerd’s perseverance in suffering convinced Wesley to advocate that all Christians “be *followers of him, as he was of Christ.*”¹⁸ By suffering in following after Christ, Brainerd also exemplified one of the most important components of the evangelical concept of sanctification – perseverance. From the late seventeenth century through the nineteenth century, perseverance in or through times of great trial and affliction was the greatest test of faith for evangelical Christians, and suffering was again a lynchpin. Heirs of Calvinism such as the Puritans believed that God’s chosen “saints” would ultimately persevere in their faith despite human weakness,¹⁹ but after events like the Antinomian Controversy in the 1630s and the spread of revival in the 1730s and 1740s, ministers were forced to assess perseverance in terms of an active and costly expression of faith. If a believer suffered in displaying his or her faith by evangelizing, praying ceaselessly, or helping to end the suffering of others, and they persevered through it, then that believer had a sound faith. Over time, suffering in evangelistic endeavors became the near universal explanation of Christian perseverance for those now calling themselves Evangelicals

¹⁷Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 446-449; Brainerd in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 221-222.

¹⁸ George Bourne, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (Baltimore, 1807), 249.

¹⁹ For the “classic” Puritan exposition of grace and perseverance see John Cotton, “Rejoynder,” in *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638*, ed. David D. Hall (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), 78-151.

My historical analysis of Brainerd’s dynamic understanding of suffering and discipleship shows not only how Brainerd aided in the transition from older religious expressions to a new Evangelicalism, but also how he helped formulate concepts of suffering and discipleship which ultimately paved the way for a new understanding of Christian service. Early stalwarts of Evangelicalism such as Philip Doddridge were inspired by Brainerd and wrote to suffering Protestants in France to look to Brainerd for solace as well as assurance of their righteousness, since just as they suffer, Brainerd suffered too.²⁰ By the late eighteenth century some evangelical thinkers contended that following a program such as Brainerd’s could even lead to earthly perfection. Regardless of where perfection of the believer occurred – in heaven or earth – it is my contention that Brainerd emerged, by his actions and through what was written about him by Christian revivalists, ministers, and admirers, as a devoted apologist for “costly grace.” Better than any other example found in the history of American religion, I argue, by thought and deed he helped establish for Evangelicalism an original and deeply rigorous program of discipleship based upon a willingness to suffer as a Christian who is active in the world, not withdrawn from it. Just as Jon Butler found that the practitioners of Christianity “sacralized the landscape” of early America, Brainerd provided the means for Evangelicalism to sacralize the suffering of life itself.²¹

²⁰ Philip Doddridge, “To Isaac Toms, February 2, 1750” in *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD (1702-1751)*, ed. G.F. Nuttall (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1979), p. 348.

²¹ Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 14. For more on Butler’s argument on the sacralization of the landscape, see also 41, 54, 63, 108, 195, 239, 242, and 291-292.

Historiography

The way in which believers experienced suffering and how they addressed affliction within the life of faith, is, in my opinion, an overlooked component of the modern religious movement that is Evangelicalism. Since Brainerd was greatly admired in circles of Evangelicalism – if he was not an “Evangelical” himself – for his embrace and endurance of suffering, I believe my analysis can help in the historiographical quest to better define the characteristics of Anglo-American Evangelicalism. By investigating suffering, historians can offer a more refined account of how Evangelicals in American history understood their faith and how they explained complex concepts, such as conversion, regeneration, and sanctification, often using suffering as the thread tying together these steps to salvation. The embrace of suffering also shows that while evangelical Christians trumpeted an unparalleled devotion to the harvest of souls and spreading of the Gospel message, they only did so with an intense concern for theological and historical orthodoxy. In contrast to much of the scholarship on religious developments in America, from Perry Miller’s long standing thesis of declension to David Bebbington’s now influential argument that evangelicals operated with a new “bubbling confidence” in their faith, I show that the employment of suffering by evangelicals to explain and test their faith proves that the adherents of the Evangelical movement believed they were not beginning anew, but keeping a consistent orthodox profession of Reformed Christianity alive, well, and growing.²²

This dissertation builds on a small but important body of work that makes Brainerd and the era of his ministry central to the development of evangelical Christianity in America. Since

²² Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961). David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 42-45.

the mid-1980s Brainerd has most often been considered by virtue of his affiliation with Jonathan Edwards and Edwards's theology or as an exemplar of the enthusiasm created during the Great Awakening. Scholars have noticed Brainerd's faith in practice, but I have yet to find any detailed discussion of suffering as an integral part of the lifelong struggle to translate personal affliction into proto-evangelical praxis that Brainerd's suffering became. Some scholars have at least recognized instances of an individual suffering for their faith or doctrines that involve suffering, but they have not focused on suffering as a consistent sign distinguishing those deemed among the faithful. Most forcefully, Joseph Conforti argues that Brainerd's significance lies in the "heroic figure he became for nineteenth-century evangelicals" via his embodiment of "disinterested benevolence," which, I add, was a role that definitely necessitated suffering on some level because it required a believer to be willing to sacrifice everything to bring others to Christ.²³ Brainerd, Conforti insists, has been relegated by historians to an example of New Light zeal during the Great Awakening, thereby causing his significance to "languish in historical obscurity." For Conforti, reducing Brainerd to only a "consequence of the Awakening" detaches him from his most integral role as a vehicle for the transmission of Edwardsian Calvinism to the nineteenth century.²⁴ Conforti argues that Edwards's "the *Life* popularized and transmitted to nineteenth-century evangelicals major aspects of Edwards's thought...[and] played an important role in the evolution of the ... ethics of nineteenth-century evangelicalism." Following Conforti's argument, the "*Life of Brainerd* is a critical work for any assessment of Edwards's

²³ Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work," 189. See also Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, and American*, 62-86.

²⁴ See Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work," 188-201; Joseph Conforti, "David Brainerd and the Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (Autumn, 1985), 309-329; and especially Conforti, "David Brainerd and Disinterested Benevolence," 62-86.

legacy for antebellum evangelical America.”²⁵ Based on this position offered by Conforti, I add show that since Brainerd is such an important figure for understanding Evangelicalism from its beginning to at least antebellum America, then suffering in and for faith was, in particular, the very foundation of the ethics of nineteenth-century evangelicalism. When ministers were forced to breakdown concepts such as disinterested benevolence, time after time they relied on an articulation of suffering to bring the gospel message to those in need.

Norman Pettit agrees that Brainerd became a major figure for later missionary movements, but he sees the importance of Brainerd and Edwards’s *Life of Brainerd* resting primarily on the theological debates of the First Great Awakening. In the introduction to his definitive scholarly edition of the *Life of Brainerd*, Pettit writes that Edwards’s biography should be included with his other writings on revivalism, because “in no other work is the reader made so vividly aware of Edwards’ personal response to the events of the time.” Brainerd served as a tool of “rebuke both to enthusiasts and to Arminians.”²⁶ It is Edwards’s use of Brainerd to combat the “heresy” of Arminianism that Pettit finds most historically relevant for Brainerd and the *Life of Brainerd*.²⁷ Wherever else Brainerd’s historical importance may lie, Pettit sees that his impact is strongest in the immediate era of the First Great Awakening and the theological battles waged during that time.²⁸ In these theological contestations, I contend, suffering again

²⁵ Conforti, “Jonathan Edwards’s Most Popular Work,” 190.

²⁶ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 5.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 13.

²⁸ In the article, “Prelude to Mission: Brainerd’s Expulsion from Yale,” *The New England Quarterly* 59 (March, 1986), 28-50, Pettit argues that the importance of Brainerd’s missionary activity for later generations has overshadowed the fact that Brainerd never initially wished to be a missionary. It was the events of religious revival and differing ideological/theological views that cause Brainerd’s expulsion from Yale and what he learned from it that pushed him to and shaped his missionary activities. So, again, Brainerd’s primary importance does not rest in the later missionary and revival movement, but in Brainerd’s own era of revival and theological dispute. David Weddle takes a similar view in his essay, “The Melancholy Saint,” 297-318. Weddle clearly argues that “Brainerd

emerges as a key foundation for Edwards's bulwark against the extremes of the Awakening. Edwards showed that while Brainerd initially made flirtations with the enthusiastic elements of revival, he proved that his faith was sound by suffering both physically and mentally to bring the gospel to those in need rather than only publicly sharing acceptable doctrines of saving grace.

Like Pettit, Richard W. Pointer, in his essay "'Poor Indians' and 'Poor in Spirit,'" exclusively focuses on events during Brainerd's lifetime.²⁹ Pointer's primary aim is to highlight the agency that Indians maintained in their conversions to Christianity as a result of their encounters with white Christian missionaries. Pointer uses Brainerd's diary to show that "his own emotional and spiritual conditions were apparently affected by the character of his contact with Indians."³⁰ Pointer explains that all of the accounts written about Brainerd, especially Edwards's own *Life of Brainerd*, have ignored the influence of Indians. Pointer makes a noteworthy divergence from other works on Brainerd in that he views Brainerd's "public" diaries, written for and published in 1746 by Brainerd's missionary sponsor, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), as a source that is as important as Edwards's *Life of Brainerd*.³¹ Many knew of Brainerd before Edwards finished publishing his *Life of Brainerd* in 1749, and Pointer's work allows scholars to reach beyond the *Life of*

became Edwards's "model of evangelical spirituality" and his *Life of Brainerd* summarizes Edwards's own views on religious experience better "than a dozen volumes of theology" (299).

²⁹ Richard W. Pointer, "'Poor Indians' and 'Poor in Spirit': The Indian Impact on David Brainerd," *The New England Quarterly* 67 (September, 1994), 403-426.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 403-404.

³¹ The journals were published in two parts with their full names being Part I, *Mirabilia Dei inter Indicos; or the Rise and Progress of a remarkable work of Grace, Among a number of Indians...Justly represented in Journal, Kept...by David Brainerd*, and Part II, *Divine Grace Displayed; or the Continuance and Progress of a remarkable work of Grace Among some Indians belonging to the Provinces of New Jersey and Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1746). This journal was obviously circulated with the intent to have them read as inspirational pieces as well as instructive manuals for those engaged in missionary activity. See "Preface," in *Mirabilia Dei*, v-viii. Pointer, "Poor Indians," 404.

Brainerd as the primary Brainerd resource.³² Pointer focuses on Brainerd's "public" diaries to analyze the cultural exchange that took place between Brainerd and the Indians he tried to Christianize and to correct the "long-standing tendency among historians of English colonial religion to treat natives as, at best, part of the set and, at worst entirely off stage in the colonial religious drama."³³ Since Pointer is interested in Brainerd as a missionary and not Edwards's manipulation of Brainerd's "holy" example, he shows that Brainerd's missionary writings are an overlooked account to be used to uncover the complex Euro-American and native encounters of the eighteenth century. Pointer's position is crucial to my own work, since I argue that it was Brainerd's work as a missionary to the Indians that contributed most to his views on suffering and sanctification. While Pointer argues that the Indian response to missionaries and their message had a great impact on general missionary methods, I highlight the negative responses Indians exhibited at any attempt to try to civilize or to make them more European during Brainerd's attempts attempt to convert them, to show that Brainerd had to adapt his approach. In particular, Brainerd found that making use of his shared experience of suffering with the Indians he tried to convert, combined with the story of Christ's compassionate suffering, would prove to be the most effective tool at making converts.

The most recent and comprehensive scholarly analysis of Brainerd's life, work, and legacy is John Grigg's 2002 Ph.D. dissertation, "The Lives of David Brainerd," followed by his book, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of an Evangelical Icon* (2009). In his

³² In addition to Brainerd's "public" journal, Edwards's "A Sermon Preached on the Day of the Funeral of the Rev. Mr. David Brainerd" was published and circulated in December 1747 by Rogers and Fowle for Daniel Henchmen, who both shared that "Edwards hoped it would be widely read" (Pettit, *Life of Brainerd*, 543, fn. 1). In England, Dissenter/Baptist minister Philip Doddridge also published an abridgement of Brainerd's journal in 1748, titled *An Abridgement of Mr. Brainerd's Journal Among the Indians or The Rise and Progress of a Remarkable Work of Grace among a Number of the Indians*.

³³ Pointer, "Poor Indians," 404.

dissertation, Grigg places Brainerd “within the social and religious milieu in which he lived and worked,” as well as amid the theological agendas of Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley, in order to better uncover “Brainerd’s character and spirit.”³⁴ Grigg reconstructs the worlds in which Brainerd moved, from the pre-European world of the Indians he sought to convert, to Brainerd’s college days, and finally to the world of Evangelicalism after his death. After a close analysis of Brainerd’s life, Grigg then assesses how both Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley used Brainerd’s journals for their own theological battles and how this has furthered the distortion of Brainerd’s actual life and thoughts by disregarding his familial attachments to the Connecticut “establishment” and his personal religious experiences. In his dissertation, Grigg concludes that “the real David Brainerd is probably lost along with his manuscripts, survived by a caricature developed to meet the clerical agendas of notable ministers.” While Grigg has done much to aid a scholarly uncovering of the person of David Brainerd, he is left with the realization that “Brainerd is less a historical figure than he is an historical creation.”³⁵

In his book, Grigg focuses not only on the life of David Brainerd but also on the legacy created by generations of evangelical hagiographers. *The Lives of David Brainerd* re-evaluates Brainerd in the context “of the culture in which he grew up” in order to bring a sense of continuity to the person and religious work of David Brainerd that has so often been lost or obscured by those – religious as well as scholarly – writers who have made Brainerd their subject. His project is a “reconnection of [surviving] fragments in to an integrated account that restores the abstraction [of Brainerd] to its proper context.” In short, Grigg’s book is meant to be “a successful reconstitution of Brainerd’s life beyond the outlines that emerge from the

³⁴ John Grigg, “The Lives of David Brainerd” (Ph. D. diss., University of Kansas, 2002), ii and 4; John Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of an Evangelical Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³⁵ Grigg, “The Lives of David Brainerd,” 370 and 5.

biographical accounts,” using the works of scholars who have created a deeper and more thorough understanding of the time period in which Brainerd lived.³⁶

After his attempt to recreate an accurate telling of Brainerd’s life, Grigg maintains that Brainerd was a “child of two worlds” who struggled to balance the inherited Puritanism of the “Connecticut establishment” and the more radical fringes of the revival. Both clearly shaped his religious experience, and, as Grigg shows, he never quite reconciled his Puritan heritage and interest in radical revivalism in his short life, which likely widened his almost universal appeal for generations of faithful that followed.³⁷ It is within this argument that I insert the Puritan notion of suffering and Brainerd’s own experience of suffering to show that while Brainerd had problems balancing two religious world views, he was able to unite them to form both an effective method of making converts and to explain the process of sanctification that were both largely based on suffering. While Grigg’s insistence that Brainerd was a “complex character to go along with the complex times in which he lived” stands, I believe that inherited views of suffering from his Puritan past and his own intensely personal experience of it allowed Brainerd and his admirers to offer a coherent example of the evangelical discipleship that emerged from the era’s revivals.³⁸

My dissertation also advances the general historiography by underscoring the role played by Brainerd and the importance of suffering in the story of early American religion. The way in which he understood and practiced his role as a disciple of Christ helps us to understand the evangelical concepts of faith and its growth over time. I agree with Patricia Bonomi’s finding

³⁶ Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 3-4.

³⁷ For Grigg’s explanation of Brainerd’s attempt to balance his establishment origins with radical revivalism, see Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 7-44.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 189 & 192.

that “an eighteenth century of ‘Enlightenment’ skepticism coming between a ‘Puritan’ seventeenth century and an ‘evangelical’ nineteenth century simply does not add up.”³⁹ There was, I hope to show, a more far-reaching consistency within Evangelicalism. I believe that the fashioning of Brainerd into a model of discipleship for the fledgling movement proves this. Brainerd’s revered legacy within Evangelicalism emerged because he was a fundamental component of a movement that grew and developed over time, rather than being, as Jon Butler suggests, the product of isolated or imagined awakenings. His model of suffering in following after Christ was certainly a foundation to build on.⁴⁰

Prominent religious historian W.R. Ward opens the way for re-evaluating Brainerd’s centrality to the development of Evangelicalism. In an influential body of work, and most recently in *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789*, Ward convincingly argues that it was not really until the “early eighteenth century [that] a recognizable evangelicalism had emerged” in Europe and America. More importantly, he notes that “its most universal characteristic was a violent, even venomous, anti-Aristotelianism, embodied in a tremendous hostility to systematic theology.” The measure of “religious vitality” for evangelicals was then not found in a coherent and rational formula of systematic theology, but rather in a “vitalist understanding of nature” – religion was not meant to be explained, it was meant to be “experienced.”⁴¹ I believe that this finding underscores the relevance of my

³⁹ Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion Society and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 220.

⁴⁰ Jon Butler, “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,” *Journal of American History* 69 (September, 1982), 305-325.

⁴¹ W.R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3 & 4. For a concise summary of the disputed or complicated task of defining the origins of Evangelicalism as well as a general introduction to the historiography, see Leonard I. Sweet, “The Evangelical Tradition in America,” in *The Evangelical Tradition in America*, ed. Leonard I. Sweet (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984); Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 50-75; John Walsh, “Origins of the Evangelical Revival,”

discussion on discipleship – how suffering outlined what discipleship entailed and what it looked like –as it adds to the greater historiography of the development of Evangelicalism. The systemization of evangelical beliefs and practices eventually came, but physical examples for the system had to come first, and if experience initially trumped doctrine, pioneers of the movement had to explain right feelings or “affections” before anything else. Suffering in and for faith was, I argue, an acute feeling to which all evangelicals could look.

Perhaps also responding to Evangelicalism’s noticeable rejection of systematic theology, David Bebbington, in his seminal *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, kept very short the unifying and central beliefs of Evangelicalism, which he listed as “conversionism, activism, *Biblicism*, and *crucicentrism*.”⁴² These four components have become known as the “Bebbington quadrilateral,” and they have been a key ingredient in most scholarly discussions of Evangelicalism’s origins since Bebbington published his work in 1989.⁴³ Following Bebbington, Mark Noll offers his own summary of the quadrilateral and of how religion was meant to be experienced for evangelical believers. Noll explains that “the four key ingredients of evangelicalism” which have been maintained since the 1730s are the following:

conversion, or the ‘belief that lives need to be changed’; the Bible, or ‘the belief that all spiritual truth is to be found in its pages’; activism, or the dedication of all believers, including laypeople, to lives of service for God, especially as manifest in evangelism (spreading the good news) and mission (taking the gospel to other societies); crucicentrism, or the conviction

in *Essays in Modern Church History in Memory of Norman Sykes*, ed. G.V. Bennet and John Walsh (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) 132-162. For an in-depth analysis of the topic, see Ted A. Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century* (Columbia, SC: University Press of South Carolina, 1991); W.R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴² David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-3.

⁴³ See Timothy Larsen, “The Reception Given *Evangelicals in Modern Britain* Since its Publication in 1989” in *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, eds. Michael A.G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008), 21-36.

that Christ's death was the crucial matter in providing atonement for sin (that is, providing reconciliation between a holy God and sinful humans).⁴⁴

Noll concedes that most of these beliefs had been articulated by earlier groups of believers, especially English Puritans. The separation between Evangelicals and their predecessors, for Noll, lies in the fact that groups like the Puritans did “push toward a more personal or more internal practice of Christian faith,” but had trouble realizing that “reform of self could be separated from systematic reform of church and nation.”⁴⁵ The theological beliefs propagated by earlier traditions like the Puritans and those of the evangelicals were much the same, but the way in which evangelicals applied those beliefs, Ward suggests, did change. Ward adds that in the eighteenth century “evangelicals liked to think of themselves as conservative in doctrine, [but] they were looking to change, and put together a platform of forces for change that would extend beyond the narrowly theological.”⁴⁶ Evangelicalism is then reduced to the individual and the requirement for the individual to experience religion within and beyond set theologies, guided by right feelings and actions along the path to sanctification and, ultimately, perfection.

It is in the above conversation that I will insert Brainerd and his experience of suffering on his own perceived path to sanctification. Suffering is clearly an underemphasized, if not overlooked, component of how evangelicals both explained their faith and put forth a uniform religious praxis. Brainerd was so important for early Evangelicalism because early evangelical believers were wrestling with a complex inherited theology and, like Jonathan Edwards, they worked unceasingly to simplify this theology in order for the lay believer to follow, to make sense of, and, most importantly, to *feel* his or her faith. Bebbington's quadrilateral has done

⁴⁴ Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 19.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 54.

⁴⁶ Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 6.

much to unify evangelical thought and practice, but without suffering it falls short of fully explaining “activism” and the consistent effort evangelicals made to tie their expression of faith to pre-existing and orthodox theologies. It is impossible, of course, to abandon the discussion of theology and doctrine since doctrinal concerns continued to direct early evangelicals even when, as scholars like Ward argue, it seems that evangelicals “violently” rejected systematic theology. Brainerd himself was very concerned with doctrine and found it proper to instill the right doctrine when making converts. Following the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Brainerd “set up catechetical lecture[s]...proposing Questions to them [his converts]...receiving their answers, and then explaining and insisting as appear’d necessary and proper upon each question.”⁴⁷ Only when his prospective converts’ answers were doctrinally sound would Brainerd continue on with his lectures. After covering this orthodox catechism, Brainerd *did* deviate from an accepted norm, but it was only which parts of the Gospel he chose to emphasize, not theology. Brainerd learned from experience that his Indian audience had trouble accepting messages of eternal damnation and judgment, but were indeed receptive to the message of Christ’s suffering to save lowly sinners. So rather than bringing his audience to the Gospel with promises of civility or warnings of damnation, Brainerd focused on a message of suffering and sacrifice for others so that those others, even total strangers, may reach salvation. Before he taught the catechism or shared the message of Christ’s sacrifice, Brainerd also learned he must, in order to gain a receptive audience, sacrifice for and endure suffering with the Indians. Doing so not only proved his sincerity to his audience but also his genuine belief in the doctrines he sacrificed to share. In following this method, Brainerd did find some success, and as Edwards staunchly advocated in

⁴⁷ David Brainerd, *Divine Grace Displayed; or the Continuance and Progress of a remarkable work of Grace Among some Indians belonging to the Provinces of New Jersey and Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1746), 90.

his defense of revivals, suffering all things in faith so that others may know the Gospel message was, and had at least since the time of the Puritans, been the essence of Christian practice.

Suffering, by way of Brainerd's example, became the lynchpin that connected the evangelical concern for the harvest of souls to the historical orthodoxy of Reformed Christianity.

Reaching beyond what historians like Bebbington, Noll, or Ward suggest, I emphasize that figures like Brainerd turned readily to the costly effort of spreading God's word to keep his ministry theologically orthodox while also allowing him the ability to "make some practical Improvement to the whole" by helping his catechists understand exactly what was required of them and how they should apply proper doctrine.⁴⁸ Application, then, as seen in Brainerd's own experience, became the primary concern of Evangelical theology. Evangelicals were definitely conservative in doctrine, but they tried to apply those theologies in new ways. I will argue that Brainerd is an exemplar in showing later generations what was meant by "the belief that lives needed to be changed," therefore showing what "activism or the dedication of all believers...to lives of service for God" actually looked like. Demonstrating his admirer's conservative attachment to Reformed theologies like grace, Brainerd's religious work was labeled "divine grace displayed." The fact that it was not just "divine grace" but "grace *displayed*," through intense suffering, shows that Brainerd's ministry was part of a movement to understand how grace worked and how the believer responded and acted within the theology of grace. Brainerd's willingness to suffer, more than Bebbington's assertion of a new sense of confidence or Ward's characterization of a modified or rejected system of belief, came to define the changed and dedicated life of the evangelical Christian.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Chapter Outline

My first chapter explores the doctrines and traditions Brainerd drew upon, centering primarily on Puritan concepts of conversion, the preparation for conversion, and how and where suffering fit into this morphology. I evaluate the origins of suffering as a practical display of grace received using works of Puritan theology and popular devotional works. I begin with an analysis of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and move to an exploration of works by key seventeenth-century Puritan ministers: Richard Sibbes, Thomas Hooker, John Cotton, Thomas Shepard, and John Flavel. In each of the works, I address how the topic of suffering was approached by the author and how suffering was at least initially limited to the first stages of conversion, most especially in coming, after a first calling, to a felt humiliation and contrition for sin. However, due to theological debates, especially concerns about antinomianism, I go on to show that suffering in the *post* conversion life of faith (sanctification) gradually became more and more stressed by Puritan theologians and ministers, especially in the later writings of Thomas Shepard and John Flavel.

In Chapter Two I focus almost exclusively on the ministry of David Brainerd and how his views of suffering developed through the course of his life and missionary duties. I show how Brainerd first experienced suffering in his conversion and its close alignment with Puritan expectations of the experiential progress to an assured sense of God's grace. The suffering Brainerd experienced in his conversion created a spiritual pride, however, and I argue that his expulsion from Yale pushed him to reassess his view of the role of suffering in the life of faith. Since Brainerd's expulsion forbade him the conventional route to the ministry and thrust him down an unforeseen path into missionary work, he developed his own original methods of missionary work that were markedly different than most programs of the time. Suffering to

enlarge the kingdom of God, as understood through his missionary endeavors, became, for Brainerd, the way a believer was sanctified. Suffering to enlarge the kingdom of God made Brainerd dependent upon Christ to atone for his sin and an agent of God's will by making converts. I insert into this conversation an evaluation of missionaries, empire, and the work of "civilizing" to both underscore Brainerd's commitment to God before all else and to highlight the importance of suffering in his daily ministry. In Brainerd's writings he developed an understanding that suffering with and for possible converts was the best tool for enlarging Christ's earthly kingdom. No other display proved the sincerity of belief and the depths of the evangelist's care more than the willingness to suffer. "Harangues of terror" and damnation did little to move his audience, but he found them drawn to the witness of Christ's suffering and sacrifice.⁴⁹ What is more, Brainerd argued that suffering for others made the evangelist like Christ and drew both the believer and the lost to him.

Chapter Three offers an assessment of Edwards's defense of revivalism and the ways in which he employed the experience of suffering and David Brainerd in that defense. I consider Brainerd's place in the transatlantic religious revivals primarily through the writings and apologetics of Jonathan Edwards, and how Edwards saw that Brainerd's early religious experiences epitomized the perennial problem of hypocrisy in the church in a time of growth and change. Edwards believed that suffering for the will of God and expansion of his kingdom was the embodiment of true virtue, and Brainerd was the best contemporary exemplar of it. Through the works of men like Edwards, emphasis on the process of sanctification became a hallmark of early Evangelicalism, especially when it included suffering. Suffering in pursuit of Christ opened a new evangelical understanding of assurance in a number of ways, and it also provided a

⁴⁹ David Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei inter Indicos*, 74.

clear definition of what “action” or Christian practice/discipleship actually looked like. First, as I argue in much of the chapter, the enactment of faith was conservative in that it protected against the hypocrisy of denouncing the faith of others that often resulted from the pride new members of the Church gained from the assurance of his or her conversion. Second, suffering to do God’s will enabled the believer to reform their own life and especially the lives of others with its powerful display of concern for God’s word as well as God’s creation. Finally, suffering provided an opportunity for the realization of the theological concept of perseverance, or as Edwards called it, “Christian fortitude.”⁵⁰ To persevere in the face of suffering was arguably the ultimate and truest religious affection in Edwards’s theology. In Edwards’s theology the believer may never truly know if they were converted or when it occurred, but suffering in pursuit of Christ led, more than anything, to an active and faithful dependence upon him, this belief, perhaps, being the best definition of an “evangelical” Christian.

In Chapter Four I show that Edwards’s outline of Christian practice as a costly expression of faith made suffering the most common tool for theologians of the late eighteenth century to explain the requirements of faith. Suffering provided theologians such as Samuel Hopkins and Joseph Bellamy (often using Brainerd’s now famous example) a way to answer many questions of faith. Ministers like Hopkins argued that if a believer were willing to suffer to enlarge the kingdom of Christ, then they would hasten the millennial return of Christ. They took Edwards’s theories of Christian virtue and constructed the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, which arguably became the most powerful rationale for the necessity of suffering by the disciples of Christ. Alongside my discussion of Calvinist ministers, I consider John Wesley’s Arminian assessment of Brainerd, suffering, and discipleship. While less concerned with eschatological

⁵⁰ See, Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 446-449.

motives and having rejected the harshness of the Calvinist scheme of salvation, Wesley fully agreed with the advocacy of a suffering display of faith and its power for making converts. I close with the assertion that Brainerd's example of suffering closed the gap between Calvinist and Arminian/Wesleyan evangelicals, because both could accept that regeneration and sanctification were aided and even initiated by suffering. The concept of suffering gave the apologists of early Evangelicalism a way to summarize or encapsulate both *right* religious ideas and feelings. The believer's willingness to suffer for others not only proved acceptance of the gospel, but enduring it was an action (works) designed to bring others to Christ.

The fifth and final chapter of my dissertation traces the increasing emphasis on the process of sanctification, as opposed to conversion, for the rapidly growing Evangelical movement of the nineteenth century. This intensified focus on the pursuit and signs of saintliness led to the Holiness movement and the proliferation of the belief that Christian perfection could be realized on earth if, by way of historical example, the proper path was followed. This chapter hones in on the figures and writings of Edwards Amasa Parks, Nathaniel Taylor, Nathan Bangs, Charles Finney, Charles Spurgeon, and Dwight Moody. In their discourses, suffering especially as Brainerd experienced it, remained one the most important components of the evangelical expression of faith. There were, however, also new developments, including a powerful resistance against the possibility of "disinterest" in acts of religious benevolence, instigated by men like Nathan Bangs and others influenced by Wesley, who, as the century progressed, arguably became the majority within the movement. According to my argument, enduring suffering, rather than disinterested benevolence, was the universal quality of sanctification for those many Americans who now identified themselves as "Evangelicals." Brainerd and his display of a costly discipleship became foundational for a new

Evangelical understanding of sanctification, and, most importantly, what it *felt* like.

Furthermore, regardless of where practitioners of Evangelicalism believed the perfection of the saints occurred on earth or in heaven, most agreed that perfection came only by great trial. As the century progressed, Brainerd's willingness to "take up his cross" and imitate Christ in his role as the "suffering servant" cemented his importance within Evangelicalism, as well as the prominence of suffering within Evangelicalism from its beginnings to the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. Suffering like Christ and in pursuit of Him so that others may come to Him was – more than any obsessive, chronic melancholia or morbid self-interest – Brainerd's greatest contribution to early Evangelicalism because it provided a point of reference for the entire movement. Brainerd's personal beliefs could be and were attacked, but his actions provided a continuity with the past and helped guide new believer's to sanctity as the movement continued to proliferate.

CHAPTER ONE

Edification of the Saints: Suffering and the Puritan Exposition of Conversion

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...

Isaiah 53:5

Suffering has always been an important component of Christian life and faith. The experience of suffering has helped to both motivate and sustain faith, instruct converts, and serve as a means to identify the faithful from hypocrites. Influential medieval divine Thomas à Kempis shared in his cherished devotional manual, *The Imitation of Christ* (ca. 1418-1427), that “so long as we live in this world we cannot escape suffering and temptation.” Life on earth was, as Kempis explained, citing the book of Job, “constant warfare.” Nevertheless, he added that “all our peace in this miserable life is found in humbly enduring suffering rather than being free from it. He who knows best how to suffer will enjoy the greater peace, because he is the conqueror of himself, the master of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven.” If the Christian’s entire life of faith was to imitate Christ, then there was no better imitation than to share in his sufferings. The writings of Kempis also show – though sometimes hidden behind other theological concerns – there were always Christians who across the ages advocated the belief that “if you share His suffering, you shall also share his glory.”¹ In the centuries after Kempis wrote his manual, the Puritans of England and America proved they were purveyors of this same belief.²

¹ Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Company, 1940), 18, 45, and 57.

² For a suggestion of Kempis’s influence on and in Puritan, and later, Evangelical thought, see W.R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), 86 and 122-123.

This chapter is an assessment of the ways in which adherents of Puritanism, primarily in its Anglo-American expression, confronted the experience of suffering in the life of faith and how it influenced those, like David Brainerd, who followed them. Using a sample of influential Puritan literature, I argue that suffering was a constant theme in the Puritan exegesis of their theology of grace because it served as a tangible and regularly encountered signpost on the way to salvation. Most often when Puritans considered suffering in relation to faith, it was in terms of the process of conversion. Puritans focused on the encounter suffering during conversion because the ultimate theological scheme of Puritanism was salvation by faith. Suffering, in its many forms – from the realization and sorrow over having lived a life of sin to the physical pain of life – pushed the believer to lean faithfully on Christ. However, as I will discuss in more detail below, the Puritan discussion of suffering and conversion left plenty of room for ambiguity. Depending on the Puritan, the process of conversion could cover an expansive ground. Conversion could be a beginning step in the life of faith, or at the same time, the entire earthly life of a saint. Nevertheless, wherever or whenever it occurred or how long it took, conversion was a cornerstone for the entirety of Puritan theology. Historian W.R. Ward shows how, for Puritans, “conversion was the ultimate spiritual prize,” and they believed if the “Christian life did not begin with conversion it would probably not begin at all.”³ Suffering, as I will show, was crucial for any Puritan articulation of conversion because ministers knew that it could help guide a sinner to conversion and continue to inform him or her on the path to salvation.

When ministers and theologians like Shepard worked to instruct the faithful on the way to conversion – what it looked like and what happened after – they often turned to a discussion of

³ W.R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 87.

suffering. The instruction or edification ministers provided their flock was part of the process or dialogue that “prepared” a sinner for conversion and the life of faith. Puritans specifically called this process “preparation” and it became a central component of Puritanism and perhaps an even more contentious topic in Puritan historiography. In this historiography, scholars cast Puritans as being either “orthodox” or “spiritualist” based upon the view of preparation that they had. The “orthodox” like Thomas Hooker, embraced preparation for conversion and argued that there was an active role played by the sinner in it. Other Puritan divines, like John Cotton, were “spiritualists” and proponents of radical grace theology who argued conversion was all in God’s hands with little for the sinner to do but believe.⁴ However, the use of preparation as way to classify Puritans as either orthodox or spiritualist is limited. Like conversion, preparation was both a primary step, and a process that encompassed the whole life of faith on the way to salvation. Even if preparation for conversion was unacceptable for some Puritans, as Calvinists, all Puritans knew that sanctification, or being made holy by God, was essential before reaching salvation.⁵ Since sanctification changed the believer before reaching heaven, all Puritans – either by God alone or as active coworkers – experienced preparation. Puritan ministers knew

⁴ Scholar of Puritanism, Andrew Delbanco, argues that the heart of the “Puritan ordeal” rests in the varied understandings of preparation for conversion. Puritans, in light of their theology of grace, debated the limits of physical work in conversion, when and where it occurred, and even if conversion could be prepared for. See Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 2-8. For an excellent introduction to the basics of Puritan preparationist ideology see Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966). For more on preparationism and the historiographical classifications of “orthodox” and “spiritualist” see Michael Colacurcio, “Regeneration Through Violence: Hooker and the Morale of Preparation,” in *Godly Letters: The Literature of the American Puritans* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 248-330; Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 1-12; David Parnham, “Redeeming Free Grace: Thomas Hooker and the Contested Language of Salvation,” *Church History* 77 (Dec., 2008), 921-930.

⁵ See William K.B. Stoever, *‘A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven’: Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 192-199

that suffering was central to this experience, and they used it to guide or at least assure their flock that they were on the path to salvation.

Suffering's centrality to Puritan descriptions of the entire life of faith – the pilgrimage from conversion to sanctification – meant that suffering was also central to articulating religious faith for the Puritan progeny. One of the most enduring legacies of the Puritans within Reformed Christianity was how well they charted and characterized the life of religious faith. The Puritan *ordo salutis*, or the literary explanation of the “way of salvation,” was so thorough that the experiences and emotions Puritans used to describe their faith on the way to salvation became the standard form for most American evangelical Protestants.⁶ For example, Charles Hambrick-Stowe shows that the Puritan conception of the way to salvation as process that delivered believers from one place (sin) to another (holiness) made “pilgrimage” not only an enduring “metaphor” within Puritanism, but one that was passed on to their theological heirs.⁷ When later evangelical Christians first confronted and wrestled with suffering in their faith, they mostly did so as Puritans, or at least from a Puritan perspective. While in the grips of the conversion process, a believer suffered from the humiliation of his or her sin, and struggled to reach contrition. These were all feelings Puritans were told that were required for a sinner to become a saint. Suffering in and through the processes of faith was a unifying experience for both the Puritan faithful and evangelical believers who followed in their path.

⁶ For more on the *ordo salutis* see, Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 76.

⁷ On the transfer of Puritan language and explanations of faith later evangelical Protestants see, Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 17-18. Hambrick-Stowe's discussion of the “pilgrimage metaphor” is in, Charles E. Hambrick Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Williamsburg, VA: University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill, 1982), viii-ix, 20-22, 56, 197-203.

Throughout much of the seventeenth century, theology scholar Alan C. Clifford explains that threats from “outside and inside the Reformed churches” especially that of antinomianism or radical free grace theology forced Puritan divines to focus less on the theory of faith, and more on the heart and the practice of faith. The antinomian position that saving grace was entirely received in conversion created a noticeable counterpoint in Puritan literature that argued proper emotions and experiences over the course of a saint’s earthly life actually held the best signs of grace received.⁸ Suffering, as I argue, was always a central experience in those works, and I believe that it was suffering more than any other experience that allowed Puritans to emphasize the practice of faith to buttress against extremes like antinomianism without challenging free grace theology. Clifford shows that the Puritans immediately found a safeguard for their practical concerns, for even Calvin recognized that “faith is more a matter of the heart than the head, of the affection than the intellect.”⁹ Puritan ministers were then charged with making both theology and scripture accessible on a more personal and relatable level, so the faithful could help guard against the extremes of antinomianism and know what signs of grace provided assurance of their salvation. As scholars like Teresa Toulouse show, Puritan ministers increasingly attempted to fit scripture and theology to “practical application in the daily lives” of the minister’s congregants “in a simple and plain speech.”¹⁰ I will show that, time and again, addressing the experience of suffering in faith allowed Puritan ministers and writers to

⁸ Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology, 1640-1790, An Evaluation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 169, 186, and 177. For more on antinomianism and the “antinomian crisis” see two indispensable works that cover the most crucial documents and arguments of the crisis are: David D. Hall ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1968); Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁹ Clifford, *Atonement and Justification*, 177.

¹⁰ Teresa Toulouse, “‘The Art of Prophesying’: John Cotton and the Rhetoric of Election,” *Early American Literature* 19 (Winter, 1984/1985), 280.

breakdown complex theologies to the most practical and easily understood levels, giving way to works like *Pilgrim's Progress* that were consulted by generations of Christian believers looking to navigate through the path to salvation.

John Bunyan's (c. 1628-1688) *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) is arguably the most well-known and far reaching work of popular Puritan literature. It was not only published and widely read in England, it was also enthusiastically transported to America and beyond. While it may not be a definitive theological treatise, Bunyan's use of the theme of pilgrimage definitively influenced the way in which everyday believers defined or explained faith.¹¹ In the "Author's Apology for His Book," Bunyan assured that "this book will make a traveler of thee." He reminded his readers that "the prophets used much by metaphors to set forth truth," so his use of pilgrimage to explain the religious faith was sound. Bunyan knew that as readers followed Christian, the work's central character, they would see in contrast to the antinomian position an active faith of one who "runs, and runs, till he unto the gate of glory comes." He hoped that the pilgrimage of Christian "will make the slothful active" and aid in their own journey to Christ.¹² In regards to suffering, Bunyan's epic is particularly important. The work details the pilgrimage of faith with Christian's experience of trial and suffering on his way to the "Celestial City," or salvation. The centrality of conversion and preparation to the Puritan experience is evident throughout Bunyan's work, but the theme that emerges most clearly is that neither occurred without trial and suffering.

¹¹ For a concise discussion of the extensive scholarly attention given to John Bunyan and his most popular work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, see, T.L. Underwood, "It Pleased Me Much to Contend': John Bunyan as Controversialist," *Church History* 57 (December, 1988), 456-469.

¹² John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to That Which is to Come; Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream* (Buffalo, NY: Geo. H. Derby and Co., 1853), 9 and 7.

As a work intended for popular consumption, Bunyan worked around a number of theological debates without addressing them directly. For example, at the start of the journey we assume that the central character has already been converted, given his name, Christian. Later, this is clarified when Christian recalls his conversion during the trials he faces while on his pilgrimage. Bunyan probably began his story with an already converted character facing trials *post* conversion in an attempt to show that conversion itself was not enough to rest on if his readers wanted to reach salvation. He wanted to show his readers that they must, like Christian, continue on in his or her spiritual labours.¹³ Bunyan's portrayal of action and turmoil after conversion is another warning against antinomianism, or resting on faith alone to achieve salvation. Bunyan, like many other Puritans, felt this was dangerous and set out to work against it. Bunyan first uses suffering in the form of anxiety to prove his point. Before beginning his quest, Christian is filled with anxiety about his idleness after conversion. His anxiety eventually pushes him to action, and he sets off on a path filled with even greater suffering. However, he is at least no longer standing still, and is now headed towards salvation.

The driving question for all of *Pilgrim's Progress*, is "what must I do to be saved?" It pushed Christian to action in Part I, and does the same for Christian's wife, Christiana, and their four sons in Part II. Christian asks the question immediately in the first stage of his journey, and at the outset of her journey Christiana recalls that "bitter outcry of his, 'what must I do to be saved,'" which "did ring in her ears most dolefully." Christiana following after Christian on her own pilgrimage shows that Bunyan believed the work of salvation and the suffering of it was primarily endured after conversion. However, rather than focusing only on new actions and

¹³ See, Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, viii-ix, 20-22, 197-203; for more on preparation beyond conversion see also Stoeber, 'A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven', 192-199.

trials, a weighty portion of the narrative is devoted to the characters' recollection of past experiences. Particularly, Christian recalls the experience of conversion and the workings of grace he received during that process. As Christian gets nearer to the gates of the "Celestial City" he and his companion, Hopeful, share the details of Hopeful's conversion to guard against the weariness of their travels and revitalize their commitment to their faith.¹⁴ Throughout the work, Bunyan has his characters continually praise God for his bestowing of grace. The trials and suffering that Christian faced are the main theme and most memorable component of the narrative, but the reception of God's grace is the lynchpin of his quest. Bunyan's devotion to Calvinism required that his characters constantly recall or recognize that their conversion was based on the work of grace and not the work of man. Grace enabled Christian to begin his pilgrimage and complete his heroic acts of faith. The suffering that Christian endured in these acts of faith served as a means to highlight the power of the grace of God.¹⁵ Recollections or detailed remembrances of conversion like the one that Christian and hopeful displayed were also a common feature at Puritan church services, so the scene would have been easily recognized. Scholars like Patricia Caldwell notes that they were used to help "edify" current church members and draw in new members.¹⁶ Bunyan had to first make his audience comfortable, or his message palatable. Most of all, he had to establish that Christian's endurance of the trials and suffering he faced could not have occurred unless already converted by the grace of God.

¹⁴ Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 10, 110, and 84-89.

¹⁵ See Roger Sharrock, "Spiritual Autobiography in *The Pilgrim's Progress*," *The Review of English Studies* 24 (April, 1948), 102-104.

¹⁶ Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1983), 75-76.

Once Bunyan safeguarded Christian's display of an active faith by showing he received and was empowered by grace during his conversion, he turned to his main theme of trial and tribulation. Christian's pilgrimage is not one of ease. His experiences of duress, doubt, and suffering far outweigh the "splendours" for the bulk of the narrative. When respite and beauty are experienced it is often a beauty that is "curiously beautified." Normal instances of serenity are scant in Christian's travels, and when they are experienced, the down time is spent preparing for the "surfeits, and other diseases that are incident to those that heat their blood by travel." Pain, disease, and the "severest judgments" abound on Christian's way to the Celestial City, and they by far outweigh moments of pleasure.¹⁷ Bunyan's own struggles with faith and his understanding of the demands of reformed theology strongly influenced him to show affliction outweighing pleasure on the way to salvation. His target audience of lay believers also meant that he wanted to create palatable and relatable moments of confusion, duress, and withholding that they were likely to encounter in their own struggles with faith. He also had to show them why it worth taking on such suffering.¹⁸

To motivate action, Bunyan knew that he must create a sense of urgency in his readers by relating Christian's fears and anxiety to their own. A gripping fear and realization of his current state of suffering with no end initially inspires Christian to embark on his journey. When Christian first asks, "What shall I do to be saved," Bunyan noted that it was in a condition of "great distress and misery." Most of all, he had the very human realization "that [he was] condemned to die." Evangelist, the chief prognosticator of the narrative, reminds Christian that death is certain, which affirms Christian's worries. Evangelist then prods Christian a little

¹⁷ Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 69.

¹⁸ See, Sharrock, "Spiritual Autobiography," 102-108.

asking, “why not willing to die, since this life is attended with so many evils?” The question posed an alternative that there could be something else. If there was something else, Evangelist asked to know “if this be thy condition, why standest thou still?”¹⁹ Fear and suffering was already the possession of Christian’s current state, and death was its only end. Evangelist reminds Christian that action brought the prospect of an end to his misery and the possible reward of salvation.

Given what unfolds in the remainder of Part I, we see that action only at first brings an enlargement of pain and suffering, rather than its cessation. In Part II of *Pilgrim’s Progress* a character named Mr. Sagacity memorializes Christian’s journey through Part I. He explains that it was full of “molestations, troubles, wars, captivities, cries, groans, frights and fears.” It was an altogether “hazardous journey” that had to be endured. Mr. Sagacity explains that only after enduring such tribulation does Christian now know an existence “without labor and sorrow or grief.” He goes on to explain that Christian both faced and was able to sustain such violence by one factor; “for the love that he had to his Prince.” This love earned him a return of the “affections of his Prince,” and guided him to salvation.²⁰ Christian, by the reciprocal love of God, does prevail through his sufferings. He comes to see that “troubles and distresses that you go through...are no sign that God hath forsaken you; but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore you have received of his goodness, and live upon him in your distresses.”²¹ To lean only on God in “distresses” was the answer to the burning question, “what must be done to be saved.” To lean only on God by faith, or love, is costly and will assuredly

¹⁹ Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, 10-11.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 109.

²¹ *Ibid*, 97.

put the devoted assuredly in harm's way. However, as Christian found, suffering was the test of faith, and enduring through it was the best way to know he was on the right path to salvation.

The multiple forms of suffering – misery, fear, pain, molestations, and distress – are the tangible devices of Bunyan's narrative. They are also the very real experiences that Bunyan knew and showed through Christian occurred in the process of salvation. To have feelings or emotional experiences in faith – what the Puritans described as affectations or affections – was incredibly important to Puritans. As W.R. Ward finds, a Puritan “needed to *feel* his election.” Suffering and pain were tangible experiences or “signs in himself” that election had occurred.²² The layman, even without understanding the intricacies of Calvinist theology, could at least understand that in their suffering they were working through the processes of salvation. Writers like Bunyan knew that they were presenting their readers a complex theology. However, when Christian (the everyman believer) struggles with the mysteries of theology Bunyan offers help to both Christian and his readers. Characters like the Interpreter explain to Christian that the feeling of faith is like a fire, and that “this fire is the work of grace that is wrought in the heart; he that casts water upon it...is the devil.” This fire cannot be distinguished because “Christ, who continually, with the oil of his grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart.” While the fire is maintained by Christ, not the believer, it is the believer that experiences the fire. On his earthly pilgrimage, through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Christian encountered “hobgoblins, satyrs, and dragons of the pit” and even faced Beelzebub himself. There was much in the way to derail Christian, but in experiencing dangers, temptations, even commonplace feelings of confusion, there was evidence that Christian, and all believers, was on the right path.

²² Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 87. For more on the Puritan need to feel, and the ways in which they expressed their feeling consult, David Leverenz, *The Language of Puritan Feeling: An Exploration in Literature Psychology, and Social History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980).

While on that path any believer could fall into a “very dangerous quag.” Even “King David once did fall” but God “plucked him out,” only after experiencing “his affliction.” Bunyan explained that such scenarios are not to be lamented, but are instances of reassurance and empowerment. God, in these times of darkness, could and would save his chosen because what they suffered in their journey made them lean on him.²³

Around fifty years before Bunyan published his popular work on the suffering of Christian pilgrimage, English Puritan minister, Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), prepared his influential sermon *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax*. The thrust of the sermon is that the reception of God’s grace did not end pain or suffering. Instead, Sibbes explains that it was increased for the purposes of purification and the final healing of the believer. The sermon was probably first published in 1630, although some references to it exist as early as 1620, and it has enjoyed a long history of publication.²⁴ Bunyan may have even been influenced by Sibbes. Historians show that Richard Sibbes had an almost universal appeal among the Puritan clergy and laity alike. Janice Knight argues that his warmth, concern for comfort, and staunch defense

²³ Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, 23-24, and 41-42.

²⁴ Included in the 1838 re-print of *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax* (London: C. Whittingham) is a bibliography of Sibbes’s work placing the publication of the *Bruised Reed* second in Sibbes’s corpus with a publication date of 1631(xvi). First in the body of works is *The Saints Cordials*, published in 1629, but this was a collection of sermons made by various ministers, of which both Sibbes was included. Another nineteenth century copy of the *Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax* (the copy that is consulted in this study) published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication gives the publication date of 1620 for the work. In Mark Dever, *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000), there is also included an alphabetized and chronological bibliography of Sibbes’s works in which Dever gives 1630 as the date of publication for the *Bruised Reed* (236-243). William Haller in *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York, 1938), 66, notes that the *Bruised Reed* was the first published work that Sibbes saw in print during his lifetime (Sibbes perished in 1635). There were some sermons published as early as 1618, according to Dever, but it is likely that these, like the *Saints Cordials*, were all compilations, rather than solely authored by Sibbes. Norman Pettit (see below) relies on Haller’s information and notes the *Bruised Reed* as being first. While this notion may not stand, the *Bruised Reed* is or was Sibbes’s best-known text, with re-prints spanning multiple languages and decades from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, beginning in 1973 there began another revival of re-prints of the *Bruised Reed* the most recent being in 1998 (Dever, 236-243).

of Christ made him popular with his parishioners and the patron of “spiritualist” ministers like John Cotton. Michael Colarcurcio shows that Sibbes was not a champion of the “bogey of hellfire,” but rather, like Thomas Shepard after him, one who believed “in the heartbreaking work” required for salvation. Finally, Perry Miller offers that Sibbes and his views were so influential because Sibbes was simply a friend to many of the most influential Puritan divines of seventeenth century. The connections that Sibbes made and the influence he wielded in them helped make him a favorite Puritan to reference for even later theologians like Jonathan Edwards.²⁵ Sibbes’s endorsement of suffering in life as a way to finally reach comfort was pervasive, and it ran through generations of minister’s sermons outlining the path to salvation.

Richard Sibbes knew that the rigors of life were demanding and that if left unattended, his flock would never find the possible comfort life’s demands distracted them from. Sibbes set the premise of his sermon, *The Bruised Reed*, with this passage: “in time of temptation, misgiving consciences look so much to the trouble they are in, that they need to be roused up to behold Him whom they may find rest for their distressed souls.” He advised, “In temptations it is safest to behold nothing but Christ...this saving object has a special influence of comfort upon the soul...” Sibbes gently led his audience to see that as they looked to Christ and to “the Father’s authority and love in him” in their times of crisis they would see “all that Christ did and suffered as Mediator [as well as] God in him ‘reconciling the world unto himself.’” Sibbes told his audience that Christ’s suffering to reconcile the world with God, and God’s love and pleasure in Christ meant “we may gather that he is as well pleased with us, if we be in Christ!”²⁶ To lean

²⁵ See, Knight, *Orthodoxies*, 110; Colarcurcio, *Godly Letters*, 331, 220, and 231; Perry Miller, “The Marrow of Puritan Divinity” in *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 59-60. For Edwards’s use of Sibbes, see Knight, *Orthodoxies*, 198-214.

²⁶ Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax to which is added A Description of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 180?), 14-15.

on Christ in times of suffering would bring comfort, because in leaning on Christ, the believer received the love of God. Historians like Norman Pettit explain that Sibbes always “spoke for spiritual warmth,” but that he was also an advocate of “the rod” in the process of salvation. Sibbes knew the believer would have to be brought to lean on Christ by suffering “the lash.” Sibbes’s advocacy of the rod and the lash was restrained, or the believer “may ‘die under the wound,’” but it was still required.²⁷

Before he turned to the lash, Sibbes eased into his sermon telling his audience that “God has laid up all grace and comfort in Christ for us, and planted a wonderful sweetness of pity and love in his heart toward us.” The “Christian Reader” needed look no further than scripture to see that it is full of “Christ’s love and tender care over those that are humbled.” However, he went on to emphasize that it was love and care for those that were only humbled, which is why they must suffer. Suffering was the state that man was to be in *before* ever receiving the working of grace. Sibbes explained that man must be not whole, but he must be bruised and humbled because “Christ so favours weak ones, as that he frames their souls to a better condition than they are in.” According to Sibbes, Christ operates under these three conditions when dealing with sinners:

First, the condition of those that Christ had to deal with: 1. They were bruised reeds. 2. Smoking flax. Secondly, Christ’s bearing toward them; he brake not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax; where more is meant than spoken; for he will not only not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but will cherish them. Thirdly, the constancy and progress of this his tender care, until judgment come to victory; that is, until the

²⁷ Pettit, *The Heart Prepared*, 66-68. In his introduction to his biography on Sibbes, Mark Dever, reinforces this view of Sibbes as an eminently practical minister “more concerned with comfort than controversy.” Dever goes on to note that Sibbes’ theology and aims were expansive and an important component of the corpus of works articulating the Puritan covenant theology, or “belonging to Christ.” See, Mark Dever, *Richard Sibbes*, 1-8.

sanctified frame of grace begun in their hearts be brought to that perfection, that it shall prevail over all opposite corruption.

Sibbes showed that the sinner will be damaged, but not completely broken. There would be pain in the process, but through it care and grooming would be provided so that the “bruised reed” would persevere. For Sibbes the process of salvation started with weakness. All men “are bruised reeds before their conversion, and oftentimes after...he...makes them nothing, before he will use them in any great services.”²⁸

Without Christ, Sibbes explained that man was in a state of sin and therefore already “in some misery.” This misery was necessary because “by misery [the sinner] is brought to see sin as the cause of it” and that there was no salvation within a body of sin. Sibbes showed that this realization would cause a “spark of hope” to arise and encourage a “restless desire” to look for help from beyond the self, bringing the sinner closer to Christ. According to Sibbes these steps – misery, realization of sin and helplessness, desire for help from Christ – are the first processes of conversion, or preparation for conversion, and they continued to be advocated by ministers well after his death. The suffering or misery did not end after these steps either. Once hope has been cultivated by this process, the “spark” will be immediately challenged. Sibbes explained that the “spark of hope” will be, “opposed by doubtings and fears rising from corruption” present in the nature of man. Sibbes showed that it was here, in the miserable or bruised sinner with their “spark of hope,” that existed “together the bruised reed and smoking reed.” Now, he urged, the workings of faith and the road to salvation had begun.²⁹

²⁸ Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 5-9, and 16-19.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 17-18.

Thus far in his sermon, the bruising discussed by Sibbes was only the bruising that occurs before conversion. This bruising and the “work of the Spirit in bringing down high thoughts is necessary before conversion.” However, it was still not enough to save the sinner. Sibbes wrote that the weakness of man will cause “relapses and apostasies,” even introduction to the law of God will not save them. The Sinner was still in their natural state of sin and “they were not long enough under the lash of law.” Next, Sibbes explained that the “Holy Spirit, to further the work of conviction, joins some affliction, which, when sanctified, has a healing and purging power.” The suffering experienced during conversion must continue to purge the sinner of sin. Or as Sibbes explained, “nay, after conversion we need bruising...by remainder of pride in our nature, and to let us see that we live by mercy.” Once the sinner was drawn to Christ by his or her misery in hopes of mercy, there would be more suffering.

Sibbes offered two primary purposes for the continuation of suffering. First, “weaker Christians may not be too much discouraged, when they see stronger ones shaken and bruised.” He added, that “Peter...till he met with this bruise, had more wind in him than pith. The people of God cannot be without these examples. The heroical deeds of those great worthies do not comfort the Church so much as their falls and bruises do.” The record of the apostles and saints suffering after their own conversions served “as examples of those who have obtained mercy.” Sibbes believed that falling taught souls that were similarly suffering far more than heroics could. Without falling, Sibbes noted that David would not have “come to a free confession...” and “that his sorrows did rise in his own feeling, to the exquisite pain of breaking of bones.” The second reason that post-conversion bruising was necessary was that it drew the sinner even closer to Christ. Sibbes explained that “when God exercises us with bruising upon bruising” it is to work in the sinner “a conformity to our head Christ, who was bruised for us...that we may

know how much we are bound to him.” On this point Sibbes also warned that the faithful should be slow to judge when failure occurs either in the self or others. He offered that it was likely that it was the occurrence of bruising by the hand of God and that “profane spirits...censure broken-hearted Christians for a desperate person, when God is about a gracious work with them.”

Sibbes closed this argument on bruising with a reminder that the whole process, from conversion onward, is done with great effort. He wrote that “it is no easy matter to bring a man from nature to grace, and from grace to glory, so unyielding and untractable are our hearts.”³⁰

After Sibbes laid out the necessity for bruising before and after conversion, he reassured that “Christ will not break the bruised reed.” He explained that Christ will operate like a physician or a surgeon, putting the “patient to great pain” before healing. Christ “will lance and cut, but not dismember.” Sibbes wrote that the afflicted soul should know that “he is a physician good at all diseases, especially at the binding up of a broken-heart: he died that he might heal our souls with his own blood.” With these reassurances that the sinner is in good hands, Sibbes worked toward creating a set of signs the faithful may look to in order that they may see they are under the physicians care. He clarified that in the instances “when we feel ourselves bruised” the sinner should know that “Christ’s course is first to wound, then to heal.” In his awareness of the human fear of pain and treatment, Sibbes added that “no sound whole soul shall ever enter to heaven.” The experience of temptation was another sign of the healing process. Sibbes wrote that the sinner should recall that “Christ was tempted for me; according to my trials will be my graces and comforts.” Sibbes urged all sinners to embrace their infirmity, since it is the

³⁰ Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 20-21.

“consciousness of the Church’s weakness [that] makes her willing to lean on her beloved and hide herself under his wing.”³¹

Once Sibbes established that bruising was necessary and that the sinner was in the able hands of Christ, he moved on to explain in more detail the work of bruising and the role the sinner had in it. He wrote that:

First, we must conceive of bruising either as a state into which God brings us, or as a duty to be performed by us. Both are here meant. We must join with God in bruising ourselves. When he humbles us, let us humble ourselves, and not stand out against him, for then he will redouble his stroke; and let us justify Christ in all his chastisements, knowing that all his dealing towards us is to cause us to return into our own hearts. His work in bruising tends to our work in bruising ourselves...We must lay siege to the hardness of our own hearts, and aggravate sin all we can.

There is work for the sinner to do in this process. In the bruising endured by the chastisements of Christ the sinner must also bruise himself in “lament[ing] our own untowardness,” and by suffering come to “that none of this could be spared” because of their sin. In the process of bruising there was a transaction between God and man. Sibbes explained that it caused man to offer his faith only after God so gracefully bruised the sinner. Sibbes hoped that this would cause the sinner to “look on Christ, who was bruised for us...whom we pierced with our sins,” and feel true humiliation. Sibbes warned that alone, no one will “prevail” in feeling true humiliation, “unless God by his Spirit convince us deeply, setting our sins before us, to a stand. Then we will seek out for mercy.” Humiliation was so important because the sinner “must know that every sudden terror and short grief is not that which makes us bruised reeds; not a little hanging our heads...but a working our hearts to such a grief, as will make sin more odious unto

³¹ Ibid, 22, 26, and 27.

us than punishment.” We are not bruised enough in our view of sin, Sibbes explained, “until we offer a holy violence against it...[until] we make work for God to bruise us, and for sharp repentance afterward.” Sibbes advised that the sinner should not flee from this fight against sin because “there is more mercy in Christ than sin in us.” What is more, he reminded them that it is better to go bruised to heaven than sound to hell.”³²

By the close of the fourth chapter Sibbes demarcated the path to salvation. If the process of contrition and humiliation were endured, and it was coupled with the sinner’s doubt of their ability or worthiness to be saved, then the sinner was likely on his or her way to turning to Christ. The process required pain and suffering, but in the chapters to follow, Sibbes worked to bolster confidence by turning to clarify the other part of his title the “smoking flax.” Grace had begun in the individual, but the continuation of the process to salvation, sanctification, will be as long and arduous. Conversion was important, but the sinner should know that “grace is little at first.” Sibbes summarized: “the observations hence are, first, that in God’s children, especially in their first conversion, there is but a little measure of grace, and that little mixed with much corruption, which, as smoke, is offensive. Secondly, that Christ will not quench this smoking flax.” After the initial spark, conversion, the remaining corruption must be seen to and corrected, until a “new creature” is formed.³³

The process of sanctification was where Sibbes showed that the “new creature” formed, and it was done by more work and more suffering. Just as Bunyan had maintained in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Sibbes believed that conversion or the first workings of grace, was essential for the

³² Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 28-31.

³³ *Ibid*, 36-37.

sinner to overcome the sufferings that followed conversion. Sibbes never tried to create controversy or challenge the supremacy of grace in his advocacy of the “work” the sinner must complete during sanctification. Instead, as Charles Cohen argues, he was concerned with balancing an “evangelical technique” that guarded against discouragements presented in uncorrected practices, namely resting on conversion alone.³⁴ Sibbes urged the sinner to “look on our imperfect beginning, only to enforce further striving to perfection, and to keep us in a low conceit.” The bruised were not yet pure, as the grace bestowed on them at their conversion was still “mingled with corruption.” Sibbes advocated that the sinner must know “that grace does not drive out corruption all at once, but some is left to conflict with. The purest action of the purest men need Christ to perfume them...” The biblical examples of pure men like Moses, David, Jonah, and Paul were all still in need of God’s help because like all men “we carry about us a double principle, grace and nature” which do battle for the entirety of man’s life, even for the pure.³⁵

Sibbes warned that the cohabitation of grace and nature in man steer the pure towards “two dangerous rocks which our natures are prone to dash upon, *security and pride*.” Here Sibbes offered a clear argument leveled at antinomianism, or resting in assurance having received God’s “free grace” in conversion. Sibbes assured, that grace was bestowed upon the sinner at conversion, but like David his other biblical examples, the sinner was not pure. The sinner can expect more pain after conversion because “the scope of true love is to make the party better... With some a spirit of meekness prevails most, but with others the rod.” God knew which method worked best, but sanctification was a trying affair and as Sibbes explained “a

³⁴ See, Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 87-88. For more on Sibbes balance of theology see Pettit, *Heart Prepared*, 66-67.

³⁵ Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 40-42.

sharp reproof sometimes is a precious pearl and a sweet balm.” According to Sibbes, a powerful impediment to sanctification and ultimate glorification was the “dangerous rock of security” found in conversion.³⁶ Pain, correction, and work are all required for salvation, otherwise there is a subversion of Christ’s own words: “come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden.” Sibbes explained that to be still or to rest easy, “would not make use of so gracious a disposition” as sinner being perfected. Sibbes reminded his audience that perfection does not occur here, but that “perfect refining is for another world, for the world of the souls of perfect men.”³⁷

The continuation of pain and suffering after conversion will bring the sinner closer to Christ who was perfect. Sibbes explained that the suffering of the believer during sanctification simulates some of the suffering Christ endured and that “it cannot but touch his bowels when the misery of his own dear people is spread before him.” Sibbes added that the “failings, with conflict, in sanctification should not weaken the peace of justification, and assurance of salvation,” because, “hereupon it follows, that weakness may stand with the assurance of salvation.”³⁸ Suffering and struggle were all part of the process of being saved. To experience pain and suffering after conversion was only a sign that grace was at work in the soul. In the penultimate chapter to his sermon (chapter twenty-seven), Sibbes offered his best summary of his scheme of salvation. He wrote that “there can be no victory where there is no combat.”³⁹ There was struggle to the very end.

³⁶ Ibid, 40-42, and 49. For more on security and assurance see, Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2002), *Making Heretics*, 16-17.

³⁷ Sibbes, *Bruised Reed*, 99-105, and 50.

³⁸ Ibid, 122, 157, and 156.

³⁹ Ibid, 189.

Like Sibbes, Thomas Hooker (1586-1647) explained much of the process of salvation in the terms of a physician caring for sick and suffering souls, and he agreed that the soul first had to be broken before healed. Hooker himself viewed the minister's duties as remarkably similar to a physician's. According to his biographer, Frank Shuffelton, Hooker's energies were devoted to uncovering and making known the impediments of the soul to Christ to so he could then "prescribe remedies" so they might be saved.⁴⁰ During the same time frame that Richard Sibbes's concluded in *The Bruised Reed* that "there can be no victory where there is no combat," Hooker made a strikingly similar argument. In 1629, Hooker's *The Poor Doubting Christian Drawn to Christ* was first published in England and then transferred to the American continent when Hooker emigrated there in 1633. Based on the work of Perry Miller, Thomas Hooker is widely accepted as the leading "American" representative of "Puritan orthodoxy," and according to Janice Knight he is one of "the Intellectual Fathers," of that orthodoxy and the doctrine of preparation it contained.⁴¹ A leading scholar of Hooker, Sargent Bush Jr., argues that the "encouragement" and "solace" that Hooker provided in *The Poor Doubting Christian*, combined with his logical and easily digested arguments, made the work "one of the most popular and enduring pieces of pulpit literature produced by a seventeenth-century American Puritan."⁴²

⁴⁰ Frank Shuffelton, *Thomas Hooker, 1586-1647* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 37; see also Sargent Bush Jr., *The Writings of Thomas Hooker: Spiritual Adventure in Two Worlds* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 149. For more on the role of the minister as physician see Howard M. Feinstein, "The Prepared Heart: A Comparative Study of Puritan Theology and Psychoanalysis," *American Quarterly* 22 (Summer, 1970), 168-169.

⁴¹ See Knight, *Orthodoxies*, 2-4.

⁴² Sargent Bush, "The Growth of Thomas Hooker's *The Poor Doubting Christian*" *Early American Literature* 8 (Spring, 1973), 3-4. For the "logic" of Hooker's arguments see David L. Parker, "Petrus Ramus and the Puritans: The 'Logic' of Preparationist Conversion Doctrine," *Early American Literature* 8 (Fall, 1973), 140-141.

Hooker's first step as the minister-physician in *The Poor Doubting Christian* was to diagnose what impediments or "hinderances [*sic*]" stood in the way of being healed (coming to Christ). He broke the impediments into two types. The first were those that "really keep men from coming to take hold Christ at all." The second impediments were those "which do not indeed deprive a man of title and interest to eternal happiness, but make the way tedious...so that he cannot come to Christ so readily as he desires and longs to do." The first impediment was the more dangerous of the two, and had its own multiple components. The first component of the impediment was being in a "presumptuous security" and "content...with their present condition." The second component was to rely too much on personal abilities and strengths, which could only "reform some sins." The third and fourth components went in the opposite direction of the second, and were probably leveled at antinomianism and the danger of resting in security. Hooker maintained that the active work of sinner could not alone save the sinner only God's grace could, but work and suffering *was* a necessary component of salvation. Hooker chastised those "being convinced of his utter inability to please God in himself...that he must leave all, and cleave only unto Christ by faith." Hooker warned that a man who does so and "thrusts himself upon Christ, thinking all the work is then done, and no more to be looked after" only "hammer[s] out at last a faith of his own to make him happy."⁴³ According to Hooker, this was not truly salvation by faith, as true faith required the sinner to endure suffering actively work towards salvation. Hooker made it clear, that if anyone was on this course, the first impediment, their hopes of salvation would never be realized.

⁴³ Thomas Hooker, *The Poor Doubting Christian Drawn to Christ: Wherein the Main Hinderances which Keep Men from Coming to Christ are Discovered; with Special Helps to Recover God's Favour* (Hartford, Conn.: Robins and Smith, 1845), 25-26.

Hooker made short work of covering the first impediment, and its components since there was little to do but highlight that they would entirely block the path to salvation. The second type, were more common and Hooker believed that most of his audience would encounter them because they were of their own making. These hindrances derived “out of the carnal reason” of man for fear of suffering. Hooker explained that man’s flawed thinking creates “another state of believing than ever Christ required or ordained.” He added that it should be “no marvel that we come short of him: for thus we put rubs, and make bars in our way...and then say we that we cannot take, nor go. Thus it is with you poor Christians, and the fault is your own.” The tragedy of the situation was its ability to be avoided. The believer was supposed to have a “distressed soul” that is “haply” and “truly humbled.” Hooker argued that all men, in their humbled state, should “take notice of the beauty of holiness” and wonder at the “precious promises which God hath made to all that are his.” The wonder caused by the holiness of God and the reward of the promise should cause the believer to pursue them both. However, in their humbled state, Hooker knew that the sinner became aware of their insufficiency; “thus they dare not to come to the promise; and they dare not venture upon it.” Hooker knew there was no need for this. He urged, “we must not think to bring our enlargements and hope to the promise, but go to the promise for them.” Hooker believed that man did not have to be made whole before coming to the promise (salvation), but it was the pursuit of the promise that made the man whole. The sinner was led astray by their own carnal limitations and bodily corruptions. He asked, “Who made this condition of the covenant, that a man must have so much enlargement, before he can come to the promise?” Hooker assured that it was not God, because “all that he looks for is mere poverty and emptiness...the Lord looks for no power or sufficiency from you.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Ibid, 27-29.

Hooker's scheme of preparation began with suffering or at least depravity. As a committed Calvinist he knew that man did not possess anything that would enable their conversion or salvation, which was the basic point he was trying to get his audience to accept. They had nothing to offer, so that is what made them acceptable to Christ. To accept this point required faith and, of course, the grace of God. Michael Colacurcio argues that this was part of Hooker's concept of "enabled believing." Salvation was "purchased" for those who "shall believe," or as Hooker explained, "if you will be content that Christ shall take all from you, and dispose of you and all; then take a Saviour, and then you have him."⁴⁵ If his audience doubted they had access to the promise, he assured them that if they had the faith to see and accept Christ as the savior then there is the proof "that thou hast a title to the promise." Grace was evident in the faith, which the sinner did nothing to receive, but had it purchased for them. However, Hooker did believe that faith or believing was an action. To "take Christ upon those terms on which he offers himself," was the assurance that they had "title to the promise." With that title the believer had to act in an effort to repay the purchase.⁴⁶

Hooker never allowed for the action of man to influence God in any way. He simply believed, in accordance with covenant theology, that there was a necessary exchange of faith and devotion for grace received. If this was known by scripture, Hooker asked why a sinner would wait to begin working on his side of the bargain until he saw some sign of grace.⁴⁷ He told his audience, "let the Lord do what he will, and let us do what we should...It is God then that must

⁴⁵ Colacurcio, *Godly Letters*, 253; Hooker, *The Poor Doubting Christian*, 29.

⁴⁶ Hooker, *The Poor Doubting Christian*, 29. For more on being "active in believing" see Stoever, *A Faire and Easie Way*, 63-65.

⁴⁷ See, Shuffelton, *Thomas Hooker*, 81-84.

do it; who yet will not do it without us, being reasonable men and women in the power of willing.”⁴⁸ Ultimately everything was in the hands of God, but God had given sinners their task in scripture. The sinner must build an absolute faith and dependence upon God, they must strive after him, and take by faith that Christ will take them who have nothing to offer. Hooker explained that “the Lord who is free will not stand bent to thy bow, or give thee grace when thou wilt; for, it is not for us to know the times and seasons.” In the meantime, he advised them to “labour to have thy conscience settled and established in that truth, which now out of the word thou has gotten to bear witness of the work of grace in thee...it is good to have our judgment informed by the word.” Hooker preached that to listen to and engage the word of God “is the way to receive constant comfort, and the way to go on cheerfully in thy Christian Course... , though you meet with ever so many temptations and oppositions, crossing your way.”⁴⁹ With the word in hand, the sinner would go on to meet the suffering of conversion.

According to Hooker’s doctrine, when the sinner begins to wrestle with the demands of scripture, the suffering of preparation begins. Just as Sibbes explained in *The Bruised Reed*, Hooker labored to show in *The Poor Doubting Christian*, that the sinner needed ample correction to realize their current condition so they would pursue after Christ. Hooker wrote that “the word and means of grace do work good, if they make thee more sensible to thy hardness and deadness.” Hooker believed that the first awakenings to a life sin, and even the first chastening, occurred by scripture.⁵⁰ He told his audience that preparation had begun when “the word with

⁴⁸ Hooker, *The Poor Doubting Christian*, 99.

⁴⁹ Hooker, *The Poor Doubting Christian*, 36, 84, 78-80, and 98.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 36. See also, Lisa M. Gordis, *Opening Scripture: Bible Reading and Interpretative Authority in Puritan New England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 77.

the spirit make thee more sensible of thy baseness, thy hardness of heart, and dullness of spirit, in regard of that body of death which hangs upon thee..." If this was so, the sinner was about to endure even greater suffering, but it was, as Hooker consoled, good for them. He explained:

That physic works most kindly, that makes the party sick before it works: so it is with the word. Before, thou hadst a proud heart, and didst therefore lift up thyself in thine own abilities, and didst trust in thine own strength, and though thou thoughtest that thy care, and the improvements of the means, would work wonder. But now the word works sweetly, when it makes thee apprehensive, that a wounded soul is the gift of God, not man...To feel deadness is life; and to feel hardness is softness.⁵¹

The sinner needed to know the vileness of their sin, "the venom of his corruptions, and the lamentable effect of all his sinful practices." A great step in Hooker's process was when the sinner would move to have "more suspicion over his own soul than ever before. So that he would begin to quarrel with itself, and lies down in shame." Through the heavy hand of God, the sinner will come to know self-denial, and for Hooker, "self-denial is when the soul knoweth it hath nothing...for it knows it is dead...it therefore looks up to heaven, and seeks all sufficiency from God alone."⁵²

Hooker argued that once the sinner has been broken, and is moved to rely on "God alone" while in their suffering, conversion has begun. Hooker assured, like Sibbes, that the beginnings of conversion did not indicate an end to suffering. He warned his audience, "thou must not think to have this joy and refreshing before thou goest to the promise. – Thou must look for it when thou has chewed and fed upon it...This joy is a fruit that proceeds from faith after much wrestling." According to Hooker, even if the sinner became sanctified, like King David, they

⁵¹ Hooker, *The Poor Doubting Christian*, 36.

⁵² *Ibid*, 41, 39, 42, and 44.

still must continue to seek Christ. He explained, that “David was justified and sanctified, and yet wanted his joy.” Hooker urged that the gospel shows that the sinner must never rest; “the soul thus continues wandering and seeking, till at last the Lord Christ comes in to the soul, when the soul has thus hungered and longed for him.” For Hooker, to continue on through the pain endured by wrestling, hungering, and thirsting after Christ, was more sound than resting on some sense or feeling that God had saved them. By the promise of scripture, Hooker assured “thou that hungerest for a Christ, here he is to satisfy thee. Thou that thirstest after Christ, here he is to refresh thee.” To “build comfort” upon the scriptural promise that the “poor broken-hearted sinner” will have their reward is to build upon a rock. To build only “upon sense and feeling,” without the suffering endured in pursuing Christ, “is to build upon the sand.”⁵³

As Hooker continued in his ministerial duties, he became more and more concerned with the hollow actions of believers that followed conversion that did not bear fruit. His concern marked, as Sargent Bush argues, a gradual shift in Puritanism’s increasing embrace of morality and moral action, as action itself was the fruit of belief and true regeneration since it “is required by God.” In his sermon *Wisdom’s attendants; or, The Voice of Christ to be obeyed* (1656), Bush explained that Hooker laid out “the basic guideline for determining whether an action is a worthy one or not by asking the believer to ‘remember who is your leader. In all our actions, let this be the question, would *Christ* do so? Then will I.’ Thus the basic moral rule is, ‘What *Christ* did performe, doe you.’” Crucially for my argument, Bush shows that Hooker went on to “find it necessary...to point out that the practicing Christian may find affliction rather than ease is his reward. As a result, a frequent admonition is that one must be able to endure hardships.” Or as Hooker put it, “Every follower of Christ hath affliction allotted to him as a childes part” which

⁵³ Ibid, 47-48.

are “no arguments of Gods displeasure...but an ensigne of grace and goodness.”⁵⁴ Suffering in ones faith after conversion remained for Hooker the best sign that God had bestowed his grace on the believer.

The most powerful and eloquent response to Thomas Hooker’s call for a proactive preparation guided by suffering came from John Cotton (1585-1652). In many ways it is the course of Cotton’s life and ministry that binds Sibbes, Hooker, and Cotton together. While Cotton was a young minister in England, Richard Sibbes became one of his mentors and had a profound impact on Cotton’s spiritual theology. During the late 1620s and early 1630s Cotton, like Hooker, experienced intensified hostility against Puritanism and would soon seek refuge. Interestingly, in 1633 – despite their impending rivalry, Hooker and Cotton came to America together.⁵⁵ Upon his arrival, Cotton became the leading thinker and voice of free grace theology for the first generation of American Puritans, and soon found himself at the center of New England’s “antinomian controversy.” Cotton adhered to the totality of the promise of God’s free grace in salvation with unparalleled tenacity, and like Sibbes and Hooker, his influence reached well into the next century, even shaping some of the more mystical views of theologians like Jonathan Edwards.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Bush, *The Writings of Thomas*, 292-294.

⁵⁵ See Larzer Ziff, *The Career of John Cotton: Puritanism and the American Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 3-70; Darren Staloff, *The Making of an American Thinking Class: Intellectuals and Intelligentsia in Puritan Massachusetts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 26-28.

⁵⁶ For an excellent introductory summary of Cotton and his “tenacity” see first, Stoever, *A Faire and Easie Way*, 34-57. For additional information on Cotton, see also, Colacurcio, *Godly Letters*, 331-366; Gordis, *Opening Scripture*, 37-55; David D. Hall, “Introduction,” in *The Antinomian Controversy*, Hall ed., 3-23; R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and the English Calvinism to 1649* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 167-183; Winship, *Making Heretics*, 28-43; Knight, *Orthodoxies*, 1-33, and 198-214.

In his set of sermons, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (1659), Cotton mounted his defense of free grace theology using similar logic as Hooker and appears to have engaged directly against many of Hooker's views.⁵⁷ Cotton's questioning of Hooker's system of preparation led to his portrayal as an antinomian, but eventually even he came around to using suffering as a sign believers could reference. For example, Cotton asked, "may I not look at such good desires, and hungerings and thirstings, and mournings after Christ, as are in me, to satisfy myself with them?" Cotton answered that sinners could look there, and even "look long," but it will only "kindle a spark of comfort." Cotton argued that true comfort is only received "through the grace of God." He added that "he revealeth to us our redemption; and reveals it so, that the soul is set in an earnest longing after Christ."⁵⁸ The soul of the sinner is made aware of the workings grace by none other than Christ. The struggles and sufferings of the sinner to find Christ did not reveal the workings of grace.⁵⁹ Cotton argued "our strength lieth not in our own hungering and thirsting, and poverty, though there be truth in these...by reason of the Spirit that wrought them." In Cotton's defense of grace, all must be given to Christ, when a sinner comes to Christ, it is not by "anything wrought in us," but Christ himself that "causeth us to thirst after more of himself in every Ordinance."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ The sermon was not published until 1659, but was likely preached in the mid-1630s. See introduction to the text in *Salvation in New England: Selections from the Sermons of the First Preachers*, eds. Phyllis M. Jones and Nicholas R. Jones (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 45. For an introduction to the arguments between Hooker and Cotton see Alfred Habegger, "Preparing the Soul for Christ: The Contrasting Sermon Forms of John Cotton and Thomas Hooker," *American Literature* 41 (Nov., 1969), 342-354.

⁵⁸ John Cotton, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, in *Salvation in New England*, eds. Jones and Jones, 56, 57, and 55.

⁵⁹ See Colacurcio, *Godly Letters*, 366.

⁶⁰ Cotton, *Covenant of Grace*, 57 and 55.

Cotton primarily discussed suffering in relation to the topic of assurance. If the Puritan movement or the elect saints said they adhered to the covenant of free grace then Cotton believed they should not jeopardize that faith by endorsing earthly sufferings and strivings as a sign that a person had received the grace of God. Cotton warned that this included the suffering endured following the prescriptions of the law or scripture. He explained that the sacrifice of Christ was the opening of the new and “everlasting Covenant” in which Christ “took our nature upon him” and freed the Christian from the “Covenant of the Law.” Cotton explained this as a move “*from a state of bondage, unto Christian liberty.*” Before the sacrifice of Christ, humans, “in a state of Bondage...were under the *Law* and curse of God but *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law* (Galatians 3:13): and now *sin shall no more have dominion over use, for we are not under the law* (Romans 6:14).” Cotton quickly moved to point out that what he meant was that Christians were now free from the Covenant of the Law, “though we lie under the *Commandment* of it [the law] in Christ.” He closed, “let it exhort us to stand fast in all our Christian liberties: they cost dear; and we are redeemed from the *Covenant* and *curse* of the *Law* of God (from the *Laws* of men much more, that are not according to God); be not therefore servants to lusts and passions, to the world...let us walk as redeemed ones...”⁶¹ There was nothing that humans could do to repay the cost of Christ. They were chosen and bound to Christ by his sacrifice, nothing more.

Cotton worked out the details of Christian liberty, assurance, suffering and the defense of free grace in a work known as “*Mr. Cotton’s Rejoynder*,” or the *Rejoinder* (c1644).⁶² The main

⁶¹ Ibid, 49.

⁶² Michael Colacurcio regards “Cotton’s embattled but slashing *Rejoinder*...as the most subtle and resilient piece of Protestant argumentation ever written (Godly Letters, xvi-xvii).

theme or concept that Cotton used to tie Christian liberty, assurance and suffering together was “the sealing of the spirit.” By God’s free grace, no work of man, the truly elect are “sealed with the spirit.” They are granted faith with this seal, and since they have faith, they have assurance that they were chosen. He wrote that “in time faith and the sealing of the Spirit go together, and in order of causes the sealing of the Spirit goes before faith, as being the efficient cause of it.” Cotton clarified his position, explaining that “no man can have, nor can truly by faith see any saving work of Christ in himself, till by the Seal of the Spirit itself it be engraven upon him, and witnessed to him: for there is no work in us accompanying Salvation.”⁶³ The realization of one’s suffering, poverty, or misery without Christ does not create faith. Faith is only implanted by the “sealing of the spirit.” Cotton explained, only after receiving the “seal of the spirit,” does the suffering and work of a Christian come. He proclaimed, “for my part I do not only think it sinfull to rest satisfied in the testimony of our Spirit but utterly unsafe...” Cotton explained that the Saints do not dare rest, but work. Since they were “stamped with the seal” their suffering in Christian work served to “bear witness to our Spirits that the work of our Spirits are of God and accepted of him.” According to Cotton, the saints become living witnesses of Gods work in man. The work and suffering experienced by a Christian did not acquire the Christian saving grace, they were manifestations of it. Christian works and sufferings were for the glory, “witness,” and “testimony” of God’s free grace.⁶⁴

Cotton’s defense of free grace theology was stalwart, but as a minister of the gospel charged with the practical application of doctrine and guidance of an anxious flock, Cotton had a

⁶³ John Cotton, “*Mr. Cotton’s Rejoynder*” in *The Antinomian Controversy*, ed. Hall, 79, 83-84.

⁶⁴ Cotton, *Rejoinder*, 149, 148, and 150.

ministerial disadvantage. When, in his sermons like *The Way of Life* (1641),⁶⁵ Cotton told his flock that we should “keep our hearts clean,” and keep them “*prepared or fixed*,” Cotton wanted his parishioners to present, even prepare an open heart to Christ. However, at the same time he reminded them that there was nothing, no preparatory action that could enable Christ to come into it. This undoubtedly left many parishioners still wondering “what must I do...”⁶⁶ Even Cotton’s “spiritual father,”⁶⁷ Richard Sibbes, was much more comfortable offering the faithful a path to assurance and salvation that mixed both grace and human action. Sibbes even endorsed the “sealing of the spirit” in his preaching, but he warned “that seal is not faith, for the apostle saith, ‘*After you believed ye were sealed*’...So that his sealing is not the work of faith, but it is a work of the Spirit upon faith.” Sibbes understood that the “sealing of the spirit” came after faith, not before it, so there was room for the sinner to work.⁶⁸ As a caring physician to sinners, Cotton wanted to elicit action, but his theology never allowed human action to instigate the working of grace. At the most, Cotton could promise his flock that if they were suffering like Christ they were bearing witness to the “sealing of the spirit.” According to the work of Michael Colacurcio, there was no way for Puritan ministers and laity to escape the human tendency to look for assurance of salvation by some action or feeling. In the end, Cotton could not out preach the inevitability that suffering through “anxious preparation and determined sanctification”

⁶⁵ This work was also published after Cotton delivered it sometime in the late 1620s or early 1630s. See introduction to the text in *Salvation in New England*, eds. Jones and Jones, 119.

⁶⁶ John Cotton, *The Way of Life* in *Salvation in New England*, eds. Jones and Jones, 125. For Cotton’s struggle with grace and preparation see Toulouse, “The Art of Prophesying”, 285-286.

⁶⁷ See Knight, *Orthodoxies*, 1-12.

⁶⁸ See Richard Sibbes, *Exposition of 2d Corinthians Chapter I* in *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes* Vol. 3, ed. Alexander Grossart (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1862), 455.

would outweigh the “sealing of the spirit” as the best piece of evidence the faithful was on the way to salvation.⁶⁹

No Puritan minister knew better than Thomas Shepard (1605-1649) that the anxiety a sinner had about salvation could motivate action, and that suffering during *sanctification* was the best piece of assurance a minister could offer that they would be saved.⁷⁰ This approach to the process of salvation in popular sermons like *The Sincere Convert* (1641) put Shepard in the middle of the theologies of Hooker and Cotton, and gave his views a special appeal for later generations of the Puritan progeny.⁷¹ Jonathan Mitchell, the successor to Shepard’s pulpit after his death, wrote in the introduction to the posthumously published *Parable of the Ten Virgins* (1660) that “God taught him [Shepard] and helped him to teach others the true middle way of the gospel, between the Legalist [possibly Hooker] on the one hand, and the Antinomian, or loose gospeler [possibly Cotton] on the other.”⁷² Shepard’s “middle way” was so convincing that John E. Smith shows in his analysis on Jonathan Edwards’s work that “Edwards quoted more from Shepard than from any other writer,” and contemporary critics of David Brainerd even noticed Brainerd’s adherence to Shepard’s views.⁷³

⁶⁹ Colacurcio, *Godly Letters*, 366.

⁷⁰ See Gordis, *Opening Scripture*, 65-71; Winship, 12-27. See also Michael McGiffert, *God’s Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard’s Cambridge* (Amherst, Mass., University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 19-26.

⁷¹ For Shepard’s later influence see Colacurcio, *Godly Letters*, 348, 372, 614-615n26, 618n12; Thomas Werge, *Thomas Shepard* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 97-111; John T. Shawcross, “The Old or the Unknown Path? A Dilemma in Colonial American Life,” *South Central Review* 8 (Summer, 1991), 50-56; McGiffert, *God’s Plot*, 19-20.

⁷² Jonathan Mitchell, “Preface,” to Thomas Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins* in *The Works of Thomas Shepard* Vol. 2 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 9.

⁷³ See John E. Smith, “Editor’s Introduction” to Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* Vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 50-54; Ebenezer Frothingham, *The Articles of Faith and*

Shepard set out to capitalize on the anxiety of sinners in work like *The Sincere Convert* as quickly as possible. The sermon's own subtitle was "Discovering the Small Number of Believers, and the Great Difficulty of Saving Conversion." Even if this was so, Shepard assured that all was not lost, and that there were "jewels" among them who would be saved, if they would strive and be willing to suffer for it. He exhorted the sinner to "labor to get [the] image of God renewed" in them, to "labor to mortify and subdue sin, to "labor for a melting, tender heart," and finally to "labor to see the Lord Jesus to glory."⁷⁴ Shepherd, a son-in-law of Thomas Hooker was a committed preparationist,⁷⁵ and he reviled resting easy in faith. He explained:

It is true, God hath elected but few, and so the Son hath shed his blood, and did but for a few; yet this is no excuse for thee to lie down... Thou must in this case venture and try, as many men amongst us do now... Therefore say as those lepers in Samaria, If I stay here in my sins, I die; if I go out to the camp of Syrians, we may live; we can but die, however: if I go out to Christ, I may get mercy; however, I can but die, and it is better to die at Christ's feet than in thine own puddle... Cry guilty... sigh under the bondage... so may Christ be sent into thy soul... Rest not therefore in a in the sight or sense of a helpless condition, saying, I cannot help myself, unless Christ doth; sigh unto the Lord Jesus in heaven for succor.

Suffering is clearly a main component of salvation here, as Christ will only come when there is suffering. Like Hooker, Shepard believed that scripture would help navigate the sinner to and through the requisite suffering, but most would not make it. He used Matthew 7:14, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it," to support his

Practice with the Covenant that is confessed by the Separate Churches of Christ in General in this Land (Newport, RI, 1750), 418-419.

⁷⁴ Thomas Shepard, *The Sincere Convert: Discovering the Small Number of Believers, and the Great Difficulty of Saving Conversion* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 55, 23.

⁷⁵ *Salvation in New England*, Jones and Jones, eds., 156; Thomas Werge, *Thomas Shepherd* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 14.

position. While scripture provided the path to salvation, few found it, because few were willing to actively apply and suffer under the gospel message.

Shepard warned that even the “righteousness” of the Pharisees “could never save them.” They knew the law (scripture) and the proper motions better than any, but as Judas exemplified, their repentances were “legal repentances” based on “natural sorrow” for wrongdoing according to the law. The sinner may come to know and “read the Scriptures often...and yet never be saved.” Shepard explained, that salvation following the guide of scripture could only occur after “true humiliation” which is accompanied by “hearty reformation,” namely suffering. After barring a legal path to salvation, he moves to the “zealous,” who were probably the antinomians. He explained that the “zealous” were convinced that they “hath been given more knowledge than others...that have a thing like faith, and like sorrow, and like true repentance...but yet they be but pictures.” Shepard elaborated that this group rests on their assurance or zealotry of belief. Out of that zealotry they speak “of profaneness...and hypocrisy of others, yea, even the coldness of the best of God’s people.” Shepard even admitted that this zealous group was impressive, especially in their willingness to suffer persecution. However, he explained that their zealotry was like Paul before his conversion and based on “false religion.”⁷⁶ The narrowness of the path to salvation did not leave room for excess. Neither legalism nor zealous belief brought the sinner to the strait gate of paradise.

Shepard’s companion sermon to *The Sincere Convert, The Sound Believer* (1645) marked a shift in emphasis on the experiences of sanctification over those of conversion in Shepard’s

⁷⁶ Shepard, *Sincere Convert*, 58, 60-61.

theology, and maybe within Puritanism as a whole.⁷⁷ In this sermon, Shepard argued that the actions and sufferings of sanctification were more important as a source of assurance and sound faith than anything gained in conversion. Shepard felt that initial conversion was important, but believed that most of conversion or regeneration spanned the life of the sinner working on sainthood. Shepard, admitted that entire regeneration was “finished in glorification” while in heaven, most the most weighty portion of it was achieved on earth in sanctification. Shepard even believed that if the sinner received the “seal of the Spirit,” it was probably given in sanctification. He explained, “God’s seal is ever set to some promise...the Lord’s promise of actual justification and reconciliation pertains only to men sanctified...” Shepard believed that the assurance gained from the “seal of the spirit” can only through the process of sanctification, and sanctification was “our spiritual combat and warfare with sin.” He explained that this combat “makes thee wrestle against sin,” and the pain and suffering of wrestling is the sign of “the Lord’s grace sanctifying thee.” Shepard promised, that by suffering and wrestling “thou has a most sweet and comfortable evidence of thy justification and favor with God.”⁷⁸

Shepard finished his defense of sanctification as the most necessary component of a sinner’s salvation in his posthumous and widely influential sermon the *Parable of the Ten Virgins* (1660).⁷⁹ Unlike the gospel account of the “Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins,” which only spans the first thirteen versus of Matthew 25, Shepard’s exegesis of the parable is a

⁷⁷ See Colacurcio, *Godly Letters*, 217-218.

⁷⁸ Thomas Shepard, *The Sound Believer. A Treatise of Evangelical Conversion. Discovering the Work of Christ’s Spirit in Reconciling of a Sinner to God* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 255 and 258. In his personal *Meditations and Spiritual Experiences* (Glasgow: David Bryce, 1847) Shepard maintained this belief in sanctification as *the* sign he and the faithful to look too; “hereby I saw how sanctification was an evidence of reconciliation (80).”

⁷⁹ For the influence of this work see, McGiffert, *God’s Plot*, 19-20. See also note 69 above.

massive two-part work over six hundred pages long.⁸⁰ The collection of sermons is an assessment of the “visible church of God,” represented by the virgins, both wise and foolish, in the wedding party, and the necessity of constant vigilance by the church and the saints. Shepard explained that the wedding party (the church) consisted of five wise virgins and five foolish virgins to show “there are hypocrites in the best and purest churches.”⁸¹ By the last chapter of the work, Shepard made it clear that those who will reach salvation, the wise virgins, are “those that are prepared here.” He instructed that the believers who keep up a constant watch in their sanctification are like the wise virgins of the parable. The wise virgins maintained their anticipation, “against security and dead-heartedness,” of the bridegroom’s (Christ) return.

Shepard’s call for watchfulness was a call to action and a warning “against [the] security” that regularly followed a believer’s conversion, or the security that often took hold of a long established church. He argued that the separation between the chaff (the hypocrites) and the wheat (the true saints) resulted from the differences in action or the preparations made following “first conversion.” According to Shepard, these preparations were done in the process of sanctification. Both the wise and the foolish virgins brought with them lamps for light, but only the wise virgins brought extra oil for their lamps, in anticipation of a delayed return by the bridegroom. The foolish virgins were secure in their belief that the oil in their lamps would be enough, and were unprepared for any unforeseen events or delays in the grooms return. Their

⁸⁰ All references to the parable are from Matthew 25:1-13 KJV.

⁸¹ Thomas Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins* in *The Works of Thomas Shepard* Vol. 2 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853) 16 and 183.

security, lack of preparation, and slumber was the “last sin” that ultimately prevented their reception into the final wedding party.⁸²

Security, or an assured confidence following initial conversion, was as Shepard explained, “the most bewitching sin.” It first causes the believer to rest confidently upon early triumphs over sin and makes them “ready to think the worst is past.” Then, when the path to salvation proves to be more difficult than anticipated, their false confidence lulls the believer to sleep in “truce with sin.” This sleep and truce potentially compromises all prior gains made by the believer. Shepard pointed out that even a “strong man that is asleep” can fall victim “and be overcome” by “any weak enemy.” The man, “when awakened may recover his losses, but it is sad for the present with him” as his rest and security led to his “dead-heartedness.” The attraction to sleep or rest befuddles many believers and churches because, as Shepard surmised, in it “[t]here is peace” and “we have our ease.” The turmoil, suffering, or “wearisome trials and heavy loads” of life entice the believers and their churches to sleep, but once in slumber “hearts die, and prayers die.” As earthly “sorrow made the disciples’ eyes heavy,” Shepard saw in his own time, “the poor laden” soon looked for an end to toil in earthly comforts and took their rest too soon, missing salvation in their lull. Instead, he warned that true believers, like the wise virgins, needed to be prepared for a delayed rest and an increase in sufferings.⁸³

While it was suffering and weakness of the body that pushed the believer to sleep, the remedy against sleep was to embrace suffering, or as Shepard prescribed, “endure temptation, and watch...” Shepard then worked through a list of derisions “against slightness and a hoverly

⁸² Ibid, 549 and 633.

⁸³ Ibid, 633 & 634.

[sic] work.” He concluded his list with this: “sorrows in the country cry for it.” Shepard urged the church to see that if the believers worked “against slightness and shallowness of the work of grace in them” and stood steadfast in their suffering, then “glory will pay for all at Christ’s coming.” He urged his audience to see that the “promise of mercy is made to such only” that suffer, watch, and wait. Therefore, they should “cry” for “sorrows”⁸⁴ At the close of the thirtieth chapter, Shepard drove this point home. He wrote “I am persuaded, as Calvin is, that all the several trials of men are to show them known to themselves and the world, that they be but counterfeits, and to make saints known to themselves the better.” The father of the Reformed tradition saw that the exposure of “counterfeits” or hypocrites came after suffering, so did the proof of one’s sanctification. For a believer left wondering if their faith was strong, Shepard added, “if you would know whether it will hold weight, the trial will tell you. Look there, and in special, if it drives to prayer, fear not.”⁸⁵

Following Shepard’s publication of *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* in 1660, Jonathan Edwards and other evangelical theologians found the most direct defense of suffering as proof of sanctification and as a means to expose hypocrisy in the writings of the “transitional” generation of Puritan ministers that were widely read throughout the American colonies. The most well-known of these “transitional” divines, and one of the most cited by Edwards, was English minister John Flavel (c.1630-1691).⁸⁶ Born around 1630, Flavel’s ministry began after all four

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Ibid, 302.

⁸⁶ For a description of the “transitional” Puritan thinkers see David A. Currie, “Cotton Mather’s *Bonifacius* in Britain and America,” in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies in Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* eds. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 73-75. For more on Flavel’s influence on Edwards and in America see Smith, “Editor’s Introduction,” 60-62; Brian H. Cosby, *John Flavel: Puritan Life and Thought in Stuart England* (Lexington Books: Plymouth, UK, 2014), 36-38.

of the above Puritan ministers had passed away, and took shape during the turbulence of the Restoration of the Stuart Dynasty in the 1660s.⁸⁷ Flavel touched on the necessity of suffering for true saints in a number of his published sermons as well as in many of his tracts written for “occupational groups” like farmers and sailors.⁸⁸ His most direct discussion of the topic is found in the sermon *Preparations for Sufferings: Or the Best Work in the Worst Times* (1682). Flavel explained that his sermon was not meant to “scare and affright any man with imaginary dangers,” but it was rather a plea for the “due preparation to take up our own cross, and follow Christ in a suffering path.” It concerned Flavel that his generation “read the histories of the primitive sufferers” without any intention or “spirit...to follow them.” Audiences read them and “commended their courage and consistency” but did not see them as a means for preparing their own hearts even if they were an “example of suffering, affliction, and of patience.”⁸⁹ Flavel’s concern mirrored those found in Shepard’s *Parable* as he felt believers were stuck in a “pleasant but most pernicious drowsiness” and were “sinking” into a false comfort that would allow troubles to “steal upon [them] by way of surprizal.” Shepard showed that the wise virgins understood that readiness, patience, and watchfulness were necessary at all times and would lead to true paradise. God, Flavel insisted, did not “take delight” in the suffering of the faithful, but “he had rather their hearts be heavy under adversity, than vain and careless under prosperity.” Flavel tried in his own way to show the “singular advantage of a prepared soul.” He believed that “the expectations of evils abates much of the dread and terror, by accustoming our thoughts before-hand to them, and making preparations for them: so that we find them not so grievous and

⁸⁷ Cosby, *John Flavel*, ix, and 1-32.

⁸⁸ Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 275.

⁸⁹ John Flavel, *Preparations for Sufferings: Or the Best Work in the Worst Times* in *The Whole Works of the Rev. Mr. John Flavel* Vol. 6 (London: J. Mathews, 1799), 3.

amazing, and intolerable when they are come indeed.” Preparation for suffering “sweetened” the “bitter cup” of suffering, and, above all, it assisted the “people of God” in the required submission to the “will of God.”⁹⁰

Flavel’s position in *Preparations* helps underscore, as Sargent Bush noticed of Hooker’s work, the shift in emphasis on post-conversion preparation, or sanctification via a suffering discipleship, that was taking hold within Puritan theology in the latter half of the seventeenth century following increased concerns about antinomianism. Conversion, the bestowing of grace and faith, was necessary, but the work of it belonged to God, and could come at any time. Preparing for suffering was, however, the submission of the believer to God’s will, aided by Christ, and made the believer ready to “take up his cross” and truly follow Christ. Preparation for suffering was the only way, Flavel showed, for one to be prepared to follow Christ, as to follow him was “when our suffering come indeed.” To be prepared to suffer, and to openly suffer, brought with it the ever-elusive feeling of assurance. As Flavel explained, “readiness for sufferings will bring the heart of a Christian to an holy rest and tranquility...and [will] prevent that anxiety, perturbation, and distraction of mind.” The assurance gained in the preparation for suffering doubly destroyed fears of hypocrisy as it is also “an excellent argument of the honesty and sincerity of our hearts, in the matters of religion.” The believer that suffers and prepares for it “is like to be the man that hath deliberately closed with Christ upon his own terms, and is like

⁹⁰ Ibid, 3, 7, and 5.

to be the durable and victorious Christian.”⁹¹ According to Flavel, the visible, regenerated saints were the “suffering saints.”⁹²

Flavel believed that the preparation for and the act of suffering encapsulated all of the process of sanctification and the work that follows it. He wrote that “faith entitles Christ to the believer’s sufferings, and puts them upon his score; as so it exceedingly transforms and alters them...it is no small relief when a man could up the Bible, as that *martyr* did at the stake say, ‘This is that which hath brought me hither.’”⁹³ Flavel also helped pave the way for future evangelicals to embrace suffering as crucial component of evangelism. Flavel believed that if a saint was to bring the gospel to those in need, he or she must be “fitted and prepared...for the greatest sufferings.” The call to bear the cross, as Flavel saw it, was a call to “attend diligently upon the ministration of the gospel, because it “is not only the procreant, but also the conserving cause of faith.” The converted were a “spectacle” to behold, and the call to suffer was to be taken seriously as “heaven, earth, and hell, are spectators” of the “suffering and trial of the saint.” Perseverance through great trial was, in Flavel’s opinion, the greatest tool for the harvest of souls.⁹⁴ What is more, Flavel believed that the greatest example a saint could offer was the public display of his or her faith, both in daily practice and especially while under trial or duress. The expression of and commitment to faith under stress, persecution, or danger was the ultimate sign of faith which Flavel called “Christian fortitude. According to Flavel, Christian fortitude was “holy courage,” or a “holy boldness in the performance of difficult duties, flowing from

⁹¹ Ibid, 17-18.

⁹² Flavel refers specifically to “suffering saints” a handful of times, see pages 42, 53, 58, 59, and 64.

⁹³ Ibid, 44.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 6, and 47-49.

faith in the call of God....” The reception of this gift of grace came with “the completing of our actual readiness for sufferings,” or full submission to the will of God.⁹⁵

Flavel clearly felt that believers must live an active life of faith after conversion, and he shows that when many Puritans considered preparation, it was in terms of the work that a believer must do only *after* receiving God’s grace. Flavel remained a consistent Calvinist when he asserted that “God hath fitted and prepared my heart for the greatest sufferings; this is the work of God: flesh and blood would never be brought to this.” Preparation was initiated and guided by God, and doing the work of evangelism was a sign of one who had received God’s grace. Furthermore, six years after writing *Preparations for Suffering*, Flavel offered in *The Balm of the Covenant Applied to the Bleeding Wounds of Afflicted Saints* (1688) an interpretation of suffering by the converted in the vein of covenant theology that would have been readily acceptable to most Puritan ministers. To take up the cross or suffer for the will of God was not ever, for Flavel, salvation by the work or merit of suffering, but it was only a manifestation of God’s blessing of grace. This position is clear with his closing of *The Balm of the Covenant*. In it, Flavel wrote, “whatsoever your troubles, wants, fears, or dangers are, or may be in your passage to this blessed state, the covenant of grace is your security, and by virtue thereof your troubles shall open and divide, as Jordan did, to give you a safe passage into your eternal rest.”⁹⁶ The covenant of grace was responsible for salvation, and it was adherence to the covenant that brought true Christian fortitude. The ability to persevere through suffering by the converted was,

⁹⁵ Ibid, 47-49.

⁹⁶ Flavel, *Preparations for Sufferings*, 6; John Flavel *The Balm of the Covenant Applied to the Bleeding Wounds of Afflicted Saints* in *Works* Vol. 6 (London: J. Mathews, 1799), 119.

however, the ultimate sign (assurance) of salvation and those truly saved would publicly perform and suffer for their faith, or they were likely not saved at all.

Flavel also directly defended Puritan ministers' use of signs like suffering to provide assurance against antinomian critics. In *A Saint Indeed: Or, The Great Work of a Christian* (1667), Flavel denounced the "Antinomian doctrine" that "reject all Marks and Signs for the Trials of your Conditions, telling you it only the spirit that immediately assures you." He explained that if the saint is to know "Assurance, and the sweet Comforts flowing from it," then he or she are to follow the "Scripture Way," where "God dispenses" and the sinner "take[s] Pains with [their] own hearts" and "give[s] all diligence" to "prove [themselves]." True assurance and "sincerity" in faith, Flavel urged, lay in "much Pains and Watching, Care and Diligence" and "cost." In short, "God doth not usually indulge lazy and negligent Souls with the Comforts of Assurance," but only provides it to the diligent who show and prove their "flourishing Grace."⁹⁷

Flavel continued his defense in "second part of the *Saint Indeed*" with a discussion on hypocrisy in his sermon *The Touchstone of Sincerity: Or The Signs of Grace and Symptoms of Hypocrisy* (1679). Here Flavel speaks out against "Lukewarm professors...who never thoroughly engaged in Religion," but "easily embraced" that principle of the Gnosticks [sic]:" indifference. Flavel informed the reader that the thrust of his sermon, "the main Subject of this Treatise," and the best guard against hypocrisy is to find "Grace under trial in this Life." He believed that "no man can say what he is, whether his graces be true or false till they be tried and examined by those things which are to them as fire is to Gold." Trial and suffering by the believer "in this world" is the only way to "come to [in] to the world to come." This fact, for

⁹⁷ John Flavel, *A Saint Indeed: Or, The Great Work of a Christian Opened and Pressed From Proverbs 4:23* (London: 1768), 29-32.

Flavel, was “the foundation of Christianity,” and it “asserts the difficulty of salvation,” since the believer “shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”⁹⁸

Throughout the corpus of the Puritan works signs of conversion, grace and salvation abound. Most of all these works exemplify that suffering on the path to salvation – from first conversion to the process of sanctification – was the most enduring and easily understood sign of God’s favor and the workings of grace that Puritan authors presented. In John Bunyan’s personal conversion he shared his experience of suffering in “trembling at sin,” and noted that “[his] torment would be very sore.” Patricia Caldwell’s work on the Puritan conversion narrative shows that a record of such feeling of suffering had utility, because they provided descriptions of experiences “to persuade men to turn from a life of sin to a life of righteousness”⁹⁹ If the drama of personal conversion narratives left the sinner wanting, writers like Bunyan knew they could rely on the “drama of martyrdom.” In his analysis on martyrdom in English literature, John R. Knott shows that the Christian tradition of celebrating the sufferings and sacrifices of the martyrs remained pervasive in English literature throughout the seventeenth century. Knott found in Bunyan’s work a “fascination” with “the acts of martyrs.” By witness of the martyrs, Knott argued that “Bunyan sought to shift his audience’s attention from the affliction they faced...to

⁹⁸ John Flavel, *The Touchstone of Sincerity: Or The Signs of Grace and Symptoms of Hypocrisy Opened in a Practical Treatise upon Revelation 3:17-18* (Boston, 1731), 2-3, and 50-52. This work also seems to also have had resonance for Jonathan Edwards as this 1731 reprint noted that it was “printed for J. Edwards, H. Foster, and J. Pemberton.” The work is cited by Edwards in *Religious Affections* a number of times. See Smith, “Editors Introduction,” p. 61; Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* in Vol. 2 *Works of Edwards*, 137-138n, 170n, 182n, 373n, 374n, 375n, 433n. For another work in which Flavel discusses hypocrisy, from which Edwards also cited often and that Miller saw as influential on Mather, see John Flavel, *Husbandry Spiritualized or Heavenly Use of Earthly Things* in *Works* Vol. 5, 595-604.

⁹⁹ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005), 4, 14, and 51; Caldwell, *Puritan Conversion*, 137 and 74.

the power of God to enable the Christian to turn suffering into triumph.”¹⁰⁰ Ministers and writers like Bunyan knew that showing Christians persevere in suffering and or sacrificing for the faith helped grow the faith of others. In *Pilgrim’s Progress* we see the conversion of one of the characters, Hopeful, after his witnessing the martyrdom of another.¹⁰¹

The universality and tangibility of the experience of suffering made it the most reliable form of assurance for the Puritan faithful. For preparationists like Hooker, violence and suffering brought the sinner to God. For spiritualists like Cotton, suffering was an edifying experience that bared witness to the “seal of the Spirit.” Shepard artfully blended the two, and emphasized that the suffering of combat not only brought the sinner to God, it encouraged the “sealing of the spirit.” The suffering caused in an active faith did not always mean physical pain or violence. It was often mundane. The loss of worldly relations, attachments, and comforts were all sources of a very real and relatable pain that caused the sinner to suffer. The strait path to God was probably endured alone and forsaken by “jovial company.”¹⁰² As the above authors showed, the path to salvation only continued suffering. Nevertheless, suffering was a sign the sinner was leaving the world to become anew in Christ. Any pain felt was just one more sign of true regeneration. As a master of consolation, Richard Sibbes summarized the point best: “the apostle having shewed his desire of Christ’s righteousness, now comes to shew his desire also of having communion with Christ in his sufferings...he must shew that he hath his part in the fellowship of his sufferings.” Puritans explained, and men like David Brainerd learned, to have

¹⁰⁰ John R. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563-1694* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 179 and 185; Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 87.

¹⁰¹ See Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, 62 and 85.

¹⁰² Thomas Hooker, *The Soules Preparation for Christ or A Treatise of Contrition Wherin is Discovered How God Breakes the Heart and Wounds the Soule, in the Conversion of a Sinner to Himself* (London: A. Crooke, 1632), 77 and 90.

fellowship with Christ, meant, in Shepard's words, "to do the work of Christ, to be daily at it, and finishing of it."¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Richard Sibbes, *An Exposition of the Third Chapter of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians* in *Works* 5: 96; Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins*, 95.

CHAPTER TWO

“Do the work of Christ:”^{*} The Ministry of David Brainerd

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ

II Timothy 2:3

David Brainerd was born in Haddam, Connecticut on April 20, 1718. He was the sixth of nine children, and descended from a line of public servants on his father’s side. On his mother’s side, as Norman Pettit argues, “he came into a family with a long ministerial and Puritan tradition.”¹ Jonathan Edwards, the first editor of Brainerd’s journal, also argued that Brainerd was of peculiar interest for any investigation of proper faith because of the era in which he lived. Edwards explained that Brainerd’s “conversion was before those times” of “the late religious commotion” (the revivals of the 1730s and 1740s), but that he was also “one that lived in those times and went through them.” Brainerd found religion in “a time of general deadness,” so his first exposure to faith was free “from any corrupt notions” that developed in revival. However, since he lived through the revival and was affected by them, he “had a very extensive acquaintance with...the religious operations” of revival, the “false appearances” they produced, and was “one who himself was the instrument of a most remarkable awakening.”² John Grigg,

^{*} Thomas Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins in The Works of Thomas Shepard*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 95.

¹ Norman Pettit “Editor’s Introduction” in Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 33-34.

² Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards* Vol. 7, 521 and 90. The original work and full title of Edwards’s biography, which was basically an editing of Brainerd’s personal journal, is *An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd, Minister of the Gospel, Missionary to the Indians, from the honourable Society in Scotland, for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, and Pastor of a Church of Christian Indians in New-Jersey. Who died at Northampton in New-England, Octob. 9th 1747. in the 30th Year of*

Brainerd's most recent scholarly biographer, develops Edwards's view of Brainerd further and argues that as "a child of two worlds," or one who was both a product of the Puritan establishment and the new evangelical revivalism, Brainerd was well positioned to have an important impact on religious developments in colonial New England. Grigg goes on to explain, despite the best biographical editing efforts of evangelical giants such as Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley, that Brainerd never really offered a concrete doctrinal position that fit completely to the liking of either Edwards's pro-revival but cautious Calvinism or Wesley's Methodist Arminianism. While this may have been troublesome for the doctrinaire, it undoubtedly catholicized his appeal among later evangelicals who looked back at his ministry admiringly and helped Brainerd become a model Christian for evangelicals across multiple denominations.³

There is much about David Brainerd's life and ministry to make David Weddle's moniker of Brainerd, the "melancholy saint," most fitting.⁴ Brainerd always seemed to feel a constant sorrow in all that he did, even when others drew close to him in clear admiration. For example, Norman Pettit argues Brainerd had friends, but that he did not feel he could include among them a high number of those who were close. Brainerd did indeed have friends, to whom he affectionately wrote to, spoke of, and longed to see during the isolation of missionary work. While at college, Brainerd even had an influence on and developed friendships with men like

his Age: Chiefly taken from his own Diary, and other private Writings, written for his own Use; and now published, by Jonathan Edwards, A.M. Minister of the Gospel at Northampton (Boston: D. Henchman, 1749).

³ John Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of an American Evangelical Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7-44 and 164-187. See Joseph Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work: 'The Life of David Brainerd' and the Nineteenth Century Evangelical Culture," *Church History* 54 (June, 1985): 188-201; Joseph Conforti, "David Brainerd and the Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (Autumn 1985): 309-329; Grigg, *Lives of David Brainerd*, 164-187.

⁴ See David Weddle "The Melancholy Saint: Jonathan Edwards's Interpretation of David Brainerd as a Model of Evangelical Spirituality," *The Harvard Theological Review* 81 (July, 1988), 297-318.

Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins, two men who contributed deeply in their own way to the development of American evangelicalism.⁵ Nevertheless, even with friends, Brainerd could not help but regularly feel alone, and he often longed for “Christian kindness and love.” Brainerd’s longings for kindness coupled with his oft-noted feelings of “being weary, and tired of this world of sorrow” all point to a life pronounced by melancholy.⁶ However, even with such regular proclamations, there was something more to Brainerd’s experience of sorrow than a melancholic disposition. Brainerd always answered his bouts of sorrow and melancholia with the affirmation that he could, in imitation of Christ, “bear sorrows.” In order to be holy and to honor God, Brainerd knew he must suffer. Ultimately, Brainerd demonstrated that it was only “through great trials...that we enter the gates of paradise.”⁷

The trials that Brainerd experienced throughout his personal and ministerial life greatly informed his understanding of what it would look and feel like for a disciple to seek and follow Christ, and they will serve as the focal point of this chapter. I will follow the stages of Brainerd’s life from his conversion, expulsion, and missionary activity up to his death. In each of these stages, I will highlight his experience and understanding of suffering, and will especially focus on suffering in his work as a minister and missionary. Isolating Brainerd from Edwards as much as possible, I will focus predominately on Brainerd’s own views as he wrote them or as we

⁵ See Norman Pettit “Editor’s Introduction” in Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 32-71. Bellamy, Hopkins, and Brainerd’s influence upon them will figure prominently in the following chapter. For the best introduction to the two men’s prominence in American religious history, see Joseph A. Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregations Ministry, and Reform in New England Between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1981); Mark Valeri, *Law and Providence in Joseph Bellamy’s New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁶ David Brainerd in Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards* Vol. 7, 181 and 215. When Brainerd is speaking, citations from here forward will be noted as “Brainerd in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*.” When Edwards is speaking citations will read “Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*.”

⁷ Brainerd in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 218.

can trust that Edwards left them. When the topic came to suffering in one's discipleship and sanctification, I believe there is ample evidence that Edwards left Brainerd's words to stand on their own.⁸ This is most clear in Brainerd's personal letters to friends and family, especially those to his "dear brother" John and youngest brother Israel. These letters, which Edwards appended to the *Life of Brainerd*, show an older brother's attempt to guide and protect his younger brothers as they followed in his footsteps to the ministry, and they also contain the kernel of Brainerd's practical theology.

Suffering in pursuit of God's call unfolds as the most emphasized point or theme throughout these letters and is Brainerd's most basic understanding of the right display and product of faith. His stance on suffering was scriptural too, and not based on his noted melancholy. For example, when Brainerd explained the keystone of his faith and work to his brother John he cited II Timothy 2:3, "the Lord grant that I may learn to 'endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.'" This passage encapsulates Brainerd's understanding of discipleship, sanctification, perseverance, and all that he wanted to share with his brothers. His belief "that we may perform the work, and endure the trials he calls us to," no matter the cost,

⁸ See Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," 1-24, 149n5; Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 128-139 and 188-192. Interestingly, just as Brainerd was endorsed by Edwards as the physical embodiment of his points made in his *Religious Affections*, Brainerd matched his own views with Edwards's work. In the final letter he wrote to his brother John before his death, Brainerd recommended that he first look to God and scripture "for help" and then next to "read Mr. Edwards on the *Affections*, where the essence and soul of religion is clearly distinguished from false affections." Edwards's was surely delighted with the reciprocal endorsement, but in a footnote to the letter he explains that he almost "suppressed these passages" but decided against it as to do so would undermine "such a person as Mr. Brainerd." For the letter and quotations, see Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 497 and 497n9. Additionally, Brainerd's "public journal" that he kept for his sponsoring missionary society show that what he wrote in his private journal about suffering fell in line with his missionary work and views. This journal was carefully prepared by Brainerd and is free from the edits of Edwards. I will discuss Brainerd's public journal in greater detail below. For evidence of Brainerd's careful preparation of this publication, see Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 583-585.

was also Brainerd's endowment to the rising evangelical movement.⁹ In a brief preface that Brainerd wrote for a 1747 republication of the famous Puritan divine Thomas Shepard's *Meditations and Spiritual Exercises*, Brainerd drove this point home. He shared that through suffering, "the most poor and miserable may be brought to see themselves possessed of 'the pearl of great price.'"¹⁰ Brainerd learned, as ministers like Shepard advocated, that suffering and trial was the best sign of having received God's grace. As Brainerd matured and honed his missionary craft, I will show that he expanded older Puritan views by accepting suffering as the most reliable tool to explain the life of faith, but he also believed, in the model of Christ, that it was the best tool to make converts as well.

Like so many from his time, David Brainerd was well acquainted with death and emotional suffering from a very early age. Edwards's introduction notes "that in [Brainerd's] youth he was left both fatherless and motherless." When Brainerd discussed his feelings on the death of his mother, he wrote that he was "exceedingly distressed and melancholy" to the point that his previously energetic "religious concern began to decline and...degenerate." The loss only added to what Brainerd described as a naturally "sober" and melancholic disposition that formed in early youth, and resurfaced regularly in his "longings" for death later in life.¹¹ However, while I assert that Brainerd's views on suffering were not limited to or defined by his melancholy, it was at times so excessive that it could be accurately described as morbidity. It

⁹ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 484-485. This letter to John was written on April 30, 1743, during Brainerd's missionary work at Kaunaameek. Edwards labeled it as "No. 1. To his brother John, then a student at Yale College in New Haven" (484).

¹⁰ David Brainerd, "Preface" in Thomas Shepard, *Meditations and Spiritual Experiences: By the Late Rev. Mr. Shepard, M.A of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, England, Afterward Minister of the Church of Cambridge, in New England* (Glasgow: David Bryce, 1847), 22.

¹¹ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 100-102. For an example of his longing for death see 144, 158, and 496-499.

was problematic for Edwards, and also readily apparent to later historians, but the argument that Brainerd's melancholy was simply a personal character flaw has its limits. Displays of melancholy and personal journal recordings of the feeling were not an uncommon component of Brainerd's inherited Puritanism, and were actually a normal component of faith, especially in its beginning stages.¹² Brainerd's experience of melancholy, while excessive, must be taken as a product of his inherited understanding of suffering in the process of conversion, and as a product of familial loss.¹³ It was these two contexts, personal loss and the struggles of initial conversion, that he first encountered and explained his suffering. Not until he engaged in his missionary work would Brainerd experience and embrace a suffering far more costly but also more compelling to others.

Brainerd's first battles against sin can be read as a mostly orthodox Puritan account of conversion. Brainerd cited Solomon Stoddard's preparationist manual *A Guide to Christ* (1714) as "the happy means of my conversion" and followed, most religious historians would agree, a

¹² See Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 89-98; Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," 1-24; Weddle, "Melancholy Saint," 297-318, especially 314-316. Two now classic works, Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), make plain the normalcy of melancholy in religious experience. Burton wrote to primarily guard against it and identify its origins and forms, and James discusses it as an emblematic form of religious experience. Both authors, writing with two-hundred years between them, frame melancholy in terms of suffering. Burton wrote, "there is no way to avoid it, but to arm with patience, with magnanimity, to oppose thy self unto it, to suffer affliction as a good soldier of Christ, as Paul adviseth constantly to bear it." He then goes on to warn of getting mired in it, which is then melancholy and the negative repercussion of suffering. See Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy, What it is, With All the Kinds, Causes, Symptoms, Prognostics, and Several Cures of it*, Vol. I (London: J and E Hodson, 1906), 17-18. In William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Collier Books, 1961, 9th edition), 127, 129-130, 136-137, 177, and 206, we see that melancholy is at first "painful," and full of "anguish," "loathing," and "anxiety." James explains that Leo Tolstoy felt it, and it "stimulated [his] intellect to a gnawing, carking, questioning and effort for philosophic belief." The great pilgrim John Bunyan felt it too, and while not concerned with an overarching philosophy of meaning like Tolstoy, he suffered "over the condition of his own personal self," but "like Tolstoy saw the light again." Brainerd's melancholy and suffering before and after his conversion was like this as well. James cites Brainerd's conversion experience (177 and 206) and shows that he was bogged down in it to the point of despair, but soon he came to a state of "spiritual illumination" and, like his predecessor Bunyan and his descendent Tolstoy, always "saw the light again."

¹³ See Chapter 1 above for an in-depth discussion of the necessity for conviction, humiliation and compunction in the Puritan scheme of preparation for conversion.

standard preparationist model of conversion.¹⁴ In his early religious life he recalled that he was “a very good Pharisee...[with] a very good outside, but rested entirely on [his] duties,” or the right public display of faith. Then, in 1738 when he was twenty years old, Brainerd explained “the beginning of [his] thorough conviction” began. It came with a “sudden...sense of amazing danger and the wrath of God and hell.” The fear of God’s wrath pushed him into a “distressed” frame of mind in which he concluded that he “deserved nothing.” Nevertheless, he wrote that he still hoped that his outward duties would soften God’s opinion of him. Slowly, he started to see his unworthiness and knew he must “venture upon the mercy of God in Christ,” but secretly “still clave to the covenant of works” thinking he could “establish a righteousness of [his] own.” Brainerd still “trusted in all the duties [he] performed” to affect his conversion rather than submit fully to God.¹⁵

Eventually, he realized that God was “at work on him” and that God used struggle and strife as “a means to show” the depravity of man and the absolute necessity of his total reliance upon God in the process of salvation.¹⁶ At this point in the journal, he arguably took on the role of “a Jacob,” or one who wrestles with God. This became a favorite descriptor of Brainerd by later admirers, as well as an important component of Brainerd’s personal faith. His faith would surely be felt by his wrestling, and his wrestling was always intense. He spoke of “pangs of distress” in his “discovery of [his] vileness and nakedness” before God, and was angered by his “inability to deliver [himself] from a sovereign God.” There was backsliding and “sluggishness”

¹⁴ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 122. For Brainerd’s link to Puritan models of preparation, see Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 10-12.

¹⁵ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 105-108

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

and even extreme feelings that were “very full of atheism.” Brainerd often felt himself at war with God, and “wished inwardly there was another God [he] might join and fight against the living God.” In his “malice” towards God, Brainerd felt alone, even betrayed. However, all of Brainerd’s feelings fell within the confines of the Puritan process of conversion. According to Puritan theology, Brainerd was undergoing the requisite “bruising” in his conversion so that he may be brought to suffer humiliation for his sin. God was not the enemy, the enemy was sin. Through this first bout of suffering in conversion, Brainerd was “now convinced by the Spirit of God of the necessity of a deep humiliation in order for a saving close with Jesus Christ.”¹⁷ Brainerd’s Puritan forefathers such as Thomas Hooker and Richard Sibbes could not have said it better.¹⁸

After roughly a year of battle, “dreadful enmity, and blasphemy against God,” Brainerd recorded the date of his conversion as Sunday July 12, 1739. He remembered the date as “the happy season to my soul,” and in a note he wrote that it was “forever to be remembered.” In the handful of pages that Brainerd recounts his ultimate conversion, he swings from a “lost and disconsolate state” to a “state of inward joy, peace, and yet astonishment.” He even allowed himself to record feelings of being happy after his conversion. Unfortunately, the change in mood was short lived. Brainerd fell quickly back into a state of “distress,” but the distress that he now felt was different. He knew now that it was the right distress. This distress was a “sense

¹⁷ Ibid, 109, 111, 114, 115, and 116.

¹⁸ See, Thomas Hooker, *The Soules Preparation for Christ or A Treatise of Contrition Wherin is Discovered How God Breakes the Heart and Wounds the Soule, in the Conversion of a Sinner to Himself* (London: A. Croke, 1632); Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed and Smoking Flax to which is added A Description of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 180?). For more on the views of Hooker and Sibbes in regards to bruising and humiliation, see Chapter 1 above.

of guilt” for his sin, the required sense of humiliation that Brainerd would carry with him for the rest of his life.¹⁹

The trials of Brainerd’s conversion and his coming to humiliation serve as an important marker in Brainerd’s spiritual life. First, it is the probable beginning of the dichotomy between despair and “true joy” that Brainerd experienced throughout his life of faith. Second, his combat with God and eventual submission to the “way of salvation entirely by the ‘righteousness of Christ’” laid the foundation for Brainerd’s conviction that the path to salvation required all sinners to endure “great distress.” After being forced through a “miserable state” in his conversion, Brainerd felt that his reward was hard won, and that it should be equally as hard for others as well. He wrote that he would anger easily when nominal Christians (“both ministers and people”) spoke of “the world” and their experiences and never mentioned “anything of that dreadful wilderness that I had been led along through.” Brainerd came to doubt the validity of the conversion of many “that called themselves Christians” simply because they did not relay any similar feelings of trial or duress. For Brainerd, suffering real humiliation became the ultimate proof of conversion; without it, Brainerd only saw hypocrites.²⁰

Brainerd’s newfound conviction, based on his own experience, that true conversion was a pained conversion initially only brought him trouble. His high standards for proof of conversion made him prone to doubt the faith of his fellow Christians and also forced him to remove himself from Christian company in when he entered Yale only months after his conversion in September, 1739. This only exacerbated his feelings of acute loneliness, and

¹⁹ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 126, 140, 137, 139, and 141.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 140 and 137.

probably drew suspicion as well. His isolation fostered feelings of spiritual pride and even led to flirtations with antinomianism that would soon derail his academic career and his entry into the ministry. Evidence of his pride can be seen in many of the entries that were written during Brainerd's isolation in his first year of college. He wrote that he felt "[he] was a creature alone and by [himself] and knew not of any that felt as [he] did."²¹ The extremes of his conversion created a young man with a neophyte's zealotry, who saw few, if any, allies. What is more, his apprehension that "there was no goodness or merit in my duties," only "indebtedness to God for allowing me to ask for mercy," further isolated Brainerd from people who believed that both God and man worked together for salvation. When he entered college in the Fall of 1739, he entered as a disciple of radical free grace theology ready to challenge the faith of others. He also began his academic career as a very inward looking man with intense reservations about his future endeavors.²²

Brainerd's experiences, actions, associations, and eventual expulsion from Yale are some of the most well-documented components of his life. Historians have used his college experience and expulsion as descriptors of the very real New Light enthusiasm brought about by revivalism as well as the defining event in the shaping of Brainerd's missionary career. John Grigg adds that his ordeal at Yale ultimately pushed Brainerd to the middle as a "peacemaker"

²¹ Ibid, 142. In his own study of Brainerd, John Grigg notes that Brainerd did become an adversary of antinomianism but he did have a "radical" side that implied antinomian undertones. Brainerd's latent radicalism often cropped up in his visitation and correspondence with college friends such as Joseph Bellamy. His choice of words in warning Bellamy "to be 'very cautious in thinking and treating with other[s] that don't feel as we do'" are similar to the quotation cited above and show that Brainerd believed that he and very few select others were true Christians set apart from the rest, a perennial and often detrimental belief of many antinomians. He knew, later, from experience that they should tread lightly in accusations of unsound faith so as not to draw intense ire and scrutiny from the community at large. See Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 42-44.

²² Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 134-136.

between radical New Lights and the establishment Old Lights.²³ Later, in Chapter 3, I will show that his expulsion and how Edwards's account of it was pivotal in the development of the evangelical understanding of suffering for one's faith; here the expulsion ordeal served as a warning not to use a personal narrative/experience on conversion, no matter how painful, as a test for the validity of another believer's conversion. Only suffering after conversion could serve as assurance of salvation because it was a product of receiving God's grace and imitating Christ.²⁴ Unfortunately for Brainerd, it was his convictions on the necessity a pained conversion brought by submission to the will of God that first got him into trouble at Yale because it was what made him doubt the faith of, and refuse to interact with, his peers. Had he never suffered so intensely in coming to accept the tenets of free grace and the sovereignty of God, he probably would have finished his degree without much difficulty. However, he could not get over his struggles lightly, and because he could not, he learned another side of suffering in following after Christ.

The best outline of Brainerd's first experience at Yale is that he entered the college, as he said, "with some degree of reluctancy" because he felt he would not be able to "lead a life of strict religion." His sense of being set apart from other Christian made him doubt university life would help in his spiritual growth. Once there, everywhere he noticed "temptations" and behaviors unbecoming of young Christian men. By default, he went into isolation, often disappearing a "considerable distance" from the college to escape such unsavory company. Oddly, even though he "mourned for...more time...to be alone with God" and tried to remove

²³ See Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work," 188-201; Norman Pettit, "Prelude to Mission: Brainerd's Expulsion from Yale," *The New England Quarterly* 59 (March 1986) 28-50; Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 7-44.

²⁴ See Chapter 3 below.

himself from company, he also complained of being “alone in the world like a stranger and pilgrim.” Brainerd’s loneliness was even made worse by bouts of illness in his first year at college. At one point, measles spread through the college and eventually infected him, causing him to take time away from school. The intensity of his studies also regularly taxed his health. Sometime around the month of October, 1740, he arranged “to board out of college at a private house.” The arrangement was probably for self-preservation, but it also secured his private time with God. After recuperating through the month of November, he felt ready to recommit to his studies. The drudgery of his college life would probably have continued, but to his delight apparent changes in the atmosphere of the university had begun to take place while in his absence in the month of October.²⁵

The change came, in Brainerd’s view, when on October 21, 1740 “the Rev. Mr. Whitefield came through the land.” He was unable to see him speak, but by word of mouth, he was moved by Whitefield’s message. He believed that Whitefield spoke of “doctrines and conduct” in tune with his own, even to the extent that his “soul was refreshed and seemed knit to him [Whitfield].” Other students on campus must have shared the same feelings, because for the first time at Yale, he felt “the power of religion.” Finding likeminded students also helped him feel “great satisfaction” in a new experience of “Christian conversation” and fellowship. He began to arrange “private meetings” with new allies and delighted in the spread of what he and others saw as a religious revival.²⁶

²⁵ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 142-143, 144-145, and 149-150.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 149-150 and 152-153.

From here forward, the rest of what actually happened to Brainerd while at Yale is lost to history. Any retelling of the events that led up to his expulsion depend upon piecing together his future accounts of his experience with speculation. Apparently, before his death, Brainerd had the portions of his diary that dealt with his expulsion destroyed.²⁷ From what Edwards relayed, Brainerd told him (Edwards) that it was related to a singular event in which Brainerd proclaimed, in a private side conversation, that Yale tutor, Mr. Chauncey Whittelsey, “had no more grace than a chair.” What historians like John Grigg and Norman Pettit have pieced together suggests that he not only became wrapped up in the fervency of revival, but that he also finally found like-minded friends who together felt they had full license to publicly challenge other Christians’ reception of grace.²⁸ Before the excitement that Whitefield generated, he simply withdrew from those he felt were lacking in grace. Now with friendly allies, his convictions got the better of him. Norman Pettit argues that even Jonathan Edwards helped to fuel the flames. In a commencement speech, which Brainerd heard, Edwards said “that the current excesses...such as visions, tears, and the condemning of others as unconverted were no ‘argument that the work in general is not the work of the Spirit of God.’” Edwards eventually went on to warn against such excess, but Brainerd felt Edwards’s words justified his actions so he kept on “condemning others” until he was expelled.²⁹ Caught up in the excitement of revival and with a newfound encouragement from friends like Samuel Buell, David Youngs, and possibly even Samuel Hopkins, he overlooked warnings from his Puritan heritage.³⁰ He forgot lessons learned from

²⁷ See Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 22 and 207n64.

²⁸ See Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 22-25; Pettit, “Prelude to Mission,” 22-50.

²⁹ Pettit, “Prelude to Mission,” 35-36.

³⁰ Samuel Hopkins explains some of the excitement caused at Yale from the tours of ministers such as Whitefield and especially itinerant preacher Gilbert Tenant. He includes Brainerd as one of the Christians who was legitimately

events like the Antinomian Controversy that conversion was only a beginning and that resting on conversion alone as one's testament of faith held more hypocrisy than the lightness with which one experienced or recalled his or her conversion.³¹

The change in climate at Yale, encouraged by such men as George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, was assuredly the factor that pushed Brainerd out of his self-imposed cloister and into the spotlight. However, he was not ready for the scrutiny that it would bring. During the time that he spent alone, he often pondered the intensity of his conversion and the suffering he endured through its "wilderness." Without interacting with others, he naturally concluded that few could match his own experience, so few were probably converted. Emboldened by the camaraderie of like-minded individuals, he assumed that he had the right to publicly assess the experiences of others and call them out when he found them wanting. Many, including the rectors at Yale, felt otherwise and moved to make Brainerd an example. Their decision altered his path to the traditional ministry since his ordination would normally follow his degree.

It also made him entirely rethink the place of suffering within the life and witness of faith. In his need to study for a ministry license he began to see that while suffering in conversion helped the sinner come to grips with the sovereignty of God, it was not the trial or suffering that was required for the "advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world." The suffering required for that was more like what he endured in his expulsion, the suffering for one's beliefs. In a relatively short amount of time, the tables had turned on Brainerd, and the

concerned "with his condition" and that Brainerd met with him and helped bring him to conversion. See Edwards A. Park, "Memoir," in *The Works of Samuel Hopkins* Vol. 1 ed. Edwards A. Park (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1852), 15-17. For more on Brainerd's associations at Yale see, Pettit, "Editors Introduction," 37-40.

³¹ For more on hypocrisy after conversion see Chapter 1 above.

accuser became the accused. At first, this suffering was only brought on by his condemnation of others and not by an active witness or display of faith. As he recoiled from his expulsion and reassessed some core convictions during his studies for his preaching license, he transferred the onus of suffering from conversion to what he came to define as “progressive sanctification.” Brainerd began to accept, like his Puritan forefathers Thomas Shepard and John Flavel had already urged, that the right experience of suffering came in the time after conversion when the sinner, through trial, became a saint.³²

Brainerd’s constant ruminations on his expulsion, the pain it caused, and the lessons it held dominate “Part II” of the journal, which covers his preparations for his licensing to preach as well as the beginning of his ministry. The first entry of it was made on April 1, 1742 with Brainerd worried about “[his] life and warmth in divine things.” He knew that he had enjoyed the warmth of receiving God’s grace at conversion, but now saw that he had faltered and turned to “boasting.” This was undoubtedly a reference to his actions leading to his expulsion. As he reflected upon the “sins of his youth,” he came to see that his tendency to boast of his reception of grace at conversion obscured the fact that God continues his “dispensations” of grace after conversion. Brainerd believed that these dispensations were different than those given in conversion, and could be easily lost or withheld if the believer was not attentive. As he delved into scripture he also found that “when there is boasting,” grace “surely...is excluded.” He took this to mean that God had, for a time, readily withheld his “warmth” in order to correct or punish him. The pride of having found his favor with God in conversion, he believed, set off a negative sequence of events in his youthful handling of faith and grace. Ultimately, it made him forget that while he was converted he remained a sinner and was “dependent on God for the being and

³² Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 158. For his first mentioning of “progressive sanctification, see page 444.

every act of grace.” To move on from his “great trial at college” and continue his “growth in grace” he found that he, and all Christians, must always be “renewedly indebted to the God of all Grace for special assistance.” Over the course of the next fifteen days, he came to the above realizations and came to understand his expulsion as being part of God’s design to “make [him] fit for greater service by learning the great lesson of humility!”³³

As Brainerd saw it, he never proclaimed the wrong faith or chose the wrong side; he simply became overconfident in his conversion and misunderstood the prominence of suffering *throughout* the life of faith. Conversion by grace was only a first triumph for the sinner. The suffering endured in it led the individual to comprehend “the dreadful sin of [human] nature” and the awesome sovereignty of God. He now realized, as men like Shepard and Flavel had confirmed, that conversion did not vanquish sin altogether; it only opened the way for a series of trials – this being the process of sanctification –in which the sinner would labor constantly for “the cause of God.” While in these trials, the believer would suffer and strive to overcome a body mired in sin. Brainerd wrote that if a sinner was to have any “hopes that God will...return again with showers of converting grace to poor Gospel-abusing sinners,” he must see “‘tis good to wrestle for divine blessings.” He knew that grace was freely provided by God, but with grace came the necessity to struggle and suffer because they were required “for the mortification of indwelling corruption, especially spiritual pride.” The expulsion of Brainerd, a converted Christian, from a school of divinity proved this point. It also made him see that if he was going

³³ Ibid, 157-161.

to be true to his conversion he must “heartily forgive all injuries done us” and “to wish our greatest enemies as well as we do our own souls!”³⁴

The qualms of Brainerd’s first two-dozen journal entries of the section are palpable. He not only wanted to find a legitimate cause behind the “injuries done” while at Yale at the hands of his “greatest enemies,” but for the sake of moving on he needed to maintain his view that it was his spiritual benefit. The cause of his injuries, he reckoned, was God’s and part of God’s desire to teach him humility. By learning humility he would “be forever devoted to his service,” and especially the work of “grasping for multitudes of souls.” He figured that the possible benefit of the ordeal was that it would help him become “more holy, more like [his] Lord...wholly free from imperfection.” On Sunday, April 25, 1742 in a very long journal entry that even contained two original poems, he accepted the most direct cause for his suffering. He settled on the brief statement, “Oh, for sanctification!” All that was endured at Yale, he believed was for his sanctification. All the suffering that was to come was for his sanctification as well, so that he would “be fit for the blessed enjoyments and employments of the heavenly world.”³⁵

Even after this realization, Brainerd remained full of doubt and worry. However, this worry helped him understand, as Shepard recommended in his *Parable of the Ten Virgins*, that he could never let down his watch.³⁶ Two weeks later, on May 9, he again wrestled with the “cursed pride of [his] heart, as well as the stubbornness of [his] will” that got him into trouble at Yale. He longed to be still “humbled” and “greatly feared lest through stupidity and carelessness

³⁴Ibid, 160-163.

³⁵ Ibid, 163-164.

³⁶ See chapter 1 for Shepard’s positions on “watchfulness” during sanctification.

[he] should lose the benefit of these trials.” The trials, as it turns out, would not ever fully escape from his mind. The “disgrace [he] was laid under at college seemed to damp [him]” regularly, and his being humbled by pain was not uncommon. Brainerd recorded that he would often get “almost sick with [his] inward trials” born of his shame and perceived “wickedness of [his] heart.” The constant disgrace and humbling that he faced during this time led him to explain his sanctification as being punctuated by a “pleasing pain.” In this cycle, he would simultaneously “feel a sort of horror in [his] soul,” along with “a kind of humble resigned sweetness,” since through it he found “refuge in God.” He still believed the pain of his conversion was very real, but it was nothing compared with what he endured afterwards. While coming to terms with his expulsion and during his preparation for the ministry, he wrote, “I underwent the most dreadful conflicts in my soul that I ever felt”. Part of his soul’s conflict came in accepting that if he were to become sanctified, he must, like Christ, suffer and be “weaned from the world...even crucified to all its allurements.” Brainerd now knew that suffering like Christ as his disciple, was necessary for his salvation.³⁷

By July 29, 1742, the day his “learning and...experiences in religion” would be put on display and tested, Brainerd had in place a theoretical purpose for his ministry. His strategy contained two main parts. First, he planned for his ministry to be a means to demonstrate his “devotedness to God” via the painstaking work of enlarging Christ’s kingdom on earth. Second, since such work required that he be “resigned to God in everything,” he figured it was the best path to sanctification and his “growth in holiness” since being entirely devoted to God was the essence of a sinner sanctified. To this, he added that an active ministry that spread the gospel

³⁷ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 166-167, 172, and 173. Brainerd speaks of the “pleasing pain” of sanctification sometime after his licensing to preach. See page, 186.

message was also the only vehicle fit to answer the call of the great commission to evangelize. His view wove together evangelism and sanctification, arguing that the two together would provide access to “the blessedness of the upper world.” From his experience at Yale, he could respond to a multitude of theological dilemmas. He could explain how resting on conversion alone stopped short the process of salvation, and often led to an almost insurmountable position of pride. The answer to such pride and indwelling sin was for a sinner like him to “grasp for multitudes of souls,” and like Christ, “sweat blood” for them. It was only through “agonizing,” “crying,” and “wrestling” that, Brainerd argued, “the happy hour of deliverance comes.” This was true for both himself and the “multitudes of poor souls.” His views, as he shared them with his examiners, proved sound since he was granted a license to preach “by the Association of the Eastern District of Fairfield County” on July 29, 1742 in Danbury, Connecticut. In celebration, Brainerd recorded in his diary that he “resolved to live devoted to God all [his] days” and that he “was greatly refreshed and encouraged.”³⁸

His buoyed confidence was sadly limited. Just around two weeks after his licensure he felt powerful reservations about “God’s sending [him] among the heathen afar off.” New doubts of his ministerial abilities and latent fears of the “self-exaltation, spiritual pride, and warmth of temper” mixed with his past “endeavors to promote God’s work” often debilitated him as he prepared for yet another round of examinations. This time Brainerd would have to prove his worth as a missionary to the representatives of the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK). Popular Presbyterian minister and revivalist Ebenezer Pemberton (1705-1777) had contacted the SSPCK about Brainerd’s potential as a missionary after Pemberton had developed sympathy for Brainerd because of the way he was treated at Yale.

³⁸ Ibid, 162-163, 170, 174. Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 174n7.

According to Noman Pettit, it was Pemberton who first housed George Whitefield when he passed through Yale in 1741 and it was Pemberton who initiated Brainerd's role as a missionary.³⁹ The representatives of the SSPCK, identified as "the Correspondents in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania," managed the affairs of the missionary organization in the region and would assess whether or not to sponsor Brainerd as one of their official missionaries in North America. From August to November of 1742, "Part III" of his journal, Brainerd prepared for the missionary examination. During the time of these preparations, Brainerd preached as well as navigated through a constant stream of intense self-doubt and despair, mixed with "heavenly joys."⁴⁰

Importantly this section of the journal is the first that show Brainerd regularly engaged in preaching, and interacting with friends and colleagues. He saw his college friend Rueben Judd ordained, with another friend and ally Joseph Bellamy delivering the ordination sermon from Matt. 24:46. The sermon and verse, entitled "Blessed is that servant," moved Brainerd to reflect on maintaining his watchfulness against sin and keeping up an active Christian service.⁴¹ Shortly after the ordination of Judd, Brainerd also mentioned his brother John for the first time. Three days after the ordination of his friend, it seems that his doubts and struggles made him worry about his "dear brother." He wrote that he "pleaded earnestly" for him and "that God would make him more a pilgrim and stranger of the earth and fit him for singular serviceableness in the world." The entry underscores Brainerd's developing position that the life of faith should be that

³⁹ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 175, 176, 177, 187. Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," 39-40.

⁴⁰ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 188n6.

⁴¹ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 178 and 178n2. See also, Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," 52; Matthew 24: 42-46.

of a discipleship spent ostracized from the world, even though the disciple's sole aim was to help the "poor souls" living in it. His thoughts and prayers for his brother again produced the belief that suffering was necessary for evangelism. He shared that his "heart sweetly exulted in the Lord, in the thoughts of any distresses that might alight on him [John] or me, in the advancement of Christ's kingdom."⁴²

More than theology and the stresses of study made Brainerd dwell on the possibility that he and his brother, who was studying for the ministry, were engaged in work that would lead to an ostracized and friendless end. It appears that many around New Haven, including the Yale administration, still considered Brainerd an unsavory renegade who peddled unorthodox beliefs worthy of imprisonment, even if he had a license to preach.⁴³ On September 5, 1742, in two journal entries after writing about his brother, Brainerd was "informed" of a plan to "imprison" him "for preaching at New Haven." This threat of imprisonment was also deeply personal since he originally came to New Haven to see some of his friends graduate at their commencement, but his return with a preaching license obviously produced concern.⁴⁴ By 1742, itinerant preaching had already become a fixture of colonial towns in the region.⁴⁵ The constant exposure to itinerant sermons made for a tough crowd. By the time he was licensed many towns had already made their preferences for preaching known. They especially favored outsiders over local parish preachers since they could offer both fresh perspectives and the energy of revival

⁴² Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 179.

⁴³ For more details and perspectives on the possible imprisonment of Brainerd, see Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 38-40.

⁴⁴ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 179-180.

⁴⁵ See Timothy D. Hall, *Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial American Religious World* (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1994).

that broke out of the confines of the meetinghouse.⁴⁶ Unfortunately for Brainerd, he was well known in New Haven, and even if there were many who were willing to hear and meet with him, there was enough of an audience in positions of power, like the rectors at Yale, who would rather see him in jail or simply move along.

The fact that many already familiar with the gospel message that he worked to share were hostile to it engendered great anxiety. The news made him “quit all hopes of the world’s friendship,” which, while devastating, was also empowering. He reshaped the plan to imprison him into one that came “from the hand of God” rather than “from the hand of man.” He not only believed that it was to serve as punishment for his past “vileness,” but that it was another test for him to prove his devotedness to God. While he felt “barren and melancholy” from the opposition to his presence, and he was hindered in his work “for fear of imprisonment,” he did not stop meeting and preaching with friends and willing audiences. On Tuesday, September 7, he wrote that his continuing to “remain undiscovered” by those who wanted to imprison him gave him the “opportunity to do business privately” rather than refrain. He was not overly bold or defiant, but he took risks. Two day later, he described sneaking into town to worship and sing hymns then sneaking back out “to the farms again without being discovered by any enemies.” The secret prayer missions must have produced some sense of his being in the right in contrast to those who hunted him. He closed the day’s entry with, “thus the Lord preserves me continually.” If he did not feel some sort of righteousness, then he did at least gain yet another

⁴⁶ Ibid, 75-77.

experience that showed him that sacrifice moved him closer to holiness and “conformity” to God’s will.⁴⁷

The prospect of incarceration also helped him prepare for the upcoming trials of missionary work, especially the very real possibility of rejection and failure. If Christians or those who were at least familiar with the tenets of Christianity rejected him, what would the “heathen” do? The experience clearly shook him. He had already been disavowed by leaders in a town where he had studied divinity, and he would soon be sent to live as a complete stranger among a people whose hostilities toward him could only be guessed at. This prospect was made even worse by the likelihood that he would not have any common point of reference to build on. He tried to muster his strength as best as he could, but often faltered. For example, he wrote “I long to be at the feet of my enemies and persecutors,” only to swing violently the other way “trembling” at the “sense of [his] insufficiency to do anything in the cause of God.” Brainerd was terrified of what lay ahead. So much so that Edwards even noted that Brainerd was “ready to give up all for gone respecting the cause of Christ, and exceedingly longing to die.” Everywhere the fear of failure punctuated Brainerd’s preparations for ministry, and it had a powerful effect on how he would approach those preparations.⁴⁸

Brainerd, while fully convinced of his conversion, could never fully get past the fear of “helplessness and inability” to be an effective witness of the gospel. He constantly tried to remember he must be in all things “dependent upon God,” but he regularly returned to doubt and despair over his abilities and personal effectiveness as a minister. Between October 17-21, 1742,

⁴⁷ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 179-181.

⁴⁸ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 181-183. Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 182.

after avoiding arrest and before his examination for the SSPCK, he made an important decision about his spiritual life and ministry. During a time of “secret prayer” he found that he “longed to be ‘delivered from this body of death,’” but in that longing “felt [an] inward pleasing pain” because he knew that while on earth he “could not be conformed to God entirely.” As he looked back on his recent sermons, he found that he “could scarce ever preach without being first visited with inward conflicts and sure trials.” There was no avoiding it and he would have to be thankful “for these trials and distresses” because they were “blessed for [his] humbling.”⁴⁹

He came to embrace the idea that “life is a constant mixture of consolations and conflicts,” and knew it would “be so till [he] arrive at the world of spirits.” Everything he had experienced thus far, and all that he figured would come, pointed to a life that would be spent “reaching” and “stretching towards the mark of perfect sanctity” until he felt like he would “break.” He knew he would never quite reach that mark while still living within a body of sin, but his sanctification was to be “progressive” and only reached through continuous strife. If he were asked by his examiners at this point how one was to be sanctified and reach heaven, Brainerd would have answered with the journal entry that said it can only occur after one was “exercised with much pain.”⁵⁰ By the time of his examination by the SSPCK on November 25, 1742, at the age of twenty-four, he solidified his belief that suffering and sanctification went hand in hand. One did not come without the other.⁵¹ While this view had long been argued by theologians such as Shepard, Brainerd’s application of it to missionary work would eventually cause him to deviate from the prescribed methods of missionary activity endorsed by the

⁴⁹ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 183.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 186-188

SSPCK. By using suffering in sanctification as a means to bring people to Christ, Brainerd left his own powerful precedent to be followed as the evangelical movement matured after his death.

The correspondents of the SSPCK may or may not have directly asked Brainerd about his views on sanctification and salvation. Whatever was asked and offered was sufficient enough for him to pass the examination. However, in recalling the exam he did write that he was “made sensible of [his] great ignorance and unfitness for public service.” We cannot know if this was said to him or if he felt it on his own, but there is some indication that he was offered some “improvements” for the work of “gospellizing the heathen.”⁵² The SSPCK was at first eager to throw Brainerd directly into missionary work so “he would be exposed to [the] many hardships and dangers” that accompanied the job. They had designs to send him to work among the “Indians living near the Forks of the Delaware River in Pennsylvania and...the Susquehanna River,” but they soon changed his destination a number of times. Practicality or concerns about his inexperience trumped expediency, so the correspondents eventually decided to ease Brainerd into his work. The best way to do this, Jonathan Edwards figured, was by having him finish up his itinerancy first. Then Brainerd could move on to learn under the direction of John Sergeant, a successful SSPCK missionary operating a mission school at Stockbridge, Massachusetts.⁵³

From November 1742 to March 1743, Brainerd began his final preparations to become a missionary to the Indians living on the frontiers of New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. He spent the time visiting friends and family and was grateful for any encouragement he received. During his time of preparation, Joseph Bellamy was one of his most important and

⁵² Edward, *Life of Brainerd*, 188. For more details on the examination, see Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 40-41.

⁵³ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 188, 189-190, 201; Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 191n1, 201, 201n2. See also, Pettit, “Editor’s Introduction,” 59 -61; Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 49-57.

influential allies. It seems they met often, and Brainerd wrote that in their parting prayers together he had found “sweetness and composure.” The meetings with Bellamy may also have motivated him to make a final push against “the false appearances of religion” in the region before departing. In this final push, his belief that a pained sanctification was the best sign of the reception of God’s grace was often highlighted. From December to February, he recorded that many of his final sermons were meant to “bear testimony against those things which instead of promoting, do hinder the progress of vital piety,” such as pronouncements of faith untested by the requisite trials. On Friday, January 28 he reached out and preached to Christians in New London who were “too much carried away with false zeal” and tried, without success, to convince the “ministers and private Christians” to amend their ways. Leaving them he noted in his journal that they could not yet see eye to eye, since “God had not taught them with ‘briers and thorns’ (Isaiah 5:6) to be of a kind disposition toward mankind.” He left them hoping he had shown them that they had not yet suffered enough to finally come to God.⁵⁴

A few days later, on February 2, Brainerd delivered what he thought was his “farewell sermon” before setting out “on [his] journey towards the Indians.” However, his exposure to missionary work would yet again be delayed. This time, Edwards postulated, it was due to fears of the extra hardships winter may cause Brainerd. The hesitation, yet again, to send him can only be guessed at. It was possibly due to concerns over his mental and physical fragility, but no clear record exists. Nevertheless, about a month later, he finally found his way “to Mr.

⁵⁴ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 190-191, 196,197, and 201.

Sergeant's at Stockbridge." On Thursday March 3, 1743 his work as a missionary would immediately begin.⁵⁵

Unlike the delaying of his departure, the reasons for the decision to send Brainerd to work with Sergeant before he would work alone is fairly clear. Richard Pointer and John Grigg believe it was probably made in order to instill in Brainerd the exact aims of the SSPCK mission.⁵⁶ First organized in 1701 by members of the Edinburgh Society for Reformation of Manners, the SSPCK was officially created by a Royal Charter in 1709, which was then updated in 1738, five years before Brainerd began his mission.⁵⁷ The original goal of the Society was to educate and convert to Protestant Christianity the people living in the Highlands of Scotland. This would primarily occur through the erection of a system of schools scattered throughout the Highlands.⁵⁸ The Society's successes in the Highlands coupled with the rise of the transatlantic dialogue between evangelical Protestant Christians pushed the Society to expand their reach to the American Colonies and the Indian populations there. While the society was, as Grigg claims, a "latecomer to American missions,"⁵⁹ they were among the first missionary organizations to operate from an ecumenical stance within Reformed Christianity, hiring or sponsoring missionaries from various denominational backgrounds. Historian Frederick Mills shows that the spread of revival in Scotland in many ways mirrored the revivals in the American Colonies,

⁵⁵ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 196-197, and 201. Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 197n7, 201, and 201n2.

⁵⁶ See Richard Pointer, "'Poor Indians' and the 'Poor Spirit': The Indian Impact on David Brainerd" *The New England Quarterly* 67 (September, 1994), 409-410. Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 48-54.

⁵⁷ See *An Account of the Rise, Constitution and Management, of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge* (London, 1714), 8-17.

⁵⁸ For an excellent detailed explanation of the methods of the SSPCK, especially the erection of schools, see Margaret Connell Szasz, *Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans: Indigenous Education in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

⁵⁹ Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 48.

creating in the kirks of Scotland a “missionary-minded movement” that was prepared to look past denominational differences. The ecumenical position of the SSPCK made the organization well placed to support the building of what Griggs labels a “greater Atlantic Protestantism” that would use schooling, primarily instruction in reading and writing guided by the general tenets of Protestantism, as the primary tool of evangelism. Scottish minister William Ballie argued that such work enabled “the Lord [to] send a Revival of Religion...to all corners of the land.”⁶⁰

In the eyes of the SSPCK, Highland Scots and American Indians were a particularly problematic demographic for new missionaries such as Brainerd. Not only were the Indians “heathens” and the Highlanders corrupted by the influences of Catholicism, they were both altogether “uncivilized.”⁶¹ As the Society learned through their initial endeavors, basic schooling and catechizing were often not enough to bring such souls out of darkness. By their requests to Parliament, through an updated charter passed in 1738, the SSPCK was also allowed to build “trade schools” in the Highlands in order to teach useful “civilizing” trades such as weaving and basic farming techniques. The program of building “trade schools” did not transfer to American operations; although missionaries there were still expected to catechize, make literate, teach trades, and “civilize” the people of the “infidel nations” found within the colonies.⁶² The emphasis on education made the SSPCK an important forerunner in missionary activity when compared to later missionary efforts of the nineteenth century. The Society

⁶⁰ See Frederick V. Mills, “The Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge in British North America, 1730-1775” *Church History* 63 (March, 1994), 15-16; Arthur Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival: The Scottish Evangelical Revival of the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Banner of Truth Press, 1971), 210; Henry Sefton, “The Scottish Society in Eighteenth Century America.” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 17 (1971): 169-184; Szasz, *Scottish Highlanders*, 72-77; William Ballie, as quoted in Arthur Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival*, 210.

⁶¹ See, *An Account of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge* (Edinburgh, 1774), 1-8.

⁶² *Ibid*, 5-8 and 10.

realized, like many later organizations, that since Christians were a people of the book, education must take precedence in bringing both conversion and civilization to the peoples with whom their missionaries worked.⁶³ Under the watchful eye of John Sergeant, Brainerd would learn, according to Richard Pointer, the “standard strategies [of] English missionaries.” First, under these strategies, he would teach the basics of Reformed Christianity, which included doctrine as well as practical “manners” like farming that would make them civilized. He would also learn to “suppress any ‘heathenish’ practices” and ultimately “instill in them the work ethic of the English yeomen farmer.”⁶⁴ By way of Brainerd’s affiliation with the SSPCK and his tutelage under John Sergeant it seems that he was at first instructed to follow what James Axtell importantly argues most missionaries of the day were made to believe: that in order to make converts, the missionary must first “reduce [the Indians] to civility” or the ways of the Europeans.⁶⁵

Brainerd’s work as a foreign missionary to native peoples within an imperial colony inserts Brainerd into a vast debate over the role of missions in empire that I cannot fully assess within this dissertation. However, his working within this context, combined with his experience of and beliefs about suffering, requires some attention. On some level, it must be accepted that, like most missionaries, he was, as anthropologists John and Jean Camaroff suggest, “an agent of ‘cultural imperialism.’” He had preconceived notions of civility, savagery, and right belief that

⁶³ See Margaret Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 191-217; James Axtell, *Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 179-217; Jean and John Camaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Part I: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 59-64.

⁶⁴ Pointer, “Indian Impact on David Brainerd,” 409-410.

⁶⁵ Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 133.

he aimed to spread mostly by personal example, all of which have been cited as a chief method of a missionary's civilizing effort.⁶⁶ However, as the debate on the place of missionaries within the context of empire has grown, the effectiveness of missionaries as producers of loyal, "civilized," subjects has been called into question.

Recently, studies that emphasize the individual agency of native peoples in their own conversion and the finding that conversion occurred more readily by the example of native believers instead of foreign missionaries are the most powerful challenges to the argument that foreign missionaries were civilizing agents of empire.⁶⁷ Brainerd, as Richard Pointer forcefully argues, was profoundly influenced by the Indians he tried to evangelize, and contact with them, made him rethink his methods for making converts. One powerful example of the Indian influence on Brainerd is that he relied heavily on his Indian interpreter, Tautamy, a converted Christian, to do much of his work.⁶⁸ Also, while missionaries like Brainerd did indeed push English forms of "civility" like living in towns and pursuing agriculture, the ultimate goals of the missionaries were different than other imperial agents. Unlike other agents of empire, the missionaries' aim was not to create or maintain an empire in the political sense, but to add

⁶⁶ For civilizing and conversion by personal example see Camaroff, *Revelation and Revolution*, 16.

⁶⁷ For an excellent introduction to the "shelf of literature" (Etherington, 1) on the subject, see Norman Etherington, "Introduction," in *Missions and Empire* ed. Norman Etherington, *Companion Series of the Oxford History of the British Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-18; Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004), especially 316-330; Eliga H. Gould, "Prelude: The Christianization of British America" in *Missions and Empire*, 19-39; Elizabeth Harris, *Theravāda Buddhism and the British Encounter: Religious, Missionary, and Colonial Experience in Nineteenth Century Sri Lanka* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-8; Camaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 200-205. A standard account, that many of the above works argue against, of the relationship between religion and empire can be found in Louis B. Wright, *Religion and Empire: The Alliance between Piety and Commerce in English Expansion, 1558-1625* (New York: Octagon Books, 1973). David Grigg also assesses Brainerd's influence on later missionary attempts to civilize foreign peoples. See Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 164-170.

⁶⁸ Pointer, "Indian Impact on David Brainerd," 403-426; Peggy Brock, "New Christians as Evangelists," in *Missions and Empires*, 132-152. For more on Brainerd's interpreter Tautamy, who will be discussed more below, see David Brainerd, *Brainerd's Journal; Mirabilia* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1746) 8-15.

converts to the kingdom of God. This kingdom, the missionaries believed, should be built so it would remain standing after all the earthly empires fell away. Missionaries, as Andrew Porter explains, had the ability to choose whether or not to use “civilization” as “a means to an end.” If it did not help in making converts it could be readily discarded in favor of more appropriate tools.⁶⁹ Brainerd, as seen in his work and his writings, adhered to the notion that methods could be abandoned, and because of his suffering *with* his converts, he recommended abandoning civilizing as a primary component of missionary work.

Brainerd’s personal view of his role as an agent of God is far more elusive than were the goals of the SSPCK. He would have arguably seen himself as an agent of God before he ever considered himself an agent of empire – if he ever did. Before beginning his mission to the Indians, it seems that he lacked any sort of a British or imperial superiority akin to what scholars like James Axtell argue missionaries always had. Evidence of this can be found in his records: “I scarce ever felt myself so unfit to exist, as now: I saw I was not worthy of a place among the Indians, where I am going, if God permit: I thought I should be ashamed to look them in the face.”⁷⁰ Brainerd did not rush out as a superior conqueror to bring Indians into the fold, but rather, as his diary shows, he doubted his ability as a missionary constantly, and he did not reserve his doubts for his private diary but let it be known to those close to him. Only two months into his missionary activities, Brainerd wrote the following to his brother John: “Sometimes I hope God has abundant blessings in store for them [the Indians] and me; but at other times I am so overwhelmed with distress that I can’t see how his dealings with me are

⁶⁹ Geoffrey Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Imperialism, 1793-1900* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006) 21-24, Porter, *Religion versus Empire*, 116.

⁷⁰ Brainerd, in *Life of Brainerd*, 195.

consistent with the covenant of love and faithfulness.”⁷¹ Brainerd wished the best for himself and the Indians, but he often felt he was out of favor with God, and that he was incapable of carrying out a successful missionary career. At first glance, the passage of time did not help him feel more confident, which can be seen in another letter to John written eight months later. In the opening of the letter, he complained that the world is “a vast empty space” and spoke of longing to die. Perhaps to spare his brother, it is worth noting that later in the letter he did move on to explain his feelings of a newfound sense of hope.⁷² Nevertheless, his diary and letters read so much like a book of lamentations, so full of personal doubt, that it is fairly easy to disregard any notion that he thought himself a superior creature to the Indians he tried to convert.

First and foremost, Brainerd’s allegiance remained exclusively to God, and he always tried to credit his successes as an extension of God’s own work. He wrote that he “was a little encouraged in some hopes God might bestow mercy on their [the Indian’s] souls,” and “that God would enable me to live to his glory to the future.”⁷³ However, he never let himself be overly encouraged for long. Just when he would find reason to celebrate, he would check his pride. Time and again he would write things like, “I could not look my people in the face when I came to preach. Oh, my meanness, folly, ignorance, and inward pollution!”⁷⁴ This passage not only

⁷¹ Ibid, 485.

⁷² Ibid, 486.

⁷³ Ibid, 204 and 205.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 232.

shows Brainerd guarding against pride, it also shows, at least in his personal diary, that he was never a person overly full of pride.⁷⁵

Despite this point, the audience of Brainerd's diary, God, must be taken into account. At times, as I show below, Brainerd's "public journal," which was actually meant for others to read often had a different tone.⁷⁶ The difference between the two journals lies, in part, to the fact that Brainerd, like many Calvinist New Englanders, kept his diary as a tool of personal religious devotion and as a means to monitor his growth in faith. To Calvinists, excessive pride was a danger, and a diary was a widely used method to keep one's faith in check and implement the proper practices of piety.⁷⁷ Because of this, it is possible that his personal journal withholds some of what he truly felt about his superiority in relation to the Indians, since he was constantly trying to keep himself in a humbled state when writing in his diary. Nevertheless, even if he humbled himself in his private diary, it is plain that an advocacy of suffering and hardship in the cause of God still remained constant in both his private and public journals.

⁷⁵ For more on Brainerd's lack of pride compared to other missionaries, see Pointer, "Indian Impact on David Brainerd," 407-408.

⁷⁶ Brainerd's "public journal" was published in Philadelphia by William Bradford in 1746. It consisted of two parts along with an added preface written by the SSPCK correspondents as well and an attached appendix written by Brainerd. The first part of the journal was published as *Mirabilia Dei inter Indicos; or the Rise and Progress of a remarkable work of Grace, Among a number of Indians*. Part two was printed as *Divine Grace Displayed; or the Continuance and Progress of a remarkable work of Grace Among some Indians belonging to the Provinces of New Jersey and Pennsylvania*. The appendix was simply entitled *Appendix to the Journal*. While the journal was set apart in different parts or sections, the entire journal was published together with continuous pagination so, as part one ended on page 80, part two picked up on page 83 after a blank page and the title page of part two. For ease of reference I will cite quotations and references as *Brainerd's Journal* followed by a semicolon with the section of the journal ("Preface," *Mirabilia, Divine Grace, or Appendix*) followed by the page(s).

⁷⁷ For accounts of American Calvinists or Puritans using diaries as a tool of devotion see R. Seeman, "The Spiritual Labour of John Barnard: An Eighteenth-Century Artisan Constructs His Piety," *Religion and American Culture* 5 (1995), 181-215. Most scholars agree that Edwards printed Brainerd's diary to serve as a devotional tool rather than a practical guide to the work of a missionary, which it was also later used as. In Richard A.S. Hall, *The Neglected Northampton Texts of Jonathon Edwards: Edwards on Society and Politics* (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 146, Hall writes that "in Edward's view, Brainerd's pious example would serve the same purpose as quarterly public prayer: it would tend to rekindle the embers of piety in others." See also Conforti, "Jonathon Edwards's Most Popular Work," 188-190.

In the letter to his brother cited above, dated April 30, 1743, Brainerd had only been officially working as a missionary for just under two full months in the wilderness south of Albany, New York, known as Kaunameek. However, that was enough time for him to share that he “live[d] in a most lonely, melancholy desert,” and that his “work [was] exceeding[ly] hard and difficult.” Even though he opened the letter with affection, writing “I long to see you,” it at first seems like the letter will only have a somber tone. However, in his understanding of his position and salvation, it does not. While he shared with his brother that his “own experience has taught [him] there is no happiness and plenary satisfaction to be enjoyed in earthly friends...or in any other enjoyment that is not God,” he did hold out hope for the two brothers’ happiness and triumph over sin to be found in their work and the world to come. He added that if God would “afford us each his presence and grace, that we may perform that work, and endure the trials he calls us to, in a most tiresome wilderness,” then the “distance at which we are held from each other” was of no concern because they each “had the presence of God.” In the work that Brainerd had just begun as a missionary, he already came to accept that, while “lonely” and “difficult,” it afforded him the presence of God. He may have to “travel on foot...the worst of way,” eat only a “hasty pudding” and “boiled corn,” and sleep upon a “little heap of straw, laid upon some boards,” but it was all to learn that “we must ‘through much tribulation’ (Acts 14:22) enter into God’s eternal kingdom of rest and peace.”⁷⁸

Suffering for the cause of God clearly emerges as the theme of this letter. In many ways the letter could also serve as the framework for the rest of his missionary career. The pains that he met with early on were taken by Brainerd as learning experiences. These struggles were so he “may learn to ‘endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ’ (II Tim. 2:3)” and to persevere

⁷⁸ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 485-486.

in what God asked of him. The loneliness and the poor diet were all “needed...chastisements,” and were for his benefit, even if “hitherto [he had] little or no apparent success.” He knew that if he “endured these trials” they would make him better. There were still times that he felt he was “the most vile of any creature living...on this side [of] hell,” and he asked for his brother’s prayers to help him through. He did not, however, ask for prayers to end the pains he was enduring. Instead, he made supplications to be “humble, holy, resigned, and heavenly minded by all [his] trials.” His closing to his brother urged them to “run, wrestle, and fight, [so they] may win the prize and obtain that complete happiness, to be ‘holy as God is holy’ (Lev. 19:2; I Pet. 1:16).” After a difficult first exposure, Brainerd figured that regardless of the number of converts he made – the suffering he endured in missionary work at least drew him closer to God and “complete happiness.”⁷⁹ At this point, he still only saw his suffering as something that benefitted him, but in time he would come to see as being for the benefit of others as well.

The early stages of his missionary work were still taxing for Brainerd. Even after his mental preparations and acceptance that trial drew him nearer to God, he struggled to overcome the test and relied on past experiences to explain his current position. He recorded, like he had done before, that the time “was a most bitter and distressing season,” and that he was “viler” than “the most barbarous people on earth.” Since he had no missionary experience, he quickly defaulted to old explanations of struggle and maintained that his hardships were so he could “possess the sins of [his] youth.” Only weeks into his missionary work, Brainerd seems to have returned to this normal position. He continued to see his missionary work, just like his preparations for his past two examinations, as part of the necessary chastisement for “the actions of [his] life past” that were “covered over with sin and guilt.” At this point, he still assumed that

⁷⁹ Ibid.

suffering while doing the work of Christ was part of the required purification process for living a life *previously* full of sin. Once again, throughout the first months of missionary work, past errors consumed him and he regarded them as the source of his present suffering. However, the experiences of missionary work slowly opened another view of the process of sanctification. He started to see that the pain only increased because the world grew increasingly hostile as the saint was purified. This was even more apparent to Brainerd when the saint engaged in evangelism.

Brainerd had already established, as seen in the letter to his brother, that there was a reward in suffering. However, he struggled to keep hold of that realization. He especially struggled to hold firm in that belief when pressed with acute physical sufferings that also compounded the “spiritual distresses” he had long known. The journal entry made on Wednesday, May 18, is an excellent summary of his dilemma. He wrote that he lived in a position that afforded him no comfort except “what [he] had in God.” He lived in a “lonesome wilderness,” with only an Indian interpreter to speak with, had a poor diet, and lacked Christian contacts to “whom [he] might unbosom [himself] and lay open [his] spiritual sorrow.” The prospect of his success was also elusive, so he could find no comfort there. Worst of all, the people whom he was trying to convert were in a dire position and were suffering excessively from their current situation. He wrote that the “Indian affairs [were] difficult” because they had “no land to live on, but what the Dutch people lay claim to.” Since the Dutch claimed that land, they were fully prepared to drive them off of it and, recognizably, had “no regard to the souls of the poor Indians.” The “flock” of Indians at Kaunameek that Brainerd was sent to evangelize were unquestionably fighting for their survival. To his distress, his role as a Christian minister sent by a European society did not aid in his efforts to help the Indians or make him acceptable to the Europeans living in the region. He wrote that the Dutch “hate me because I come to

preach to ‘em [to Indians and Dutch],” and they especially had no concern for the purpose of his mission among the Indians. Thus far, doing the work of Christ had increased the suffering of the disciple and those to whom he was sent for no apparent reason, other than for being there at all. Adding insult to injury, suffering still did not change his feeling that “‘God hid his face from me’ (Job 13:24).”⁸⁰

Brainerd had yet to make the discovery that the shared physical and emotional suffering of the missionary and the people he was sent to convert was the missing element that would complete his theory of discipleship, sanctification, and missionary practice. He probably would have discovered this sooner, but he once again became distracted by past goals. As he began to throw himself into his missionary work, which now included an order from the SSPCK “to set up a school among the Indians at Kaunaameek,”⁸¹ He also made preparations to “attempt a reconciliation” with Yale. His attempt, made in June 1743, failed, which sent a dark cloud over his ministry for most of the month. In fact, until the final decision in September of that year (1743), he was often distracted by his past behavior and the prospects of reconciliation. Throughout much of this time, from June to October 1743, Edwards paraphrased the journal liberally as Brainerd constantly fell into a deep depression. Edwards explained “that one main occasion of that distressing gloominess of mind which he was so much exercised with at Kaunaameek, was reflection on past errors and misguided zeal at college.” Brainerd’s obsession with reconciliation, as well as a strong sign of his misgivings regarding his new profession, can

⁸⁰ Ibid, 206-207.

⁸¹ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 208n4.

be seen in Edwards mentioning that Brainerd not only tried in June to amend relations with Yale, but tried again, “still in vain,” immediately after in the “beginning of July.”⁸²

By August, he showed some signs of commitment to his work as he labored to improve his living conditions by finishing construction of a home. During his work on his home, he recorded that it “‘was good for me to be afflicted’ (PS. 119:71),” and he seemed to begin, again, committing himself to all that it would take to be a missionary. On August 13, he recorded in his journal that, “he found the comfort of being a Christian,” which was the realization that the “sufferings of the present life” could in no way measure up to the “divine enjoyments” of the next. He finally felt “his past sorrows...disappear” and with his “soul...full of tenderness and love...longed that others should know how good a God the Lord is.” The next day, a Sunday in which he would preach, with his new found optimism, he observed, that the “Lord enabled me to speak with some feeling and sense of divine things, but [he] perceived no considerable effect” on his audience.⁸³

The sermon that Brainerd delivered on that Sunday “endeavored to show my poor ignorant people what we are to believe of Christ, and that we must believe in Christ in order to [gain] salvation.” He laid out a rudimentary scheme of faith, salvation, Christology, and “what a man must feel,” but he failed to capture the audience. The stress of doubt, his failed delivery, and poor living arrangements were physically overpowering for him. The very next day he began to feel ill and malnourished, eventually becoming so sick over the course of the next week that he was “scarce able to walk about.” Once restored, he felt thankful to God, and returned to

⁸² Ibid, 208-212.

⁸³ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 211-213.

his instruction with a renewed sense of the “tenderness” that God had shown him. The desire to “strive,” “grow,” “wrestle” and “persevere” returned, pushing him to once again “spend time instructing [his] poor people” and praying that “God would pity their souls!”⁸⁴ Suffering and rebounding from real physical infirmity early in his ministry at Kaunaumeeek seems to have been a spark for the kindling of Brainerd’s missionary career. The belief that God had preserved him through this recent illness so he could preach again, even after he had failed to create a captive audience, is the first instance of Brainerd taking advantage of the witness of suffering in the advancement of his missionary endeavors.

Time to develop any sort of ideology about a witness of suffering while working as a missionary was cut short by Brainerd’s continued interest in the prospect of a reconciliation with Yale that would allow him to finish his degree. As before, he poured most of his efforts and thoughts into that prospect and at the end of August 1743, he set out on a trip that would bring him back to New Haven to see if he could make amends. The trip, and the entire month of September 1743, was a crucial and an assuredly painful time in the personal and ministerial life of David Brainerd. While on his travels, he spent much time speaking to “considerable assemblies of people” on the “essence of true religion” and against the “false appearances, wildfire party zeal, [and] spiritual pride” he deemed were still present in the region. From the experience gained so far he did, in those conversations, record and share that “‘tis through great trials...that we must enter the gates of paradise,” and he used this position to try and temper any “extremes [that] men [were] inclined to run into,” much like those that caused his expulsion.⁸⁵ It is clear in the journal entries that Brainerd shaped the themes of his sermons made on that

⁸⁴ Ibid, 212-213n5, 214-215n6, and 215.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 216-218.

journey as a rebuke to his past behavior as well as proof of his having corrected that behavior that he hoped would encourage a chance at reconciliation.

It had been two years since his expulsion and on Wednesday of the fourteenth day of that month, Brainerd would have graduated with his degree from Yale University. In his journal entry on that day, September 14, Brainerd wrote that “I was greatly afraid of being overwhelmed with perplexity and confusion, when I should see my classmates take theirs...” and that “I have long feared this season, and expected my humility, meekness, patience, and resignation would be much tried.” To his surprise he “found much more pleasure and divine comfort than [he] expected” and to his relief God “enabled him “with calmness and resignation to say, ‘The will of the Lord be done’ [Acts 21:14].” While at the commencement, Brainerd was at ease, “calm, sedate, and comfortable.” Later in the day Brainerd was even able to enjoy the company of a “dear Christian friend” and with his friend experienced a “spiritually serious, tender, and affectionate” encounter in private prayer.⁸⁶ The day clearly progressed far better than he hoped and there is no recounting of an emotionally debilitating experience. Edwards even thought that Brainerd proved that he was no enthusiast or hypocrite but a genuine saint. Brainerd did not, however, emerge from the graduation ceremony at Yale unscathed.⁸⁷ The days preceding and following the commencement were full of pain or at least emotional duress for Brainerd and on

⁸⁶ Ibid, 218.

⁸⁷ In his article, “Prelude to Mission,” Norman Pettit argues that Brainerd’s young life and his experiences that led to his expulsion not only pushed him into missionary work, but shaped the entire spiritual life of Brainerd including his approach to conversion and missionary activity. It has been pointed out by other scholars like Joseph Conforti that the events leading to Brainerd’s expulsion have been, until recently, really only viewed by historians as convenient examples of growing religiosity or zeal during the era of the Great Awakening. However, as I argue, they do not go beyond his expulsion to explain the ways in which Brainerd attempted reconcile and atone for his past enthusiasm. See Joseph Conforti, “Jonathan Edwards’s Most Popular Work.” See chapter 3 below for more details on how Edwards viewed Brainerd’s reconciliation attempt.

Tuesday, September 20, five days after his meeting with the university regents, he again fell gravely ill.⁸⁸

This return to illness after his attempt at reconciliation and the “mercy” from God that Brainerd “saw” and received from his friends “in the midst of affliction” is the moment that he fully embraced the witness of a suffering discipleship as the best method for missionary work. The “divine goodness” of falling ill while among friends, spared his life, he believed, and it also led him to the realization that “this is not a time proper to prepare for eternity.” There was work to be done, and his pain would enable it. Now free from obsessing over completing his studies at Yale, Brainerd would throw all he had into his ministry. This appears to have happened quickly. While he was sick, he noted that the words of Psalms 118:17, “‘I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord had done,’ frequently revolved in [his] mind.” He then “thought we were to prize the continuation of life only on this account, that we may show forth God’s goodness and words of grace.” Brainerd was moved to believe that his personal sickness and manifest agony coupled with God’s preservation of one so ill, would be the light of his lamp.⁸⁹

On October 4, he finally returned to his home among the Indians. He wrote that they appeared “very glad of [his] return” and he instantly “fell on [his] knees and blessed God” because even though he had been faced with “a season of sickness” and “exposed to cold and hunger in the wilderness,” God had preserved him. More than obsessing over chastisements for past wrongs, Brainerd saw in his illness that “God had renewed his kindness to [him]” simply by keeping him alive. That he should be allowed to live was assuredly based on the belief that it

⁸⁸ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 217-221.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 221-222.

enabled him to continue the work of God because God had kept him alive. He obviously felt a greater indebtedness to God, as he wrote, because he “was now much resigned under God’s dispensations towards me, though my trials had been great.” By the grace of God, Brainerd would persevere in his sufferings. Doing so publicly while among the Indians, he would show, was his best tool of conversion.⁹⁰

Bouts of melancholy and doubt were too much a part of Brainerd’s natural character and inherited Calvinism to ever disappear completely. Yet, for much of the rest of the year (1743) his times of darkness were punctuated more often by feelings of “fervency” and “rising hopes.” These feelings strengthened his view that his work would help him grow in grace and achieve “further degrees of sanctification.” For a time his personal sanctification would stand as his primary impetus for missionary work. However, when physical illness returned again before the close of the year, his reaction to his illness showed that he viewed his suffering as a cause beyond his own sanctification. His recurring illnesses also cemented the fact that he was a sickly man, destined to expire at a young age. Before Brainerd concerned himself with his mortality, he responded to his illness in two ways. His first response, similar to when he had illness in the past, was thankfulness to God for the comforts that he did have. The second was a new close study of biblical “servants of old” who were aided by God in their struggles and “made instrumental” in their service to him. He cited the example of Elijah as one who “wrestled with God,” and Moses for the strength his faith. He admired Abraham since, like Brainerd, he was “a stranger... here in the world,” and finally he embraced the “story of Joseph’s sufferings and God’s goodness to him.” The study of such characters not only provided solace, it allowed him to frame his current position and ministry within a Biblical context. He enjoyed the company, and he could see in

⁹⁰ Ibid.

these stories from scripture that the more he struggled, the greater his ministry would be. For Brainerd, these men were all “instruments” and “examples of faith and patience,” who could help him “wrestle ardently for the conversion of souls.”⁹¹

These biblical parallels fueled Brainerd in his missionary work. He not only found mental and spiritual solace in relating to God’s ancient servants, but through them he experienced an increase in both his physical determination to work and the resultant wear to his body and mind. For the rest of his ministry and life he worked and traveled himself to exhaustion. Edwards noticed it and often explained that he probably fell ill due to “riding in the night after a fatiguing day’s journey.” In entry after entry, Brainerd records having had to “ride hard, and fatigue myself,” with Edwards – in palpable amazement – responding in summary that Brainerd was for a time “very ill and full of pain; and yet obliged through his circumstances...to be at great fatigues in labor and travelling day and night.” Edwards wrote that the sustenance that Brainerd found in God and scripture when ill or suffering physical exhaustion “enabled” not only a powerful determination in his ministries, but also a realization that God “had given [him],” like “David...in his trials,” a portion of the “divine temper, that...freely forgives and heartily ‘loves [his] enemies’ (II Sam. 19:6).”⁹² The greatest enemy that emerged from this invigorated stance was idleness. Brainerd noted that “nothing lies heavier on [him] than the misimprovement of time,” so he did his best to fill it with doing as much as possible. He preached, prayed, and again increased his travels by regularly going “to study the Indian tongue with Mr. Sergeant at Stockbridge,” which was according to Edwards a twenty mile ride from Brainerd’s post at Kaunaumeeek. As Brainerd’s work continued, he never challenged that God’s

⁹¹ Ibid, 223, 224, and 226.

⁹² Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 226-227. Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 226-227.

ultimately controlled the path to conversion or sanctification, but he would at least do his part. He would endure the requisite trials, labor, and he would suffer his way to holiness bringing as many along with him as possible.⁹³

Two letters, one written to his brother John (cited above) at the end of December, and the other written to his youngest brother, Israel, in January help summarize Brainerd's new determination and designs for his missionary work. The letter to his brother John informed him of his growing disaffection with the world and the sickness and hardship that he had so far endured. He sympathized with his brother that he too had to "journey through a world of inexpressible sorrows," but he used his experience of God helping him through his own illnesses and "pressing inward trials" to show John that he emerged the better for it. Through God's aid and his renewed dependence on him, Brainerd found the key to the "life of Christianity." He explained that this was the "diligent, industrious, and faithful improvement of precious time." The wise use of time would allow them – he and John as well as all Christians – to "faithfully perform" the work required by God with "bodily strength and mental vigor." With this strength and vigor they could suffer boldly and become "instrument[s] of good to [God's] people." The "billows" faced while "patiently" running their race would ultimately bring them to a life of rest and "endless pleasures." Through his recent experiences he hoped to show John, then at Yale, that suffering through sickness and great hardships was not detrimental but necessary for sanctification as well as empowering for the saint. He told John that if he managed his time well and accepted that suffering advanced God's plan then it would force him to depend more upon

⁹³ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 228. Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 228n6.

God. Such a dependence upon God promised to end earthly suffering, “through infinite grace,” and bring an “eternity” of “peace.”⁹⁴

The letter to Israel was even more careful to make this point. Israel was seven years younger than Brainerd and without “earthly parents” to guide and instruct him. Brainerd first pushed Israel to remember to “glorify” God before all other pursuits. He added that while this recommendation was widely known among men, it was rarely heeded. Most men, he explained, pursued material gain and pleasure which ultimately led to their demise. If God was pursued first, he advised, then true happiness would be found. To set Israel on this course he recommended a life of “strict sobriety” which could be realized only by a “good improvement of precious time.” Time, he instructed, should be spent in “labor...reading, meditation, and prayer.” All of which was done to realize that we are “placed in God’s world to do his work.” Brainerd attempted to show his youngest brother that if he learned “to desire to live in this world only to do and suffer what God allots to you,” then he could “be of the spirit and temper of angels.” Finally, he left his brother a shortcut. Men were, according to Brainerd, “a long time in learning that all our strength is in God,” “that we can do nothing of ourselves.” He conceded that only Israel’s “own experience” could bring him to that realization, but Brainerd still tried to set him on the right path.⁹⁵ Brainerd figured that had he himself known earlier that God would sustain him through illness and make an example of his suffering, then his own journey through the wilderness to salvation may have been lighter. The power of his example of suffering made him hope he could help his brothers along their way to a successful ministry and eventual salvation.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 486.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 487-488.

Through the rest of the winter of 1743-1744 Brainerd followed his own recommendations and managed his time carefully. He stayed busy preaching, studying, riding to and from Kaunaumeeck, and writing on the “various powers and affections of a pious mind.”⁹⁶ He constantly exhausted himself and continued to struggle with illness, during which he always tried to depend on God. During this time, he still experienced his routine doubts about his abilities as a minister, but he always emerged from them believing he “could bear any sufferings.”⁹⁷ Once, in March 1744, he exhibited a renewed concern for his “past conduct, especially in [his] religious zeal.” He wrote a succession of diary entries filled with references to enemies past and his hopes for “exercising love and kindness to them,” displaying “love, kindness, forgiveness, and benevolence” to “all the world.” As the month progressed, so did a feeling of anxiety. He wrote of longing to be “perpetually and entirely crucified” and praying “earnestly” for both friend and foe.⁹⁸

Brainerd never directly explained the source of his anxiety, but it was probably due to the fact that his time among “his people” at Kaunaumeeck was ending. According to Edwards, due to the very small number of Indians residing at Kaunaumeeck, the SSPCK had instructed Brainerd to convince them that it would be better for them to “remove to Stockbridge” and live under the

⁹⁶ Ibid, 236 and 236n3. Edwards included Brainerd’s “essay,” “A scheme of a dialogue between the various powers and affections of the mind, as they are found alternately whispering in the godly soul” written in February, 1743, in the “further remains” of his publication (477-482). The essay is largely an expansion of what he shared with his brothers, a plea to “follow hard after God (Ps. 63:8),” during which the believer will continue to struggle with sin but will be aided by various “dispensations” from God. In it he also argues that the believer will become “impatient with sin” as well as sufferings, but he will learn that the sufferings will help him best sin, of course, by the aid or “dispensations” of God.

⁹⁷ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 238.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 241-242.

care and guidance of John Sergeant.⁹⁹ The final meeting with the “commissioners” over the issue would occur in April, so during the preceding month he may have wrestled with his doubts over removing a people from their land. On March 10, he recorded feeling “great unworthiness” mixed with surprise and love because he had been so well received by God’s “children [the Indians],” as “one of their brethren and fellow citizens.” The “thought of their treating [him] in that manner” made him want to “lie at their feet” so he could show his reciprocal “love and esteem of them.” He even added that they “were much better” than he. Whether harboring doubts over the arrangements made to leave their land or his knowledge that he would soon leave them, he felt “sorrowful.” He thought he was “the worst creature living” and “longed to get on [his] knees and ask forgiveness of everybody.” The next day, Sunday, March 11, he delivered his last sermon at Kaunaumeeek to his “poor people.” Brainerd was at a loss of words even though he “had so much to say to them.” In the end he could only do his best to make them feel “spiritually alive.”¹⁰⁰

The depth of Brainerd’s concern for the condition of “his people” at Kaunaumeeek seems legitimate. At the same time, some of the anxiety that he was feeling may also have been due to the fact that he, according to Edwards, had “received...opportunities to settle in the ministry amongst the English.” Brainerd again faced the dilemma of deciding on which career path to take, and spent the month of April seriously considering the opportunity. Edwards cited Brainerd’s lack of knowledge of the “suffering” in an established ministry as opposed to his hard-won familiarity with the “extreme hardships” of missionary work as his primary impetus to remain a missionary, but the options of leaving the wilderness to take the pulpit of a settled

⁹⁹ See Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 245n7 and 243n5.

¹⁰⁰ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 242-243.

church had appeal. We can only speculate, but his suffering as a missionary may have helped keep Brainerd in the field as a missionary. After weighing his options, he accepted new orders from the SSPCK to return to missionary service. He would now be sent, “through the howling wilderness,” to minister to Indians living on the forks of the Delaware River between the colonies of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.¹⁰¹

The reluctance to leave missionary work behind shows that Brainerd did develop some attachment or commitment to missionary life. I believe it also shows that he had developed his own independent methodology for making converts, and wanted to bring it to fruition. Looking back, it does not seem that his missionary endeavors included major concern for civilizing the Indians. Instead, they were full of genuine attempts that show Brainerd’s sincerity for his mission and people which then allowed him to instruct the Indians in “proper” doctrine. The best way to prove his sincerity, Brainerd established, was to struggle openly and “lay at the feet” of his flock. A relentless determination, even in the face of illness and fatigue, he hoped, would win souls for God. It certainly won the respect and admiration of other ministers and churchmen in the region. In a response to and recognition of his work, the Presbytery of New Jersey, led by the efforts of influential minister Ebenezer Pemberton, the same minister who helped Brainerd make contact with the SSPCK, wished to ordain Brainerd in the Presbyterian Church.¹⁰² Their wish to do so was not to take Brainerd away from his missionary work, which it did not, but it was to honor him as a fully ordained minister of the gospel rather than only a licensed preacher. On June 12,

¹⁰¹ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 245n8, and 245-246. Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 247.

¹⁰² See above, and Pettit, “Editor’s Introduction,” 39-40.

1744, Brainerd passed the ordination exam and became an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church.¹⁰³

According to Jonathan Edwards, the confirmation of Brainerd's ordination was guaranteed. On the topic, he included in a footnote an excerpt from a letter that Ebenezer Pemberton sent to the SSPCK. In the letter, Pemberton claimed that "Brainerd passed" with "universal approbation of the Presbytery, and appeared uncommonly qualified." Of special note was Brainerd's "great deal of self-denial" coupled with an "animated...noble zeal" that set him apart and especially fit to drive out "the darkness of heathenism."¹⁰⁴ The letter, as Norman Pettit shows, was later published in *The Christian Monthly History* in 1744, and may have been one of the first writings about Brainerd made public.¹⁰⁵ Showing the reach of his influence, Pemberton also had Brainerd's ordination sermon published in the same year (1744). He requested that the printers add to the sermon a letter that Pemberton had asked Brainerd to write outlining his missionary work and methods employed after his first years in the field. Written in November, 1744, the appended letter was titled "A Narrative relating to the Indian Affairs" and were definitely the first words by Brainerd about his missionary work and views written for public consumption. Brainerd's letter, or *Narrative* as Edwards referred to it, taken together with Pemberton's sermon, offer the most comprehensive outline of Brainerd's missionary views and practice available outside of his public (SSPCK) and private (Edwards's *Life*) journals.

¹⁰³ See Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 252, 252n7-8.

¹⁰⁴ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 252n7-8.

¹⁰⁵ Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," 78.

Suffering to win souls, as Brainerd did, is certainly the theme Pemberton intended his audience of ministers to grasp.¹⁰⁶

Pemberton chose Luke 14:23¹⁰⁷ as the scriptural cornerstone of his ordination sermon. The fall of man, he explained, created evil in God's perfect creation and required that "his Servant" (Christ) repair the damage and provide the path to man's salvation, especially for the "most miserable of mankind." The apostles and servants of Christ were to continue Christ's work and through his example of "compassionate care" go out to the worst or most "deplorable" of places and "compel" the sinners to "come in" to the house of God. Pemberton's emphasis on deplorable places and most miserable souls were purposeful. He wanted to highlight Brainerd's actions and see them replicated, but in a very specific way. The righteous, according to Pemberton, had their own rewards, but those in the most "helpless condition" needed the most help and deserved the closest attention. To reach these souls the apostles would need to give up the comforts of civility and go out to them in the "high-ways and hedges." Once there, the servants of God would have to avoid a powerful temptation: the historical precedent of using violence or force to make converts. In many ways these "ministers of the gospel" were not only to make converts, but also were to fight against the past "cause of *religious tyranny*" that had set so many against the church and its mission. Pemberton argued that the history of violence in the name of God had turned "the peaceable kingdom of the Messiah...into a field of blood." The only way to correct these past wrongs was to avoid "calling fire from heaven," and for true

¹⁰⁶ See Pettit, "Related Correspondence, Introduction," in Pettit, ed. *Life of Brainerd*, 559-560. Pettit notes that Edwards referred to or cited the "*Narrative* six times" so it was clearly important as well as necessary to add to his edition (560). The sermon was published as *A Sermon Prech'd in New-Ark, June 12, 1744. At the Ordination of Mr. David Brainerd, A Missionary Among the Indians upon the Borders of the Provinces of New-York, New-Jersey, and Pennsylvania. By E. Pemberton, A.M. Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in the city of New-York. With an Appendix, Touching the Indian Affairs* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, for J. Pemberton, 1744).

¹⁰⁷ The passage reads: "And the Lord said unto the Servant, go out into the high-ways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled," as cited in Pemberton, *Ordination Sermon*, 1.

Christians to “sacrifice their very lives in the cause of God” using only “*meekness...long suffering and doctrine.*” Only by way of “disinterested zeal...[and] universal benevolence to all of mankind” could past wrongs be made right. Pemberton believed and Brainerd showed that in suffering and sacrifice true, rather than nominal, converts would come unforced to the Lord’s Table. The only time that any form of fear was to be used was when making sinners realize they needed Christ. Pemberton preached as if his audience of ministers or “children of the Gospel,” already knew this point. So he took the opportunity to remind them that any refusal to do missionary work based on fear, especially the fear of replacing comfort for affliction, would invite God’s “voice of terror” upon them. Salvation was found, Pemberton pleaded, in sharing the “blood of Christ,” and, in closing, argued that it would “cleanse [them] from all...guilt and pollution.”¹⁰⁸

Brainerd’s letter, written five months after Pemberton delivered his sermon, served as a practical summary of Pemberton’s main points. The letter exemplified, in Pemberton’s view, a “self-denying mission,” full of “Fatigues and Perils, that must attend his [Brainerd’s] carrying the Gospel of Christ” to the Indians. Pemberton found it opportune to also note that Brainerd turned down many opportunities for “a comfortable settlement” as a pastor in a parish church before ever taking on his work.¹⁰⁹ According to Brainerd, he answered the request to write the letter with “freedom and cheerfulness” because he hoped that it would help promote the missionary cause by assuaging those hesitant about the importance of the work. He tried to include only the “most important matters.” He was also forthcoming and noted first the isolation

¹⁰⁸ Pemberton, *Ordination Sermon*, 1-10, and 20-21.

¹⁰⁹ Ebenezer Pemberton, *An Appendix, Containing a Short Account of the Endeavors, that have been used by the Missionaries of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, to introduce the Gospel among the Indians upon the Border of New-York, &c.* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1744), 24.

and loneliness he felt in his first assignment. He explained he was over twenty miles from the closest “English” inhabitants and was even a great distance from the “Dutch.” As a newcomer unsure of his place, he first took up lodging with Highland Scots, the only Europeans nearby, with whom he stayed for three months. During that time he found his isolation from the Indians troubling as he spent too much time travelling back and forth and could not establish a solid connection with them. His “pains” from travel were unfruitful so he decided it would be better to live directly among them. First he resided in a “wigwam” with the Indians and then built a house living there “entirely alone.” Brainerd admitted that the burdens of “this solitary way of living” were hard and he often went without many necessities. Those outside looking in would, he argued, probably see the conditions as overwhelming but he found that living among “his people” was the first, and most important, means of missionary work.¹¹⁰

As Pemberton suggested in his sermon, Brainerd had removed himself to the “hedges.” He also found that the pain he endured there was necessary because he could serve as a positive example for Christianity. Just as Pemberton had preached, Brainerd’s first difficulties in missionary work – after his isolation – was the removal of the “prejudice against Christianity” that the Indians had developed by interacting with those Europeans who came before him, those “called Christians” in name only. Brainerd recognized that these professed Christians had willfully impressed such negative views of Christianity on the Indians so that they could continue to “cheat, and so enrich themselves by” the Indians. This reality forced him to work hard to remove any wariness of his “labors among them.” This work, he noted, trumped any of the “difficulties” met with living in isolation among a foreign people. Since he lived among

¹¹⁰ Pemberton, *An Appendix*, 25-27. The letter to Pemberton is also included by Pettit in the “Related Correspondence,” 570-581.

them and could provide a constant positive example, he could then turn to teaching doctrinal basics, which he always tried to make “plain and easy.” He first instructed them on the “sinfulness and misery” of their natural estate and the punishment they would receive if they did not rely on Christ. Second, he worked to show them the “fullness...and freeness” of “redemption” provided by the “sufferings” of Christ. He would later share in the letter that citing the example of Christ’s suffering in the gospel was the best way to make new converts. After concentrating on these two points, he explained that he worked, with the help of his interpreter, to provide “sundry *Forms of Prayer*, adapted to their circumstance and capacities” in their own language. From here he covered Biblical history, miracles, and a deeper “exposition” of “the Gospel of St. Matthew.” Brainerd conceded that much of his work was made easier because many of the Indians he first worked with had been exposed to the positive example and teaching of John Sergeant. After a year with them, he felt encouraged by their continued growth and saw signs of “reformation in the lives and manners of the Indians.” As discussed above, he “helped” them decide to remove and live under the care of Sergeant so that he might move on to share the “Soul’s concerns” with those still in need.¹¹¹

The rest of the letter documents Brainerd’s travels and contacts with various Indian tribes living in the backcountry of Pennsylvania. Throughout the remainder of the letter, he highlighted the persistent trouble of overcoming negative opinions of Christians held by his hosts. With each contact he would ask to “address their King,” and in a “friendly manner” ask if he could discuss with them and eventually “instruct them in Christianity.” Multiple times he was cordially received by the “king” and his people, and multiple times they asked with wonder why he “desired the Indians to become Christians, seeing the Christians were so much worse than the

¹¹¹ Ibid, 28-31.

Indians in their present state.” The litany of objections to conversion Brainerd heard were standard. The Christians, or the Europeans who called themselves Christians, “first taught them [the Indians] to drink,” and they lied, stole, and drank “worse than the Indians.” The Indians told him that Christians stole on such a level that it was those who called themselves Christians who felt hanging was a necessary punishment to stop it. To this comment, Brainerd recorded that a “rational [Indian]” noted that no Indian was “ever hang’d for stealing” and they never came close to stealing “half so much.” Because of these negative assumptions, one tribe even agreed to interact with him as friends so long as he did *not* try and convert them. To this arrangement, Brainerd could only “bid them farewell.”¹¹²

Brainerd explained that he soon fell into a routine. He would ask to preach, exceptions would be hesitantly made, and then he would spend most of his time “lamenting” the conduct of “some who are called Christians.” He shared that some immediately “suspected” him of “ill design” as the “white people had abus’d them, and taken their Lands.” This made them conclude that it was impossible for him to be “concern’d for their happiness,” and that he only wished “to make them slaves...and make them fight with the People over the water,” which he took to mean “the French and Spaniards.” In spite of the objections, he found that “most of them appear’d very friendly,” and they allowed him to preach. He sensed that some even tested his devotion, and he was told by one tribe that they “desired” to hear more, only if he would “make them a visit” to their home on the Susquahannah.¹¹³

¹¹² Ibid, 32-35.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Brainerd accepted the challenge and found that the invitation to preach at their home provided him with the best opportunity to show his good intentions. He gambled that his determination and willingness to undergo hardship *for* and *with* his audience just to preach would at least win him the time to be heard. He was pleased, he reported, that his enduring hardship was welcomed “with expressions of kindness.” He wrote also that he preached to them at every opportunity when they “were at home” and took great “Pains” to create a public audience with both the men and the women. He, thereby, won for himself a chance to make his voice heard and a “fair opportunity...to remove from their minds those scruples” that might have prevented his speech at all. His willingness to try to remove the “scruples” the Indians had against Christianity, if, he believed, God continued to allow him to live, opened the door for his continued ministry. The “many difficulties and hardships” he endured in the “journey among them” had to be, he believed, the “means” by which the “prejudices against Christianity” were, and could be, removed. Brainerd believed that the visible strains he took by traveling, going from home to home, and just showing up consistently day in and day out, just to be heard slowly outweighed past notions the Indians had about Christianity and removed any suspected “designs” of “civilizing” at almost every turn. When he found them willing to convert, it was only to Christianity and not “to the customs of the white people.” At first this was troubling to him, as he found that “the manner of their living” was “a great disadvantage to the design of their being Christianized.” However, as his time in the field continued, he became willing to make concessions. Conversion to proper or true Christianity was his ultimate goal. Brainerd accepted that civility was only a possible benefit, but never a necessity, since it was almost always a barrier to conversion rather than an enticement. Most of all, what he had learned thus far from

the “heathens” he had encountered, was that they would only be brought to conversion after he suffered with them.¹¹⁴

We cannot, however, grant Brainerd too much leeway in forgoing attempts at civilizing a “heathen people” while converting them. While writing his letter, he continued to feel that he was a “vile unworthy worm,” but he still shared, in the letter as well as elsewhere, that the Indians were indeed addicted to the “fabulous Notions of their *Fathers*” and generally of a limited “capacity.”¹¹⁵ The sin of his assumption of cultural superiority is undeniable in Brainerd. It is only more pronounced in the writings that he produced for the SSPCK in his “public journal.” Brainerd’s journal sent to the SSPCK, covering his work from 1745 to 1746 gave a much different picture than his personal diary, and made him sound much more like his nineteenth-century missionary counterparts. His previous humble silence on the depravity of the Indians changed to a more superior tone. In the public journal he wrote, “they are in general unspeakably indolent and slothful – have been bred up in idleness – know little about cultivating Land, or indeed of engaging vigorously in any other business.”¹¹⁶ It is unclear why the tone changed so markedly in his public journal when compared to his private journal. On the one hand, he may have tried to frame his mission within the context of Pemberton’s sermon, which was a *softer* plea to show that these people needed help before all others. On the other hand, he might have thought he needed to show that he fell in line with the SSPCK’s views on “heathen”

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 35-38. For more on the “acculturation” of Indians and its relation to conversion see Harold W. Van Lonkhuyzen, “A Reappraisal of the Praying Indians: Acculturation, Conversion, and Identity at Natick, Massachusetts, 1646-1730,” *New England Quarterly* 63 (September, 1990), 396-428.

¹¹⁵ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 271; Pemberton, *Appendix*, 37, and 27.

¹¹⁶ David Brainerd, *Brainerd’s Journal; Appendix* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1746), 241. For more on the publication and citation of Brainerd’s “public journal,” see note 76 above. This appendix, added by Brainerd to his public journal, is an outline of his general methodology and advice for conversion of the Indians. In many ways the appendix is an expansion of the letter that Brainerd wrote to Pemberton in 1744.

peoples. The SSPCK wanted to hear that the Indians were barbarous savages, embodying the cruelest and basest level of mankind, because they wanted to encourage others to join those like Brainerd to lift them *first* to civility and *then* to Christianity. The correspondents of the SSPCK also hoped that the journal would provide a “peculiar pleasure to see...the operations of the Spirit upon the Minds of these poor benighted Pagans” in order to highlight the majesty of God by showing that even the Indians can be saved.¹¹⁷ While Brainerd did not continually berate the Indians for being “lesser” than whites – a term that he used – he does make subtle references throughout his journal to show that the Indians were not equal to whites. In one instance, in July, 1744, Brainerd said he preached to “an Assembly of *white* People” much more freely and fervently than he could ever had hoped to do with the Indians in their current state. He suggested that this would remain true until they became more knowledgeable, or, perhaps, more like the whites.¹¹⁸

Even if Brainerd at first followed the SSPCK’s insistence to describe the Indians as heathens and barbarous savages, there are plenty of instances in his public journal that show that he did gradually break with the society’s goals to spread civility and then Christianity. It is even clear that he came to reject their general outlook on “pagan” peoples because he lived and suffered among them. He often forgave his Indian hearers for the necessity of breaking the Sabbath for greater worries, such as their survival. He notes in his journal that “they killed three deer, which were a seasonable Supply for their wants, and without which, it seems, they could not have subsisted together in order to attend the Means of Grace.”¹¹⁹ As time passed, Brainerd

¹¹⁷ Brainerd, *Brainerd’s Journal*; “Preface,” vii.

¹¹⁸ Brainerd, *Brainerd’s Journal*; *Mirabilia*, 9.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 4.

did more than allow the breaking of the Sabbath by the Indians, but doubted that the method of “reducing to them to civility” before converting them was of any use at all. He explained in his public diary that he thought it

unjust to spend Money...only to civilize the *Indians*, and bring them to an *external* Profession of Christianity, which was all that I could then see any Prospect of having effected, while God seem'd...evidently to frown upon the Design of their saving Conversion, by withholding the convincing and renewing Influences of his Spirit from attending the Means I had hitherto us'd with them for that end.¹²⁰

Similar to his explanation in his letter to Pemberton, Brainerd – throughout his public journal – consistently “endeavored to instruct them particularly in the first Principles of Religion, in the most easy and familiar manner [he] could,” before he would attempt anything else.¹²¹ God, he believed, did not favor Christianity as a tool of civilizing. He found that doing so only made new converts like the nominal Christians who had produced the negative conceptions of the faith in the first place. As he experienced, this was by far the most problematic barrier to conversion any missionary could face. Brainerd, through his years in the field, knew only too well that even arriving at teaching “first principles” required that he first earn the trust and respect of his prospective converts. The only way to do that, he argued, was by living, travelling, and suffering with them. Imposing outside views on them, which the Indians actively resisted, did not win converts, friends, or even the willingness to listen.

Brainerd used the example of his interpreter to prove his point. When his interpreter, Moses Tinda Tautamy, came to him in 1744, he seemed “well fitted” for his work. Tautamy knew English and the Indian languages well and was also initially accepting of the English

¹²⁰ Brainerd, *Brainerd's Journal; Mirabilia*, 66.

¹²¹ Brainerd, *Brainerd's Journal; Divine Grace*, 103.

missionary methods of civilizing first. Brainerd explained that it was his interpreter's "desire that the *Indians* should conform to the Customs and Manners of the *English*, and especially to their manner of living."¹²² However, as he got to know Tautamy, he found that when he tried to preach on religious matters, his interpreter lacked the zeal and commitment Brainerd expected from a true Christian. Brainerd assumed that since the man had been exposed to English customs and culture, then he would naturally be a Christian. This, at first, seemed so, since his interpreter seemed "very desirous that the *Indians* should renounce their *Heathenish* Notions and Practices and conform to the Customs of the *Christian* World."¹²³ However, Brainerd, he reports, started to see that his interpreter was actually a victim of traditional missionary practices. They taught him how to act like a Christian, but never gave him a clear notion of what it meant to truly be a Christian. He decided that it was "want of...having an experimental, as well as more doctrinal Acquaintance with divine Truths" that was the problem, so he set about to teach Tautamy the "doctrinal" and "experimental" Christianity that demonstrates right faith in practice that Tautamy had never learned.

The change of tactic made a difference. Tautamy was soon converted to "proper" Christianity and became an indispensable tool for Brainerd. Brainerd noted that "there was a surprising Alteration in his publick Performances, he now address'd the *Indians* with admirable Fervency...and when I had concluded...he would tarry behind me to repeat and inculcate what had been spoken."¹²⁴ Tautamy abandoned his "shallow" desire for the Indians merely to conform to English customs, and, according to Brainerd, wished whole-heartedly that his fellow

¹²² Brainerd, *Brainerd's Journal; Mirabilia*, 8.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 9.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 14.

Indians become true-Christians as well. Tautamy's conversion was definitely a turning point in Brainerd's success as a missionary. Brainerd was now at his mission at Crosweeksung, New Jersey, where Edwards reported he had his "greatest success...as a missionary to the Indians." While there, Brainerd noted that Tautamy, "has, I'm persuaded, already been, and I trust will yet be a Blessing to the other Indians." Brainerd was right, as he was told by many witnesses that "seeing [his] interpreter and others baptiz'd made them more concern'd [for their souls] than anything that they had ever seen or heard before."¹²⁵

The example of Tautamy and the other converts being baptized also softened Brainerd's view of Indian culture and beliefs. More importantly, it even convinced him that the Indians possessed an intellect and understanding of religion that proved beneficial to Christian conversion. He once came across a "conjurer" or Indian holy man who said he was trying to revive the Indian religion of old times. He explained to Brainerd that in their belief there was no concept of a devil and that the good would have their reward in the next life by living in a "beautiful town," and the bad simply left to "wander" but without severe punishment. He also noted that ill-behavior, such as drunkenness, was looked down upon by Indian tradition and belief, so it was the Europeans who had corrupted them. Brainerd was surprised by the man's decency and courtesy and noted that "there was something in his Temper and Disposition that look'd more like true Religion than any Thing I ever observed amongst the other *Heathens*."¹²⁶ Brainerd allowed himself to accept that there were Indian beliefs that were coherent and intelligent, and knew from his own experience that the "deplorable state" that the Indians were in was often due to proximity to whites who were "Christians in name only."

¹²⁵ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 298; Brainerd, *Brainerd's Journal; Mirabilia*, 15.

¹²⁶ Brainerd, *Brainerd's Journal; Mirabilia*, 54-56.

Encounters with Indians, such as the “conjurer,” and a growing familiarity with their native faith helped Brainerd hone the delivery of “proper doctrine” to his audience within an accessible context. Without notions of an evil devil or eternal punishment in traditional Indian belief, he found that it was difficult or even useless to convince the Indians of their need for Christ through “*Harangues of Terror*.” He learned that “God saw fit to *improve* and bless *milder* Means for the effectual awakening of the *Indians*,” which for Brainerd meant turning to a subject he knew well: suffering and sacrifice.¹²⁷ He was astonished at how his audience “as one, seem’d in an Agony of Soul to obtain an Interest on Christ...the more he discours’d of the love and compassion of God in sending his Son to suffer the Sins of Men.” The love expressed by Christ in his suffering was his most valuable doctrinal reference point, and he wrote that it was “surprising to see how their hearts seem’d to be pierc’d...when there was not a Word of Terror spoken to them.” Promises of eternal damnation did not bear fruit, but references to the “man of suffering” who “took up our pain” found in Isaiah 53:3-10, produced a “remarkable influence” and remained one of his favorite passages for exegesis.¹²⁸ Brainerd also regularly used selections from the Gospels of John and Luke that included the discussion of miracles but more importantly outlined the necessity for belief without the use of terror to affect the hearts in his audience. John 5: 24-25 was one of his favorite passages, because it “appear’d (as usual) to cause some Concern and Affection in the assembly.”¹²⁹ While he knew that salvation was only granted by God’s grace, he thought that if he showed the Indians they could gain evidence of

¹²⁷ Ibid, 74.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 19—20; Isaiah, 53:3-5 NIV. Isaiah 53 is referenced seven times in the *Life of Brainerd*. See Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 615.

¹²⁹ Brainerd, *Brainerd’s Journal; Divine Grace*, 113. John 5: 24-25 reads “Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life. Amen, amen, I say to you, the hour is coming and is nowhere when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”

having received that grace and eternal life through belief in and striving after Christ, then there would be no need to try and terrorize them into accepting Christ as their savior through promises of hellfire and damnation.¹³⁰ Brainerd developed a catechism based on this softer approach, and centered most of his questions around the happiness of the believer once they had accepted Christ, as long as they remained aware that God required them to fulfill his request of total devotion to him.¹³¹

Brainerd's own experiences of suffering through his conversion and "progressive sanctification," combined with his taking Indian beliefs and culture seriously by way of his suffering hardship with them, became the sources of his ministerial success. In his letter to Pemberton he wrote that he "could not but rejoice I had taken that Journey among them, altho' it was attended with many Difficulties and Hardships." Brainerd knew that his willingness to suffer just to be with "his people," among other "methods" were the "means in some measure" that helped convert them. What is more, had he not lived with them, interacted with them, or been willing to adapt to their beliefs, it is doubtful that he would ever have realized that "fire and brimstone" approaches to conversion were meaningless to most in his audience. Through these adaptations and shared experiences while living with "his people," he found that the redemptive message of Christianity through personal sacrifice was much more palatable to the Indians than their becoming like the European colonists. This is an important component of his missionary work and it would serve as a powerful precedent for future generations. First, his doctrinal

¹³⁰ See, Brainerd, *Brainerd's Journal; Mirabilia*, 73-75.

¹³¹ See, Brainerd, *Brainerd's Journal; Divine Grace*, 202-207. Here Brainerd shows his affiliations with "covenant theology" in the nature of his questions. For example, on page 207 one question asks "Does God require us to do any thing that will hurt us and take away our Comfort and happiness? Answer: No." Just as his Puritan forefathers believed, Brainerd taught his converts that once believers entered into the covenant with God, it could never be broken as long as the believer kept up their end of the bargain.

adaptations and methods of delivery diverged greatly from and even criticized the SSPCK's belief in the need to civilize before converting, a move by Brainerd that proceeds by at least fifteen to twenty years what scholars have shown was a general shift in missionary policy.¹³² Second, his adaptations and methods showed prospective evangelists – both the missionary and the local preacher – the necessity of actively moving and struggling with the people he or she is evangelizing. The only way to prove sincerity was by a willingness to be “crucified to all enjoyments of life” for the sake of those they worked to convert. Once again, suffering remained a central component of Brainerd's entire theology.¹³³ In looking at his ministry, it seems that all tests of sincerity and depth of belief, whether in one's personal conversion, growth in sanctification, or the work of spreading the gospel, were proven by suffering.

Brainerd spent the rest of his life and ministry trying to prove this point. In June, 1747, four months before his death at the age of twenty-nine, he wrote to his brother Israel to explain that he was dying for sure, but still he implored him to “press after holiness.” He wished his brother would seek out the ministry despite the fact that Israel may, like himself, “die early” because it would allow him to “strive to live to God.” In doing so, Israel would be more likely to receive grace through his struggles than if he took a less demanding route of service. That same summer, He wrote his final letter to John to bolster him in his own work as a new missionary by saying, “all the labors and hardships” that he had endured were worth it. Brainerd felt sorry for John that he still had to weather the “storms and tempests” ahead, but he knew that by enduring there was the possibility that “‘thou shalt both save thyself, and those that hear thee’ (1 Tim.

¹³² See Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 133.

¹³³ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 490. This quotation is taken from a letter written by Brainerd to a “special friend.” Norman Pettit notes that there are claims that the letter was written to Edwards's daughter Jerusha (489n4).

4:16).” Brainerd believed at the close of his life that even if a missionary attempt failed, the suffering endured for the cause sanctified the evangelist, and if there were to be a harvest, it would be by the witness of a suffering laborer. Brainerd died on October 9, 1747 knowing that for everyone salvation will always and forever be the “pearl of great price.”¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Brainerd, “Preface,” *Meditations and Spiritual Experiences*, 22.

CHAPTER THREE

“His love and meekness were not a mere pretence...but they were effectual things.”*
Suffering and Jonathan Edwards’s Defense of Evangelical Revival

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of
sin

Hebrews 11:25

In the “Author’s Preface” to *The Life of David Brainerd*, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) explained that after Christ, God has “raised up some eminent persons that have set bright examples of that religion that is taught and prescribed in the Word of God.” For Edwards, among those whom God “raised up” stood the example of David Brainerd. The pages of Brainerd’s journal, Edwards believed, gave the reader the opportunity to witness “extraordinary appearances of religion and devotion” through Brainerd’s suffering “many vicissitudes and trials.” In addition to Brainerd’s “fortitude” in suffering, his “thoughts, affections and secret exercises” were all markers “of true vital religion,” and Edwards used them as the last and crowning defense of revivalism begun in 1737 in his *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*.¹

* Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 507.

¹ Edwards *Life Brainerd*, 89-91. For Edwards’s first description of the revival or “Great Awakening” see Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, ed. C.C. Goen, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 4 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 96-212. See also C.C. Goen, “Editors Introduction” to Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Awakening in Works of Jonathan Edwards* Vol. 4, 1-95. For more on Edwards’s use of Brainerd as a defense against extremism or enthusiasm see Norman Pettit, “Editor’s Introduction,” to Edwards, *Life of Brainerd in Works of Jonathan Edwards* Vol. 7, 1-14; John A. Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of an American Evangelical Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 128-146; David Weddle “The Melancholy Saint: Jonathan Edwards’s Interpretation of David Brainerd as a Model of Evangelical Spirituality,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 81 (July, 1988), 297-300; Joseph Conforti, “Jonathan Edwards’s Most Popular Work: ‘The Life of David Brainerd’ and the Nineteenth Century Evangelical Culture,” *Church History* 54 (June, 1985): 188-201; Joseph Conforti, “David Brainerd and the Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (Autumn 1985): 309-329; Joseph A. Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, and American*

Brainerd's life and ministry spanned a crucial time for his defense of evangelical revivalism. His religious life "began before the late times of extraordinary religious commotion," which were the revivals or awakenings he first described in *A Faithful Narrative* and it was "lived" or "went through" during those "commotions." Brainerd not only experienced the "extraordinary effects and unusual appearances" of religion from the 1730s to the 1740s, he was also "one who had peculiar opportunity of acquaintance with the false and appearances and counterfeits of religion" that came with revival.² Brainerd not only knew firsthand the dangers of false or "bitter zeal," he also suffered greatly to prove his faith was more than a rehearsed verbal profession. Edwards made sure to point this out in his "Appendix" to Brainerd's journal. He showed that Brainerd not only shrugged off any affiliations with "counterfeit" forms of religion, but that he went "about with a heart bruised for and broken to pieces for [them] all his life after." Ultimately, Edwards wanted to show that Brainerd "was not an idle spectator" during the revival. He was "a person of great zeal," but of the right kind, and "abhorred" the "bitter zeal" of the enthusiasts and did the work of true evangelism as an "instrument of a most remarkable awakening...and moral transformation" of unlikely "subjects."³ Brainerd did not end his religious life with resting on his conversion; he worked and suffered to create "awakenings" and

Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 62-69; Richard B. Steele, "Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue" According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994), 149-150 and 230-242.

² Edwards, *Life Brainerd*, 96.

³ Ibid, 507 and 96. The word "zeal" was obviously problematic for both defenders and opponents of the religious affections brought by the revival as it produced both negative and positive results. In his sermon *Zeal and Essential Virtue of a Christian*, delivered in April, 1740, Edwards labored to show what was truly meant by zeal, which he suggested was actually the "main part" of a Christian's "Character, and that by which they are distinguished from others." Zeal, in Edwards's reference to Brainerd, and in the "scriptural sense" was not the same corrupted term that carried with it "weakness and pride, superstition, and anger..." but part of Edwards's concept of Christian practice and fortitude. See Jonathan Edwards, *Zeal and Essential Virtue of a Christian* ed. Philip Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: Writings from the Great Awakening* (New York: The Library of America, 2013), 607-624.

“transformations” among those most in need. Edwards explicitly argued that “conversion was not the end of his work...but on the contrary, the beginning of his work” that he followed in a “continued course to his dying day.” Using Brainerd, Edwards would show that a man suffering to bring the gospel message to others was a “remarkable instance of true and eminent Christian piety in heart and practice” and it “confirm[ed] the reality of vital religion” that existed within the revivals.⁴

It was the publication of Brainerd’s journal by Jonathan Edwards in 1749 that launched Brainerd’s fame within evangelical Christianity. No one held Brainerd in as much esteem as Edwards. Edwards not only took Brainerd in while he was dying of tuberculosis, he rushed to publish Brainerd’s account to finish his defense of evangelical revival.⁵ Brainerd’s tie to Edwards’s view of the revival also explains most of the scholarly interest in Brainerd. Historians like David Weddle often argue that Brainerd is “at best, an ambiguous example of Edwards’s theology of religious experience,” and Perry Miller clearly shows that Edwards viewed Brainerd’s life and mission as a “rebuke both to enthusiasts and to Arminians” and also “made Brainerd a text for the definition of true piety.” When Miller summarized Edwards defining of “true piety” via Brainerd, Miller explained that Edwards showed that Brainerd operated only by a “love of God” rather than ““on the preconceived notion that God loved him.”” Finally, if

⁴ Edwards *Life Brainerd*, 501 and 96.

⁵ See Pettit, “Editor’s Introduction,” 68-71; Susan O’Brien, “A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755,” *The American Historical Review* 91 (Oct., 1986), 811-832; Joseph Conforti, “Jonathan Edwards’s Most Popular Work,” 188-201; Conforti, “David Brainerd and the Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement,” 309-329.

historians “remember Brainerd at all,” Joseph Conforti adds, it is usually only within the context of the enthusiasm generated by the Great Awakening.⁶

While accounts of Brainerd are limited to Edwards’s use of him, this has not kept all historians from mining the *Life of Brainerd* in an effort to show that – while sometimes obscured behind the editor’s pen – Brainerd’s own voice does emerge. Most notably, Norman Pettit and John Grigg both insist that Edwards “for the most part let, [Brainerd] speak for himself,” and that much of his editing was for the sake of brevity, particularly when Brainerd was mired in his regular bouts of melancholia. However, both scholars do agree that in the other places Edwards freely made omissions or paraphrased can be attributed to Edwards’s personal theological goals and his extra effort to diminish linking Brainerd to any enthusiastic extremes of the revival. Despite this point, John Grigg’s *The Lives of David Brainerd* (2009) still shows that when Brainerd’s life is assessed using Brainerd’s own writings and Edwards’s *Life of Brainerd*, in light of the complex cultural developments that occurred during his lifetime, the figure of a complex individual who made his own contributions to Evangelicalism emerges.⁷

I fully agree with Grigg’s assertions and his work importantly shows that the complexity of Brainerd’s religious life and work make it unfair to limit Brainerd to any one particular purpose. As I show in chapter two, Brainerd developed his own ideas on suffering and evangelism, and they emerged from his own experiences and were not due to the singular influence of theologians like Edwards. I also believe that it was Brainerd’s endurance and

⁶ See Norman Pettit, “Editor’s Introduction,” 1-14; David Weddle “The Melancholy Saint: Jonathan Edwards’s Interpretation of David Brainerd as a Model of Evangelical Spirituality,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 81 (July, 1988), 298; Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York: William Sloan Associates, 1949), 246. Conforti, “Jonathan Edwards’s Most Popular Work,” 188.

⁷ See Pettit, “Editor’s Introduction,” 1-24, 149n5; Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 128-139 and 188-192. See also chapter 2 above.

articulation of suffering for the expansion of God’s kingdom that first drew Edwards to Brainerd, and it was the same for countless others after both men had long been laid to rest. Nevertheless, Brainerd’s enduring link to Jonathan Edwards still requires a close review. This link not only highlights the importance of suffering in the development of evangelical thought, it also explains why Brainerd became a default example for numerous causes or points of theology for generations of evangelical pastors. Particularly, Edwards maintained throughout his works defending revivalism that “love of God” and “true piety” was best displayed in or by suffering. In his “Appendix” to the *Life of Brainerd*, Edwards explained that Brainerd’s “love and meekness were not a mere pretence and outward profession and show; but they were effectual things, manifested in expensive and painful deeds of love and kindness; and in meek behavior; readily confessing faults under the greatest trials.”⁸ In this chapter I will show that suffering, as Brainerd suffered for his faith, was the last best example Edwards used to close his defense of evangelical revival that he started in 1737 and finished in 1749 with the publication of the *Life of Brainerd*.

When Jonathan Edwards wrote a letter to the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Coleman in May, 1735 first describing the “remarkable religious concern among some farmhouses,” he did so with caution. Edwards knew that many had already “found fault” and “ridiculed” the revivals legitimacy since even “young people were...suddenly seized with a concern about their souls.” Throughout the letter, Edwards labored to show that the concerns were “credible” and that they were not isolated to a fanatical minority, but were rather “great and general.”⁹

⁸ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 507.

⁹ Jonathan Edwards, “Letter to Rev. Dr. Benjamin Coleman, May 30, 1735,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 4, 99-103.

Edwards continued to describe the “great awakenings” of Northampton, Connecticut and its environs with care in his first major revival work, *A Faithful Narrative*, and endeavored to show that they were “the work of God,” “sensible,” not a product of “enthusiastic conceit.”¹⁰ In the first pages of the work, Edwards pointed out that from the very beginning the revivals had “Purity in doctrine” and they were theologically sound. He argued that this was so largely “owing to the great abilities and eminent piety of [his] venerable grandfather [Solomon] Stoddard.”¹¹ From this first work to *The Distinguishing Marks* (1741) and *Some thoughts Concerning The Revival* (1742), and finally to what historians like Michael Haykin argue as the “classic work on spirituality in the period of the Great Awakening, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746),”¹² Edwards stressed that the revival and its embrace of evangelism had historical and orthodox roots.

Edwards’s push for the historical orthodoxy of revivalism was no doubt an answer to critics of the revival like Charles Chauncy. Chauncy thoroughly disparaged the dangerous zeal and enthusiasm of the revival in 1742 and 1743 in two influential works, *Enthusiasm Described and Caution’d Against* (1742) and again in *Seasonable Thought on the State of Religion in New England* (1743). In both works Chauncy argued that the revivals were evidence of a “spirit of pride” that would have been condemned by the Puritan “first fathers of the country” and were altogether damaging of proper religion.¹³ In order to counter such arguments made by

¹⁰ Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative*, 150-160.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 144-145.

¹² See Michael A.G. Haykin, “Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment: A Reassessment,” in *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* Michael A.G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart eds. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008), 56-57.

¹³ See Charles Chauncy, *Enthusiasm described and caution’d against. As Sermon Preach’d...the Lord’s Day after the Commencement...* (Boston 1742), Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, eds. *The Great Awakening: Documents*

established ministers such as Chauncy, Edwards knew he must prove the revivals were not only orthodox, they were grounded in the Puritan tradition that “eminent” ministers of the Puritan tradition had preserved.¹⁴

Edwards’s defense of evangelical also contain the outline of what scholars have termed his “experimental” or “experiential” theology. In this system, Edwards argued that through the course of one’s religious life strong emotive feelings or experiences served as the guide and marker of saving grace.¹⁵ Much like conversion for the Puritans, religion or faith as a whole was to be felt. Edwards’s first extensive exploration of faith as feeling is in his work the *Distinguishing Marks* (1741). Here Edwards urged that the evangelical activism produced by the revivals belonged to “the distinguishing marks of a work of the spirit of God” and that working to bring others to Christ was assuredly a sign of true faith.¹⁶ In 1746, Edwards expanded his discussion of the “distinguishing marks” of true faith in his “classic” work, *Religious Affections*. Edwards used the treatise to explain that some of the affections or signs of true faith were

Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences (New York, 1967), 228-230; Charles Chauncy, *Seasonable Thought on the State of Religion in New England, A Treatise in Five Parts* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743), 1-12. For more on the general and contested history of the revivals and the “Great Awakening” see Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007); John Butler, “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,” *Journal of American History* 69 (Sep., 1982), 305-325.

¹⁴ For discussions on the Puritan heritage and influence on the revivals see Charles Hambrick-Stowe, “The Spirit of the Old Writers: The Great Awakening and Persistence of Puritan Piety,” in Francis J. Bremer ed., *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 277-291; ; Thomas S. Kidd, “‘Prayer for a Saving Issue’: Evangelical Development in New England Before the Great Awakening,” in *The Advent of Evangelicalism*, 129-145.

¹⁵ For an excellent introduction to the idea of “experimental religion” see Richard B. Steele, “*Gracious Affection*” and “*True Virtue*” According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994), ix-xv.

¹⁶ William Cooper, “Preface” to Jonathan Edwards, *The Distinguishing Marks in Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 4, 215-225.

genuine, while others jeopardized the faith of the believer.¹⁷ I will show that in Edwards's *Religious Affections*, suffering – in multiple forms which Edwards later exemplified in the *Life of Brainerd* – is one of Edwards's most prominent “right” experiences or emotions in the treatise. Furthermore, I will show that suffering was often the experience or feeling that Edwards focused on when throughout *Religious Affections* he cited “eminent” preachers of the Puritan past in order to demonstrate that his views were orthodox.

Before Edwards began his defense of revivals, historians have argued, from a number of different angles, that there was a gradual shift to an emphasis on experience and feeling within the Anglo-American Puritan realms. Some have used it to mark a state of declension in the Puritan movement, others to signal the beginnings of a new evangelical expression within the same movement.¹⁸ Most prominently, Perry Miller called the transgression from Puritan orthodoxy “The Socialization of Piety,” or more simply “Do-Good.” The causes for the transgression were numerous, among them a growth in cultural and religious diversity, which ultimately resulted in the most viable religious response which Miller believed was “Pietism” or this “Do-Good” movement. The proliferation of religious ideas meant, for Miller, that the “ancient debate” over salvation by works or faith refused to go away, causing “transitional” New

¹⁷ In the extended title of *Religious Affections* Edwards broke the work up into three parts. The second part shows “what are *no certain Signs* that *religious Affections* are *gracious*, or that they are *not*.” Part three shows “what are *distinguishing Signs* of truly *gracious* and *holy Affections*.” See Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* ed. John E. Smith, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 125 and 191.

¹⁸ For a concise introduction to the topic, see David A. Currie, “Cotton Mather’s *Bonifacius* in Britain and America,” in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies in Popular Protestantism*, Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 73-89, especially p. 73 and p. 87n1.

England ministers such as Increase and Cotton Mather to turn to an increased embrace of Pietism, or the living of practical yet outward “vital religion.”¹⁹

The work Miller proclaims that most exemplified this turn to socialized piety was Cotton Mather’s *Bonifacius* (1710) or, as it popularly become known, *Essays to do Good*. Miller explains that the work was born of the “contradiction between Calvinism and the temper of the times,” and became the “epochal treatise” of New England in the eighteenth century. *Bonifacius* is, for Miller, the final spark that Puritanism had to kindle the flame of the emerging evangelical movement or, at least, revitalize the complacent faithful who no longer felt zeal in their “daily grind.”²⁰ Through the life and writings of Cotton Mather, Miller brilliantly traces the development of and transition to “do good” pietism. From social and economic convulsions to the embrace of the divine in even the most mundane labors that was largely influenced by John Flavel’s *Husbandry Spiritualized* (1669),²¹ Mather created an increasingly streamlined, practical, and simplistic way to “advance True, Real, Vital Piety.” Mather’s plan could be found in *Bonifacius*, and was, as Miller explains, Mather’s “effort to make society center upon the life of piety,” a call, as Miller summarizes, to “Get up and be doing.”²²

The call to “get up and be doing” made by Mather in *Bonifacius* is obviously a solid link to the requirement of an active faith in the development of Evangelicalism, but the work also

¹⁹ Miller, *From Colony to Province*, 393, and 408-409.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 410 and 406.

²¹ *Ibid*, 402-406. Mather’s turn to spiritualization and looking for the divine in nature seemed to also fuel his interest in Natural theology, out of which other scholars have traced Mather’s break with Puritan or Calvinistic norms. Interestingly, the causes for Mather’s turn to Natural theology were also external threats, namely “disparate intellectual traditions [that] resulted in a variety of Puritan voices,” or lack of any solid orthodox position. See Jeffrey Jaske, “Cotton Mather: Physico-Theologian,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47 (Oct.-Dec., 1986), 583-594.

²² Miller, *From Colony to Province*, 406-411.

promoted a costly or suffering discipleship. While not a part of his central argument, even Miller saw that in *Bonifacius* lay a scheme for believers “to do good though it killed them.” The purpose of Miller’s encounter with *Bonifacius* was to point out the number of deviations from Puritan orthodoxy within revivalism, which Miller contends “would...have made Thomas Hooker wretch,” not to embellish the evangelical embrace of suffering. It is, however, undeniable, even to Miller, that Mather saw that the best way to “spread the Nets of Salvation” was for people to see disciples of the gospel “praying, and weeping, and striving.”²³

The requirement of public “weeping and striving” that Miller notices and even derides in Mather’s work helps, in many ways, to explain the context in which Brainerd came of age. Brainerd certainly wept and strived in public and it brought him, according to Edwards, the resultant “scoffing and ridicule,” and even, arguably, persecution with his expulsion from Yale. Brainerd, as Edwards adamantly believed, “looked death in the face,” and did good, even though it killed him.²⁴ Also, Mather’s advocacy in *Bonifacius* for “societies for the reformation of manners” creates some attachment to the work Brainerd was doing for his sponsor, the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, an organization that no doubt believed, as Mather, that they were charged with “diffusing...the salt of heaven...about the country.”²⁵ Most importantly, Mather offered that a defining characteristic of what Miller explains as a new religious “epoch” is potentially a suffering discipleship. Miller sees that it emerged out of the “commotions” from the passing of the seventeenth to eighteenth century and produced the belief

²³ Ibid, 411-413.

²⁴ See Jonathan Edwards, *A Sermon Preached on the Day of the Funeral of the Rev. Mr. David Brainerd* in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7, 548-551.

²⁵ Cotton Mather, *Bonifacius, or Essays to Do Good, Addressed to All Christians, Whether in Public or Private Capacities* (Portsmouth, England: T.H. Miller and H. Gray and Co., 1824), 130-131.

that you were in possession of the proper faith when those who did not have that faith “neglect,” “oppress,” and “defraud” you.²⁶

I argue, through Edwards, that rather than a radical departure from Puritanism, the shift to evangelical modes of discipleship was gradual and deeply rooted in “orthodox” Puritan concepts. New scholarship that suggests that works like Mather’s *Bonifacius* were strongly committed to orthodox thought and belief and were not, as David Currie writes “signposts of decline,” also supports Edwards’s views that a suffering in “Christian Practice” had historical relevancy. In fact, as Currie argues, Mather remained the consummate Puritan or Calvinist in his belief that doing good did not do anything for salvation, but rather was only a means to support or implement the “Puritan ideal of glorifying God.” Furthermore, according to Mather, a true act of benevolence could only come from a Christian, not from the unconverted. Historians like Currie also show that *Bonifacius*, much like the *Life of Brainerd*, was largely revived in the nineteenth century by evangelicals owing allegiance to Calvinist theology.²⁷ A look into an 1825 edition of *Bonifacius*, edited in Scotland by the minister Andrew Thomson, makes this point plain.

Thomson turns directly to suffering to underscore what doing good really meant for Mather:

According to the common notions, and common practice of mankind, “doing good” implies, whatever removes pain or imparts pleasure. But this is evidently a mistaken view of the subject; for pain is frequently a great blessing, and pleasure is frequently a serious evil. The amputation of a limb, though attended with severe agony, may be the means of saving the patient’s life...

²⁶ Miller, *From Colony to Province*, 412.

²⁷ Currie, “Cotton Mather’s *Bonifacius*,” 73-86. Mather’s “religious emphasis” never fell off or moved toward secularism or away from his “central position” of piety as shown in Gustaaf Van Cromphout, “*Manuductio ad Ministerium: Cotton Mather as Neoclassist*” *American Literature* Vol. 53 (Nov., 1981) 361-379. For an in depth discussion on the continuance of the Calvinist and covenant theologies well into the eighteenth century see Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul*.

For Thomson “the Christian scheme of doing good” is based in scripture and requires suffering of the believer, but “the gospel of Christ may be considered as the great instrument by which sinful men can ever be enabled to reach the heavenly happiness. It is appointed by God for that very purpose...and without it no man can hope to be saved.”²⁸ Thomson’s point, as well as Mather’s, is that true acts of doing good or benevolence can only come through applications of the Gospel as a converted Christian. Any reduction of Mather’s position to universal moralism is contrary to Mather’s original position as well as to the views of those who took up Mather’s call.

Mather’s call to do good was not a radical move to a new form of activism, but as I will show with Edwards’s views on assurance, it was much more conservative than some have charged. While Edwards did not consult Mather in his primary works defending revivalism, he was following the lead of earlier theologians who used action and the willingness to suffer as an outward sign of having received God’s grace. Even Miller notes that John Flavel’s *Husbandry Spiritualized or Heavenly Use of Earthly Things* influenced Mather’s views on spiritualization, making Mather’s view on assurance and hypocrisy similar to those who were regarded as orthodox Puritans.²⁹ When Mather said in *Bonifacius*, “the more you regard the command and glorious example of a glorious Christ in what you do this way, the more assurance you have that in the day of God you shall joyfully hear him saying, ‘You have done it unto to me,’” he said it within the same, orthodox view of assurance that Puritan’s like Flavel had. What is more, Mather agreed that suffering “heavy and grievous afflictions” was of utmost importance for Christians since “we get good by them.” When met with sorrows and suffering, Mather argued, it was time for the believer to “immediately reflect” what actions must be taken, or what

²⁸ Andrew Thomson, “Introductory Essay” in Cotton Mather, *Essays to Do Good* (Glasgow, Chalmers and Collins, 1825), v and xi

²⁹ Miller, 406-413. For more on Flavel see Chapter 1 above.

“errands” shall be done, because “afflictions...yield...[the] fruits of righteousness.” Mather then traces this stand back to the harbinger of the Reformation with his statement that “Luther did well to call afflictions, ‘theologium christianorum’ – ‘the theology of Christians.’” According to Mather, Christianity demanded that when faced with affliction, Christians should see in it a “provocation to do good works,” since through their “special service of piety” in the face of suffering they would “awaken” the faith of others. He added in his “Conclusion” to “be ready to do good even to those from whom you suffer evil. And when you have done all the good in your power, account yourself well paid,” because in doing good to those who caused you to suffer, the Christian found the path to salvation.³⁰

Edwards clearly followed the same line of thought as Mather and turned to suffering to outline his “distinguishing signs of truly gracious and holy affections.”³¹ Scholars like Michael Haykin point out that Edwards’s discussion of religious affections come from his concession that “fanaticism” and “false professions” often followed the exuberant early stages of revival. Edward’s did not think that these “false professions” were the results of unorthodoxy, but a misunderstanding of the nature of conversion and assurance that he himself once endorsed. Haykin argues that Edwards “rethought his view of assurance” and looked for a more tangible or a less enthusiastic piece of evidence of the workings of God’s grace than what the recollection of one’s conversion could ever provide.³² Conversion remained important, but like Brainerd found

³⁰ Cotton Mather, *Bonifacius*, 112, 43-44, and 144.

³¹ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 191.

³² Haykin, “Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment, 56-57. In David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 42-50. Bebbington argues that one of the most important developments born of evangelical revivalism was a new Enlightenment-informed exegesis on the Puritan doctrine of the assurance of salvation that took shape among Anglo-American theologians like Edwards. Bebbington writes that the Puritans lacked the “confidence...of the powers of human knowledge” that later revivalists or evangelicals like Edwards had, since Enlightenment ideals began to influence existing Puritan views, and freed evangelicals to act in their “devotional life [with] bubbling confidence.” The new views on assurance,

at Yale, Edwards recognized that challenging another Christian's faith by the merits of his or her conversion account did not evidence grace, it only created a show of spiritual pride. In response, Edwards urged that the "distinguishing signs" primarily took place post-conversion in the process of sanctification with suffering as one of the best signs of the sinner sanctified. Suffering in and for faith *after* conversion was not only a sign of genuine piety, but also the willingness to endure it protected any evangelist from the accusation of a "spirit of pride" or "enthusiasm" from wary observers like Charles Chauncy.³³ Edwards then moved to show that Puritan ministers like Thomas Shepard, John Flavel, and Solomon Stoddard all agreed with this position in their own time. Through these past preachers and with the right show of zeal exemplified by men like Brainerd,³⁴ Edwards fashioned suffering into a major component of the evangelical understanding of assurance and sanctification that was rooted in the past as well as committed to the revival/evangelical harvest of souls.³⁵

Following Thomas Shepard's lead, Edwards believed that "few are saved" and those that were, were only saved by great difficulty after being "wrought upon" by God.³⁶ Edwards turned

Bebbington argues, enabled the believer to feel and know their conversion. Being assured of his or her conversion enabled the believer's confident spreading of the gospel, a feature most historians agree is the true heart of the revival/evangelical movement.

³³ Chauncy, *Enthusiasm described and caution'd against*, 229 and 230.

³⁴ See Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 507.

³⁵ Suffering in one's sanctification for the sake of evangelism, or the spreading of the "gospel in effort," aimed at conversion or the harvest of souls, is the piece that makes the action "evangelical" and different in its emphasis than earlier Reformed traditions such as Puritanism. See Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 1-19; Thomas S. Kidd, "'Prayer for a Saving Issue': Evangelical Development in New England Before the Great Awakening," in *The Advent of Evangelicalism*, 129-145.

³⁶ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 84; John E. Smith, "Editor's Introduction" to Edwards, *Religious Affections in Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, 56-57. When Thomas Shepard (1605-1649) first blazed a middle way for defending genuine piety between the legalist or preparationist stance and a more spiritual position he opened the way for evangelical ministers like Edwards to increasingly emphasize that the events or actions, like suffering, that took place in the process of sanctification held the best of evidence of God's saving grace. The primacy of Shepard's influence upon Edwards is also widely accepted. In the mid nineteenth century John A. Albro, the first

to Shepard because he was vexed by the dilemma of being a “friend of what has been *good* and glorious, in the late extraordinary appearances” of revival, while “at the same time” being a witness to the “evil and pernicious tendency of what has been *bad*” in the revivals. This issue drove Edwards to question the nature of true faith and the state of the “church of God” when revivals occurred. Edwards agreed, “there is indeed something very mysterious in that so much good, and so much bad, should be mixed together in the church of God.” However, he pointed out that “’tis no new thing, that much false religion should prevail, at a time of great reviving of true religion; and that at such a time, multitudes of hypocrites should spring up among true saints.”³⁷ Shepard’s *Parable of the Ten Virgins* was there to stand as an orthodox testimony on this point, and also show that the hypocrites could be weeded out by holding that the true saints were those willing to suffer or to “sweat and strive” under great difficulty to enter heaven.³⁸ Charles Chauncy even accepted that as a “first father of this Country, the memorable Shepard” was a bulwark of Puritan orthodoxy. By citing Shepard, Edwards knew he could assuage

compiler of Shepard’s works, noticed a connection between the two divines, as have more recent scholars such as John E. Smith, and Michael Colarcurcio. Countering these views is Janice Knight who argues that Edward’s thinking aligned more closely to spiritualists like John Cotton rather than Thomas Shepard. She assumes that Shepard would even have been “horrified” by some of Edwards’s views. Nevertheless, in his “Editor’s Introduction” to Edwards’s *Religious Affections*, Smith asserts that “Edwards quoted more from Shepard than from any other writer,” and that in his *Religious Affections* Edward’s “depended chiefly upon [Shepard’s] *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*” for the defense of his positions. See Chapter 1 above; Jonathan Mitchell, “Preface” to Thomas Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins* in *The Works of Thomas Shepard* Vol. 2 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 8-10; John A. Albro, *The Life of Thomas Shepard, The Lives of the Chief Fathers of New England, Vol. 4* (Boston, Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1870), 318-319; Smith, “Editor’s Introduction” to *Religious Affections*, 51-57; Michael Colacurcio, *Godly Letters: The Literature of the American Puritans* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 348, 372, 614-615n26, 618n12; Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994) 198-213.

³⁷ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 84-85.

³⁸ Thomas Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins* in *The Works of Thomas Shepard* Vol. 2 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 63-64.

conservative critics of the revival and possibly temper the rambunctious zeal that could jeopardize the course of the entire revival and derail the faith of its converts.³⁹

Shepard's exposure of hypocrisy and the ways in which the hypocrites shrouded themselves was of particular interest for Edwards.⁴⁰ Much of his close attention and references to Shepard and the *Parable of the Ten Virgins* appear in the second part of *The Religious Affections*, which Edwards devoted to showing which signs or behaviors were *not* indicative of "truly gracious and holy affections." Edwards borrowed from Shepard's exegesis directly in his explanation that "there are two sorts of hypocrites" in the Church. The first, in Edwards's time, are those "that are deceived with their outward morality and external religion," who Edwards calls Arminians. The second "are those that are deceived with false discoveries and elevations; which often cry down works, and men's own righteousness, and talk much of free grace," who we must assume were the overzealous "New Lights" with whom Brainerd made flirtations and were the cause of his near spiritual derailment at Yale.⁴¹ To show that these types of hypocrites are not a new manifestation of the revival, Edwards cited how Shepard too dealt with explaining the characteristics and detriments of the "*legal and evangelical hypocrites.*" The legal hypocrites, who were Arminians, were clearly a danger, but Edwards showed that Shepard "often speaks of the latter as the worst," and added with agreement that "'tis evident that the latter are commonly by far the most" personally deceived in their confidence. They are also the most

³⁹ Charles Chauncy, *Seasonable Thought on the State of Religion in New England, A Treatise in Five Parts* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743), 1. Chauncy, like Edwards, looked to Shepard first in his own efforts to warn of the dangers of the "errors prevailing" brought about by the revival. Unlike Edwards, Chauncy did not use Shepard to show that there was also good occurring in the revival, but that they were simply a danger to the true and established religion passed on by divines like Shepard (1-34).

⁴⁰ See Chapter 1 above for a review of Shepard's discussion of hypocrites in the Church.

⁴¹ See Chapter Two above. I will also discuss Edwards's view of Brainerd's expulsion in more detail below.

dangerous, because, as Shepard explained, “being deceived themselves, [they] may deceive others too.”⁴²

Brainerd’s proclamations that his tutor, “having no more grace than a chair,” stood as a ready example of a dangerous confidence that could deceive even students of divinity at an established institution. His expulsion, as explained in Chapter Two above, left Brainerd with deep personal wounds, and, according to Edwards, the same prideful zeal of the enthusiasts that almost corrupted Brainerd infected the whole of the university.⁴³ Revival itself, Edwards was adamant, was not to blame, and at first all those near the university welcomed the “appearance of men’ reforming their lives.” Inevitably, since the movement was new and, as Shepard found, “that when the churches are virgin churches, the hypocrites in those times will be evangelical,” it was only normal, as Edwards pointed out, that “an intemperate imprudent zeal, and a degree of enthusiasm soon crept in, and mingled itself with the revival of religion.”⁴⁴ Building on Shepard, Edwards urged all to see revivalism not as the cause of enthusiasm and hypocrisy. As Shepard laid out in his *Parable of the Ten Virgins*, it was youthfulness and a general lack of experience of those involved that were to blame. Later, Edwards would go on to show that men like Brainerd, at first, played the part of the evangelical hypocrite, with “a tincture of that intemperate indiscreet zeal,” but “it was not to be wondered at” because Brainerd was “not only young in

⁴² Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 173; Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins*, 197. The bulk of Shepard’s discussion on the types of hypocrites, from which Edwards drew, is on pages 183-206.

⁴³ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 153-156. John Grigg explains, in *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 21-22, that the events surrounding/causing Brainerd’s expulsion show that Brainerd was not a lone victim or isolated case. The rector responsible for Brainerd’s expulsion, Thomas Clap, regarded proponents of enthusiasm as those playing a “Wolf in Sheep’s clothing;” exactly as Shepard had warned “beware of them that come in sheep’s clothing” when referencing the evangelical hypocrites (Shepard, *Parable of Ten Virgins*, 197).

⁴⁴ Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, 184; Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 154.

years, but very young in religion and experience.”⁴⁵ He made a beginner’s mistake, but his actions would later prove that his vessel was full, as he came to understand, and Edwards worked to show, that his ministry and public suffering were the light of his lamp and proof of his assurance. Nevertheless, even while men like Brainerd came painfully to this realization, Edwards knew that many, especially a large share of the clergy, would have to be convinced that such notions rested solidly within the Puritan/New England tradition.

The problem with revival, then, was not its embrace of false tenets but that when it began it mirrored, in many ways, the first processes of conversion and with it the dangers of developing what Shepard called a “carnal security” among the “virgin believers.”⁴⁶ Shepard knew that the church’s requirement for believers to publicly recall or detail the process of their conversion was as problematic as it was beneficial. While Puritan divine Thomas Hooker wrote that the “onely [*sic*] way for the *leaper* [*sic*] to be *cleansed*, was to come out into the *congregation*, and to cry,”⁴⁷ ministers like Shepard began to notice that public pronouncements also opened the door to hypocrisy, false security and enthusiasm. Shepard showed that a convert’s verbal description of the workings of grace on their soul may hold truth, but as Michael McGiffert argues, Shepard believed that “true saints could not expect to live in constant beatitude” after their conversion;

⁴⁵ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 154.

⁴⁶ Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, 370-384.

⁴⁷ Thomas Hooker, *The Soules Preparation for Christ or, A Treatise of Contrition Wherin is Discovered How God Breakes the Heart and Wounds the Soule, in the Conversion of a Sinner to Himself*, 4th Ed. (London: A. Crooke, 1638), 55.

instead, they “had to weather many ‘winter seasons.’” True saints must prove their faith through “great trial” and suffering.⁴⁸

Scholars have shown that Shepard’s realization of the potential for hypocrisy in public accounts of conversion resulted in an altered approach to tests of church membership and methods of preparation. This approach, advocated by New England ministers, such as Solomon Stoddard and Increase Mather, was a more streamlined, often sacrament-based process of preparation that displayed grace through outward signs like baptism rather than through personal recollections. Norman Pettit argues that Stoddard and Mather embraced this modified preparationism because it cut down on the feared hypocrisy/enthusiasm that accompanied traditional requirements for church membership based on public professions. Greater use of the sacraments also kept an open to path church membership and participation as well as maintained a public or active display of faith.⁴⁹ The worry about enthusiasm, however, had unintended consequences. The move away from rigorous public confessions of grace received to a focus on the grace received in the sacraments opened the door for revivalists and historians alike to make accusations of a stagnant pharisaical (hypocritical) religion in deep decline, having abandoned the requirements of a regenerative faith.⁵⁰ In 1739, leading revivalist Gilbert Tennent famously

⁴⁸ Michael McGiffert, “Thomas Shepard: The Practice of Piety” in *God’s Plot: The Paradoxes of Puritan Piety, Being the Autobiography and Journal of Thomas Shepard*, ed. Michael McGiffert (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 19-20. Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, 370-384, and 302.

⁴⁹ See Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Spiritual Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 200-205. For more on Stoddard’s view of conversion and preparation, see Philip F. Gura, “Preparing the Way for Stoddard: Eleazar Mather’s *Serious Exhortation* to Northampton,” *The New England Quarterly* 57 (June, 1984), 240-249; Michael Schuldiner, “Solomon Stoddard and the Process of Conversion,” *Early American Literature* 17 (Winter 1982/1983), 215-226.

⁵⁰ For the classic view of “declension,” see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 3-146. Miller’s view has been pervasive, and still holds in many accounts, as the way in which the “New England way” declined. In Mark Valeri, *Law and Providence in Joseph Bellamy’s New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1994), 11-15, Valeri explains that by the “second quarter of the eighteenth century” the “so-called Stodderdean pattern

bemoaned the “Heaps of Pharisee-Teachers” who fancied themselves “put into the Priests Office” to protect the proper “Respect to the Sabbath” against those who threatened it. Rather than advocates of true religion, they were “bigotted [sic] to Human Inventions in Religious Matters,” who challenged “all knowing of others,” and spent their time “judging, in order to hide their own Filthiness.”⁵¹

In *Gracious Affections* Edwards tried to moderate between the two positions. Through an analysis of orthodox divines like Shepard, he tried to show that both the New Light enthusiasts and the anti-revivalist establishment did not understand that a long line of ministers had constantly been working to attack hypocrisy in the churches while also trying to maintain an active process of regeneration for believers attending the churches. There was not just, as the New Lights claimed, a lax pharisaical establishment selling salvation, or a wild, renegade apostasy arising in the fringes of the Church as the Old Lights claimed. Edwards showed that, when spiritual pride or false security cropped up, ministers had consistently struggled to provide a visible symbol of regeneration that their flock could depend on without erring into enthusiasm. Edwards understood that when ministers noticed a hollow faith that rested on participation in the sacraments, based only on parental church membership, they moved to restore a more active measure of faith.⁵² An effort to restore something lost was essential to revivalism, hence, those like Edwards were trying to get all sides to see that, whenever any facet of religion was revived, the exposure of Shepard’s now age-old reality of hypocrisy in both the “virgin and purest

required only upright behavior and orthodox beliefs for communicant privileges; it minimized regeneration as a condition for participation in the church.”

⁵¹ Gilbert Tennent, *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry, Considered in a Sermon on Mark VI. 34* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1740), 3, 6, and 30. For more on Tennant, see Janet F. Fishburn, “Gilbert Tennent, Established ‘Dissenter,’” *Church History* 63 (March, 1994), 31-49.

⁵²See, W.R. Ward, *Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 279-280.

churches” would constantly arise.⁵³ The current revival was just such a swing in the pendulum between laxity and overzealousness and there were, indeed, hypocrites on both sides. Edwards worked to fashion a call for a suffering discipleship that would cut through both accusations of enthusiasm and a graceless or inactive faith.

The problem of hypocrisy in the churches brought about by a renewed call for public professions of faith was compounded by the reality that these new faithful expressions were, as the biographer of George Whitefield, Arnold Dallimore, explains, moving out of the controlled confines of the church and “into the open air.” Jonathan Edwards was not the only pro-revivalist to recognize the threat that open-air expressions of faith presented to the well-being of the revival. Dallimore explains that Whitefield knew and dealt with firsthand the fact that when religious practices moved out of the churches and into “the fields,” there would be a “loud outcry,” with those suspect of revival “hurling the word *enthusiast* . . . as a means of bringing the whole revival movement into disrepute.” Like Edwards, Whitefield moved cautiously and took care to show that “open air” or public expression of religion was not new, but instead based on “precedent[s] which would justify his own” advocacy of public renewal.⁵⁴ Edwards and Whitefield were, it seems, not far off the mark in terms of their fears and of their insistence on sound precedent. There was undoubtedly quite a bit of confusion brought about by the emergence of a revival that advocated the sacraments alongside a developing open-air religion. Eventually the revival split the faithful among those who continued to advocate outward signs of grace by sacramental participation, or the “old lights,” and the “new lights,” or those who

⁵³ Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, 183-191.

⁵⁴ Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival*, Vol. I (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 249-250.

embraced exuberant displays of faith outside the church. Scholars such as W.R. Ward explain that this was bound to happen as each church in their own particular way would increasingly add their own method for the faithful to *publicly* renew their covenant with God. Jonathan Edwards accepted this variability and believed that multiple expressions were the norm, not a falling away. Edwards knew that what he needed to prove was that what was happening in the revival was not a departure from orthodoxy but a return to vigor in religious life.

Jonathan Edwards was naturally suited to be the lead proponent of the view that the revivals were both historically sound as well as a fresh call for regeneration that was playing out both locally and all across Protestant Christendom. Edwards not only inherited, by blood and a Yale education, Solomon Stoddard's established or "orthodox" pastorate, he also, through his own personal conversion experience, did not believe that there was only one "prepared" path to finding Christ. He believed that the "surprising work of God" evidenced in revival was new and exciting in its "very unusual flexibleness" which allowed multiple avenues to conversion, but it was orthodox in that assurance of that conversion rested wholly upon the regeneration of the believer which, more often than not, only occurred through great trial or suffering.⁵⁵ Scholars of Edwards, Stephen R. Yarbrough and John C. Adams, insist that Edwards, while "naturally conservative," was also not a traditional preparationist since "his conversion process did not fit the pattern ... that had become almost prescriptive after two centuries of American development." What was important to Edwards in his conversion experience was marked change after conversion, not how one came to conversion. Conversion was important, but what one did after conversion was even more important. Since, as Yarbrough and Adams argue,

⁵⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton*, ed. Goen, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 4, 147.

Edwards was a man with a mind “amazingly intolerant of inconsistency,” he could not in his writings allow the preparatory path, with all of its divergences, to be the marker of one’s conversion; he needed something more solid. Edward’s was consistent with scripture and the Calvinist/Puritan position with his belief that although “conversion is a work that is done at once [by God], and not gradually, regeneration is a lifelong process.” Battle was to be had in regeneration, and while converted, the saints “continue to err and backslide and beg forgiveness for the rest of their lives.” Assurance or the sign of true religious affections was then ultimately found in the believer’s “subordination to the divine will” that showed a marked change in the individual from before and after conversion.⁵⁶ Edwards mined the writings of past divines to establish his theory’s, and the revival’s, orthodox foundation, then turned to David Brainerd to provide a contemporary model of the process in the flesh.

Edwards’s concern for orthodoxy yet discomfort with hard-line preparationist doctrines led him to rely heavily on Thomas Shepard’s writings, like *The Sound Believer* and *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*. Shepard argued in many of his works that preparationism and assurance of salvation mostly belonged to the process of sanctification. He explained that sanctification was a lifelong ordeal in which the reception of God’s grace was made manifest in “wearisome trials and heavy loads” of life rather than in the experience of conversion.⁵⁷ In only a few pages of argument in his *Religious Affections*, Edwards, using Shepard, could easily prove to radicals like Gilbert Tenent that the founding divines were similarly worried about the “false religion” of “the

⁵⁶ Stephen R. Yarbrough and John C. Adams, *Delightful Conviction: Jonathan Edwards and the Rhetoric of Conversion* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 3-6, 21.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 1 above and Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 278-287; Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, 633.

Pharisees” as well as calm the nerves of others afraid of wild believers “overfull of talk of [their] own experiences.” To Edwards, the two extremes were one of the same truth, “as a tree that is overfull of leaves seldom bears much fruit: and as a cloud, though to appearance of very pregnant and full of water, if it brings with it overmuch wind, seldom affords much rain.” Loud professions of faith or displays of holiness through the “things of religion” like the sacraments, were “clouds without water.” Without the water or the regeneration, there is only “false affections.” Edwards went on to explain that “false affections...are much more forward to declare themselves, than true. Because ‘tis the nature of false religion, to affect shew and observation; as it was with the Pharisees.” Edwards noted that this was the belief of “that famous experimental divine Mr. Shepard” who saw “loud professions” as the blare of “a Pharisee’s trumpet” that was at its core hollow and only a hypocritical display of faith. True affections and the fruit of true faith, Edwards explained, were in the “seeking, striving and labor of a Christian” which comes “chiefly after his conversion,” as conversion is “but the beginning of his work.” For Edwards, the scripture and many “holy men” “everywhere represent” this point.⁵⁸ Edwards urged that stalwarts of Puritan orthodoxy such as Shepard, and others who followed him, were, well before the revivals, advocating a costly path to righteousness that promoted suffering as the key marker of the sanctified. In keeping the revival in line with such concerns, Edwards could show that the “religious affections” produced by the revival were, indeed, an extension of the shifts that had already begun to take place among the esteemed founding generation rather than wild or alien developments of religious hysteria.

⁵⁸ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 136-137, 137n3, and 381-382.

A newly prominent voice from the past that Edwards was able to readily employ in defense of his scheme was that of the English minister John Flavel (c.1630-1691).⁵⁹ According to historians such as Charles Hambrick-Stowe, Flavel's works became known in the colonies via "enthusiastic importation" of the closing decades of the seventeenth century and then finally through American reprints in the early to mid-eighteenth century. Flavel's most recent biographer, Brian Cosby, shows that Flavel was among the most influential Puritan voices for revivalists, and in general a favorite "devotional essayist" for much of the colonial era.⁶⁰ In Flavel, John E. Smith argues, Edwards found a most reliable source for discerning "how to distinguish the true recipients of grace from the hypocrites" not by the "powers and standards" of men but by "Christ[s] alone."⁶¹ Since Flavel was part of the later or what some historians have regarded as the "transitional" generation of Puritan writers,⁶² Edwards could also cement his claim that the shift toward an emphasis on action in sanctification – in Edwards's words "Christian practice" – had been developing for some time and that it was assuredly "the chief of all the signs of grace."⁶³

⁵⁹ For more on Flavel see Chapter 1.

⁶⁰ Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety*, 275-276; Brian H. Cosby, *John Flavel: Puritan Life and Thought in Stuart England* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2014), 36-38. For more on the "importation" of religious writings from across the Atlantic, see Charles Hambrick-Stowe, "The Spirit of the Old Writers," 277-291. The best introduction to the transatlantic literary and ideological exchange that Edwards, Whitefield, and many other revivalists took advantage of and contributed to can be found in Susan O'Brien, "A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755," *The American Historical Review* 91 (Oct., 1986), 811-832; Susan O'Brien, "Eighteenth-Century Publishing Networks in the First Years of Transatlantic Evangelicalism" in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies in Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* eds. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 38-52.

⁶¹ Smith, "Editor's Introduction," 62.

⁶² See Currie, "Cotton Mather's *Bonifacius* in Britain and America," 73-75.

⁶³ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 383.

Edwards cited a number of Flavel's works in his *Religious Affections*, five in total, and he was the third most relied upon divine following Shepard and Stoddard.⁶⁴ Just as Edwards used Shepard's *Parable* for his discussion on the perennial problem of hypocrisy in the Church, Flavel's writings helped Edwards reiterate just "how hard is it for the eye of man to discern betwixt chaff and wheat," to warn against false assurance and proclamations of holiness. As Edwards mined Flavel's works, he found that one of the most reliable criterion that Flavel offered for a differentiation between the "chaff and wheat" was to assess a convert's "holy practice under trials," which Edwards worked carefully to show was the believer's dedicated willingness to suffer through a variety of afflictions by faith alone.⁶⁵ Edwards embraced Flavel's point and argued in his *Religious Affections* that the "twelfth" and "most important and distinguishing" sign of grace bestowed was if, "by actual *experience* and *trial*, whether they have a heart to do the will of God, and to forsake other things for Christ or no." The only thing that could truly prove if a believer's faith was sound was the "exercises of grace" through the "test" of trial and suffering.⁶⁶

Edwards primarily used the writings of Flavel to defend his belief that the "sign of signs" that proved if a Christian is saved are the deeds and "fruits" of "Christian Practice." Edwards explained that the "fruits" of "Christian Practice" are brought by the "saints shining as lights in the world" and "by making a fair and good profession of religion, and having their profession evermore joined with answerable fruit in practice."⁶⁷ The only way a Christian could see if they

⁶⁴ See Smith, "Editor's Introduction," 60-62

⁶⁵ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 406, 181n6, and 433n5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 452.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 444, and 399- 401.

were truly engaging in “Christian Practice” was through “trial” and “God’s furnace.” Edwards showed that “Mr. Flavel speaks of a holy practice under trials as the greatest evidence of grace” and argued through Flavel that “the promises of salvation are made over to tried grace, and that only as will endure the trial.”⁶⁸ Other signs of having received God’s grace did exist, or as Edwards argued, “there may be several good evidence that a tree is a fig tree; but the highest and most proper evidence of it, is that it actually bears figs.” Edwards even conceded that it was “possible that a man may have a good assurance of a state of grace at his first conversion” but truly striving through great trial becomes the only sure way to know the “value of the pearl of great price” and if one has obtained it. Edwards believed that suffering or the willingness to “bear strain or pressure” belonged to the “most proper evidence of a true coming to Christ,” and as Flavel argued, preparation for suffering is the only way to be prepared to follow Christ, since when one did follow Him is “when our suffering come indeed.”⁶⁹

The faith that enabled a believer to “be stoned, and sawn in sunder, or slain with the sword; endure the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonments...” was a faith that knew “the cause” of such suffering. Edwards explained that this cause was a “true trust in Christ for salvation” and such trust would enable in believers both Christian Practice and the ability to “carry them through fire.”⁷⁰ Edwards believed that the grace and “true trust in Christ” that enabled “Christian Practice” also enabled, as Flavel argued, “Christian Fortitude.” Faith in Christ was like the “trial of a good soldier,” and it did not occur in the quiet of the saint’s closet

⁶⁸ Ibid, 432, and 433n5.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 433-435; John Flavel, *Preparations for Sufferings: Or the Best Work in the Worst Times in The Whole Works of the Rev. Mr. John Flavel*, Vol. 6 (London: J. Mathews, 1799), 17.

⁷⁰ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 447 and 453.

or “in his chimney corner, but in the field of battle.” Essentially true faith, which Edwards defined as “a dependence on the ability and faithfulness of his Redeemer,” was only found “under great persecution, and in suffering the loss of all things” for Christ. In turn, as Flavel had written, the willingness to suffer all things for Christ made the saint a “spectacle” to behold. Edwards accepted and urged that, as such spectacles, the saints would bear “fruit” and would also know they were in possession of “truly gracious and holy affections.”⁷¹

Edwards’s defense of “gracious affections” and “Christian Practice” by use of suffering also included references to a more recent and personally connected minister of the gospel than either the “experimental divine Mr. Shepard” or the “holy Mr. Flavel.”⁷² Edwards’s maternal grandfather, Solomon Stoddard (1643-1729), was the second most commonly cited theologian in the *Religious Affections*.⁷³ Philip Gura argues that it was both “Solomon Stoddard’s irreverent way” and his familial attachment that made him, after Shepard, Edward’s most reliable tool to show that the “New England way” was in flux for some time and that the revival, however alien it may first appear, was in line with what many esteemed forerunners had long advocated.⁷⁴ One of the reasons that Stoddard was so important to Edwards in his defense of revival was Stoddard’s willingness to sort through the past and use what seemed to work and disregard what

⁷¹ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 446-449, and 191; Flavel, *Preparations for Sufferings*, 49.

⁷² Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 137n3.

⁷³ See Smith, “Editor’s Introduction,” 57-60.

⁷⁴ See Philip F. Gura, “Solomon Stoddard’s Irreverent Way” *Early American Literature* Vol. 21 (Spring, 1986), 29-40; Smith, “Editor’s Introduction,” 57-60. In Paul R. Lucas, “Solomon Stoddard and the Origin of The Great Awakening in New England” *The Historian* 59 (June, 1997), 741-758. Lucas argues that Solomon Stoddard’s “theological assumptions and ministerial techniques” have been widely regarded as one the sources of “the Great Awakening in New England.” For more on Stoddard’s method see Paul R. Lucas, “‘An Appeal to the Learned’: The Mind of Solomon Stoddard,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 30 (April, 1973), 267-274.

did not.⁷⁵ Stoddard's "irreverence" and mistrust of hagiography may seem like red flags for one like Edwards who was trying to make the religious affections produced by revival fall in line with the orthodox. However, Edwards knew, like scholars Philip Gura and Paul Lucas notice in Stoddard, that "the New England Way should not be considered static" but "dynamic." What is more, Stoddard's deviation from the norm often came only in ecclesiology or church polity, and he ultimately remained an evangelist devoted to the harvest of souls through gospel preaching. In matters of theology, Stoddard was always a devout orthodox Calvinist in his view that it was ultimately only by the grace of God that a sinner was saved.⁷⁶

The two works by Stoddard that Edwards used to offer another orthodox defense of "Christian Practice" are *A Guide to Christ* (1714) and *A Treatise Concerning Conversion* (1719).⁷⁷ Both essays have been placed in the corpus of preparationist works by historians like Norman Pettit, but Pettit explains that they belonged to the more open concept of preparationism that Edwards preferred.⁷⁸ Both works first aimed at aiding in conversion, but their appeal for Edwards was they also continued to address the entire scope of a convert's life and the continual "striving" after God that true regeneration required even after a sinner was brought to Christ. That part of the subtitle to *A Treatise Concerning Conversion* is *Shewing the Nature of Saving Conversion to God and the Way Wherein it is wrought; Together with an Exhortation to Labor after it* is enough to prove this point. Feeling secure after one felt one was converted was as dangerous for Stoddard as it was for Shepard. For example, in *A Guide to Christ*, Stoddard shows that even a solid sounding proclamation of faith was not to be trusted, because without

⁷⁵ Smith, "Editor's Introduction," 57-60; Gura, "Stoddard's Irreverent Way," 40; Edwards, *Faithful Narrative*, 147.

⁷⁶ Gura, "Stoddard's Irreverent Way," 39-40; Lucas, "Appeal to the Learned," 238 & 262.

⁷⁷ See Smith "Editor's Introduction," 57-60.

⁷⁸ See Pettit, *The Heart Prepared*, 200-205.

“labor” and the willingness to suffer “being broken to pieces” there was room for hypocrisy. Faith that does not follow the right course can be deceiving, even if it sounds historically and doctrinally sound. Men may, as Stoddard shared, truly “believe for a time” in the “*history of the Gospel* for a truth, and take it for granted, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of the World,” but “many profane men have this Historical faith.” Stoddard insisted that this faith may only come from “their fear of damnation” and the assurance that such faith brings is only by the notion that they belong to a historical faith; nothing more. This type of faith was undoubtedly the hypocrisy of the antinomians, who, according to Stoddard, rests on “appearances of sincerity,” full of “pride...[and] a high opinion of their attainment,” which “is a very dangerous thing for them” because “they will bless themselves, when God curses them.” True assurance, then, comes not in knowing the right components of “historical faith,” but when the sinner laboriously, again and again, “ventures upon Christ.” Stoddard was sure to show that this position was also not a veiled attempt to endorse an Arminian concept of good works, as he also warned that “Morality and Piety are very different things.” While “Godly men are moral” their works flow from God, as does their piety. The belief in Salvation by works, Stoddard felt, came from building up “confidences on some particular scriptures” to make the hypocrite think in doing good “his condition is good.” Again, the morality performed by true saints that “is lovely in the eyes of many carnal men” are the result of their striving after God, not works of good in order to be saved.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Solomon Stoddard, *A Treatise Concerning Conversion: Shewing the Nature of Conversion to God...* (Boston: D. Henchman, 1719); Solomon Stoddard, *A Guide to Christ: Or, The Way of Directing Souls that are Under the Work of Conversion* (Boston, J. Allen, 1714), 24-30. For Edwards agreement on Stoddard’s position on faith, for which he ties Shepard to Stoddard and cites from *A Treatise Concerning Conversion* rather than *A Guide to Christ*, see Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 173-181. The citation of Stoddard is on 177n4.

From his first reference to Stoddard in *Religious Affections*, it took Edwards over two-hundred pages and sixteen more references to Stoddard to get to a point where he could bring him into the defense of Edwards's "last distinguishing mark of holy affections." This mark, or "Christian Practice," was heavily dependent upon Stoddard's concept of venturing "upon Christ," especially as Stoddard explained it in a sermon added to *A Treatise Concerning Conversion*, called *The Way to Know Sincerity and Hypocrisy Cleared Up*. In *A Treatise Concerning Conversion*, Stoddard explained, "that which is common to hypocrites is no sign of saintship" and added in *The Way to Know Sincerity and Hypocrisy* that "men that are godly, have a respect to all God's commandments [or] where there is piety, there is universal obedience."⁸⁰ In this concept of universal obedience Edwards, by way of Stoddard, argued that Christian practice was essentially perseverance "through all changes, and under trials, as long as he lives." This perseverance was the same "holy courage" of Flavel and the "Christian fortitude" that Stoddard argued would see the saint through "scruples, difficulties, temptations, afflictions, [and] corruptions."⁸¹ Edwards particularly latched on to Stoddard's view that "every godly man has a corrupt principle remaining in him." An enormous part of the suffering of the saints was that they were still, "everyday" up against "the stirrings of corruption." The saint would falter, but unlike hypocrites, would never commit acts of "gross transgressions," because "under the new covenant, if man be once godly, he will always be godly."⁸² Like Flavel, Edwards saw that Stoddard kept firm in his orthodoxy by bringing in the covenant and the Calvinist belief of perseverance of the saints into his scheme of salvation.

⁸⁰ Stoddard, *A Treatise Concerning Conversion*, 82; Solomon Stoddard, *The Way to Know Sincerity and Hypocrisy Cleared Up*, (Boston, D. Henchman, 1719), 130.

⁸¹ Stoddard, *Sincerity and Hypocrisy*, 135.

⁸² Stoddard, *Sincerity and Hypocrisy*, 120-121, and 137.

Edwards also believed that he could include the internal battles over corruptions as yet another component of suffering and fortitude, for “true saints may be guilty of some kinds and degrees of backsliding.” Like Stoddard, he believed “they could never fall away,” and in a return to the ideas of Shepard in the *Parable of the Ten Virgins*, the true saints knew they must be prepared to “keep their hearts with all diligence,” and if they fail to do so, they “never had oil in the vessel.”⁸³ In their regeneration and sanctification the saints were in the process of becoming perfect, yet even if inevitably falter because they were not yet perfect, they would always return to obedience.⁸⁴ The fortitude to return to obedience brought suffering, but as Stoddard saw and Edwards agreed, this created great assurance, because “when tribulation or persecutions ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.” God took the sufferings of the saints seriously, and those that “endure...are blessed...those that fall away...are cursed.”⁸⁵

Five years before he wrote *Religious Affections* (1746), Edwards argued in *The Distinguishing Marks* that “men are not influenced by reason,” but “that they are influenced by example.”⁸⁶ He finished this point, using ministers like Shepard, Flavel, and Stoddard, in *Religious Affections* arguing that there was no better example than a believer in “patient continuance in well doing, through the difficulties of the Christian course” for others to see “the evidence of the truth of grace.” Edwards closed his final arguments on Christian Practice with

⁸³ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 390-391, and 391n3. Stoddard, *Sincerity and Hypocrisy*, 120. For more on Stoddard’s use of the covenant, or his “covenant renewal,” see Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 100-101. Stout explains that Stoddard was less the champion of fear and more a “spiritual physician” advocating that “the cure for a ‘heart sick people’ was hope in Christ.

⁸⁴ Many heirs of Edwards and admirers of Brainerd would challenge this point, especially the Methodists. For more on sanctification and perfectionism, see Chapters 4 and 5 below.

⁸⁵ Stoddard, *Sincerity and Hypocrisy*, 133; Edwards, 390n2.

⁸⁶ Edwards, *The Distinguishing Marks*, 238.

the hope that “it would become fashionable for men to shew their Christianity, more by an amiable distinguished behavior, than by an abundant and excessive declaring their experiences...with their tongues not running before, but rather going behind their hands and feet.”⁸⁷ Edwards believed he had shown that orthodox divines, well before he made his arguments or before the revivals started, had already begun to urge this point and advocate “for men to shew their Christianity.” The revivals were not a deviation from orthodoxy, but rather a continuation of changes that had already started.

With the publication of the *Life of David Brainerd* in 1749, Edwards was able to offer a seamless defense of “Christian Practice” and “distinguished behavior, only this time in the flesh.”⁸⁸ He opens with “there are two ways of represent and recommending true religion and virtue to the world...one is by doctrine and precept; the other is by instance and example.”⁸⁹ In his “Appendix” to the *Life of Brainerd*, Edwards wrote that “his love and meekness were not a mere pretence and outward profession and show; but they were effectual things, manifest in expensive and painful deeds of love and kindness.”⁹⁰ Edwards believed that Brainerd was an “eminent teacher” in whom “the world has had opportunity to see such as confirmation of the truth, efficacy, and amiableness of the religion taught, in the practice of the same person that have most clearly and forceably [sic] taught it.” This was especially true since Brainerd, like all “eminent teachers,” faced a “variety of unusual circumstances of remarkable trial.” Edwards believed that the fortitude that men like Brainerd had in their suffering encouraged revivals or

⁸⁷ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 449 and 469.

⁸⁸ Norman Pettit and John Grigg also closely link the *Religious Affections* with the *Life of Brainerd*. See Pettit, “Editor’s Introduction,” 5-10; Grigg, *Lives of David Brainerd*, 133-139.

⁸⁹ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 89.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 507.

the “glorious events that have been in many respects new and strange.” Men like Brainerd, the suffering saints, were the “instruments” of “awakening” because by their “external conduct” through “remarkable trial,” they strove to minister to those in need of “the holy Word of God.” Brainerd was, for Edwards, the capstone on his own theological position that true religious affections and grace were proven “through many vicissitudes and trials.”⁹¹

The ordeal of Brainerd’s expulsion from Yale and his attempt at reconciliation occupy a special place in Edwards’s account. Edwards knew that Brainerd had enemies who wished to defame his theological positions and displays of enthusiasm.⁹² However, Edwards’s arguments in *Religious Affections* emphasize that Brainerd persevered through his dabbling with enthusiasm and emerged as an embodiment of “Christian Practice.” That Edwards left Brainerd’s displays and discussions of suffering unedited, as I argue in Chapter Two, is a powerful example of Edwards’s belief that Brainerd suffered and persevered through temptation and set himself on the right path. Furthermore, Edwards’s response to way in which Brainerd handled himself before and after his attempt at reconciliation with Yale also shows that Edwards believed Brainerd possessed and exemplified the “truly gracious and holy affections.”⁹³ Edwards knew that every man falters and has faults, like Brainerd’s “prone[ness] to melancholy and dejection of spirit,” but this does not mean they are not without the right faith. In the instances of Brainerd’s struggle, defeat, concession, and a willingness to continue on, Edwards argued that anyone could “accurately distinguish between real solid piety and enthusiasm.” Edwards knew and showed in

⁹¹ Ibid, 89-91

⁹² For more on the context of Brainerd’s expulsion, see Chapter 2 above.

⁹³ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 191.

his works culminating in the *Life of Brainerd* that it was in the perseverance through suffering and great trial that “divine grace [was] displayed.”⁹⁴

Edward’s believed that Brainerd’s presence at the commencement ceremony was a testament to, at the very least, a “very Christian spirit.”⁹⁵ Brainerd handled himself in such a way that highlighted both the tenacity and humility that Edwards knew a man of true faith would have. The emotional and physical stress Brainerd endured when contemplating attending the ceremony, Edwards knew, would have, alone, served as a strong inhibitor for most. What is more, Brainerd was often in a state of infirmity due to his tuberculosis, rendering any long trip physically detrimental, which only underscored Brainerd’s willingness to suffer. In an era of rapid travel it is easy to forget, too, that the approximately 100 mile distance from Brainerd’s missionary post at Kaunaumeeek, New York, to New Haven, Connecticut, would have required at least two to three days of travel by horseback, which for any man would have been an additionally taxing obstacle to overcome, especially one who was ill.⁹⁶ Edwards knew that for Brainerd to undertake this trip, in spite of the obligations and barriers, there was much at stake. Brainerd’s willingness to suffer such troubles only to “humble himself at the feet of those...he supposed he had suffered most” also demonstrated a fortitude and dedication that greatly

⁹⁴ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 91-93. The phrase “divine grace displayed” comes from the second part of Brainerd’s “public journal” published by order of his sponsoring society, the SSPCK. See David Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display’d or the Continuance and Progress of a Remarkable Work of Grace Among some of the Indians...* (Boston: William Bradford, 1746).

⁹⁵ Edwards, *Life Brainerd*, 220n2.

⁹⁶ Distances in Brainerd’s journal are sometimes noted by Brainerd or Edwards, but not always. The modern convenience of mapping distances on internet services such as Google Maps allows for a rough computation of distances traveled by Brainerd. Norman Pettit provided an invaluable map of Brainerd’s travels on the endpapers of his edited work that allowed me to gauge town names and distances on the modern map services.

impressed Edwards.⁹⁷ Brainerd's journey to Yale was in no way a leisurely affair, but rather a grueling marathon that demonstrated an almost brash disregard for personal health in the cause of God that fit perfectly to Edward's belief that possession of true faith was demonstrated in the willingness "to forsake all for him." To submit to the prospect of exacerbating physical pain by exertion and enduring emotional duress all for one's beliefs was, as Edwards had argued in *Religious Affections*, "proper evidence of a true coming to Christ."⁹⁸

On the eve of the commencement, Tuesday, September 13, 1743, Edwards was sure to show that Brainerd concluded in his journal that "'tis through great trials, I see, that we must enter the gates of paradise," to which he added – with his mind set on enduring the commencement – "if my soul could be holy, that God might not be dishonored, methinks I could bear sorrows."⁹⁹ As noted above in Chapter 2, Brainerd endured the day reasonably well, but on the next day, "with the advice of Christian friends," and the aid of Edwards, he made one final attempt to reconcile with Yale's governing body with the hopes of obtaining his degree.¹⁰⁰ According Edwards, Brainerd offered this time a written reflection "to the Rector and trustees of the college" of the events that caused his expulsion. The reflection was the same as those he previously offered, but he added that it was now made with the design that he "might cut off all

⁹⁷ The summary of Brainerd's travels is in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 216-218.

⁹⁸ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 445.

⁹⁹ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 217-218.

¹⁰⁰ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 218 and 219; Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 218n1. Brainerd already had twice in the same year, once in May, and then once again in July, attempted, unsuccessfully, to reconcile with the regents of the university. See Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 208-210. There is evidence that these earlier attempts at reconciliation were not amiable, but a "bitter face-to-face confrontation" that ultimately "broke [Brainerd's] heart." See Pettit, "Prelude to Mission," 42-45. See also, Grigg, *Lives of David Brainerd*, 58-59; and Thomas Brainerd, *The Life of John Brainerd* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publications Committee, 1865), 53-55, and 130n.

occasion of stumbling and offense” for those in his wake. Brainerd essentially chose to swallow his pride and recounted the events to the trustees in the following letter:

Whereas I have said before several persons, concerning Mr. Whittelsey, one of the tutors of Yale College, that I did not believe he had any more grace than the chair I then leaned upon; I humbly confess that herein I have sinned against God, and acted contrary to the rules of his Word...My fault herein was the more aggravated, in that I said this concerning one that was so much my superior, and one that I was obliged to treat with special respect and honor...Such a manner of behavior, I confess, did not become a Christian; it was taking too much upon me...I have long since been convinced of the falseness of those apprehensions by which I then justified such conduct. I have often reflected on this act with grief; I hope, on account of the sin of it: and am willing to lie low and be abased before God and man for it. And humbly ask the forgiveness of the governors of the college, and of the whole society; but of Mr. Whittelsey in particular...And I now appear to judge and condemn myself for going once to the Separate meeting in New Haven, a little before I was expelled, though the Rector had refused to give me leave. For this I humbly ask the Rector’s forgiveness. And whether the governors of the college shall ever see cause to remove the academical censure I lie under, or no, or to admit me to the privileges I desire; yet I am willing to appear, if they think fit, openly to own and to humble myself of those things I have herein confessed.¹⁰¹

Following the text of the letter, Edwards maintained that Brainerd continued his conciliatory tone in the remaining portion of the journal entry for the day. He felt that “God has made me willing to do anything that I can do, consistent with truth, for the sake of peace, and that I might not be a stumbling block and offense to others.” While consolation for the sake of peace and removal of obstructions for those that follow are the thrust of the apology, Brainerd continued to feel that he was wronged. It was “for the sake of peace,” Brainerd believed, that he could “forego and give up what I verily believe, after the most mature and impartial search, is my right in some

¹⁰¹ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 219-220.

instance.”¹⁰² Brainerd did not renounce responsibility for his actions, and he asked for forgiveness. He did, however, feel that he deserved his degree, especially in light of the fact that the case against him was largely based on hearsay. His comments, Brainerd recorded, were “spoken in private, to a friend or two” and were only “partly overheard.” I am sure that it was with some grief or at least uncertainty that Brainerd closed the entry with, “But I trust, God will plead my cause.”¹⁰³

By the workings of some force, whether it was Edwards’s assessment¹⁰⁴ of “the very Christian spirit Mr. Brainerd showed,” or by the “earnest application...made on his behalf” during this final attempt of reconciliation, the encounter between Brainerd and the trustees was, on some level, successful. In the spirit of compromise the governors of Yale decided that they would allow Brainerd to be re-admitted and would, after an additional “twelve-month,” confer on Brainerd his degree. This was ultimately unacceptable for Brainerd as what he wished for was “his degree then given him.”¹⁰⁵ Edwards explained in a note that he added to the journal that Brainerd had to refuse the terms because going back to school was “contrary to what the Correspondents [his sponsoring missionary society], to whom he was now engaged, declared to be their mind,” and he really only “desired” the immediate conferring of his degree because “he

¹⁰² Ibid, 220. For more on Brainerd as a “peacemaker” see Grigg, *Lives of David Brainerd*, 40-44.

¹⁰³ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 220. See also Pettit, “Prelude to Mission,” 36-41, and Pettit, “Editor’s Introduction,” 42-51.

¹⁰⁴ Edwards was an eye witness of the affair and remarked that “this was the first time that ever I had the opportunity of personal acquaintance with him” see Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 220n2.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

thought it would tend to his being more extensively useful.”¹⁰⁶ When the university still refused to give him his degree without completing another year of study, Edwards simply noted that Brainerd “manifested no disappointment or resentment.”¹⁰⁷ The affair, as scholars like John Grigg argue, was more complicated than what Edwards related, and the pain and spiritual frustration that Brainerd encountered while at Yale probably made the decision not to re-enroll “Brainerd’s alone.”¹⁰⁸ While at Yale, Grigg explains, Brainerd had trouble finding God and found his college experience to be more a spiritual “nuisance” than a blessing. Rather than any desire to return to his studies, he simply wanted his name cleared without requirements. When this was no longer a possibility, Brainerd gave up on his attempts at reconciliation and continued with his missionary work. Brainerd’s humble attempt at recovery and the display of fortitude in continuing his mission greatly impressed Edwards, but as Norman Pettit argues Brainerd “spent the rest of his adult life trying to recover from” his expulsion at Yale.¹⁰⁹

What was clear to Edwards in the entire scope of Brainerd’s ordeal with Yale was that Brainerd suffered for his actions, sought forgiveness and was, on some level denied, but still persevered and stood firm in his faith. At first he fell victim to the “intemperate imprudent zeal...and a degree of enthusiasm” that “mingled itself with that revival of religion.” Then, after his expulsion, he “learned thoroughly to distinguish between solid religion and its delusive counterfeits” through the requirements of his ministry. For the rest of Brainerd’s life, Edwards

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. The correspondents were the representatives of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) who in 1742 approved Brainerd for missionary work among the Native Americans. The SSPCK and Brainerd’s missionary appointment are discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁷ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 220n2.

¹⁰⁸ See chapter 2 for more on Brainerd’s frustrations while at Yale.

¹⁰⁹ Grigg, *Lives of David Brainerd*, 59; Pettit, “Prelude to Mission,” 48.

believed that Brainerd, primarily through “his external behavior” and “circumstances of remarkable trial,” “condemned his own former opinion and conduct.”¹¹⁰ Most of all, Edwards argued that “Mr. Brainerd’s experiences and comforts were very far from being like those of some persons, which are attended with a spiritual satiety...and rest satisfied in their own attainments...in confidence of the favor of God.” Instead, Brainerd “took up and embraced the cross and bore it constantly in his great self-denials, labors, and sufferings for the name of Jesus...to promote the kingdom of his dear Redeemer.”¹¹¹ Edwards believed, outright, that

this history of Mr. Brainerd’s may help us to make distinctions among the high religious affections, and remarkable impressions made on the minds of persons, in a time of great awakening and revival of religion; and may convince us that there are not only distinctions in theory, invented to save the credit of pretended revivals of religion, and what is called the ‘experience of the operations of the Spirit’; but distinctions that do actually take place in the course of events, and have a real and evident foundation in fact.¹¹²

Brainerd not only personified Edward’s right display of religious affections, he proved that Edwards’s defense of the revival was legitimate. There were some saints, like Brainerd, who “like a true son of Jacob...persevered in wrestling...and enduring hardness with unfainting resolution” and “promoted the revival of true religion.”¹¹³

Edwards’s emphasis on a suffering discipleship found both a receptive audience and fierce critics. Moderate revivalists saw Brainerd as Edwards intended and agreed he could be used in the battle against enthusiasm to secure the fate of the revival. The congregation of the

¹¹⁰ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 154, 91, 90, and 94.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 509 and 512.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 517.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 531 and 541.

Second Church of Ipswich, Massachusetts endorsed Brainerd as a champion against enthusiasm in their pamphlet *The Pretended Plain Narrative Convicted of Fraud and Partiality* (1748). The pamphlet was written to show that it was “fact that there has been such a gracious Revival” spreading across New England, but that the revivals have tended to “scatter the *Antinomian* Poison,” causing all sorts of problems such as “unscriptural [and] unwarrantable *Separations*.” Brainerd clearly, they argued, “abominated the Spirit and Practice” of the antinomians and separatists, and that “the Character of that excellent Person,” Brainerd, showed enthusiasm was detrimental to the proper practice of religion.¹¹⁴ Printer Daniel Henchmen continued the same argument in his June 23, 1748, distribution of a “proposal for Printing by Subscription” of Edwards’s *Life of Brainerd*, which he printed the following year in 1749. While most of the first page of Henchmen’s proposal is illegible, pieces can be made out describing Brainerd’s trials and commitment to God and “God’s Providence.” From the end of the first page into the second, Henchmen wrote that Brainerd’s story and faith should be an example to all those who are “skeptical, that there is indeed such a Thing as inward supernatural Religion...that widely differ from all vain wild Enthusiasm.” Brainerd’s story, Henchmen adds, “holds forth much Instruction to Pious persons...tending to help and guide them, under a great Variety of Difficulties and Temptations they are exposed to...[in] this evil World; and in general...promote[s] the Interest of Religion in the Purity and Power of it.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Second Church of Ipswich, *The Pretended Plain Narrative convicted of Fraud and Partiality. Or, A LETTER from the Second Church in Ipswich, to their Separated Brethren, In DEFENCE of their deceased Pastor and Themselves, AGAINST The injurious Charges of the said Separated Brethren, in a late Print of Theirs* (Boston, 1748), 10-11.

¹¹⁵ Daniel Henchmen, “Proposal for Printing by Subscription, And Account of that extraordinary Person, the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd” (Boston, 23 June, 1748), i-ii.

Those against Edwards's and Brainerd's positions against enthusiasm belonged to the radical fringes of revivalism that Edwards worked to denounce. According to Leigh Eric Schmidt, the "new light extremist," Andrew Croswell waged a particularly vehement battle against Edwards's moderate revivalism and his use of orthodox divines in order to advocate his own "conception of Christianity as a joyful triumph over all spiritual horror and anguish." Croswell directed his attack squarely against the belief that pain and struggle were the sources of assurance and true Christian practice, to the point that he "abhorred the example of Brainerd."¹¹⁶ In 1749 Andrew Croswell spoke of Brainerd in his *A Narrative of the Founding and Setting The New-gathered Congregation Church in Boston*. Croswell's essay was designed to defend the formation of the New Gathered Congregation Church against the other Congregational churches in Boston, and it worked to show that this new church was not schismatic, but rather the forming of a distinct Church.¹¹⁷ Croswell believed that those who did not belong to his church and were not aligned with his beliefs were actually the ones who created schism. Croswell, as Schmidt explains, while considered a radical "New Light" minister, was actually an ultra-orthodox Calvinist who thought the "Old Light" churches were abandoning the precepts of the Reformation, especially the doctrine of "Justifying Faith" and "cheapening" the saving grace of Christ.¹¹⁸ Croswell was aware of Edwards's "saintly" portrayal of Brainerd and the potential

¹¹⁶ Leigh Eric Schmidt, "'A Second and Glorious Reformation': The New Light Extremism of Andrew Croswell," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (April, 1986), 231-233.

¹¹⁷ See Andrew Croswell, *A Narrative of the Founding and Setting The New-gathered Congregation Church in Boston* (Boston, 1749), 15-16.

¹¹⁸ See Schmidt, "A Second and Glorious Reformation" 214-244. For more on Croswell's theology, see Andrew Croswell, *A Seasonable Defence of the Old Protestant Doctrine of Justifying FAITH* (Boston, 1745); Andrew Croswell, *Mr. Croswell's Discourse on Free Justification through Christ's Redemption* (Boston, 1765); Andrew Croswell, *Free Forgiveness of Spiritual Debts* (Boston, 1766).

damage it might have on those sympathetic to his own views. He was resolute in seeking to warn his readers:

Thou are in a very little time...to be convinced that I am a dangerous Preacher of the Doctrine of *Justifying Faith*, only by the *Strength* of this *weak* Argument, viz. *that so good a Man as Mr. Brainerd said so a little before his death*. I honour the Memory of Mr. Brainerd...but yet I must say it is not *just* to *Canonize* Men for *Saints* after they are dead, and then to put off *their* Words for a *sort of Scripture*. Had Mr. *Edwards* (whom I mention not *without Respect*...) seen it for his purpose he might have told his Readers that Mr. Brainerd was as much against *Calvin* and the Old Reformers, as against me; and that he had found out that the *Protestant Doctrine of Justifying Faith*, was *false* and *dangerous*. But perhaps, so *much light* would have spoiled a *dark Design*.¹¹⁹

In Croswell's "ultra orthodox" position, Brainerd was a good man, and one who should "live eternally," but his words should not be taken as gospel simply because he was a good or devout man. On the contrary, Brainerd was actually "against" Croswell and the "proper" doctrine of justification through faith and so was Edwards since he failed to divulge the "truth" about Brainerd. In short, Brainerd and Edwards were, according to Croswell, peddling a thinly veiled Arminianism.

Over the course of his life, Croswell had, as Schmidt clarifies, few supporters of his theological positions on "assurance, preparation, justification, or sanctification" so he did not pose a major threat to Edwards's position.¹²⁰ However, among those who he did influence or with whom he affiliated, there is evidence that suffering for faith or for Christ remained central to the revivalist position, even if Croswell denounced "anguish" as a fundamental component of Christianity. One of those affiliates was Separatist Ebenezer Frothingham. Frothingham not

¹¹⁹ Croswell, *A Narrative of the Founding*, 38.

¹²⁰ Schmidt, "A Second and Glorious Reformation," 242.

only agreed with Croswell's theology but also shared Croswell's questioning of Brainerd's theological positions. In 1750 Frothingham penned a massive 432 page explanation and defense of separatist theology and spirituality in his *The Articles of Faith and Practice with the Covenant that is confessed by the Separate Churches of Christ in General in this Land*. The last twenty-one pages of Frothingham's essay is an exposé of the true character of Brainerd that Frothingham felt was necessary to add since "it was reported that he [Brainerd] denied the Religion and Work that Separates hold to be of God..." and that many person became "quite turned off" from the Separatist position after reading it. Having just outlined an entire defense of the Separatist position that true saints would know their election and would not have to prove it by their works, Frothingham felt a "great Weight" to stand up to what some had found in the *Life of Brainerd* and prayed that God would show him "where the Mistake was, being fully satisfied that Mr. Brainerd was an eminent Saint of God."¹²¹

Frothingham was consoled in his reading and found that, if Brainerd were alive, the two of them would probably agree that the Separatists hold to Paul's command in Ephesians to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called," as well as Paul's other criteria in Ephesians 4:2-6.¹²² However, as Frothingham continued his analysis of the *Life of Brainerd*, he is convinced that it was full of "Edwards's wrong Application of Mr. Brainerd's Experiences" because Edwards bent Brainerd's views and experiences "in order to condemn the same Experiences in Separates" and their own similar deeds "wrought by the same Spirit of God" as Brainerd's deeds.¹²³ Clearly, such writings have made it easy for some historians to

¹²¹ Frothingham, *The Articles of Faith and Practice*, e 411.

¹²² Ephesians 4: 1 KJV; Frothingham, *The Articles of Faith and Practice*, 411-412.

¹²³ Frothingham, *The Articles of Faith and Practice*, 412.

argue that Edwards not only appropriated some of Brainerd's views or positions but also actively "exploited" them since, as even Perry Miller insisted, Edwards's main concern was always to "rebuke both the enthusiasts and the Arminians."¹²⁴ Frothingham went on to explain that even though Brainerd "was a *Jacob*" and filled with the spirit, he was still a "feeble Man" and did not always perceive or understand things correctly. The most striking problem that Frothingham noticed was that Brainerd did not properly understand the workings of zeal, and while he condemned the Separatist for being overzealous, Brainerd himself often relied on zeal to accomplish his missionary work. Frothingham explained that "while we are watching to keep ourselves from a false Zeal...Satan stands ready to tempt to err as much upon the left Hand..." causing humans to rely on their own wisdom and then actually to create a false zeal. Frothingham believed that this happened time and again to Brainerd due to his feebleness, making Brainerd guilty of the same errors of which the Separatists were accused. One of Brainerd's other follies that Frothingham noticed was that he seemed to be guilty of relying on his own abilities, or "human wisdom." For example, Frothingham sees Brainerd's human pride take over when he keeps trying to master the "*Indian Tongue*" to help evangelize, when in reality he should simply be relying on the grace and will of God to complete his mission. Like Croswell, Frothingham saw in Brainerd a man who was erring on the side of salvation by works.

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Despite Brainerd's weaknesses, as one who wrestled for God, he was a true Jacob in Frothingham's mind and his errors were forgivable. However, the twist that Edwards puts on

¹²⁴ See Pettit, "Editors Introduction," 1-10.

¹²⁵ Frothingham, *The Articles of Faith and Practice*, 414-416. See note 3 above for Edwards's positive use and understanding of zeal.

Brainerd's life and work were not forgivable since they gave, according to Frothingham, the *Life of Brainerd* a clearly misguided agenda. Indirectly, Frothingham explained that Edwards was himself a "poor deluded formal Hypocrite" who was in "woful Captivity by Men's Inventions." He saw in Edwards's view a direct attack on the Separatists and on the possibility of persuading "poor ignorant Persons" against the proper workings of the spirit, which were always wholly dependent on God's grace, and never on the works of man. Frothingham believed that in Edwards's "captivity" he saw that Brainerd's experiences and beliefs represented his own. In reality, Frothingham felt that Brainerd's experiences were not the experiences of the proper "learned" ministers and churches to which Edwards belonged, but "rather the daily Experience of the Saints in the Separates."¹²⁶ Frothingham felt that he saw through attempts to downplay Brainerd's early flirtations with New Light followers, and that, despite Edwards's best efforts, Brainerd retained his enthusiastic affiliations from his days at Yale to his death.

Scholars like John Grigg argue that it is hard to know if Edwards's view of Brainerd or other views of him, like Frothingham's, were correct. Grigg asserts that Brainerd was a "child of two worlds," caught between the radical fringes of revivalism on the one hand and his familial allegiance to the Connecticut establishment on the other.¹²⁷ Along theological lines, it is safe to say that Brainerd was assuredly a Calvinist, but of what stripe, even his contemporaries and relations could never quite pin.¹²⁸ Edwards certainly made it clear that he was, first, out to show that "Mr. Brainerd's religious impressions...were vastly different from enthusiasm" and that he

¹²⁶ Frothingham, *The Articles of Faith and Practice*, 412, 422, and 427.

¹²⁷ Grigg, *Lives of David Brainerd*, 7-44.

¹²⁸ See, Grigg, *Lives of David Brainerd*, 3-6, 128-146, and 147-163; John A. Grigg, "The Lives of David Brainerd" (Ph. D. diss., University of Kansas, 2002), 1-5, and 366-370; Pettit, "Editor's introduction," 1-84; Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 501-541; Croswell, *A Narrative of the Founding*, 15-16, and 38; Frothingham, *The Articles of Faith and Practice*, 411-432.

in fact had an “abhorrence...[of]Antinomianism,” since New Light enthusiasm and a radical embrace of free grace was the first threat that Edwards saw to the revival. He also worked to protect Brainerd from charges of Arminianism by the radical New Lights and wrote that his “conversion was no confirming and perfecting of moral principles and habits, by use and practice, and his own labor,” but was rather a product of “salvation by Christ” or the proper “doctrines of grace.”¹²⁹ These statements on Antinomianism and Arminianism, however, both belong to Edwards, not Brainerd. A point in Frothingham’s favor is that Brainerd once admitted, in a confrontation with a person who is assumed to be Croswell, “that the essence of saving faith lies in believing” rather than striving after God.¹³⁰ Scholars of Brainerd, such as Norman Pettit and John Grigg both discuss the liberal editing of Brainerd’s journal by Edwards, including some important omissions, but both ultimately believe that Edwards was “true to his subject.”¹³¹ Brainerd himself was truly weary of the “false appearances of religion” and “wildfire party zeal” that revival created, and so he submitted to Edwards’s carefully crafted concept of a suffering Christian fortitude as (we must trust) that he wrote, that through prayer I “was enabled to wrestle with God and to persevere.”¹³²

It is clear that the intensity of the debate over enthusiasm, the nature of grace, and true faith between the advocates and opponents of the revival (New Lights, Old Lights, and moderates) influenced the many views of Brainerd and, especially, Edwards’s use of Brainerd’s story. I believe that it is also clear that Edwards, by way of Brainerd’s example, held to his

¹²⁹ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 93, 458, and 522-523.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 456.

¹³¹ Grigg, *Lives of David Brainerd*, 136; Pettit, “Editor’s Introduction,” 1.

¹³² Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 218 and 215.

position that true evangelical faith was manifest in great trial, suffering, and fortitude, and his argument did withstand most criticisms. Even the radical free grace champion and critic of Brainerd, Andrew Croswell, eventually embraced a suffering discipleship and the camaraderie of “*the Honour*’ of being ‘*despised for CHRIST*’” and “enduring the same fight of afflictions.” Frothingham, too, was forced to admire Brainerd as a “Jacob,” a suffering combatant for the lord.¹³³ In the emergence of Evangelicalism, the centrality of *crucicentrism* or the “stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross,” and that disciples of Christ need to take up that same cross, meant that, despite his flaws, Brainerd remained a practitioner of true faith for most evangelicals.¹³⁴ Edwards’s own view of Christ and *crucicentrism* is nowhere more clear than in his 1739 sermon *Christ’s Agony*. In the sermon he outlines “how great the labour and travail of Christ’s soul was for others’ salvation,” and “that Christians are followers of Christ, and they should follow him in this...how they should seek and cry for the good of one another’s souls.” Brainerd knew this only too well and wrote that, through Christ’s sacrifice and example, his “soul was drawn out very much for the world; I grasped for multitudes of soul...I felt as if I could spend my life in cries” for both “sinners” and “the children of God.”¹³⁵ What is more, the attacks on Brainerd by critics only strengthened Edwards’s arguments because Brainerd was unquestionably a preacher of the gospel, and, as Stoddard wrote, “when tribulation or persecutions ariseth because of the word, by and by he [God] is offended.”¹³⁶ Had Croswell stopped to look, he would have seen that Brainerd was, like himself, “despised for Christ.”

¹³³ Schmidt, “A Second and Glorious Reformation,” 243; Frothingham, *The Articles of Faith and Practice*, 412.

¹³⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 2-3.

¹³⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *Christ’s Agony*, ed. Edward Hicman, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 877-878; Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 162.

¹³⁶ Stoddard, Stoddard, *Sincerity and Hypocrisy*, 133.

A suffering discipleship remained for Edwards, even in the vastness of his work, the ultimate sign of true religion. In his sermon delivered at Brainerd's funeral, Edwards exclaimed that Brainerd "sold all for Christ" and that he "devoted himself and his all, in heart and practice, to the Glory of God...under the expectation of death, and the pains and agonies that brought it on."¹³⁷ Edwards wanted to protect the revival of religion and a belief in active regeneration from the tendencies to move to the extremes of either Antinomianism or Arminianism. Through Brainerd, Edwards was able to show that in persevering through the scrutiny and accusations of extremism that the revivals had brought upon men like Brainerd, the greatest sign of proper affections was indeed perseverance through great trials. Brainerd knew too what "commotion" had caused the panic and hysteria in the revivals that began during his youth. It was the development "of a party in religion" and the "wildfire party zeal" that ensued.¹³⁸ The proliferation of voices, people, and their beliefs created fears of declension and a falling away, but as Edwards argued through Shepard, these problems had always attended the church. Shepard argued early on that the actions of true believers when in great trial "show that there is a vast difference betwixt a sincere Christian and the closest hypocrite," and Brainerd, from his dedicated ministry *after* his expulsion, proved in his "groans and agonies" that true religion was "manifest in painful deeds of love and kindness."¹³⁹ Following Edwards's lead and also noting Brainerd's example, theologians like Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Hopkins, and John Wesley would continue to rely on suffering as way to explain and characterize true religion for evangelical believers in the second half of the eighteenth century.

¹³⁷ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 548 and 553.

¹³⁸ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 216 and 218.

¹³⁹ Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins*, 206; Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 530 and 507

CHAPTER FOUR

“Representing and Recommending True Religion...Through Many Vicissitudes and Trials.”*
Suffering and Evangelical Concepts of True Virtue

Whatever you did for one of the least of these...you did for me

Matthew 25:40

In the decades after David Brainerd’s death, from 1750 to the close of the eighteenth century, the evangelical or revival movement entered into what historian Mark A. Noll describes as a period of “development, diversification, and consolidation.”¹ Thomas Brainerd, the nineteenth-century biographer of David’s beloved brother John, argued that missionaries and ministers like John actually “assumed work at its most difficult point” in the required stage of maintenance that followed “hopeful profession[s] of Christianity.”² After the spirit of revivalism had cooled, theologians were faced with task of maintaining the faith of new converts and showing them the way to walk and grow in their faith in the most practical ways possible. Just as Jonathan Edwards had done in his defense of the revivals during the 1730s and 1740s, ministers working after the revivals knew they must continue to provide examples of true religion by “doctrine and precept” as well as “by instance and example.”³ If efforts of evangelism had brought converts to the Church, then ministers needed to give reasons to stay and

* Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 89 and 91.

¹ Mark A. Noll *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 155-232. See also Henry D. Rack *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 2003, Third Edition), 331-380.

² Thomas Brainerd, *The Life of John Brainerd, The Brother of David Brainerd, and his Successor as Missionary to the Indians of New Jersey* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Publication Committee, 1865), 16-19.

³ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 89.

show what came next and how to get there. Essentially, evangelical ministers of this period had to explain in detail, since it followed conversion, the process of sanctification, why it was necessary and, most of all, what it looked like. Often sanctification was explained in terms of the regeneration or reform of the individual; it was the change required to go from sinner to saint. Due to the need to show change, Jon Butler argues in his acclaimed work, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, that “clergymen and lay exhorters spoke incessantly about the need for, and character of, moral rectitude” and in their sermons made a “constant emphasis on virtue, responsibility, and, especially, morality.”⁴

In this chapter, I argue that following Jonathan Edwards’s consistent defense of revivalism and Christian Practice that made suffering the hallmark of true faith, evangelical theologians who worked in this period of “consolidation,” like Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790), Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), and John Wesley (1703-1791), increasingly relied on suffering to explain and characterize concepts like the millennial return of Christ, “moral rectitude,” “virtue,” and reform. I will show that Edwards’s assertion in *Religious Affections* that “true religion” was shown “by actual *experience* and *trial*” and consisted of “whether [the faithful] have a heart to do the will of God, and to forsake other things for Christ” remained an acceptable view of the proof and requirements of faith across the evangelical spectrum.⁵ When Samuel Hopkins urged that individual reform could be achieved in works of social reform, like the destructions of slavery, his writings were full of the necessity of cost and endless devotion to Christ to destroy evil and

⁴ John Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 194-224.

⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 452.

bring others to Christ.⁶ Furthermore, Edwards's use of Brainerd to prove that that true religion was "manifest in painful deeds of love and kindness" not only solidified suffering as the best sign of "Christian piety in heart and practice," but meant that Brainerd continued to stand as an example for theologians to reference as they consolidated the evangelical expression of faith.⁷ This does not mean that, whenever pastors discussed things like reform or even suffering, they always included or referenced Brainerd. However, I argue that many of Brainerd's views, like suffering for the expansion of Christ's kingdom, were remarkably similar to what many theologians of the time period were arguing, and they can be read as an anticipation of the direction of the evangelical debate for much of the century. Edwards's portrayal of Brainerd "laboring, praying, denying himself, and enduring hardness with unfainting resolution" embodied the essence of true virtue so thoroughly that Brainerd and/or costly actions such as he displayed permeated religious works throughout the century. For example, in 1769, twenty years after the publication of *The Life of Brainerd*, when Joseph Bellamy worked to explain the difference between the false and proper "professions of godliness" in *A Dialogue Between a Minister and His Parishioner*, he knew the example of Brainerd still had powerful resonance and urged his audience to "pray read his life."⁸

In the years after Edwards's publication of the *Life of Brainerd* in 1749, Brainerd's influence or at least knowledge of his ministry within evangelicalism continued to spread. By 1798, a publication of Edwards's *Life of Brainerd* or Brainerd's "public journal" had been printed in Utrecht, Netherlands, Edinburgh, Bristol, England, Worcester, Massachusetts, and

⁶ I will discuss Hopkins, reform, and slavery in more detail below.

⁷ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 507 and 96.

⁸ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 531; Joseph Bellamy, *A Dialogue Between a Minister and His Parishioner, Concerning the Half-Way Covenant* in *Works of Joseph Bellamy*, Vol. 2 (Boston, Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 706.

London by an array of religious publishers.⁹ As noted above, this did not mean that Brainerd was always referenced or employed in religious works, but it is clear that he endured as a ready and recognizable reference for the remainder of the century. What is more, much of Brainerd's exemplary position within the evangelical movement and the salience of his views were largely due to the circumstance of timing and place. As Jonathan Edwards showed, he came of age during the era of revival and while at Yale he became a close friend of Joseph Bellamy, and helped influence the conversion of Samuel Hopkins. Both men were responsible for much of the "consolidation" of evangelicalism in the "New Divinity Movement" that became the dominant expression of evangelical Calvinism from the end of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth.¹⁰ Brainerd's relationship and association with Jonathan Edwards also made him well known and influential among Calvinist evangelicals. The multiple printings of Brainerd's journal also meant that evangelicals outside of the Calvinist sphere knew Brainerd as well. In order to outline his own theological positions, Methodism's co-founder, John Wesley, altered many of Edwards's works, including the *Life of Brainerd*, which greatly expanded the base of

⁹ See John Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of an American Evangelical Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 195. See also, Thomas H. Johnson, *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940). See also, Joseph Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work: 'The Life of David Brainerd' and the Nineteenth Century Evangelical Culture," *Church History* 54 (June, 1985): 188-201.

¹⁰ See chapter 2 above. See also, Norman Pettit "Editor's Introduction" in Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 37-42, and 51-57; Edwards A. Park, "Memoir," in *The Works of Samuel Hopkins*, Vol. 1, ed. Edwards A. Park (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1852), 15-17. For the Bellamy's and Hopkins's role in the New Divinity movement see, Joseph A. Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregations Ministry, and Reform in New England Between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1981); Mark Valeri, *Law and Providence in Joseph Bellamy's New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Brainerd's appeal. By 1790 the Methodists were the second largest "evangelical denomination" in the new United States.¹¹

Brainerd's tie to these men not only extended his influence, it guaranteed that suffering remained the best way to practically gauge the requirements and right display of faith.

Historians such as Richard Steele show that both Edwards and Wesley employed Brainerd to generally characterize what "Gracious Affections" and "True Virtue" actually looked like, to which I show that suffering and sacrifice was always a central component. It was this costly example of "true virtue" created by Edwards and Wesley that cemented Brainerd's enduring importance to new definitions of true virtue like "disinterested benevolence" that Joseph Conforti forcefully argues was primarily developed by Samuel Hopkins.¹² Since the doctrine of disinterested benevolence is, as Conforti explains, "a theology of social reform" and "Hopkins incorporated Brainerd's experiential religion into his doctrine" I will show that suffering emerges, in ways similar to Brainerd's experience, as a key component of the evangelical concept of reform.¹³ Conforti argues that missionaries in the nineteenth-century construed Brainerd as the "personification of radical disinterested benevolence" and the "practical

¹¹ See, Richard B. Steele "Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue" According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1994), ix-xv; Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 147-163; John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 40.

¹² See Steele, "Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue," 230-241. For Conforti's connection of Brainerd to disinterested benevolence and serving as a "touchstone" see Joseph A. Conforti, "David Brainerd and Disinterested Benevolence in Antebellum Evangelical Culture," in *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, and American Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 62-86. For an introduction to Samuel Hopkins and the development of the doctrine of disinterested benevolence see Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins*, 109-124. The origins of the concept of disinterested benevolence are in Edwards's posthumously published *An Essay on the Nature of True Virtue* (1765), from which Samuel Hopkins then codified the doctrine in his *An Inquiry into the Nature of True Holiness* (1773). In the *The Expansion of Evangelicalism*, 40, John Wolffe credits Samuel Hopkins, along with Timothy Dwight as the two men responsible for "laying a theological foundation for a future in which Evangelicalism would show itself responsive to the Enlightenment without merely capitulating to secular thought."

¹³ Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins*, 109; Conforti, "David Brainerd and Disinterested Benevolence," 76.

demonstration of the powerful theological argument that Hopkins developed.”¹⁴ In order to get to this point in the nineteenth-century, I will outline how suffering, like Brainerd experienced, became the central ingredient theologians adopted to explain and link concepts like sanctification, reform, and virtue. I argue that theologians showed suffering not only sanctified the believer, it encouraged reform, expanded Christ’s kingdom, and even contained the signs of His return.

Emotional and tangible explanations of faith, like Brainerd’s declaration that his faith was the “passionate breathings of my soul after holiness” and the imitation of the “life, labors, and sufferings of St. Paul,” had special resonance among evangelical Christians.¹⁵ Scholars like Ted A. Campbell show that as “a popular Protestant movement” and a “religion of the heart,” the essence of most evangelical ideologies is that they must be felt, feasible, and easily understood.¹⁶ Brainerd not only achieved this in his personal articulation of faith, but he saw the necessity of it in his work to make converts. For example, he learned that promising hell or damnation did little to motivate conversion since the concept of hell was too abstract. However, the message of a man who would suffer and die for others was readily grasped. Clearly men like Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley understood the need for accessibility, and it must be one reason why both used Brainerd to articulate their views. Moreover, even if Edwards and Wesley developed complex theologies, practical or tangible feelings such as suffering and love are always present in their writings. The scenarios about when and where one felt suffering may change. A believer

¹⁴ Conforti, “David Brainerd and Disinterested Benevolence,” 75-86.

¹⁵ David Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 215 and 259.

¹⁶ See David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730’s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1-17; Ted A. Campbell, *Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

may suffer during conversion, or during missionary work, but the feeling remained and it helped describe the current experience. When Charles Wesley, the fraternal co-founder of Methodism, wrote hymns about the “toil” in “pursuit” of Christ, suffering and “sacrifice” were present.¹⁷ When Edwards expounded on Christian perseverance, enduring suffering was the key descriptor. To this he later added that the endurance of suffering for others through the reciprocal love of God was the genuine display of “True Virtue.”¹⁸

After the revival efforts of the 1730s and 1740s, when evangelicals began to address the issue of reform, in terms of both individual regeneration and greater social reform brought about by the expansion of Christianity and Christian morality, it follows that they were told by ministers such as John Wesley that they would have to toil and suffer to bring or encourage reform. He told them by their “affliction [they would]...attain a larger measure of conformity to Christ,” not only for themselves, but quite possibly for a greater portion of humankind.¹⁹ Examples such as Brainerd’s missionary tactic of making converts by suffering not only provided a display of what Christian reform looked like, Brainerd’s suffering also offered a reproducible guide for others to follow. Furthermore, ministers found that suffering could even be used to help explain why it was necessary for a Christian to work towards efforts of social reform, as well as explain what his or her suffering would bring.

¹⁷ Charles Wesley, Hymn 322, “Servant of All (1739),” in *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People Called Methodists: With a Supplement and Additional Hymns for School and Sanctuary* ed. John Wesley (London: John Haddon and Co., 1875 reprint), 307-308.

¹⁸ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 446-449; Jonathan Edwards, *An Essay on the Nature of True Virtue* in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 8, *Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 540, 575-588.

¹⁹ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* in *The Work of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, Vol. 11, ed. Thomas Jackson (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 436.

The prospect of salvation was the best answer as to why the faithful should or should not engage in any specific task or behavior, especially ones that required cost or suffering.²⁰ Ideas like sanctification, holiness, and perfectionism were all a component of salvation because salvation occurs only after the sinner becomes holy through the process of sanctification. Where the completion of sanctification, and holiness, or perfection, takes place – on earth or in heaven – is the subject of the following chapter, but all evangelicals, reaching back to the Puritans, knew that the process started on earth. For the Puritans, the process was ultimately in the entire control of God and the faith of the believer only followed God’s bestowal of grace. However, once grace was received, the believer was required to display an active faith in constant pursuit of godliness. The Wesleyan rejection of key components of Calvinism, which I will discuss in more detail below, allowed many evangelicals of the Methodist strand to sidestep the dilemma of predestination and human agency. Therefore, within Methodism there were far more robust calls for individual action (works) that could facilitate the “perfection” of the believer.²¹ Unlike the Methodists, Brainerd, Edwards, Hopkins and other Calvinists had to be careful to always adhere to the absolute will of God and grant all responsibility of/for any reform to God’s will, similar to

²⁰ This statement is obviously over-simplified, as many, especially Samuel Hopkins, would have argued that the individual desire and motive for salvation were a corruption of true Christianity or “Holiness.” This is the cornerstone of his doctrine of disinterested benevolence, as the “prospect of salvation” holds individual interest. See Samuel Hopkins, *An Inquiry into the Nature of True Holiness* in *The Works of Samuel Hopkins: With a Memoir of his Life and Character*, Vol. 3, ed. Edwards Amasa Park (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1854), 22-31. Hopkins’s articulation of the “willingness to be damned” is probably the most powerful argument of the necessity of disinterest and the essence of true religion since the believer is not following personal desires, only the will of God. See Samuel Hopkins, *A Dialogue Between A Calvinist and A Semi-Calvinist*, in *The Works of Samuel Hopkins: With a Memoir of his Life and Character*, Vol. 3, ed. Edwards Amasa Park (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1854), 143-158. I will explore these dilemmas in more detail below.

²¹ See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 450-452; Alan P.F. Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism, and Salvation* (Eugene, OR: WIPF and Stock Publishers, reprint, 1998). For Wesley’s position on predestination and human agency, see John Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered* (1769) in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley: The Doctrine of Original Sin, and Tracts on Various Subjects of Polemical Divinity*, Vol. 9 (New York: J & J Harper, 1827), 377-420.

the way Brainerd did in his conversion.²² However, as Ruth Bloch argues, “as good Calvinists...they did seek to promote the work of the spirit through activities of preaching and prayer,” and “also believed (in accordance with the classic loophole of Calvinism) that faith would become sanctified in works.”²³ By this loophole, when evangelical Calvinists urged programs of personal and social reform, they argued that they were answering God’s call while in turn being sanctified. More importantly, for Calvinists like Brainerd, they could claim that their efforts promoted “the hopes of the advancement of Christ’s kingdom in the world.”²⁴

The eschatological or millennial impulse within Evangelicalism has been a potent fuel for multiple developments in the history of American religion. Scholars show that it not only contributed to political developments informing the American Revolution, but was also a primary catalyst in the Evangelical push for social reform, even a vehicle for prophetic pronouncements by the common man.²⁵ The entire reach of millennial themes within Evangelicalism is beyond the scope here, yet its influence on the evangelical understanding of suffering is overt. If Brainerd were to explain the reason for his suffering, he would have answered, as he wrote in his journal, with something like this, “that the ‘kingdom’ of the dear Savior might come ‘with power’ (Mark 9:1) and the healing ‘waters of the sanctuary’ (Ezek. 47:12) spread far and wide for the ‘healing of the nations’ (Rev. 22:2).” Within Brainerd’s

²² See Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 105-116.

²³ Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 18.

²⁴ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 158.

²⁵ See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977); Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, 22-50 and 213-231; Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 576-619.

private journal alone, there are over sixty references to the “kingdom” of God or Christ and its “hopeful enlargement” through his “laboring and ‘enduring hardness’ (II Tim. 2:3) for God.”²⁶ Furthermore, Edward’s own eschatological concerns shone through in his paraphrasing of Brainerd’s journal. He often made statements like Brainerd “felt willing to live and endure hardships in the cause of God; and found his hopes of the advancement of Christ’s kingdom...considerably raised.”²⁷ Eight years before Edwards published the *Life of Brainerd*, he had made his interest in the dawn of the millennium well known in *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion* (1742). In that work, he explicitly stated that “the Millennium [was] Probably to Dawn in America.” He went on to warn that “it is very dangerous for God’s professing people to lie still, and not come to the help of the Lord.” Instead, they should rather be ready “to stand our watch, and to be well versed in the art of war.”²⁸ For evangelical Calvinists such as Edwards and Brainerd, the endurance of suffering was so the Christian would help bring about the kingdom of God on earth.

All Christians, according to Edwards, needed to make haste, as work was to be done. In *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion*, Edwards went on to outline the “duties” that each member of society – from clergy, laity, to “civil rulers” – was responsible to complete in order to promote and enlarge Christ’s kingdom.²⁹ He continued his millennial concerns when he published the *Life of Brainerd* in 1749. In his “reflections and observations” on Brainerd’s journal, Edwards showed that Brainerd’s religion was not of the “pretenders,” but

²⁶ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 168 and 368.

²⁷ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 285.

²⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion*, ed. C.C. Goen, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 4 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 353, 358, and 385.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 353-383.

was true in that the “abasing himself” and “denying himself” was not done for his own happiness, but with hopes “of a future advancement of the kingdom of Christ.” Brainerd was working for Christ and Christ’s kingdom, not himself. According to Edwards, no “pretender” would ever go to such lengths. When Edwards delivered the sermon at Brainerd’s funeral, he also delivered it within an eschatological framework. He warned “that the time is approaching when we must be absent from the body... ‘before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one of us may receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad’ (II Cor. 5:10).” Edwards believed that Brainerd did the labor that Christ would judge appropriate. He explained that “his desires and labors for the advance of Christ’s kingdom were great” and “he was lively in religion in the right way,” since he not only spoke of faith, but did the work of faith as well. When believers needed a reminder of why they should suffer, Edwards pointed to words Brainerd shared with him days before his death: “I was led to cry for the pouring out of God’s Spirit and the advancement of Christ’s kingdom, which the dear Redeemer did and suffered so much for.” As followers *and* emulators of Christ, Christians needed to suffer for God’s kingdom just as Christ did.³⁰

In the early stages of his ministry there is some evidence that Brainerd was even more concerned with eschatological matters than the actual conversion of the Indians. On Tuesday April 19, 1743, Brainerd recorded in his journal that “I found myself engaged for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom in my own soul, more than others, more than in the heathen world.”³¹ The limitation of “Christ’s kingdom” to his own heart was actually normal, as many

³⁰ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 500 and 506; Jonathan Edwards, *A Sermon Preached on the Day of the Funeral of The Rev. Mr. David Brainerd* in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 543, 548, 551.

³¹ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 205.

evangelicals during his time thought Christ's return would be spiritual before physical, and that before he came at all, Christ must already be within a believer's heart.³² Brainerd needed to prepare the way in his own heart before anywhere else, and then, by God's grace, he could turn to converting the Indians. Still, conversion of "heathen peoples" was eminently important for promoting the advent of the millennium, and its necessity was a cornerstone of Brainerd's mission. This point is evident in the position of his sponsoring society, the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK).³³ In the preface to his "public journal," the "correspondents" of the SSPCK wrote that:

When we see such numbers of the most ignorant and barbarous of mankind, in the space of a few months, "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God," it gives us encouragement to wait and pray for that blessed time, when our victorious Redeemer shall, in a more signal manner than he has yet done, display the "banner of his cross," march on from "conquering to conquer, till the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." Yea, we cannot but lift up our heads with joy, and hope that it may be the dawn of that bright and illustrious day, when the Sun Of Righteousness shall "arise and shine from one end of the earth to the other;" when, to use the language of the inspired prophets, "the Gentiles shall come to his light, and sing to the brightness of his rising;" in consequence of which, "the wilderness and solitary places shall be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose."

The SSPCK believed that by the "plain and faithful preaching of the Gospel," as evidenced by Brainerd, coupled with the united prayers of the believers, the reign of Christ on earth could be

³² See Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, 17-19.

³³ Some scholars find that the SSPCKs interest in the millennium potentially came before all else, and while it has been regarded as an early predecessor for the "modern" missionary organizations of the nineteenth century the SSPCK's views were rather dated in terms of eschatology. See Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 36; Frederick V. Mills, "The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge in British North America, 1730 -1775," *Church History* 63 (March, 1994), 15-30.

expedited.³⁴ The thought was exhilarating for Brainerd and it gave him reason to suffer boldly in such a cause. He wrote, “God enabled me to wrestle ardently for the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom...and my heart sweetly exulted in the Lord, in the thought of any distresses that might alight on...me, in the advancement of Christ’s kingdom.”³⁵

Disciples of Edwards’s theology and friends of Brainerd, Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins, continued the millennial interests of both their mentor and missionary friend.³⁶

Bellamy was first to offer his thoughts on the millennium in a relatively short sermon that he published in 1758, entitled *The Millennium*. The sermon was built upon the book of Revelation, which, as Bellamy argued, was the “last book of holy Scripture he [God] ordered” to “give the strongest assurances that the cause of virtue shall finally prevail.” Bellamy explained that the

³⁴David Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei inter Indicos; or the Rise and Progress of a remarkable work of Grace, Among a number of Indians* (Philadelphia, PA: William Bradford, 1746), vii-viii. The united prayers of the believers has been termed the “concert of prayer,” which according to Edwards’s journal paraphrases, was a major concern for Brainerd. Edwards’s references the “concert” and Brainerd’s concern for it first in August of 1747. Edwards wrote that Brainerd’s “expressed wonder” at the general lack of interest in the Scottish churches’ “proposals” “for united extraordinary prayer among Christ’s ministers and people for the coming of Christ’s kingdom.” Brainerd’s affiliation and concern for “concert” was mentioned by Edwards twice more, once in his “reflections” on Brainerd’s journal and once in the funeral sermon. See Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 460, 532-533, and 551. Edwards was directly invested in the “concert of prayer” as he mentions in his reflections (533) that he wrote as a response to the proposal. See, Jonathan Edwards, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth* (Boston, 1747). See also Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, 17-18.

³⁵ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 179.

³⁶ Joseph Bellamy was certainly a friend of Brainerd and someone very close to him socially and spiritually. Bellamy is mentioned seven times in his journal, with one entry describing that they had “spent the evening sweetly conversing on divine things, and praying together, with sweet and tender love to each other.” See Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 184. Brainerd mentions Hopkins only a handful of times, but he does record once going to visit him, and also making the trip to see his ordination. See Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 231 and 235. However, in Hopkins’s memoir we see that Brainerd was one of the primary influences leading to his conversion and led to believe that Brainerd was a regular visitor. According to Edwards Amasa Parks, editor of Hopkins’s memoir, Hopkins “seems to have resisted the influence of his older classmates, and...yielded to the persuasive accents of Brainerd only.” See, Edwards A. Park, *Memoir*, in *The Works of Samuel Hopkins: With a Memoir of his Life and Character*, Vol. 3, ed. Edwards A. Park, (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1854), 14-17, and 49. For more on Bellamy and Hopkins’s continuation or expansion on Edwards’s eschatology, see Reiner Smolinski, “Apocalypticism in Colonial North America” in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, edited by Bernard J. McGinn, John H. Collins, and Stephen J. Skein (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003) 441-466, Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, 29-33, 123-125, 127-132, and 134-137.

“cause of virtue” that “finally prevails” is the “glorious perfection” of God’s kingdom, His creation, and His people. In order for this to occur, Bellamy urged that it was up to Christians of his “age to do their share.” Bellamy stopped short of offering explicit predictions of when the millennium would come, but he said there were “computations” that suggested that “the periods past, that have been so dark” were “introductory to [the] bright and glorious scene” of the millennium about to dawn. Bellamy conceded that it may be painful to wait for “these glorious days” to come, but reminded his listeners that “God...knows what is best,” adding that only he “knows when.” However, he promised that they were in a “preparatory age.” While waiting for God’s plan, Bellamy advised that “all the followers of Christ” should be “of good courage, and exert themselves in the utmost, in the use of all proper means to suppress error and vice of every kind, and promote the cause of truth and righteousness in the world.” Bellamy’s sermon suggested that the faithful were ultimately “workers together with God” in bringing the “perfection of God’s design” and that it would require cost and sacrifice to “perfect it.”³⁷

Samuel Hopkins took up the millennial cause decades later, and in 1793 published his longer and more detailed work *A Treatise on the Millennium*. The thrust of his treatise is much the same as Bellamy’s. He implored all “Christians who live in this age to promote [the millennium’s] coming on in the proper time by prayer, and promoting the interest of religion and the conversion of sinners.” Like Bellamy, Hopkins was not prepared to offer precise dates for the millenniums dawn. He even said that Christians of his time “will not see the millennium come while they are in the body on earth,” but they were to “be informed and warned of what is coming, and be prepared for it.” Bellamy preached that “True Christians” were to keep watch,

³⁷ Joseph Bellamy, *The Millennium* in *The Works of Joseph Bellamy* Vol. 1 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 443-446, 460, 457, 458, and 459.

work for “the cause of Christ,” and “know that their labor will not be in vain.” Bellamy guaranteed that darkness was coming, but through it so would be “redemption” and the “deliverance and prosperity of the church.” Bellamy and Hopkins both agreed that the promise of such things should be all the motivation needed to “labor and suffer on earth in the cause of Christ.”³⁸

The theme or language of suffering also conveniently offered reminders and premonitions of the promised “coming kingdom of Christ.” Theologians could not only provide a reason or a cause for which to suffer; they could also show through biblical exegesis and the history of the church, that the personal sufferings of Christians were both requirements and markers of Christ’s imminent return. Hopkins wrote that “dark and evil times” would precede the millennium, and “adherence to his cause in the midst of temptations and trials” was the test of the true believer. The suffering and afflictions portrayed in Revelations had, Hopkins believed, “excited the prayers of Christians, in all the preceding ages of darkness, affliction, and suffering...for the coming kingdom of Christ.” Believers could look to Scripture and see foretold “affliction and distress” causing the prophets such as Daniel and Jeremiah to “fast and pray for the deliverance of the people of God.” Hopkins showed that it was suffering, “in all ages of the Church,” that “awakened and stirred up” believers to work and pray for Christ’s return because they knew that great affliction would precede the millennium.³⁹

³⁸ Samuel Hopkins, *A Treatise on the Millennium. Showing from Scripture Prophecy That it is Yet to Come; When it Will Come; in What it Will Consist; and the Events Which are First to Take Place, Introductory to It* in *Works of Hopkins*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1854), 357-361.

³⁹ Hopkins, *Treatise on the Millennium*, 259.

Millennial writings remained cryptic when it came to exact prophecies of Christ's return. However, suffering was a universal experience that an audience could readily grasp as ministers prepared themselves for what would come. For example, Joseph Bellamy laid out "the whole series of divine predictions" and assured the faithful that the promises of Revelation would occur, but he knew it was "difficult to compute with any exactness" when the millennium would dawn. Because of the elusiveness of the millennium's start, ministers like Hopkins found that it was easier to show that members of "the true church of Christ...will be hated, opposed, and trodden down by the wicked, and be in an afflicted, suffering state" before Christ can return. Suffering, in many ways, provided the believer with the security that they were members of "the true church of Christ." As members of the "true church" they were told they "will subsist and continue in this evil time," and that by their suffering they were ultimately playing a part in bringing the promised return of Christ. Hopkins assured his audience that "the purest churches and real Christians will suffer much...and shall be purified and made white." The endurance of great affliction by God's people offered a ready sign that the promised end of afflictions "is to come," and that they were living in preparatory age.⁴⁰ Much like Brainerd told Hopkins over fifty years earlier at Yale in 1741, regardless the cost "a Christian should strongly go out after Christ," if he or she were to be converted, or as Hopkins argued above, if he or she were to be "purified and made white." Hopkins would have surely agreed with Brainerd's reminder to his brother "that we must 'through great tribulation' (Acts 14:22) enter into God's eternal kingdom of rest and peace."⁴¹

⁴⁰ Bellamy, *The Millennium*, 446 and 457; Hopkins, *Treatise on the Millennium*, 323-324, and 270.

⁴¹ Park, "Memoir," in *Works of Samuel Hopkins*, 16. Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 485.

Theologians working in their studies and evangelists working in the field both recognized the expediency of employing suffering to explain questions of why. The saint suffered to advance the cause of Christ and hasten his millennial reign. He or she may not have a hand in their ultimate salvation, but they were assured that the path to salvation was replete with suffering. Moreover, it probably would not come at all without it. Problems of assurance and anxiety were also conveniently answered by an assessment of suffering. For example, Edwards proclaimed, faith “is tried in the fire, and manifested, whether it be true gold or not.” In one way or another, Evangelicals from Brainerd to Hopkins endorsed Edwards’s finding that “true virtue” and “real Christianity” were only “exhibited...under the greatest trials.” They all believed that the strength of an individual’s faith resided in suffering, and suffering also served to “purify and increase it [faith].”⁴²

After establishing motives for suffering, ministers turned to defining the right forms and occurrences of suffering. Edwards and his heirs contextualized conversations on the coming millennium within “the nature of true virtue and religious affections” and vice-versa (true virtue displayed in working to advance Christ’s kingdom).⁴³ Consequently, late eighteenth-century theologians like Bellamy and Hopkins worked out what duties one possessing true virtue would engage in for the cause of Christ. By defining these duties, they would then characterize true virtue (Christian practice/rectitude). As Edwards had already shown through Brainerd, toiling and suffering for others emerged as the most common characterization of true virtue.

⁴² Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 93.

⁴³ See Steele, “*Gracious Affection*” and “*True Virtue*,” 1-34, 230-241.

The attempt to define true virtue by the labor or duties a believer must engage in is an appropriate context for both Bellamy's *The Millennium* and Hopkins's *Treatise on the Millennium*. In the second paragraph of his sermon, Bellamy argued that the "sincere concern for the cause of truth and virtue, for the honor of God and interest of true religion, [are] peculiar to a good man." He went on to add that the "cause of truth and virtue" made good men "willing to sacrifice their lives in [that] cause." If a good man truly worked for the "cause of truth and virtue," then that man's sacrifice was never ultimately concerned with "the salvation of his own soul." Instead, he was willing to sacrifice all for the salvation of others. True virtue, Bellamy summarized, was manifest in "laboring to win souls to Christ" by "exerting themselves" to "slay every lust" and "suppress error and vice of every kind." Force was never to be used, only "pious examples, kind instructions, and friendly admonitions."⁴⁴ Hopkins developed the context of Christian labor further. In the "Dedication" address added to his *Treatise on the Millennium*, Hopkins wrote, "Christians in this and in former ages...for you are praying and laboring...and ministering." He believed that it was time to return the favor and continue the process of laboring for the salvation of others. To create urgency, Hopkins reminded his audience that without their prayers "they [those who labored for them] cannot be made perfect." For Hopkins, there was a cycle to Christian labor. Personal salvation relied on laboring to bring others to faith so that they may in turn pray for those who converted them. All Christians were then required to "enter into their labors, and reap the happy fruit of their prayers, toils, and suffering." According to Hopkins, true virtue or rectitude was laboring to save others, regardless of the "toils and suffering" it brought. The truly virtuous should even be willing to sacrifice their life for salvation of another. Hopkins promised that it was worth it. He argued that "the more Christians

⁴⁴ Bellamy, *The Millennium*, 443, 444-445, 459 and 460.

labor and suffer on earth in the cause of Christ, and the more they desire, pray for, and promote his coming...the more they will enjoy it in heaven when it shall take place, and the greater will be their joy and happiness.” Such guarantees meant Christians should work to convert as many to the “cause of Christ” as possible. In order to motivate and maintain this work, ministers knew they would have to provide even more detailed analyses of Christian virtue and the suffering and sacrifice the enlargement of Christ’s kingdom required.⁴⁵

Jonathan Edwards, Joseph Bellamy, and Samuel Hopkins all offered expanded evaluations on the essence of Christian virtue in writings that garnered as much or more attention than their eschatological works. Edwards’s *Nature of True Virtue* (1765), as discussed above, paved the way for Hopkins’s refinement of the doctrine of disinterested benevolence made in his *Nature of True Holiness* (1773). In *True Religion Delineated* (1750), Bellamy forcefully argued against antinomianism and the necessity of the Christian’s compliance to God’s law that he claimed required “much labor and suffering.”⁴⁶ While Bellamy’s work came out before the other two, it seems that rather than opening a new discussion the treatise falls more in line with works like Thomas Shepard’s *Parable of the Ten Virgins* or Edwards’s *Religious Affections*. Throughout the work, there is a visible concern for combating religious extremes born of revival, which Bellamy characterized as “formality on the one hand, and enthusiasm on the other.” Edwards himself endorsed the work of his protégé. He even wrote a preface to the treatise

⁴⁵ Hopkins, *A Treatise on the Millennium*, 224, 269, and 270.

⁴⁶ Joseph Bellamy, *True Religion Delineated* in *Works of Bellamy* Vol. 1, 257. For more on the impact of Edwards’s *Nature of True Virtue* see Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York, Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1967), 285-305; for Hopkins’s *Nature of True Holiness* see Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins*, 109-124; for Bellamy’s *True Religion Delineated* see Mark Valeri, *Law and Providence in Joseph Bellamy’s New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 49-75.

applauding Bellamy's "addition of light to [the] great subject [of] the nature of true religion, and its distinction from all counterfeits."⁴⁷

In Bellamy's account of compliance with the gospel, the endurance of trial and suffering was prominent alongside his theme of total love of/to God. This love, Bellamy explained, would enable the believer to experience or achieve "true religion," which "consists in a conformity to the law of God, and in compliance with the gospel of Christ." He argued that "when the Christian religion was introduced into the world..." through the gospel message "...it was in a manner suited to a state of trial." This was part of God's design so that he could "try the temper of mankind." According to Bellamy, humans were to be judged "according to our present conduct" and compliance with the law of God. Christians suffering in compliance with that law was necessary so that God "may prove them, and know what is in their hearts." Bellamy went on to explain that the experience of real conversion led sinners away from the love of oneself to the total love of God, and "to a real conformity to the divine law." The essence of "real conformity" was "taking delight" in the gospel commission to "love our neighbors as ourselves." Bellamy pleaded with his audience to see that answering this commission required believers, no matter the cost, to aid in the conversion of others as exemplified by the sacrifice of Christ.⁴⁸

Edwards's posthumous *The Nature of True Virtue* continued the discussion of genuine love to/of God, which Edwards first exemplified with Brainerd, and further developed it (genuine love to God) in his theory of disinterested benevolence.⁴⁹ According to Perry Miller,

⁴⁷ Bellamy, *True Religion Delineated*, 2, 4, and 13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 8, 7, and 163.

⁴⁹ In Edwards's "Appendix" to the *Life of Brainerd*, 520, Edwards explained that Brainerd, before anything, had a "high degree of love to God" and placed "the happiness of life in him; not only in contemplating him, but in being

this essay is Edwards's "only purely non-polemical work." The *Nature of True Virtue* was informed by earlier debates, but unlike Bellamy's treatise above or Edwards's own *Religious Affections*, it was not written to combat accusations of hypocrisy that endangered the revivals. Rather, as Miller urges, this work was Edwards's honest dissection of a core Puritan dilemma, "to expect the worst from mankind even while demanding the best."⁵⁰ The underlying premise of Edwards's work is "that true virtue must chiefly consist in love to God." To this, Edwards added that it "most essentially consists in benevolence to Being in general." Edwards "more accurately" explained "benevolence to Being in general" as "that consent, propensity and union of heart to Being in general, that is immediately exercised in a general good will." All of these points are the theoretical foundation of disinterested benevolence. Since man was a part of Being, or simply God's divine creation, he naturally possessed love or "benevolence to Being in general," and through this love he should display and work for the "general good will" of Being.⁵¹

Edwards knew that honest attempts of benevolence beyond self-interest were the closest any sinful human could ever come to achieving disinterested benevolence. Because of this, Edwards believed that the most genuine attempt of disinterested love, and therefore true virtue, was to place oneself in the place of others and to experience what "other persons act or suffer." Edwards argued that this was based on the natural "disposition in man to be uneasy in a

active in pleasing and serving him. Brainerd "longed for the enlargement of his [God's] kingdom" and showed his "uncommon resolution to the will of God" by "vast trails, great and universal benevolence to mankind."

⁵⁰ Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 285 and 287.

⁵¹ Edwards, *Nature of True Virtue*, 540. For more on Edwards's views of benevolence and being see Jonathan Edwards, *The End for Which God Created the World in Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 8, 455-456. An excellent summary and explanation of Edwards's points see Hugh H. Knapp, "Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971, 138-145.

consciousness of being inconsistent with himself and, as it were, against himself in his own actions.” The understanding of his or her own unease produced “the inclination of the mind to be uneasy in the consciousness of doing that to others which he should be angry with them for doing.” Here Edwards added that “pure love to others” occurs when “there’s a union of heart with others; a kind of enlargement of the mind, whereby it extends itself to take others into a man’s self.” By taking others into himself acting in ways that hurt or harm others would contradict and be inconsistent with the self, which as Edwards shared, was “contrary to nature.” Therefore, we have no virtue or disinterested love of Being unless we “put ourselves as it were in their stead.” Edwards showed that suffering as others suffer, and perceiving as others perceive, was “the only way we come capable of conceiving anything in the Deity.” The unification of others to the self via “putting ourselves in the place of others” replicates the “union of heart to Being in general, and supreme love to God.”⁵² Those that followed Edwards believed that his argument showed that disinterested benevolence occurred when one suffered in the place of or with others, as Christ did, motivated only by the love and glorification of God.

Some of the theological descendants of Edwards, primarily Samuel Hopkins, found Edwards’s theories in his “non-polemical” works such as *Nature of True Virtue* too convoluted for practical application.⁵³ However, Edwards knew that he had already provided readers with “a very lively instance to see the nature of true religion; and the manner of its operation” in his *Life*

⁵² Edwards, *Nature of True Virtue*, 589-595.

⁵³ See Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins*, 109-124; Post, “Disinterested Benevolence,” 360-363; Knapp, “Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity,” 150-169. See also, William J. Danaher Jr., “Beauty, Benevolence, and Virtue in Jonathan Edwards’s *The Nature of True Virtue*,” *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 87 (July, 2007), 386-389. Danaher shows that many scholars see Edwards’s *A Nature of True Virtue* as a “Rosetta stone that renders Edwards’s’ theological ethics comprehensible.” Danaher goes on to argue that this view oversimplifies the work, as even ideological sympathizers and descendants of Edwards such as Edwards Amasa Park believed that “we need and crave a theology, as sacred and as spiritual as his’ but ‘one we can take with us’ into ‘humanizing scenes...and a more familiar grace.”

of Brainerd. The *Life of Brainerd* was certainly a polemical work meant to combat “pretenders” of true religion, but in the polemics Edwards provided specifics of a man who, “at the center of his soul,” “exercised love to god, giving himself for him...acting for his glory, [and] diligently serving him.” Edwards believed that Brainerd was a man “full of love” and that “his love was not merely a fondness and zeal for a party, but an universal benevolence; very often exercised in the most sensible and ardent love to his greatest opposers and enemies.” What is more, Brainerd showed “the right way to success in the work of the ministry,” because, like a “resolute soldier,” he engaged in his work at close proximity as “in a siege or battle.” Brainerd fought and suffered for and with “his people...until Christ were formed in the hearts of the people to whom he was sent.”⁵⁴ Suffering thus continued a constant thread that wove its way through and connected Edwards’s explanations of faith in practice. Edwards may have left out such a precise example in his *Nature of True Virtue*, but he had already provided one long before its publication. We may even entertain the idea that he planned to include a direct reference to Brainerd in a work that would have completed the “uncompleted Summa” Perry Miller argued was introduced in *The Nature of True Virtue*.⁵⁵

Even if Edwards had provided practical examples to support his theories, Samuel Hopkins believed that the untimely death of Edwards in 1758, following a smallpox inoculation, required that he complete the exegesis of true virtue and disinterested benevolence. According to scholars like Joseph Conforti, Hopkins and his allies felt that Edwards “left an ambiguous legacy for Christian ethics,” which Hopkins feared potentially “militated against worldly

⁵⁴ Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 500, 506, 507, and 530.

⁵⁵ See Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 285-305.

action.”⁵⁶ Hopkins needed to show that if properly explored and adjusted, his teacher’s concepts of virtue and benevolence could be shaped into practical applications of social reform. This is most evident in Hopkins’s appendix to *The Nature of True Holiness*. There, Hopkins carefully answered objections to Edwards’s concept of disinterested benevolence and offers ways to adjust it.⁵⁷ The relatively brief sixty-plus page sermon that precedes the appendix shows that Hopkins believed that the best way towards application was to simplify Edwards’s ideas as much as possible. I will focus on how those simplifications focused on suffering.⁵⁸

On the opening page of “Section VI” of *The Nature of True Holiness*, Hopkins explained that scripture, “the law,” “teaches what true holiness is” and that Jesus taught us that “all the law requires is love.” Therefore, “holiness must consist wholly in love.” Hopkins then explains that the “love this must be...consists in universal disinterested benevolence” which he defined simply as “love to God and our neighbor.” This love was not the “self-love” born of “selfish motives,” but the gospel required love that will “dispose us to do good unto all men” even our enemies. Christ exemplified this type of love in not only giving himself up for his friends, but also for the “enemy in distress,” or all those who rejected him. Any confusion brought on by such phrases as “union of heart to Being in general” could be avoided, Hopkins knew, simply by stating “that love to God and to our brother or neighbor is inseparable; that he who loves one of these certainly loves the other.”⁵⁹ Loving God enabled man to love his neighbor and empowered the

⁵⁶ See note 63 above; Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins*, 111.

⁵⁷ See, Hopkins, *Nature of True Holiness*, in *Works of Hopkins*, Vol. 3, 69-99.

⁵⁸ For the best summaries of Hopkins’s modifications of Edwards, see Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins*, 109-124; Danaher, “Beauty, Benevolence, and Virtue,” 386-410; Knapp, “Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity,” 135-169; Post, “Disinterested Benevolence,” 356-368.

⁵⁹ Hopkins, *Nature of True Holiness*, 34-35.

believer to promote “the greatest good,” which Hopkins described as “being the voluntary subjects and servants of Christ.” If this was what it meant to promote the greatest good, then it followed that the believer would work and devote himself to the conversion of others since conversion brought “voluntary subjects and servants” to Christ. Hopkins continued simplifying and tying Edwards’s points together. He noted that the bringing of converts not only honored and glorified God, but it also expanded his kingdom. This meant that in making converts, followers of Christ were also “*seeking first the kingdom of God*, or making this [their] supreme and ultimate end.” Hopkins then explained that best way to know if a believer was “seeking for the kingdom of God” was if he or she was “willing to do or suffer anything that [was] necessary to promote” God’s kingdom on earth.⁶⁰ When Hopkins explained that Christ directed “men to seek the kingdom of God as the only object of their pursuit” and should “forsake every other interest,” not matter the cost, a believer would have a picture “in which all holiness consists.”⁶¹

Since Hopkins was concerned with simplicity and application when he wrote *The Nature of True Holiness*, he did not allow ambiguities to arise when considering the nature of suffering. Suffering for the kingdom of God was exemplified in sacrifice and self-denial, even the foregoing of happiness. This was not an embrace of melancholia or morbidity, but a scriptural point for Hopkins. In sacrificing for Christ, the believer avoided self-interest while also gaining the “most direct and effectual way to true happiness.” Hopkins pointed to Christ’s explanation of sacrifice to summarize his position: “whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and gospel’s, the same shall save it (Mark 8:35).” Hopkins made sure that he guarded his position against accusations that Christians who

⁶⁰ Ibid, 36-39.

⁶¹ Ibid, 39.

sacrificed in such a way had selfish motives. He argued that while the gospel provided assurance that salvation was the result of such sacrifice, the practitioner of selfish religion would never be able to match such a sacrifice. The sacrifice enjoined in the gospel was never for personal gain, but was “disinterested” in that it was done for Christ. Suffering to alleviate the suffering of others by bringing them to Christ in his name was for Hopkins a “touchstone” for “true holiness.” This was also the key ingredient of Hopkins’s program for reform, and probably the best definition of the term for most Christians. Reform meant bringing people to Christ; upon receiving him, the sinner’s life would be transformed. Furthermore, the more people came to Christ, the more the entirety of society would be reformed.⁶² Hopkins believed that the true disciples of Christ, from Christ’s time to the present, sacrificed themselves to promote the welfare of others by expanding the kingdom of God on earth.

The emphasis on the willingness to forsake one’s own life and happiness for the greatest good of others in the writings of Hopkins and Bellamy led to some radical and unintended interpretations. In particular, disagreement over the phrase the “willingness to be damned” was one of the sacrificial extremes of Christian love that emerged from the two theologians’ work, and they were a gross deviation from the themes that Edwards first developed.⁶³ However, a close analysis of the works in which Bellamy and Hopkins explored “the willingness to be damned” shows that the phrase was intended to be a measure of one’s devotion to God, not the promised fate for making such a sacrifice. In *Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio* (1759) Bellamy wrote that it was *not* “a sinner’s duty to be willing to be damned” because the “damned will forever hate God. The sinner ought forever to love him.” He added in the posthumously

⁶² Hopkins, *Nature of True Holiness*, 62-63.

⁶³ See Post, “Disinterested Benevolence,” 356-363.

published *An Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel* (1798) that the true believer will know that “he deserves to be damned,” but in accordance with the gospel law, he will “love God with all his heart and yield a perfect obedience to his will” regardless the outcome.⁶⁴

Hopkins explained his position on the subject in *A Dialogue Between A Calvinist and A Semi-Calvinist* (ca 1799). Here, Hopkins explained that the believer “cannot know that he loves God, and shall be saved until he knows he has that disposition which implies a willingness to be damned.”⁶⁵ Such a disposition allowed the believer the ability to measure not only their devotion to God, but their level of disinterestedness as well. The willingness to suffer damnation for the salvation of others was a stark opposite of self-interest, so it served as a convenient contrast. Hopkins even assuaged the fears that this position was sure to inspire. He explained that even though as sinners they deserved it, damnation for a sacrifice already so full of suffering was not scripturally sound and an unlikely end. Bellamy and Hopkins knew that this measure was extreme, but they were attempting to show just how devoted the disciples of Christ were meant to be. Both men, especially Hopkins, also believed that just such an extreme devotion to God and his creation was necessary in order to correct the worst sins human society had managed to accomplish. As the movement continued to mature in the later decades of the century, the emphasis on suffering and sacrifice remained the marrow of evangelical agendas for social reform during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

⁶⁴ Joseph Bellamy, *Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio or Letters and Dialogues on the Nature of Love to God...* in *Works of Bellamy*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 263; Joseph Bellamy, *An Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel* in *Works of Bellamy*, Vol. 2, 337-338.

⁶⁵ Hopkins, *A Dialogue Between A Calvinist and A Semi-Calvinist*, 148.

In a series of essays, beginning with *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans* (1776), the ultimate test of the Christian will to reform a sinful world that Samuel Hopkins could think to offer was the destruction of slavery and the slave trade. Hopkins bemoaned that the suffering that slaves endured and continued to endure could fill volumes. So much so, he fumed, that any effort to describe it would be a “vain attempt.” He continued to explain that the mere presence of such an oppressive form of slavery within America’s “Christian” society made a mockery of the faith. Worst of all was the argument that the “enslavement of the Africans” was to their benefit since it exposed them to Christianity. Hopkins railed that the notion was exactly the “abomination” that made them (slaves) “unteachable” in the gospel and “imbibed [with] the deepest prejudices against” Christianity. He warned that any effort made to justify slavery in terms of it inducing conversion and the eternal happiness of those enslaved was a “direct and gross violation of the laws of Christ.”⁶⁶ There was no justification for it, and Hopkins believed that the proclaimed faith of the slave traders and slave owners only underscored a false religion of self-interest.⁶⁷ Hopkins was even so bold as to offer that a “real Christian” would never “have any hand in this trade,” leaving open the notion that any who had been involved in the slave trade and not shown opposition for it was no Christian at all.

The whole system of slavery and its effects was entirely the opposite of Hopkins’s scheme of disinterested benevolence in that slavery actually hindered the path to salvation rather than enabled it. This knowledge, Hopkins argued, should invoke “zeal” in all to do their “utmost

⁶⁶ Samuel Hopkins, *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*, in *Works of Samuel Hopkins*, Vol. 2, 555-557.

⁶⁷ See Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins*, 125-141; Knapp, “Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity,” 170-224.

to put a stop to this seven headed monster.”⁶⁸ In *A Discourse upon the Slave Trade and The Slavery of the Africans* (1793), Hopkins urged the church to take on the suffering of slavery and alleviate it, and he explained that doing so was the best “expression of the greatest benevolence to man.” He added that the spreading of the gospel “to all mankind...barbarians, rich or poor, white or black” was the “only remedy for lost man...whatever labor and expense it may require.” Suffering to promote the end of slavery would also fulfill God’s design for man. Hopkins explained that “exerting himself to do good to all” is “the exercise of love to God.” No other “depravity” and “wickedness of men” demanded such attention as the depravity of slavery. Slavery, Hopkins believed, was the ultimate display of “the lusts, the selfishness, pride and avarice of men.” Hopkins maintained that only the “gospel [was] suited to root these evils out of the world, and wholly abolish slavery.” Getting the gospel to those who needed it and weaving it into the fabric of society would require massive sacrifice, but accomplishing such an end would enable true reform for both the individual man and society as well. For Hopkins, the suffering of humans in bondage was the most evocative call for “every true disciple of Christ” to come suffer whatever end to spread the gospel and its guaranteed alleviation of eternal suffering.⁶⁹

Hopkins’s denouncement of slavery made plain that the truest reform of society, the unshackling of the most afflicted of human brethren, would require the suffering and sacrifice of the righteous. Suffering for others – who were themselves suffering – so that they may know and accept the gospel ended up as Hopkins’s most direct summarization of “Christian

⁶⁸ See Hopkins, *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*, 558-559.

⁶⁹ Samuel Hopkins, *A Discourse upon the Slave Trade and The Slavery of the Africans* in *Works of Samuel Hopkins*, Vol. 2, 597-601.

benevolence.”⁷⁰ Hopkins drove this point home in his “magnum opus,” *System of Doctrines Contained in Divine Revelation* (1793). Scholars like Joseph Conforti characterize this work as the “codification” and “cornerstone” of the New Divinity or New England theology that, as mentioned above, dominated evangelical theology from the late eighteenth century through the first half of the nineteenth century.⁷¹ Chapter fifteen of the one thousand-page plus treatise outlines the nature of “Christian Practice.” Here, Hopkins explains that the “important duties of Christianity” are epitomized by “taking great care and pains” in “giving all the assistance and relief in [the believer’s] power to others who are suffering.” In this summary, assistance and relief served two ends. The extension of Christian benevolence to the afflicted was most concerned with “preventing the eternal destruction of men.” Providing “relief” for those “suffering under temporal and bodily wants and distresses” without access to the gospel in the sinful system of slavery was the first test if “love of God dwelleth” in the believer. Hopkins believed that by having concern for the afflicted, and striving “by any means [to] save some” with the presentation of the “truths and ways of Christ...formed the true Christian” and led to salvation.⁷² While the “consistent Calvinism” of Hopkins prevented him from embracing the possibility of temporal perfection, he consistently showed in works like *System of Doctrines* and *A Treatise on The Millennium* that without the willingness to suffer in order to alleviate the suffering of others who were afflicted and needed Christ while on earth, the saints “cannot be made perfect.”⁷³

⁷⁰ Samuel Hopkins, *System of Doctrines Contained in Divine Revelations*, in *Works of Samuel Hopkins*, Vol. 2, 195.

⁷¹ See Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins*, 161-167.

⁷² Hopkins, *System of Doctrines*, 195-196.

⁷³ Hopkins, *A Treatise on the Millennium*, 224.

While Bellamy and Hopkins were codifying their theologies for the next generation of Calvinists to follow, John Wesley, with the intermittent help of his brother Charles, was engaged in the same task for the ascendant Methodist movement.⁷⁴ During the development and expansion of Evangelicalism, the Wesleyan position provided evangelical converts with a coherent alternative to the various expressions of Calvinism that dominated most of the movement's first appearances on the American religious landscape. There are a number of pieces of evidence that show the Wesleys were purposely providing a theological alternative to the Reformed evangelical Calvinism that Edwards and his heirs had developed. John Wesley criticized Calvinism as early as 1769 in works like *Predestination Calmly Considered*. His brother, Charles, added to the attack writing hymns like "The Horrible Decree," found in hymnals dating back to at least 1792, denouncing the Calvinist theology of limited atonement, or the belief that Christ only died for some, those known as the Elect. According to John Wesley, the motives of the Calvinistic scheme, while admittedly devoted to serving God, unfairly kept the believer in an un-scriptural bondage to sin and doubt. His alternative to such a decree was his own "doctrine of Christian Perfection." In this doctrine, the believer devotes himself fully and exclusively to God, because, as Scripture shows, God (Christ) saved him from sin and allowed him to experience a sinless life *while* on earth. Wesley, unlike Hopkins, did not need to hesitate, since earthly perfection, he summarized "in the year 1764," should be strived for and *could* be reached.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 251-269.

⁷⁵ Charles Wesley, "The Horrible Decree," in John and Charles Wesley, *Hymns of God's Everlasting Love in Two Parts* (London: G. Paramore, 1792, 4th ed.), 30-31; Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, 377-420; John Wesley, *The Doctrine of Original Sin: According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* (1757), in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley* Vol. 9 (New York: J & J Harper, 1827), 166-376; John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 441-444; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 450-469.

Despite some core theological differences, the shared endorsement of devotedness to God before all else did mean that the Wesleys agreed with many of the practical expressions of faith and virtue that their Calvinist competitors had constructed. Because of this, their calls for an active and benevolent faith often sound strikingly similar. What is more, John Wesley also endured the taxing experience of constructing and defending a new expression of faith just as Edwards had. This shared experience not only caused agreement, it also inspired Wesley to freely borrow and edit many of Edwards's to fit his own. For example, Wesley released his own edited versions of *The Life of Brainerd* and *Religious Affections*, in 1768 and 1773 respectively. Scholars of John Wesley's work, such as Henry Rack and Richard Steele, point out that it was Wesley's fear of an inactive faith and the hypocrisy that followed revival that pushed him to align with Edwards's "distinguishing signs of truly gracious affections." As I have shown, these signs specifically included suffering for the expansion of Christ's kingdom. However, the existence of a latent antinomianism within Edwards's Calvinism forced Wesley to amend many of Edwards's positions to make the believer more proactive in his works of faith.⁷⁶ While there remained a chasm between Edwards and Wesley on the nature of grace and the way in which man receives it, the *actions* of a man who had *received* grace looked much the same within the branches of Evangelicalism that these two progenitors helped shape.

The life and work of David Brainerd as endorsed – only after the requisite editing – by Edwards and Wesley highlights the above point better than any other example. Helping to unify the Edwardsian and Wesleyan characterization of an active life of benevolent faith is the likelihood that Wesley probably first became acquainted with Brainerd's work not through Edwards but rather through Philip Doddridge's *An Abridgment of Mr. David Brainerd's Journal*

⁷⁶ See Steele, "Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue," 215-242; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 450.

Among the Indians (1748).⁷⁷ Doddridge was an English dissenting minister who played an important role in the ecumenical efforts of the emerging evangelical movement that helped unify evangelicals against what he perceived as the greater threats of Arianism or Unitarianism. Since Brainerd displayed his “orthodox” Christianity with his belief in the trinity and the primacy of scripture, Doddridge immediately recognized the value of Brainerd’s work.⁷⁸ He said that he was “powerfully struck with the Contents” of Brainerd’s SSPCK journal and was immediately compelled to write an abridgement of his own in 1748 – a year before Edwards’s *Life of Brainerd* appeared – so “that it might pass into many more Hands, than a single copy could reach.” Doddridge hoped that his abridgement “might, under the divine Blessing, excite in the Breasts” a desire to emulate such “Displays of the mighty Energy of his Gospel” found in Brainerd’s story. Such emulation would only further help unify all Christians to “bear their Testimony with greater Zeal and Affection.” Doddridge believed that working to promote and advance the gospel was “the Christian and Protestant Cause,” regardless of denominational affiliation. After reading Brainerd’s account, Doddridge felt it possible that the doctrinal fine points that divided evangelical Protestants would melt away. He also hoped readers would recognize that “God will not suffer this sacred and noble Cause to die with” men like Brainerd, but would enable others to follow him.⁷⁹

Doddridge’s hopes for motivating interest in a discipleship similar to Brainerd’s were not farfetched. In a relatively short amount of time, as I have noted above, Brainerd’s ministerial

⁷⁷ See Steele, “*Gracious Affection*” and “*True Virtue*,” 230-237; Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 150-152.

⁷⁸ See Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 38; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 34; G.F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A Study in a Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951).

⁷⁹ Philip Doddridge, *An Abridgement of Mr. David Brainerd’s Journal among the Indians* (London, 1748), i-ii, and iv.

activity gained a wider audience throughout Protestant Christianity. After reading Doddridge's abridgement in 1749, John Wesley recorded in his journal that Brainerd's life moved him. In 1767, a year before Wesley published his own abridgment, the future president of Yale University, Ezra Stiles, wrote to a friend wishing him "the same unwearied assiduity and truly apostolic labours" as those found in Brainerd. Stiles added in the letter that these traits had already made Brainerd famous throughout Europe, from the Netherlands to Germany.⁸⁰ Just as Doddridge had hoped, Brainerd's active faith had the ability to end divisiveness and create some form of unity within evangelical Protestantism. The esteem that Brainerd gained did not stop ministers from modifying Edwards's own edits for decades to come, but Brainerd remained a ready citation for an active and suffering faith.⁸¹

According to Joseph Conforti, Wesley's abridgement of Brainerd's journal was the most popular source of Brainerd's admiration by nineteenth-century evangelicals.⁸² However, before he could entirely promote Brainerd as his model of Christian virtue, Wesley believed he needed to attach some general criticism to Brainerd's actions and views. Initially, Wesley was particularly upset with Brainerd for being "wise above what is written" in his denouncing "what the Scripture nowhere condemns; in prescribing to God the way wherein He should work; and (in effect) applauding himself." Wesley ultimately believed that God's will made things happen, so an individual man should not say when or where God was at work, and where he was not.⁸³ Wesley knew that Brainerd's story was worthy of sharing and deserving of admiration to the

⁸⁰ Ezra Stiles, "A letter to the Reverend Mr. Kirkland," in Abiel Holmes, *The Life of Ezra Stiles* (Boston, 1798), 126.

⁸¹ See Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards Most Popular Work."

⁸² *Ibid*, 191.

⁸³ Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 150-151; John Wesley, *The Journal of The Reverend John Wesley, A.M.* in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 2, 169.

point of imitation, but he could not allow errors such as above to be reproduced. Therefore, as a number of scholars have thoroughly shown, Wesley edited Edwards's *Life of Brainerd* liberally. Wesley's edits were mostly aimed at weeding out any elements of Edwards's and Brainerd's shared Calvinism, not undermining his display of faith or works of evangelism. Wesley not only assumed that elements of Calvinism were detrimental to Brainerd's psyche and growth in holiness, he knew that they could be the same for admiring readers. With such modifications, Wesley knew he could make Brainerd fit his own doctrine of Christian perfection.⁸⁴

One of the best summaries of the way Wesley felt about Brainerd comes in a letter he wrote on July 5, 1768, to a "Miss March." In the letter he explained to Miss March that in "Brainerd's Life there is a pattern of self-devotion and deadness to the world," that would aid in her personal devotional life. He also warned her to recognize "how much of his sorrow and pain [could have] been prevented, if he had understood the doctrine of Christian Perfection! How many tears did he shed because it was impossible to be freed from sin!"⁸⁵ It is important to note that Wesley never wished to undo or cover up Brainerd's sacrifice and suffering while in the field. These actions were appropriate, because they were similar to Christ's sacrifice. Wesley only wanted to modify some of Brainerd's Calvinist leanings, like his tendency to explain the ways in which God did or did not work. Even with his initial reservations, Wesley agreed with Edwards that Brainerd was a most valuable model of true Christian virtue and benevolence. He knew Brainerd's example would be even more effective after he made his corrections. There is evidence of this in Wesley's journal and correspondence after he released his edition of the *Life*

⁸⁴ See Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 150-163; Steele, "Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue," 150, 154-155, 157, 230-242; Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work," 191-193.

⁸⁵ "John Wesley to Miss March, July 5, 1768," in *The Letters of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.*, Vol. 5, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931), 95-96.

of Brainerd. In one letter, when asked by a fellow Methodist minister what they could do to “revive the work of God,” Wesley resolutely advised, “let every preacher read carefully over the life of David Brainerd.” He added, “Let us be *followers of him, as he was of Christ*, in absolute self-devotion, in total deadness to the world, and in fervent love to God and man.”⁸⁶ Just as Edwards, Bellamy, and Hopkins, Wesley focused attention on Brainerd’s loving God and his fellow man before all else despite the cost. He was disinterested to the point of being “dead to the world,” and, as he wrote to another minister, he was a “good soldier of Jesus...he first suffered and then saw the fruit of his labor.” For others to be successful in the pursuit of Christ, Wesley would advise to “go and do likewise!” Suffering for the cause of God, Wesley showed through Brainerd, was the only way for a life of faith to bear any fruit.⁸⁷

From Hopkins’s New Divinity to Wesley’s Methodism, a life of “deadness to the world” in total devotion to God shone through as the preeminent display of Christian practice or rectitude. Both sides also found that the best explanation of Christian rectitude was the willingness of a believer to suffer whatever they were able in order to bring the gospel message to those suffering without it. More agreement emerged between Methodism and New Divinity Calvinism since both explained that to suffer for such a cause was ultimately for the glory of God and the expansion of his kingdom. However, Wesley did not have to protect his theology or exploit any “loopholes” legitimizing the works of the faithful as the following of God’s will to bring the millennial reign of Christ. In fact, Wesley never had that much interest in advocating suffering and evangelizing to bring on or advance the millennium. He was more interested in

⁸⁶ *Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley, and Others in The Works of John Wesley* Vol. 5, 232; see also Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 154.

⁸⁷ “John Wesley to Thomas Rankin, December 4, 1773,” in *The Letters of Wesley*, Vol. 5, 57.

advocating “that there is such a thing as perfection...and it is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect.”⁸⁸ Wesley believed that men like Brainerd could have had a greater portion of joy and happiness in the world had they realized that their perfection could have begun while on earth. In *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley explained, “since even while we are under the cross, while we deeply partake of the sufferings of Christ, we may rejoice with joy unspeakable,” because “you are made perfect through sufferings.” This did not mean, Wesley clarified, that man was infallible in his perfection or that his perfection could not be lost. This type of perfection belonged only to God. Perfection was “salvation from sin,” and “perfect love” which sustained man and allowed him to “rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks.”⁸⁹

Fortunately, Brainerd’s misguided motivations did not compromise his eternal soul in Wesley’s doctrine, only much of his earthly happiness. Despite his shortcomings, Wesley agreed that Brainerd exemplified the idea that “true resignation consists in thorough conformity to the whole will of God.” Brainerd remained a picture of true virtue or Christian practice for Methodist Christians because he fit perfectly in Wesley’s model of Christian love he outlined in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. The recommendations that Wesley gave to those striving for perfection all could have been descriptions of Brainerd. Wesley wrote that the striving should “suffer whatever befalls us” and “bear the defects of others.” They should “confess to...God in secret prayer, or with groans which cannot be uttered,” and “be ready to suffer, even to the death, without complaining...with loving regard to Him.” Wesley believed that such actions would all lead to personal holiness, or perfection.

⁸⁸ See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 381-382; Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 441-442.

⁸⁹ Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 391 and 414, and 441-442.

Mirroring the Calvinist scheme of sanctification, these actions also formed the cornerstone of the Wesleyan program for personal and social reform. Wesley argued that the love God provided to the sinner required a return and an extension of love or benevolence to others as well. He urged that, “we should chiefly exercise our love towards them who most shock either our way of thinking, or our temper.” Ultimately, Christians should love and sacrifice so “that others should be as virtuous as we wish to be ourselves.” Wesley believed that whatever one suffered to accomplish this end was acceptable. He reminded the Methodists that “there is no love of God without patience, and no patience without lowliness and sweetness of spirit.” The increase of patience and humility, was “the surest proof of the increase of love” given by God in Wesley’s theology, and it required they give that love selflessly to others in order to glorify God in return. In many ways, this was Wesley’s own version of disinterested benevolence. He added that “true humility is a kind of self-annihilation,” which was “the centre of all virtues” since it makes “God the first object of love.” His stance becomes “disinterested” in that it makes the man willing “to bear the defects of others.” Wesley would probably agree that people were never totally disinterested since the sinner would “draw profit from suffering” for others. Nevertheless, the total love of God enabled the willingness to suffer “self-annihilation,” like Christ, for the salvation of others. Wesley assured his fellow Christians that in return for such love, God would grant the Christian “perfect holiness.” In the following chapter I will show that evangelical Christians of the nineteenth century fiercely debated the path to and location of perfect holiness.” However, despite the ensuing debate, most of the great consolidators of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism agreed with Wesley that “bearing men, and suffering evils in meekness and silence, is the sum of a Christian life.”⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Ibid, 436-437.

From Jonathan Edwards's first defense of evangelical expressions of faith, to the consolidation of movement in the late eighteenth-century, for the leaders of the movement suffering remained the thread that bound together the practical explanations of evangelical Christianity. Ministers like Samuel Hopkins and John Wesley knew that without unpacking concepts such as millennialism, disinterested benevolence, and Christian Perfectionism their parishioners were left only with theological definitions that had little relevance to their everyday lives. However, when they showed that the willingness to suffer for others so lost souls may know the word of God was the best way to be sanctified and prove a believer's disinterested love, they knew they could elicit action and relevance. Men like Hopkins argued that suffering to end the immorality of slavery was in itself a display of morality, and Joseph Bellamy showed that suffering for Christ on earth only hastened his return. Everywhere, suffering was used by evangelical thinkers, from the ardent Calvinist to the emerging Methodist, to portray evangelical faith in practice. By the turn of the century, evangelicals of all denominations would continue to turn to suffering to continue to answer the requirements of their faith.

CHAPTER FIVE

Tempered to Perfection: Suffering and Holiness in Nineteenth Century Evangelicalism

Great travail is created for all men...

Ecclesiasticus 40:1

On March 17, 1811, the Reverend John Snelling Popkin (1771-1852) labored to console the parishioners of the First Parish in Newbury, Massachusetts. Popkin was not only a minister, but an impressive scholar of Greek literature at Harvard University who, despite a flirtation with Unitarianism, defined himself as an “Evangelical.”¹ He preached that “...afflictions may be called the chastening of the Lord; because he permitted them, and required his servants to endure them, continuing steadfast in the faith, assured of his gracious support and behavior.” Members of the parish had endured “two mournful events...that fill[ed] their hearts with grief and surprise” in the proximal deaths of two women in the community, Mrs. Phebe Adams and Mrs. Hannah Lunt.² Popkin began his sermon addressing not the deaths of the two women, but the trials of the early Hebrew Christians, and “the sufferings arising from persecutions to which they were exposed.” These sufferings, he preached, “might strongly tempt the believers to depart from their faith, or shrink from this duty. But by trying, they would prove, a sound faith, and increase and confirm the Christian graces.” Suffering or affliction was “incident to their profession as Christians” Popkin argued, and it was one’s Christian duty to confront and endure them regardless of the form or reason for the “chastening.” Aware of the vexing message, Popkin reassured the parishioners by citing Hebrews 12:11: “no chastening for the present

¹ Cornelius C. Felton, “Biographical Sketch,” in *A Memorial of the Rev. John Snelling Popkin, D.D. Late Eliot of Greek Literature in Harvard University* (Cambridge, MA: John Bartlett, 1852), vii and lxxxii-lxxxvii.

² John Snelling Popkin, *A Sermon Preached on an Afflictive Occasion* (Newburyport, MA: William B. Allen & Co., 1814), 4 and 10.

seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it may yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.” Suffering is never desirable, and while hardly comforting, Popkin argued that it is part of God’s design and the Christian is to be “submissive to his will, desirous of his grace, and obedient to his commands.”³

Suffering, or affliction, due to the “chastening of the lord” was a common theme in nineteenth-century Evangelicalism. As the nineteenth-century Calvinist evangelical minister, Henry Augustus Boardman (1808-1880) explained in his sermon, “Earthly Suffering and Heavenly Glory (1878),” suffering was essentially earthly life. For Boardman, suffering comprised physical pain, emotional loss, prolonged discomfort, the “trials of poverty,” and more. Boardman believed that any “general survey of society” would paint a “vivid impression of the general prevalence of suffering.”⁴ Suffering was inescapable, he and many other nineteenth-century evangelicals agreed, and like the pain caused by the death of Ms. Adams and Ms. Lunt above, suffering affected everyone, especially God’s people. However, ministers of the period also knew that illness, pain, and the death of ministers or devout parishioners, contained valuable lessons. When discussed within the context of scripture and devotional literature, it served as a convenient instruction about the trials and tribulations of Christian life, especially the necessity of suffering for the converted.

Suffering for the already converted or those “born again” emerged as a dominant theological and practical focal point for evangelicals of the nineteenth century. They expanded upon earlier discussions of sanctification initiated by the Puritans and later emphasized by

³ Popkin, 4 and 5.

⁴ Henry Augustus Boardman, *Earthly Suffering and Heavenly Glory: With Other Sermons* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1878), 11-16.

ministers such as David Brainerd and Jonathan Edwards. The influence of John Wesley, as discussed in Chapter Four, increasingly linked concepts of sanctification with the perfectionist view that believers could become holy, or perfect while on earth. Sanctification, which David Bebbington explains as “the way in which believers become holy,” experienced an “upsurge” in the nineteenth century. The “upsurge” of interest in the topic of sanctification became so prominent in the nineteenth century that it even spawned a new doctrine or movement known as the “Holiness movement” or, simply, Holiness.⁵ Evangelicals of the nineteenth century could (and did) easily claim that men like Brainerd agreed that suffering while on earth aided in the growth of holiness.⁶ Both suffering and Brainerd’s example remained pillars of the evangelical faith in the new century, but as the century progressed they were both increasingly used to explain the path to holiness or perfection, rather than, as in the earlier figures, just to encourage the practical displays of faith.

Evangelicals increasingly latched on to displays of suffering in works of evangelism, like Brainerd’s, as a way to reach holiness or perfection on earth. For some, sanctification and holiness became one and the same. For others who still adhered to Calvinist theories, sanctification retained its place between conversion and holiness. While the divide between Calvinist and Wesleyan views of perfection remained, both types of evangelicals increasingly stressed the purification one received by suffering either during sanctification or on the way to holiness.

⁵ David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 188-194; Timothy L. Smith, “Righteousness and Hope: Christian Holiness and the Millennial Vision in America, 1800-1900,” *American Quarterly* 31 (Spring, 1979), 27.

⁶ See Chapter Three above.

Suffering in nineteenth-century Evangelicalism as a means of purification is the central theme of this chapter. While retaining ideas of evangelicals of the past, nineteenth century evangelicals subtly shifted away from explaining Christian practice and moved towards using suffering to detail the path to holiness. Brainerd, in the eighteenth century, believed that his suffering *would* prepare him for the glory of heaven. Henry Augustus Boardman, in the nineteenth-century, wrote that Christianity’s “whole purpose and aim is to prepare us for heaven.”⁷ However, in the eighteenth-century Brainerd only *hoped* that after “enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ” he and his brother “*may*...obtain [the] mercy of God.”⁸ As I will show, even though Calvinist theologians like Boardman had reservations on where Holiness and mercy was received he was much more ready to than Calvinists past to *guarantee* that “his [God’s] glory” would be “their [the believers’] glory.”⁹

While evangelicals in the nineteenth-century emphasized the earthly attainment of holiness more than ever most agreed that the process of sanctification or holiness necessitated instruction, or at least aid from past and fellow Christians. In the dedication page of his sermon *Divine Goodness in Afflictions*, Jotham Watermen wrote: “to the Afflicted...with the Author’s most earnest prayer, it may contribute to their sanctification...”¹⁰ Suffering or affliction was part and parcel of sanctification, and examples of how and why one was to endure affliction were also necessary for the process of becoming holy. Evangelicals— clergy and laity alike —continued

⁷ Boardman, *Earthly Suffering and Heavenly Glory*, 11.

⁸ David Brainerd, in Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 484-485.

⁹ Boardman, *Earthly Suffering and Heavenly Glory*, 12-14.

¹⁰ Jotham Watermen, *Divine Goodness in Afflictions* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1808).

in the nineteenth century an already emergent hallmark of their faith: the devotion of time to the construction of a reproducible formula for the faithful to follow.

As nineteenth-century evangelicals worked to define the process and components of sanctification, they not only reflected upon recent examples, but also, like minister and great grandson of Jonathan Edwards, Sereno Edwards Dwight (1786-1850) argued, turned to “those holy men...[who]burned with a flame which could not be extinguished...[and who] in their *histories*...still shine with equal luster, and shed the same effulgence on mankind.”¹¹

Evangelical believers of all denominations did not have to dig too far into the past. Voices from recent patriarchs of the movement, such as John Wesley, had already charged Christians to “carefully read over the life of David Brainerd,” so they may “be *followers of him, as he was of Christ*.”¹² An evangelical Calvinist could see that the words of Jonathan Edwards advocated much the same. Edwards believed that Brainerd was one of God’s “eminent persons that have set bright examples of that religion that is taught and prescribed in the Word of God.”¹³ Men like Dwight thought David Brainerd still figured distinctly for those living in the nineteenth century. In regards to Edwards’s *Life of Brainerd*, Dwight maintained, “on the whole I am convinced that few works hitherto published, are calculated to be as useful to the Church at large, or to the individual.” In 1854, thirty-two years after Dwight’s praise of Brainerd, men like Methodist Reverend John Bayley (c.1800s) still counted Brainerd’s biography as one of a handful of books that could inspire conversion to Christianity. In his own conversion story,

¹¹ Sereno Edwards Dwight, *Memoirs of the Rev. David Brainerd: Missionary to the Indians* (New Haven, CT: S. Converse, 1822), 8.

¹² John Wesley, as quoted in George Bourne, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (Baltimore, MD: 1807), 249.

¹³ Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd, Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7, 89-90.

Confessions of a Converted Infidel, Bayley noted that it aided in his conversion, and in a chapter devoted to covering the “Circulation of Good Books,” he enthusiastically recommended reading Brainerd’s biography.¹⁴

What is more, the specific memory of Brainerd’s suffering with and for his converts endured well into the nineteenth century. By the time Thomas Brainerd (1804-1866) published his work in 1865 that chronicled the life of David Brainerd’s brother, John, he had uncovered “fragments of a martyr-life” that showed Brainerd’s “toiling for the welfare” of the Indians as the most memorable aspect of his mission among the very descendants of the Indians he worked to convert.¹⁵ One recollection that Thomas Brainerd uncovered about Brainerd was from a Delaware woman who was a descendant of the peoples he worked with and who lived on a reservation in Wisconsin. She recalled that her grandmother told her the Indians “loved David Brainerd very much, because he loved his heavenly Father so much that he was willing to endure hardships, travelling over mountains, suffering hunger, and lying on the ground, that he might do her people good.”¹⁶ Thomas Brainerd obtained another memory of Brainerd that was recorded at a missionary station on the banks of the Kansas River in 1834. Here another descendent of the Delaware people whom Brainerd worked to convert noted Brainerd was “a staff...a staff to walk with,” because he suffered with them, and made “them know he was not proud.” They knew this because “he slept on a deer-skin or bear skin...ate bear meat and samp [cornmeal mush].”¹⁷

¹⁴ Dwight, *Memoirs of the Rev. David Brainerd*, 10; John Bayley, *Confessions of a Converted Infidel; With Lights and Shades of Itinerant Life, and Miscellaneous Sketches* (New York: M.W. Dodd, 1854), 155.

¹⁵ Thomas Brainerd, *The Life of John Brainerd, The Brother of David Brainerd, and his Successor as Missionary to the Indians of New Jersey* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publication Committee, 1865), 16-19.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 459-463.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 463-465.

Such memories of Brainerd as a “staff to walk with” among the descendants of the people he worked to convert secured Brainerd’s legacy within nineteenth-century Evangelicalism. Some historians even argue that his importance to the nineteenth-century evangelical movement may even eclipse the impact Brainerd made in his own time.¹⁸ Joseph Conforti’s efforts to restore Brainerd’s “central place in American religious history,” finds a prominent place for Brainerd in the nineteenth-century missionary movement.¹⁹ John A. Grigg, Brainerd’s most recent scholarly biographer, not only highlights Brainerd’s life in the terms of his own time, but also shows that Brainerd’s weightiest influence rests squarely within the missionary movement of the nineteenth century.²⁰ It seems that many evangelicals and most missionaries of the nineteenth century would have agreed with Sereno Edwards Dwight that Brainerd “would probably be selected by all denominations of Christians as the *holiest missionary*, if not the *holiest man*, of modern times.”²¹

The suffering and discomfort Brainerd endured as a missionary were especially admirable for evangelicals of the nineteenth-century and helped shape their understanding of suffering. However, Brainerd’s missionary work itself was not the only component of his faith evangelicals were to emulate. Alongside the suffering of his missionary work, Brainerd’s continual growth in his faith, from his conversion to the understanding that he endured of

¹⁸ See, Joseph Conforti, “Jonathan Edwards’s Most Popular Work: ‘The Life of David Brainerd’ and the Nineteenth Century Evangelical Culture,” *Church History* 54 (June, 1985), 188-201, and Joseph Conforti, “David Brainerd and the Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (Autumn, 1985), 309-329.

¹⁹ Conforti, “Jonathan Edwards’s Most Popular Work,” 190; Conforti, “David Brainerd and the Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement.”

²⁰ See, John A. Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of an American Evangelical Icon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 164-181.

²¹ Dwight, *Memoirs of the Rev. David Brainerd*, 9. See also Conforti, “David Brainerd and the Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement,” 309-310.

suffering *part* of his sanctification, was arguably one of the most important examples for evangelicals discussing the expression of faith *after* conversion. Brainerd also remained a figure cited to argue doctrinal fine points or fallacies for nineteenth century evangelicals. Historians have made it clear that the dominant theological divide of the Calvinist-Arminian controversies (the nature of atonement and justification) within Evangelicalism remained alive and well in the nineteenth century.²² These divisive discussions on atonement and justification, traditionally seen as faith versus works in conversion, also saw a subtle change in emphasis. More and more, as the century progressed, the faithful debated the nature or qualities of sanctification over conversion and the possibility of Christian perfection aided by human works while on earth. Both sides of the doctrinal divide cited Brainerd in their quest for solid precedents. Citing Brainerd did not erase theological tensions within Evangelicalism, but it did show that, as time passed, Evangelicals increasingly blended the Arminian/Wesleyan and Calvinist/Edwardsean traditions to explain their faith and continue the movement's dynamism.²³

My primary concern in this chapter will not be with missions or doctrinal division, but rather with the new concern of the religious movement in the individual achievement of holiness. As shown in Chapter Four, Brainerd's life and especially the nature of his sufferings exemplified the qualities of true virtue or Christian practice, and suffering to bring others to Christ became the evangelical program for the reform of the individual and society as a whole. Brainerd

²² See David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 151-180; Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology, 1640-1700: An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

²³ Joseph A. Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Allen C. Guelzo, "An Heir or Rebel? Charles Grandison Finney and the New England Theology," *Journal of the Early Republic* 17 (Spring, 1997), 61-94; Smith, "Righteousness and Hope," 24; Richard B. Steele, "*Gracious Affection*" and "*True Virtue*" According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1994), 237.

remained important for nineteenth-century evangelicals who were eager to continue to address the demands of Christian discipleship and its necessary suffering, especially within the developing concern for achieving holiness. However, as I showed in Chapter Four, theologians did not always cite Brainerd or include him as an example of virtue, suffering or Christian holiness. Even so, the suffering of discipleship remained a constant way to address and explain the stages of faith, and Brainerd could have been, and often was, used as an example. When Brainerd prayed for holiness in 1743 and asked God to feel “serious, kind and tender towards all mankind, and [to] long that holiness might flourish more on earth” he anticipated many of the concerns of nineteenth-century evangelicals. Like Brainerd, they hoped that if they suffered, they too would become holy.²⁴

Nineteenth-century evangelicals turned to Brainerd in their study of the nature of sanctification as Timothy L. Smith explains because their conceptions of the topic “were rooted in the past.”²⁵ Just as evangelical ministers did in the decades after Brainerd’s death, ministers in the nineteenth century believed Edwards’s example of Brainerd remained a solid example of true religion. This explains why ministers like Charles Finney in the nineteenth century, just like they did in the eighteenth, often made reference to Brainerd at seemingly random points without explaining who he was or what he did.²⁶ Writers and ministers seemed to take for granted that their audience would simply know about Brainerd and what he stood for. Furthermore, it was Brainerd’s near perfect exemplification of disinterested benevolence, that solidified his place as a

²⁴ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 221.

²⁵ Smith, “Righteousness and Hope,” 24.

²⁶ I will discuss Finney’s use of Brainerd in more detail below.

marker of Christian holiness for nineteenth century evangelicals.²⁷ Joseph Conforti shows that the *Life of Brainerd* was “crucial” for Evangelicalism in the nineteenth century because it enabled “the transformations of Edwards’s ethics into the ethics of antebellum evangelicalism.” As I show in Chapter Four, disinterested benevolence could not be explained without suffering. Whether an evangelical promoted Wesleyan perfectionism or Calvinistic disinterested benevolence, Brainerd’s model of suffering to make converts were readily cited as exemplification of both.²⁸

The doctrine of disinterested benevolence, rooted in Samuel Hopkins’s New Divinity, remained primary motivators for missionary work, social reform, and theological discussion in the first half of the century.²⁹ As it did in the eighteenth-century disinterested benevolence demanded both sacrifice and suffering for evangelicals of the nineteenth-century. Furthermore, Hopkins’s insistence that the faithful should, like Paul, be willing to suffer no “less than eternal damnation...if by this his brethren might be saved” remained an issue as the movement worked out concepts of holiness.³⁰ Suffering continued to be a primary element of bringing others to Christ and enlarging his kingdom, but it became increasingly embraced as a key component of the growth in personal holiness or sanctification for the individual believer. However, to

²⁷ Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition*, 62-86; David W. Kling “Edwards in the Second Great Awakening: The New Divinity Contributions of Edward Dorr Griffin and Asahel Nettleton,” in *After Jonathan Edwards: The courses of the New England Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (New York: Oxford, 2012), 134. See above chapter for a discussion on the origins and influences of Disinterested Benevolence.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 64 and 85.

²⁹ See Oliver Wendell Elsbree, “Samuel Hopkins and his Doctrine of Benevolence,” *The New England Quarterly* 8(December, 1935), 534-550; David W. Kling, “The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,” *Church History* 72 (December, 2003), 791-819; William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 118-119; Stephen Post, “Disinterested Benevolence: An American Debate Over the Nature of Christian Love,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 (Fall, 1986), 356-368.

³⁰ Hopkins, *A Dialogue*, 146; Post, “Disinterested Benevolence,” 361-363.

safeguard against the extremes of personal interest and protect the sovereignty of God, evangelicals continued to argue that all was for the glory of God.³¹

Challenges or modifications to Hopkins's "willingness to be damned" component of disinterested benevolence came from many different directions. There were friendly leaders of the New England Theology – the nineteenth century Calvinistic purveyors of Hopkins's New Divinity – such as Edwards Amasa Parks (1808-1900) who noted that Hopkins's disinterested benevolence was not a result of a cold Calvinism.³² Rather, Parks argued that it was a theory much in line with "the feelings of Fenelon, Madame Guion, and many other mystics with regard to the endurance of pain for the divine glory." Parks added that even Unitarians such as William Ellory Channing understood that:

however fearful [Hopkins's] system, [it] was yet built on a generous foundation...[that] all holiness, all moral excellence, consists in benevolence, or disinterested devotion to the greatest good...that love is the only principle...Other Calvinists were willing, that their neighbors should be predestined to everlasting misery for the glory of God. This noble-minded man [Hopkins] demanded a more generous and impartial virtue, and maintained that we should consent to our own perdition...if the greater good of the universe...should so require.

Parks believed that it was nothing more than the simplicity of the message of love in Hopkins's theory itself, "which Captivated the enthusiastic mind of Channing."³³ As far as Parks could tell, there was not coldness in Hopkins's doctrine of disinterested benevolence, only solid scriptural

³¹See Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition*, 62-86; Post, "Disinterested Benevolence," 356-368.

³² I will discuss Parks in more detail below.

³³ Post, "Disinterested Benevolence," 361; Edwards A Park, "Memoir," *Works of Samuel Hopkins Vol I* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1854), 211. For a review on Park's prominence in the development of the New England Theology, see Anthony C. Cecil, Jr., *The Theological Development of Edwards Amasa Park: Last of the "Consistent Calvinists"* (Missoula, MT: American Academy of Religion & Scholars' Press 1974); Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition*, 108-144. I will also discuss Bangs in more detail below.

deductions. He pointed to Paul's Letter to the Romans verse 9:3, "For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren," as evidence.³⁴ For Hopkins's disciples, the willingness to suffer eternal damnation remained the ultimate in suffering and sacrifice, but even Parks and his allies were willing to concede that if not understood the doctrine was indeed "fearful."

Those on the Wesleyan or Methodist spectrum of Evangelicalism could in no way accept either Hopkins's or Park's interpretation of the "willingness to be damned." Nathan Bangs (1778-1862), Methodist minister and prolific chronicler of the Methodist Episcopal Church, devoted much labor to refute Hopkins's theology.³⁵ In the sixth letter of *The Errors of Hopkinsianism Detected and Refuted* (1815) Bangs offered his Methodist corrections to disinterested benevolence, in which the suffering of a Christian figures prominently. He wrote that the cost or suffering of discipleship was not in the "willingness to be damned" or selfless disregard but "that we are to deny ourselves of *all ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and take up our daily cross" imitating Christ in his suffering and un-worldliness. The idea of disinterested benevolence, he wrote, "sounds very pleasing to the ear, but it is something to which man is a total stranger." Bangs believed that it was impossible for humans to disregard the self or happiness. To do so was contrary to scripture and to common sense as well.³⁶ Furthermore, Bangs wrote that "we are commanded to love our neighbor only as we love ourselves," in which

³⁴ Park, "Memoir," 210. In his journals Brainerd never alludes to or preaches on Romans 9:3. He makes use of many other passages involving suffering and sacrifice, but, again, never gave his opinion on Romans 9:3.

³⁵ See, Nathan Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 4 vols. (New York, 1838-41), Abel Stevens, *The Life of Nathan Bangs, D. D.* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1863); Matthew Bowman and Samuel Brown, "Reverend Buck's Theological Dictionary and the Struggle to Define American Evangelicalism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29 (Fall, 2009), 441-473.

³⁶ Bangs, *The Errors of Hopkinsianism Detected and Refuted* (New York: John C. Totten, 1815), 269-272; See also Post, "Disinterested Benevolence," 361-362.

God's command begins with self-love, not disinterest. For Bangs this was the will of God, and he believed "the will of God is the supreme rule, by which all intelligent creatures, should be regulated." Bangs then moved his argument of suffering and sacrificial works consistently in line with the Wesleyan position. He wrote "to seek his [the believer's] own happiness, and the happiness of his neighbor...by repenting, believing, and loving God, and by *dispersing abroad*, giving to the poor...then the universal good would be realized."³⁷

Park and Bangs – a Calvinist and a Methodist – all came to the same conclusion about benevolence, whether disinterested or not. Suffering and sacrifice for the greatest good remained requirements of faith. Such actions would not only create happiness implanted by and consistent with the will of God, but it would also reform the individual believer and, potentially, many others as well.³⁸ Nevertheless, regardless of denominational affiliation, themes such as suffering for (or by the will of) God were almost universally accepted as the century progressed. This shared view helped create what historians like Nathan Hatch call a "blurring of worlds" within nineteenth-century Evangelicalism that often made proponents of differing doctrines sound very much alike.³⁹ The use of figures like Brainerd as a symbol of holiness for evangelicals of all stripes also points to the beginning of a synthesis in nineteenth-century

³⁷ Bangs, *The Errors of Hopskinsianism*, 271-272, and 274.

³⁸ See, McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 118-119.

³⁹ See Matthew Bowman and Samuel Brown, "Reverend Buck's Theological Dictionary," 443; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 34-35. Brainerd was even used by evangelical ministers to create some sort of unity between Evangelicals to stand against the threats of Socinianism or Unitarianism. See Andrew Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared* (Philadelphia, 1796). On page 69 Fuller, an English Baptist minister, stated his belief that Calvinism was extreme and often "persecuting," but challenged the Socinian/Unitarian position that Calvinists would be even more pious if they adopted a "happier, milder and more rationalistic creed." Fuller countered this belief and asked whether the Socinian's have "more perfect examples of piety, candour or benevolence than are to be found in the characters of a...Brainerd, an Edwards, a Whitefield..." These men may have been Calvinists, but their "lives were spent in doing good to the souls and bodies of men" and, more importantly, "lived and died depending on the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ" – evangelical tenets whether Wesleyan, Calvinist, or Baptist.

evangelical thought that bridged the solid theological foundations of Calvinistic and Edwardsean doctrine with the more practical and energetic influences of Wesleyan Methodism.⁴⁰

Benevolence, taking up the cross (discipleship), and the suffering allowed by the will of God in the process of sanctification were all doctrinal points forming a common thread that united evangelical across the spectrum.

Congregational minister Jotham Waterman's sermon, *Divine Goodness in Afflictions* (1808), in many ways summarizes what evangelicals of the nineteenth-century would be exploring when discussions came to the necessity of suffering for the converted on the path to sanctification.⁴¹ While Waterman was not a major figure in the development of nineteenth-century evangelical thought, his sermon shows that views on suffering were becoming universal. First, as many ministers did, Waterman often refers to suffering incurred by Christians as "chastening," since it is the will of God. The second important precedent, based on Proverbs 3:11, was that "the chastening of Heaven are not to be despised, for uninterrupted prosperity is not good for man, as it would, not knowing how to abound as well as suffer need." Suffering, Waterman argued, "will bring him nearer to his great Creator and kind Benefactor. Suffering or "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground' they come from God, and are the fruit of *paternal love*." Suffering belongs to the goodness that God has bestowed on man because "had we no pains, we should have no pleasures." Pleasures or happiness were, for Waterman, part of God's divine plan, and his view was very similar to what

⁴⁰ See Bebbington, *Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 52-81.

⁴¹ Waterman was also a battler against Unitarianism. See Jotham Waterman, *The Wren and the Eagle in Contest or A Short Method with the Unitarian Nobility* (Boston, 1819).

Methodists like Bangs also believed.⁴² Finally, suffering or afflictions are the major components of the process of sanctification. As Watermen wrote, “*He forms the light and creates darkness, that his children walk in the former, and prove their deeds good.*” That the faithful suffer to walk in the light, accept and even rejoice in their suffering and afflictions, was a widely accepted explanation of faith and the requirement of suffering for evangelicals of the nineteenth century.

Nathaniel William Taylor (1786-1858), as compared to Waterman, was a well-known and exceedingly influential Calvinist minister of the nineteenth century.⁴³ In this role, Taylor was a powerful expositor of Christian suffering for nineteenth-century evangelicals and helped advance a modified view of sanctification from the Calvinist perspective. Historians such as Douglas A. Sweeney label Taylor as the “father” of the “New Haven Theology” and the purveyor of evangelical Calvinism through the middle of the century. Taylor saw himself as an inheritor of Edwards and looked to Edwards’s writings, the *Life of Brainerd* included, to create his modified Calvinism called the “New England Theology.” Taylor’s own system was built

⁴² Jotham Watermen, *Divine Goodness in Afflictions* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1808), 4-5.

⁴³ Douglas A. Sweeney, *Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology, and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3. Taylor has been seemingly hard to define for historians. In Earl A. Pope, “The Rise of the New Haven Theology,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985) 44 (March, 1966), 24, Pope describes Taylor as a theologian who “explicated and defended a theology... [that was] highly controversial...[and] claimed to represent the genuine essence of Calvinism.” William R. Sutton in, “Benevolent Calvinism and the Moral Government of God: The Influence of Nathaniel W. Taylor on Revivalism in the Second Great Awakening,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 2 (Winter, 1992), 23, claims he offered “America’s ‘one great contribution to the theological thinking of Christendom’ by combining the ‘Calvinist and Newtonian worldviews.’” Others like Sidney Mead in *Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786-1858: A Connecticut Liberal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), offers that Taylor was a “Connecticut liberal” in opposition to Douglas Sweeney’s finding that he was and remained a self-proclaimed “Edwardsian Calvinist (4).” For more on Taylor see Conrad Cherry, “Nature and the Republic: The New Haven Theology,” *The New England Quarterly* 51 (December, 1978) 509-526; Douglas A. Sweeney, “Taylorites and Tylerites,” in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 142-150.

upon the foundations laid by Edwards and continued its construction following the works of men like Samuel Hopkins.⁴⁴

Taylor laid out a thorough exegesis of the necessity of suffering on the path to sanctification in his collection of *Practical Sermons* published in 1858. The first component of his framework was that “the Christian in the exercise of a lively faith practically regards heaven as a reality.” By doing so, “faith, then, brings heaven in view...and earth...retires into the background.” By breaking free from earth “its honors fade, its pleasures wither, its pomp vanishes, even its sufferings appear but for a moment.” Then, with heaven in mind, “the soul is swallowed up in that eternal weight of glory” and the believer can “think, and feel, and act, and suffer and live, and die, under the impression of its reality.”⁴⁵ Heaven is where the believer must have his sights set. In the world, the Christian “is a pilgrim and stranger...” Taylor then explained that while on earth “shocks severe to nature may be received; and though not without emotion, yet not with despair, not with repining. In the world he expects tribulation.” The consolation for the believer is that while they are assuredly to endure suffering on earth, and while the “journey will be weary...all this will soon be over...and heaven will make ample amends for all the toils and sufferings of the way to it.”⁴⁶

The amelioration of suffering for the believer is the reward of heaven and the “freedom from sin and of perfection in holiness” that heaven will bring. Heaven, or the “Better Country” as Taylor defined it, is the end result of a life of tribulation. In heaven, the believer will be

⁴⁴ See, Sweeney, *Nathaniel Taylor*, 41 and 61.

⁴⁵ Nathaniel W. Taylor, *Practical Sermons* (New York: Clark, Austin, & Smith, 1858), 37-38.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 39-40.

reunited with “those whom he has prayed and suffered and taken sweet counsel in this vale of tears.”⁴⁷ Earth, the “vale of tears,” Taylor promised, is the polar opposite of heaven. Everything endured on earth will find alleviation in heaven. The faithful need only to look upon the “rich monuments of grace” such as Paul, Richard Baxter, Jonathan Edwards, and David Brainerd, who, “animated by their example,” showed the way to “redeeming love.” For the believer, faith and the reality of heaven will dispel the “trials of life...in the exercise of a lively faith,” and “will arm him with the fortitude of a martyr...[and]will impart such support...no sufferings could move him.” Taylor concluded, “we all hope for heaven; we believe it to be a world of unspeakable happiness.” However, Taylor reminded his audience that they were only beginning “the path of holiness” and that they “are in the road to heaven.” Holiness will be achieved in heaven, not “in the road” to it. “In the road to heaven,” the believer must first inquire “what *we* must be to be qualified to enjoy it.”⁴⁸

Taylor gave qualifications necessary to enter heaven and its holiness in his next sermon, “Paul and Silas in Prison.” The sermon and the example of the qualifications necessary are given in the context of the abysmal conditions shared by Paul and Silas in a prison at Philippi. Taylor began by reminding the reader that “the Christian looks beyond this world for complete happiness. Yet while here on earth he has something which the world can neither give nor take away.” While Taylor advocated that believers needed to keep the picture of heaven constantly fixed in their mind, he moved on to explain that the believer must endure the trials of earth first before going on to heaven. He wrote that the “external trials and suffering” of earth must be experienced by the believer and learned to be endured without “worldly resources or hopes.”

⁴⁷ Ibid, 40-41.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 43,45, 48, and 49.

Followers of Christ are to be “the objects of the scorn and hatred of the world,” like Paul and Silas, but not without “the same sources of support [the promises of heaven and holiness] and joy” that Paul and Silas relied on in their own sufferings. The recognition and right use of the “sources of support and joy” were then the qualifications of the “real Christian.”⁴⁹ If a believer could employ the same sources as Paul and Silas, then they would be qualified for holiness.

The first source of support or happiness while wandering in the “vale of tears” is the Christian’s ability to measure the difference between what is gained and what is lost by his or her faith. To rely on sensual or worldly comforts “leaves a void which the world can never fill.” The loss of these comforts would, for the “men of this world,” make the lightest of afflictions unbearable. Taylor explained that once the believer was able to reconcile his or her loss of worldly possessions with the gain of eternal possessions they would be able to comprehend and be “happy in the assurance that their sufferings were the means of great good.”⁵⁰ Suffering was Taylor’s second source of support and happiness. Like Paul and Silas, all Christians should “regard suffering not only as inseparably connected with the crown of glory, in the presence of God, but as the appointed means of the preparation to wear it – the appointed means of growth in grace.”⁵¹ For Taylor, there was no sanctification, no holiness, without suffering. He went on to explain that Paul and Silas “gloried in tribulation,” because, as in Romans 5:3, “tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope... which hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.” Taylor advocated that, on earth, “love to god... can make a heaven.” In that heaven on earth, he instructed, Christians

⁴⁹ Ibid, 51-52.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 51 -53.

⁵¹ Ibid, 53.

must regard their sufferings and afflictions “as the chastisements of their heavenly Father, laid upon them for their profit, that they might be partakers of his holiness.” In Taylor’s system, suffering was a process of purification on the path to holiness. Since it would make them holy, every believer should be very willing to endure and even rejoice in it. Taylor reminded his audience that in suffering and tribulation “every Christian grace shone purer and brighter,” and they were part of the “sanctifying grace of God.” Finally, as suffering helped to bring personal good and holiness, it also helped in “perfecting their likeness to Christ.”⁵²

Taylor frames much of his argument in terms of earthly possessions and their likely loss to help everyday believers understand his message. While there were not many earthly riches that did create true happiness, Taylor conceded that there are worldly riches and comforts that can grant feelings of prosperity and even happiness. For the worldly man these comforts and possessions create happiness, but if they are lost during times of affliction all happiness is lost. Taylor wanted his audience to see that, on the contrary, there are the possessions of “blessings so great, so rich, that...no worldly loss could lessen them...[or] impair them.” The faithful may endure minor suffering when they tear themselves away from earthly possessions and comforts, but what they gain will far outweigh what they lose. He also hoped they would understand suffering in a new light, and not simply as a loss of comfort and possessions. Taylor wrote that the faith of Paul and Silas “brought spiritual blessings, eternal blessings near, and, placing them by the side of earthly blessings, enabled them to form some just estimate of both. Thus their afflictions, their worldly hopes, seemed light and trifling compared with the glory that awaited

⁵² Ibid, 53-54.

them.”⁵³ If the believer could make the same “just estimate,” it would set them in the right path to holiness and help them cope with suffering.

Taylor’s third, and final, qualification for heaven, “was love to him for whom they suffered.” To achieve the likeness of Christ was a point that few evangelicals could contest.⁵⁴ “Love,” Taylor argued, “is the strongest passion of the human heart. What efforts will it not make – what sufferings will it not endure for the sake of that object?” On this point, Taylor was able to make suffering more tangible. He compared the willingness to suffer and sacrifice for Christ to the willingness to suffer that the “tender parent, the affectionate child, and the faithful friend” had for those they loved. The greatest form of Christian benevolence, he wrote, is “the love of Christ” and the willingness to “suffer for his sake.” Taylor added that what was gained clearly outweighed the cost. Paul and Silas were willing to “gladly suffer the loss of all things” to gain what Christ had to offer. This sort of sacrifice was, for Taylor, “disinterested love to Christ that...extinguishes every self-regard.” This was the highest form of love and worth the highest cost. Taylor also embellished a point that was pivotal for advocating an active faith as well as resisting the extreme of self-immolation. Paul and Silas were “ready to be offered [sacrificed]...even longed to depart with Christ...however, they were willing to abide longer in the flesh, that Christ might be magnified in their bodies.”

The Christian was not to give up and rest in the promise of heaven, but continue on, enduring suffering so they may serve as an example to others. The thought of heaven could

⁵³ Ibid, 52-53.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 54. Evangelicalism had long been marked for being “emphatically Christocentric,” a trait that seems to only increase in the nineteenth century. See Bebbington, *Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 85-86; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 2-4; Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 16-21.

sustain them, and they would arrive there soon enough. Before reaching holiness in heaven, Taylor explained that believers must first accept that they “are made a spectacle to the world.” They must “finish [their] course with joy and the ministry which [they] received, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”⁵⁵ Such actions are, Taylor concluded, the stuff of “real religion.” He pointed out that while Paul and Silas were in the worst of conditions, they were not gloomy but happy. These disciples showed that “while the limbs are racked with pain...songs of praise...enable the happy spirit to soar above earth to heavenly bliss, [all] while the body is bound in chains.” He lamented that so many believed “suffering...is too high a price for the peace of pardoned sin, and for a perfect likeness to their savior.” Taylor wanted all believers to “rise above...external things, and do the work to which we are called...to prize the image of God in our souls, and regard our afflictions as brightening that image.” If a Christian wanted to know if they “experienced the religion of the gospel,” Taylor believed they were required to answer this question: “are you willing to suffer, that your faith may be increased – that you may be more like your savior?”⁵⁶ If they answered “yes,” they practiced the gospel faith. If not, they were “men of this world.”

If Taylor’s audience found it difficult to relate to Biblical apostles, then they could look to one of Taylor’s recommended “monuments of grace” and draw some powerful connections between David Brainerd’s life and Taylor’s pastoral prescriptions. In his own ministry, Brainerd longed “for the holiness of that world,” but asked that the “Lord, prepare me therefore” while in this world. He wished to be a “‘pilgrim’ and stranger’ here below; that nothing may divert [him] from pressing through the lonely desert, till [he] arrive at [his] Father’s house.” Brainerd also

⁵⁵ Taylor, *Practical Sermons*, 54-56.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 56-61.

looked to Paul's discipleship, and in doing so outlined Taylor's points perfectly. Brainerd certainly wished to be in heaven at his life's end, but he knew that he must suffer first in preparation for his holiness and his "imitation of God and Christ Jesus."⁵⁷ Like Brainerd, Taylor implored his audience to see that true Christianity "is as good a thing now as in the days of the apostles" and has the power to make men "happy, yea, joyful" in the "midst of trials, insults, injuries, temptations, and sufferings." Religion, true Christianity, should not drag a man down, but should, like the apostles, make "one equally happy in his spiritual and eternal portion." The design of true religion, according to Taylor, is ultimately a positive end – the end sin and suffering. He added that there is "no event, no pain, which religion may not relieve with its consolations." A letter composed by Brainerd during one of his own times of tribulation reflects Taylor's position. In the letter, Brainerd wrote that he believed "that divine hope... was the very sinews of vital religion," not agony or despair.⁵⁸

Taylor's qualifications for the path to holiness cut across denominational lines, and I believe his views on suffering were universal in evangelical in thought. Edwards Amasa Park (1808-1900), "the last Edwardsian" with considerable influence, held similar views on suffering to those of Taylor, even though he was more theologically conservative in his view of the abilities of man.⁵⁹ In the final chapter of his *Discourses on Some Theological Doctrines as Related to the Religious Character*, Park wrote "we forget the elastic nature of heaven, that it even now may have stretched itself out within reach of our arms... why do we forget that heaven

⁵⁷ See Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 216, 217, 173, 259, and 490-491.

⁵⁸ Taylor, *Practical Sermons*, 57-60.

⁵⁹ Charles Phillips, "Edwards Amasa Park: The Last Edwardsian," in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 151. For more on the influence of Park, see also Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition*, 108-144.

moves around among men?” Park believed that while on earth believers have the capacity “to be in the likeness of God the Son, who took our nature in order that we may take his character.” Park argued that Christ was constantly “alluring them [Christians] to virtue as their only true honor” and was “always inspiring him to duty and sustaining him in sorrow.” Park, like Taylor, reminded the faithful of the scriptural benefits of suffering. To make his point, he cited II Corinthians 4:17, “for our light affliction, which is but for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.” Suffering on earth, during sanctification, would lead to heavenly glory.⁶⁰

Park explained that if believers were to be in God’s image, “then we must cheerfully submit to all the influences needed for our transformation...many a blow must be struck upon this marble heart. Many an excrescence must be cut out of this stone heart...by severe friction it is to become the polished statue.” Park cautioned that holiness and likeness to God can only be earned “by a thousand pains,” by a “thousand nameless agonies” without resentment with only the disciple’s trust in the “Great Sculptor.” The disciples of Christ must endure “all the contusions needful” to lose everything, “property,” “fame,” “friends,” and “the joys of this world.” By their endurance, Park assured his audience, they would “awake to this clear view of thyself, and find my own soul transformed into thy likeness.”⁶¹ Elsewhere in his discourse, Park points to the suffering and ministry of Paul as one that all Christians, “the richest,” “the poorest,” “the most ignorant,” should emulate. While Paul was a great disciple of Christ, he was only a human like all Christians. Park maintained that all Christians were apostles like Paul and could

⁶⁰ Edwards A. Park, *Discourses on Some Theological Doctrines as Related to the Religious Character* (Andover, MA: Warren F. Draper, 1885), 368-369.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 368-369, 371, and 373.

count on the same support Paul received. Similar to Taylor, Park provided examples of other Christians to emulate if the great apostle somehow remained out of reach. Here again, as Taylor did, Park referenced “the power of Brainerd’s life and labors” as a more recent example to follow and for proof that there were consolations for the sufferings endured while on earth.⁶² Park argued that past Christians proved that the consolations for suffering were based on the reciprocal love of God and that the “perfection of God’s love,” which “endures everlasting to everlasting,” becomes more radiant and cheering in times of affliction. Above all the greatest consolation remained, for “if here we are co-workers with our redeemer, if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him hereafter.”⁶³

Nathaniel William Taylor and Edwards Amasa Park were both disciples of Edwards and were comfortable drawing from Edwards’s writings when they explained the necessity of suffering in their theology. As noted above, there were many outside of the Edwardsian tradition, mostly Methodists, who also pulled from the same sources. For example, good Methodists heeded Wesley’s advice to “read carefully over the life of David Brainerd,” and to “be *followers of him, as he was of Christ*, in absolute self-devotion, in total deadness to the world, and in fervent love to God and man.”⁶⁴ In 1854, Methodist preacher John Bayley (c.1800s) continued to follow such advice. To do so, he outlined “the uses of adversity,” or suffering for the benefit and sanctification of man, in his own story of conversion, *Confessions of a Converted Infidel With Lights and Shades of Itinerant Life*, that sounded remarkably similar to the positions of Taylor and Parks. Instead of explaining God as a “Great Sculptor,” Bayley

⁶² Ibid, 68, 174 and 176.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ George Bourne, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (Baltimore, 1807), 249.

imagined he was “like a wise and benevolent physician; he inflicts momentary pain for the purpose of producing enduring pleasure.” Bayley explained that “we shall find that the afflictions of the righteous are the *tokens of the love of God*...he loves his people too well to withhold from them the needed correction.” All suffering, he added, is “calculated to *improve our hearts*.” This was “a hard lesson to learn,” but the believer must know that “injuries, insults, and degradations” will “prepare them for the wealthy place...brought by the goodness and mercy of God.” Bayley’s allowance for human frailty stands out as the Methodist contrast to the Calvinism of Park and Taylor. This is clear in his position that “the influence of divine grace, while it may not entirely repress the shrinking of poor human nature among his fellow men...will enable him to bear patience in his suffering.” Nevertheless, Bayley believed that through suffering Christians would find “the sources of spiritual improvement.” Even if Bayley left more of an opening for the Christian to struggle under divine chastening than Taylor or Park, he ended in the same place in his belief that “suffering...will *prepare us for a nobler state of existence*.”⁶⁵ Bayley believed that the legacy of men like David Brainerd and Puritan divine Richard Baxter (1615-1691) proved this point and could aid any believer in their own struggles.⁶⁶

Nathan Bangs (1778-1862) a co-religionist of Bayley, and, as noted above, an opponent of the heirs of Edwards, had similar views on suffering as Taylor, Park, and Bayley. Near the end of his life, Bangs found “peace in suffering” and pondered his life’s work, particularly his defense of the Methodist doctrine of Christian Perfection.⁶⁷ In his work, Bangs was greatly

⁶⁵ John Bayley, *Confessions of a Converted Infidel*, 54, 57-58.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 155-156.

⁶⁷ Abel Stevens, *Life and Times of Nathan Bangs* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1863), 395-396.

influenced by Wesley, and viewed suffering as a means of reaching perfection or completing sanctification (holiness) while on Earth.⁶⁸ Much of the language on suffering is the same as the views above, but Bangs added points like, “I have many things to suffer, even crucifixion, before I am *perfect in sufferings*,” or the “holy ambition of the soul to imitate his divine Master, who was *made perfect through sufferings*.” In *The Errors of Hopkinsianism Detected and Refuted*, Bangs not only took issue with disinterested benevolence, but he also worked to buttress the Methodist doctrine of Christian perfection. He denounced the Hopkinsian or Calvinist theologians who argued that holiness or perfection could only truly be reached after death. He granted his opponents a limited victory by agreeing with them that Paul’s claim of having “attained to sinless perfection” was misunderstood by many Christians and did not mean that Paul “*completed* his sufferings, or was as perfect as are the saints in heaven.” Bangs even added, “To *all* this perfection we do not expect anyone to attain in *this life*.” However, Bangs explained that Paul “strongly asserts the *perfection of his present attainments*, as a Christian surrounded with infirmities, and exposed to temptations; but still pressing forward.” By pressing forward in suffering, Bangs showed that Paul was “made *free from sin*” and gained the “fruit unto *holiness*, and in the end everlasting life.”⁶⁹

When Taylor and Park wrote of holiness, they wrote of holiness achieved in death after the correction or chastisement of suffering like Christ. They stopped short of perfection or holiness on earth. While Bangs did not insist on this final holiness found in death, he did argue that perfection on earth made the Christian “purged from dead work, *by the blood of Christ*, that they might serve the living God.” He maintained, that “if they do not serve the living God until

⁶⁸ See above chapter for a discussion of Wesley and Christian Perfectionism.

⁶⁹ Bangs, *The Errors of Hopkinsianism*, 171-173.

purified, and if *death* acts as a purifier, then we do not serve the living God until after death.” In 1818, three years after he published *The Errors of Hopkinsianism*, Bangs continued his defense of Christian Perfection, which he labeled “Evangelical Perfection,” in his work *The Reformer Reformed*. Bangs argued that “Evangelical Perfection” occurs when the sinner, “sanctified by the blood of the everlasting covenant...pass[es] from nature to grace, and from the power and dominion of sin, to a state of holiness...having their *hearts purified* by faith in Christ.” This purification allows the sinner, now holy, to follow the dispensations of the law, and truly serve God through any suffering until death.⁷⁰ Such faithful devotion to God was Bang’s most direct explanation of Evangelical Perfection.

As an editor and contributor to journals such as the *Methodist Magazine* and the *Christian Advocate*, Nathan Bangs’s influence was both far reaching and lasting. By mid-century the *Christian Advocate* was the most circulated paper in the country and was considered, as Nathan Hatch points out, the “official organ of the [Methodist] church.”⁷¹ The platform that these two journals provided, allowed Bangs to guide Methodist teaching towards an increased advocacy of “Evangelical Perfection” or what other Methodists called “entire sanctification.” Those within the fold of Methodism seem to have been deeply influenced by Bangs. Scholars like Samuel Smith argue that Bangs’s views on sanctification and perfection became a “central preoccupation of religious thought” for much of the century. Bangs’s influence on a rapidly expanding Methodism combined with the adjustments made to Edwardsean Calvinism from men like Nathaniel Taylor, meant that holiness and perfection were inescapable topics for most

⁷⁰ Nathan Bangs, *The Reformer Reformed: Or a Second Part of the Errors of Hopkinsianism Detected and Refuted* (New York: John C. Totten, 1818), 216.

⁷¹ Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 203-204; Smith, “Righteousness and Hope,” 29.

evangelicals of the nineteenth century. Suffering in sanctification as a means of purification, undeniably helped mold the perfectionist views of the century's most famous early revivalist, Charles Grandison Finney.⁷²

Charles G. Finney has received a lot of attention from religious and social historians of the nineteenth century. Most forcefully, William G. McLoughlin argues that Finney was “the leading prophet” of the “new definition of revivalism and perfectionist theology” of the Second Great Awakening. However, Finney and his views, like Nathaniel Taylor's, have been hard to define and often misunderstood. For example, at any given point in his career, Finney was said to have explained, revised, rejected, or altogether denied Calvinism and its various interpretations.⁷³ The scholarship on Finney makes it clear that he sidestepped most controversies and focused on the work of revival and enlarging the kingdom of God. Since Finney was focused on an increase of God's kingdom on earth he was comfortable employing any number of ideologies if it meant he could achieve his goal. If promising an audience that they would be perfected through or by suffering, then Finney would endorse perfection if it made converts. Since Finney was willing to appropriate and “sell” ideas for the sole purpose of making converts, historians like Nathan Hatch believe that Finney became a “transitional figure” within evangelicalism since he was willing to transcend denominational lines. The resulting fame and reach from his nondenominational message meant that Finney became the most important figure

⁷² Smith, “Righteousness and Hope,” 21-25.

⁷³ McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 122; Guelzo, “An Heir or a Rebel,” 61; Leonard I. Sweet, “The View of Man Inherent in New Measures Revivalism,” *Church History* 45 (June, 1976), 208; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 199.

for expanding the theory of Christian perfection in the nineteenth century.⁷⁴ Rather than argue theological fine points, Finney's powers of oratory and persuasion were channeled into the work of conversion and keeping the converted from becoming "backsliders." These goals linked Finney's discussion of suffering to his advocacy that the Christian "be ye perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect."⁷⁵

Christian Perfection, or what Finney labeled as "entire sanctification," was the motivating pursuit of the Christian after conversion. Finney's most famous outline of this quest was compiled in his work *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (ca. 1835). Finney warned that those engaged in the work of converting sinners needed to be forthcoming on all matters of faith from the start. They should never withhold information or not fully explain what concepts like sanctification truly meant. For example, evangelists should never say sanctification is "not something that *precedes* obedience, some change in nature or the constitution of the soul." Instead, sanctification needed to be defined by what it clearly was: sanctification "*is obedience*, and as a progressive thing, consists in obeying God more and more perfectly." Finney, much like Brainerd almost one hundred years earlier, explained that the believer should directly understand that "holiness consists in obeying God."⁷⁶ And sanctification, as a process means obeying him more and more perfectly." This short explanation of the process of sanctification is the kernel of Finney's doctrine of perfectionism, or as it was later known, in reference to the

⁷⁴ Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*, 199; Edith L. Blumhofer, "Purity and Preparation: A Study in the Pentecostal Perfectionist Heritage," in *Reaching Beyond: Chapters in the History of Perfectionism*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 263.

⁷⁵ Matt. 5: 48; See also, Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 99, 403, 415-416, and 419-420.

⁷⁶ For Brainerd's view on "progressive sanctification" see chapter three above, and Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 158 and 144.

college in which he was a professor and president, “Oberlin Perfectionism.”⁷⁷ The ability to achieve full submission to the laws of God (perfection) also required suffering and/or loss. Finney advised that when ministering to “young converts,” it must be made brutally clear “that unless they are willing to lay themselves out for God and ready to sacrifice life and every thing else for Christ, they have not the spirit of Christ, and none of his.” This all meant a believer must be willing to suffer like Christ if they wish to belong to him. Finney went on to explain that “self-denial” and “sacrifice” meant “depriving oneself of...personal enjoyment...for the sake of promoting Christ’s kingdom.” Finney knew, and he wanted “young converts” to see, that Christ’s kingdom was gained by pain, far more often than by joy.⁷⁸

Once converts are brought to accept such a sacrifice, Finney then instructed them on the qualities of perseverance, and the need for continued suffering for the convert. The necessity of perseverance and the likelihood of suffering would follow from the gospel commission that the Christian testify to sinners. In his lecture “Means to be used with Sinners,” Finney broke down ten components of testimony for the believer. The components included, “the satisfying nature and glorious sufficiency in religion, the necessity of holy life, the necessity of self-denial, the necessity of meekness, heavenly-mindedness, humility and integrity.” Finney added that they are to take these testimonies, and reveal them by “*precept and example*.” In their testament they should “rebuke, exhort, and entreat with all long-suffering and doctrine” because “actions speak louder than words.” On meekness and the endurance of suffering, Finney explained that “nothing makes so solemn an impression on sinners...as to see a Christian, Christlike, bearing

⁷⁷ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 414-415, and 429. See also McLoughlin’s footnote, 415n1.

⁷⁸ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 414-415.

affronts and injuries with the meekness of a lamb.”⁷⁹ For Finney, obeying the law of God meant an active testimony by the Christian, which was in turn sanctification. Furthermore, Finney did not limit suffering to the preparation for holiness. He made it a component of the Christian’s holiness that must be put on display to save souls.

Finney’s description of Christian perseverance in sanctification was also made within the context of his advocacy of an active testimony by the Christian to sinners. One of greatest quarrels that Finney had with those working within the Calvinist strain was the perennial antinomian position that once one is converted, they persevere in the assurance that they are saved.⁸⁰ Finney railed against this position and argued that “if a man is truly converted, HE WILL CONTINUE TO OBEY God. And as a *consequence*, he will surely go to heaven.” Finney believed that entire sanctification required suffering and continual striving, not just conversion and the assurance of salvation that it brings. In order to avoid disobedience and to grow in their holiness, Finney warned that the convert must “*be religious in everything*.”⁸¹ Finney’s exhortation to be religious in everything was one of his guards against “backsliding,” or abandoning an active faith. In his defense against backsliding, Finney inserted his recommendation to be “temperate in all things.” This recommendation helped influence Finney’s role as a champion of moral reform and allowed some to reduce his view of perfectionism to little more than a program of intense self-denial in terms of substances and vice. Such reductions have enabled Finney to serve as a champion of Jacksonian America’s belief in the ability of

⁷⁹ Ibid, 142 and 148.

⁸⁰ Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 183.

⁸¹ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 414-415.

individual man to effect progress and change.⁸² However, Finney never went so far to say that morality and self-denial were enough. He strongly argued against any Christian that believed “if they make a profession and live a moral life, that is religion enough.” Finney even claimed that such views were “enough to ruin the whole human race.”⁸³

Finney united the concepts of sanctification, perfection, or holiness into a theology of work or action, and turned to the reliable evangelical example of David Brainerd to stress that sanctification certainly did not consist in waiting or inaction. One of Finney’s recent biographers, Charles Hambrick-Stowe, finds that Brainerd had a special place in Finney’s own conversion account, and, I believe, Brainerd exemplifies the gamut of Finney’s revival message and theology.⁸⁴ In *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* Finney explained that Brainerd did all for God’s will, and submitted himself to suffering in order to expand the kingdom of God. In doing this, Finney believed, Brainerd eventually found the path of sanctification and came to embody the necessary requirements for salvation and holiness. “David Brainerd, was a long time taken up with his *state of mind*, looking for some *feelings* that would recommend him to God,” later became “ashamed” so much so the “poor man...was driven to almost to despair.” Finney then showed that there was a radical change in Brainerd before he completely went to despair. Finney explained that Brainerd abandoned “the false philosophy he had adopted” and looked away from himself and went on to take the “proper course” which was essentially to suffer without hesitation. Finney argued that like Brainerd, the believer should “look at some duty to be

⁸² Ibid, 416-417, See William G. McLoughlin, “Introduction,” in Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, xlii-xliv; Smith, “Righteousness and Hope,” 29-37; Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney*, 179.

⁸³ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 155.

⁸⁴ See Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney*, 16-18, and 21.

performed...look at Christ, and...before he is aware, he will find that he has submitted to God.” This meant, for Finney, that the believer had accepted suffering and sacrifice for God, which, in turn, would bring solace. Finney showed that this occurred with Brainerd when “he just gave up his heart [to God] and the agony was over.” If the believer, like Brainerd submitted himself to the will of God, Finney argued that he or she would find peace. Waiting for proper feelings to arise or simply behaving morally was not what made a Christian. Finney thoroughly believed that suffering like Christ and then, like Brainerd, being “WILLING to obey Christ is to be a Christian.”⁸⁵

Brainerd’s emotional suffering may have also inspired Finney’s view that “those who grow in grace feel more and more self-loathing. They have greater humility and self-abasement.” According to Finney’s theories on the beginnings of an active faith, the sinner must realize that their former self was entirely corrupt and undeserving of salvation. Then through an intense period of self-loathing, the sinner is driven to total submission to God. Finney argued that submission to God inspires the willingness to suffer in the cause of Christ because when Christ suffered it brought a “clear view of God.”⁸⁶ Suffering was then in a sense a reward. Finney’s view echoed that of Brainerd who wrote about his “his own vileness” and “[his] exceeding filthiness,” but through it he eventually came to feel “weaned from the world,” “willing to be despised,” and willing to “undergo the greatest sufferings in the in the cause of Christ, with pleasure.” Like Brainerd, Finney advocated in his outline of faith pleasure in coming to terms with his vileness and submission to God. Finney maintained that the believer

⁸⁵ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 374-375.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 453.

should, like Brainerd, not rest in his or her work, since after submission he or she would be willing “to wrestle earnestly for others, for the kingdom of Christ in the world.”⁸⁷

Finney went on to explain that “as [Christians] increase in piety, they feel more and more a desire that the *world* should be converted to God...their bowels of compassion yearn for all men that they might repent and be saved.”⁸⁸ Like Wesley before him, Finney showed that inactivity in faith caused by excesses of self-loathing or the spiritual pride similar to what Brainerd first experienced could be overcome. Finney showed that Brainerd eventually persevered and grew in holiness, and committed his life to serving God and his creation by working for the conversion of souls.⁸⁹ By coupling Brainerd’s ministry with the biblical example of Job, Finney could offer a final example of why a convert could never rest on his or her display of self-loathing and displays of morality on the way to salvation. They had to actively serve God and man as well. Finney wrote that God considered “Job a perfect and an upright man,” not without sin, but “sincere” or “honest in religion.” To his detriment, Job became aware of his “perfection,” Finney wrote, and therefore could not truly serve God. At first, when God made him suffer, Job could not understand the purpose of his suffering because he looked within himself, rather than to God. Finally, through his “heart-breaking agony,” he recognized his true vile state, his dependency on God, and the necessity to serve him and his

⁸⁷ Brainerd in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 158-159.

⁸⁸ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 421.

⁸⁹ See, Richard B. Steele, “*Gracious Affection*” and “*True Virtue*” According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1994), 233.

creation. Brainerd, like Job, finally moved beyond concern for self in his suffering, saw God clearly in his suffering, and devoted his life to God's service.⁹⁰

Service or obedience to God stands as Finney's most powerful message. This service was, above all, to be active. As Finney proclaimed, "there is no such thing as standing still in religion." According to Finney, the Christian, "if he does his duty," will also assuredly meet with "opposition," undergo "agonizing conflicts," and "expect persecution." However, the Christian must remember that this suffering and affliction is necessary for their sanctification, as Finney reminded his audience that God told Paul "that the thorn is necessary for your sanctification. . . I sent it upon you in love, and in faithfulness, and you have no business to pray that I should take it away."⁹¹ In his view of suffering, Finney did not stray too far from Taylor or Parks. He explained suffering, just as Taylor and Parks did, as part of the process of sanctification. However, Finney believed that God allowed his believers to "suffer" in their "sin so awfully" so as to "produce a deeper work of grace," which, "in men, grace means holiness." Finney crossed a fine line into an embrace of earthly perfection that those like Taylor were unwilling to cross. He argued for "the necessity of holiness in order to enter heaven." This is especially true when he argued that to grow in grace (holiness) is "to increase in a spirit of conformity to the will of God" while on earth. Finney agrees with Taylor's argument that suffering and afflictions are allowed "that they might be partakers of his holiness," but Taylor based his argument on a holiness *to come* and a "*perfecting*" experience, *not* perfection. Finney

⁹⁰ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 453-454, see also, 333. On his views of benevolence and self-loathing Allen Guelzo argues that Finney, rather than making a radical departure with Edwardsian/Hopkinsian thought, stays very much within the fold and relies heavily on this Calvinistic strain of thought to advance his own doctrines of Revival. See, Guelzo, "An Heir or a Rebel," 80-81.

⁹¹ Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 466, 463, 117-118, and 81.

instead urged a holiness and perfection that was achieved here on earth. As Finney wrote, “men need not expect to be saved, unless they *are* holy.”⁹²

The ability to achieve holiness or entire sanctification on earth separated Finney from other divines who maintained some allegiance to Edwardsian Calvinism. His popularity and commitment to revival also opened the door for others to disseminate the message of Christian perfection, or what William Edwin Boardman described in 1858 as “the Higher Christian Life.”⁹³ Boardman and his contemporaries like Phoebe Palmer, helped foster the Holiness movement within Evangelicalism that rapidly developed in the middle of the nineteenth century. This movement maintained, without quarrel, the attainability of holiness while on earth. As this movement grew, suffering remained important for thinkers like Boardman and Palmer who willingly called themselves “perfectionists,” as well as for those who remained more conservative in their beliefs on perfection. This is evident in the work of Scottish missionary and admirer of Brainerd, the Reverend Robert Murray M’Cheyne. M’Cheyne, who was regularly cited by both perfectionists and those against the doctrine,⁹⁴ highlights suffering in his 1845 memoir. M’Cheyne argued that “Christians must have great tribulation...we must carry the cross, but only for a moment, then comes the crown...we are only called ‘*to suffer a while.*’” In their suffering, M’Cheyne wrote, Christians should expect a change, they should “come out like gold” and always remember “affliction will *certainly* purify a believer.”⁹⁵

⁹² Ibid, 381, 447, 448, 146; Taylor, *Practical Sermons*, 53-54.

⁹³ See Blumhofer, “Purity and Preparation,” 262-266; William E. Boardman, *The Higher Christian Life* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1858); Thomas C. Oden, ed., *Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 1-22.

⁹⁴ See, Henry A. Boardman, *The “Higher Life” Doctrine*, 269-270.

⁹⁵ Andrew A. Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of the Rev. Robert Murray M’Cheyne* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1845), 189. For his references to Brainerd, see pages 16, 24, 87, 198, 250, 427, 534, and 535.

Phoebe Palmer took this idea and developed it further in her popular *The Way of Holiness* (1854). Palmer claimed that “His sacrificial death and sufferings are the sinner’s plea... If true to the Spirit’s operations on the heart, men, as co-workers with God, confess their sins, the faithfulness and justice of God stand pledged, not only to *forgive*, but also to *cleanse from all unrighteousness*.” Like Finney, Palmer asserted that once sinners have confessed, “*man must act*” and in a continuous fashion be “willing to *suffer* as well and to *do* the will of God.”⁹⁶ Such a position found a wide audience during the middle of the nineteenth century, and The Holiness Movement continued to grow in strength. Near the end of the century it spawned its own offshoots, namely Pentecostalism, and even revitalized conservative oppositions against the concept of Christian perfection. Opposition to the movement was led by the efforts of “old line Presbyterian,” Henry Augustus Boardman. In *The “Higher Life” Doctrine of Sanctification* (1877) Boardman worked hard to oppose the excesses of the Holiness movement, primarily its assertion of reaching a sinless state while on earth.⁹⁷ However, just like the perfectionists, Boardman continued to use suffering as the primary descriptor of an evangelical expression of faith. He asserted that final perfection as a result of suffering could only occur in heaven.⁹⁸ While perfection or entire sanctification on earth remained controversial, one component of sanctification that *did* occur on earth and remained consistently agreed upon by evangelicals was suffering. Furthermore, all evangelicals could agree and that suffering was required during sanctification.

⁹⁶ Oden, *Phoebe Palmer*, xi; Phoebe Palmer, *The Way of Holiness* (New York: Piercy and Reed, 1843), 59, 66, and 250.

⁹⁷ Henry Augustus Boardman was of no relation to the perfectionist minister William E. Boardman cited above.

⁹⁸ Blumhofer, “Purity and Preparation,” 270-279; Henry A. Boardman, *The “Higher Life” Doctrine of Sanctification: Tried by the Word of God* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1877).

As David Bebbington has observed works that combined themes of suffering and perfection, like Palmer's *The Way of Holiness*, were widely read. Furthermore, countless other evangelical magazines and quarterlies printed by multiple denominations across the spectrum also regularly engaged the topic.⁹⁹ Suffering and its relation to perfection were seemingly inescapable to readers and listeners throughout Evangelicalism. Orators like Finney spread his ideas on suffering easily. He often spoke at revival meetings attended by journalists which caused him to deliver his material to the audience in a manner easy to report. Moreover, as noted earlier, religious journals such as the Methodist controlled *Christian Advocate* were the most widely circulated periodicals in the nation through much of the century. The circulation of these journals also happened to be the same force that made Brainerd an "icon of evangelical spirituality" for the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰ From these publications readers across the nation consumed the same ideas on suffering and sanctification, often with references to Brainerd, that were being relayed from the pulpit and argued by theologians. For instance, in an article in the 1877 edition of *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, readers were given a familiar recounting of Brainerd's missionary work. The author, the Reverend John Stoughton, recalled that his "sufferings were as great as his labours." He paid special attention to Brainerd's spiritual growth and noted that "Brainerd was no inactive mystic... clouds did not constantly rest upon his soul; there came 'clear shining rain,' and we find him, by a rapid transition, passing from the depths of spiritual agony to the heights of holy rapture." Like Finney, Stoughton praised Brainerd's growth in holiness through suffering and advocated an active witness to the

⁹⁹ See, Bebbington, *Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 82-116.

¹⁰⁰ See, Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney*, 97, 149-151, and 291-293; Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work," 188-201; Grigg, *Lives of David Brainerd*, 164-176.

Gospel like Brainerd's. Stoughton wrote that "his bodily agonies were very great, but his mind was fixed on spiritual things, especially on the interests of the Church of Christ."¹⁰¹

Whether coincidental or not, within the same journal edition that contained Stoughton's piece, there is another article on "the doctrine and motive of self-sacrifice" written by the editor of journal, Edmond de Pressensé. The article, "Practical Addresses to the Students for the Ministry," was written as a warning against the likelihood of misunderstanding self-sacrifice. Pressensé showed that an evangelist will often be fixed on the idea that they are sacrificing themselves in order to achieve salvation of the self. Pressensé argued that human frailty allowed the Christian, even after conversion, to be tempted by self-interest and, therefore, to miss the true meaning of taking up the cross. They often confused sacrifice and suffering with "pastoral visitation, or punctual discharge of pecuniary obligation, or...the master of the technicalities of any science from chemistry to theology." Pressensé continued, writing that "it is too hard, too difficult, too irksome to many a minister to take the pains that are indispensable to produce a deepest effect upon his fellow-men." In short, many have utterly "failed in the Christian law of sacrifice." Citing 1 Corinthians 6:20, Pressensé reminded the reader that "you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your body and spirit, which are His." According to Pressensé, all those who take up the cross must be willing to truly suffer and sacrifice in selfless imitation of Christ. To have the self in mind when "sacrificing" would subvert the true "law of sacrifice."¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ John Stoughton, "Apostles to the Indians: No. II David Brainerd," *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 7 (1877), 447,449, and 450.

¹⁰² Edmond de Pressensé, "Practical Addresses to the Students for the Ministry," *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 7 (1877), 706-712.

British Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), labeled the “prince of preachers” by evangelical admirers,¹⁰³ devoted much of his life to challenging the “mannerisms, pomposities, and proprieties, once so potent in the religious world.” He worked to replace them with “a ministry not only orthodox and spiritual, but also natural in utterance, and practically shrewd.”¹⁰⁴ Spurgeon said that he figured his task was like putting “one’s foot through the lath and plaster of old affectations, to make room for the granite walls of reality.” The result was what one of his fellow ministers, W.M. Hutchings, labeled “practical Christianity.”¹⁰⁵ Spurgeon’s lectures, writings, and sermon’s, particularly his *Lectures to My Students*, were widely published in the evangelical journals discussed above and he enjoyed a wide readership by late nineteenth-century evangelicals. His reach was also considerable in that he spent much of his life devoted to the training of young ministers in his form of “practical Christianity.”¹⁰⁶

According to Spurgeon, the first step to becoming a minister of practical Christianity was to realize that to suffer as a human helped a minister in their endeavor to win souls. It brought them closer to understanding themselves as well as to those in need of salvation. Spurgeon readily shared this view and worked to explain the benefits of “why it is that the children of light sometimes walk in the thick of darkness.”¹⁰⁷ The eleventh “lecture” of *Lectures to My Students*, “The Minister’s Fainting Fits,” is devoted to explaining the necessary suffering of man,

¹⁰³ See Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1992).

¹⁰⁴ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: A Selection From Addresses Delivered to the Student of The Pastors’ College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1875), vi.

¹⁰⁵ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, vi; W. M. Hutchings, *Smoking to the Glory of God: A Letter to the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon In Reply to His Apology For Smoking, With Special Reference to the Principle On Which That Apology Is Based*, 2nd ed. (London: W. M. Hutchings Pub, 1874), 14

¹⁰⁶ See, Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 40-45.

¹⁰⁷ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 167.

especially the Christian minister. Spurgeon was very careful to note that by sharing in human suffering the Christian minister has the greatest ability to save souls. He even claimed that the angels could not match the witness of a suffering minister. He explained:

good men are promised tribulation in this world...that they may learn sympathy with the Lord's suffering people, and so may be fitting shepherds of an ailing flock. Disembodied spirits might have been sent to proclaim the word, but they could not have entered into the feelings of those who, being in this body, do groan being burdened...Men, and men subject to human passions, the all-wise God has chosen to be his vessels of grace; hence these tears, hence these perplexities and castings down.¹⁰⁸

Young ministers were supposed embrace human frailty and suffering. To do so made them understand life and suffering and relate to them as “shepherds of an ailing flock.” Spurgeon reminded his students that “officialism [strict dogma/doctrine] is sick unto to death; life is the true heir to success, and is coming to its heritage.” Suffering as a human, and as imitators of Christ the man, made ministers “weapons in the hand of God.”¹⁰⁹

Spurgeon did not want his explanation of suffering and affliction to stop at sanctification. Like Finney, he wanted to extend its role as a primary ingredient in the work of evangelism. He wanted to show that “it is our duty and our privilege to exhaust our lives for Jesus. We are not to be living specimens of men in fine preservation, but living *sacrifices*, whose lot it is to be consumed.”¹¹⁰ Spurgeon believed that such a burden naturally made men of the Gospel prone to melancholy and weakness. Spurgeon's understanding of human frailty and its benefits of creating solidarity the minister's flock also made Brainerd a natural point of reference for him.

¹⁰⁸ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 168 -170.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, vi and 1-2.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 168 and 170.

Unlike the discomfort that Edwards and Wesley displayed with Brainerd's melancholy, Spurgeon found it natural and entirely acceptable. Brainerd, Spurgeon wrote, was "animated with love to Christ and souls, how did he labour always fervently... with unutterable groans and agonies 'until Christ were formed' in the hearts of the people to whom he was sent." Brainerd's sufferings did not break him, but helped bring souls to Christ, and in a sense they brought victory. Spurgeon reminded his students that Brainerd endured "and... like a true son of Jacob, he persevered in wrestling through all the darkness of the night, until the breaking of the day." Spurgeon explained that Brainerd's darkness and sorrow were not to be hidden or explained away; they were to be embraced by sinners, just like the "Man of Sorrows," Christ himself. Frailty and tears in a ministry like Brainerd's was a positive thing. Spurgeon argued, "We have the treasure of the gospel in earthen vessels, and if there be a flaw in the vessel here and there, let none wonder."¹¹¹

Suffering increasingly became a central component for every endeavor faced by an evangelical Christian. From sanctification to the work of evangelism, suffering was a marker of living according to the Gospel. Spurgeon wrote that "immersion in suffering has preceded the baptism of the Holy Ghost." Purification and holiness remained the prize, but Spurgeon allowed himself to speak against his predecessors such as Finney. Spurgeon argued that "the Lord is revealed in the backslide of the desert... defeat prepares for victory." The Christian will continue to fall throughout life on earth. But in doing so "the man shall be emptied of self, and then filled with the Holy Ghost." Spurgeon believed that the frailty of man worked in favor of God's design because "by all the castings down of his servants God is glorified, for they are led to magnify him when he sets them on their feet." Such arguments helped to ease the faithful's

¹¹¹ Ibid, 48 and 169.

concern for continued weakness even after conversion. Since he was concerned with practical applications of theology, Spurgeon knew he must speak plainly to explain and utilize the reality of human suffering. Where earlier “pomposities and proprieties” worked to explain ideals of perseverance, Spurgeon directly explained that “heaven shall be all the fuller of bliss because we have been filled with anguish here below, and earth shall be better tilted because of our training in the school of adversity.” God chose humans to convert humans because they were frail and understood frailty. If Christianity was practically explained as the imitation of Christ, then the believer could rest assured in the fact that they would suffer. They would often face betrayal by their closest friends and allies, and would be left with only God the Father to rest on.¹¹² Suffering, in some sense, offered assurance in that it was certainly a way for believers to achieve some likeness to Christ.

In the late nineteenth century the only preacher who could rival Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s fame was American evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899).¹¹³ Moody, perhaps more than any other minister, shaped modern Evangelicalism’s stress on a “personal relationship between the individual believer and God,” specifically through the “individual’s response to Christ.” In short, a relationship with God meant a focus on and relationship with Christ. Moody often proclaimed “Christ must be all in all.”¹¹⁴ Because he was a man of the people who lacked a formal education and spoke colloquially, quite a few contemporary critics had trouble in understanding his message. When once asked to clarify “the kind of Gospel he

¹¹² Ibid, 174, 178, and 179.

¹¹³ See, Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 45-51; James F. Findlay, Jr., *Dwight L. Moody: American Evangelist, 1837-1899* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

¹¹⁴ Findlay, *Dwight L. Moody*, 228 and 229.

preached...so that all might know. Mr. Moody promptly replied...that it was already in print in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah.”¹¹⁵ Biblical scholars define the “Isaiah 53” that Moody referenced as containing the verses of Isaiah 52:13-53:12. These verses make up what Christian theologians describe as the composite of the “Suffering Servant.” For Christians, these verses contain a likeness of the promised messiah made manifest in the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁶ Lyman Abbot, a sympathetic critic of Moody, put it simply, in his statement that Moody preached “the compassionate suffering...sacrificing, agonizing love of God.” Moody believed that Christ was the “Suffering Servant” promised in Isaiah 53, and he felt that Christianity was simply the devout following and imitation of Christ. Moody believed that “the suffering Christ on the cross, his death, and his emergence from the grave, must be caught up vicariously into immediate experience...these events must be felt existentially, gripping the totality of one’s existence.” In a short daily devotional compiled by his daughter Moody urged the believer to abandon the concept of suffering as a sense of duty and see their suffering as love to Christ in return for the Christ’s love to him. By doing so, the believer will count “it a joy to labor, and even suffer, for his blessed Master.”¹¹⁷ Suffering out of love and for the love of Christ, was then, Moody’s gospel, and his summary of what it was to be a Christian.

Moody’s use of Isaiah 53 to summarize his faith and concept of suffering shows that suffering in imitation of Christ was one of the most salient concepts within Evangelicalism from

¹¹⁵ Robert, Boyd. *Moody and Sankey, Their Lives and Labours; Together with A History of the Present Great Religious Movement* (London: Ward, Lock and Tyler, 1875), 63.

¹¹⁶ Richard E. Averbeck, “Christian Interpretations of Isaiah 53” in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology*, ed. Darrel L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2012), 33-34.

¹¹⁷ Findlay, *Dwight L. Moody*, 229 and 230; Emma Moody Fitt, *The D.L. Moody Year Book: A Living Daily Message from the Words of D.L. Moody* (New York: The Caxton Press, 1900), 118-119.

the time of David Brainerd through the nineteenth century. Brainerd used the passage multiple times in his ministry to “his Indians” and witnessed a “remarkable influence attending the Word, and great concern in the assembly...as if pierced at the heart, crying incessantly for mercy...the Spirit of God seemed to seize them with concern for their souls.” In his private prayers and his sermons, Brainerd painted a picture of the Suffering Servant based on Isaiah that seemed to motivate his audience beyond all other pieces of Scripture. He called Isaiah 53:10, “yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him,” “that sacred passage” that gave him “great assistance” and held “amazing power.”¹¹⁸ For evangelicals of the nineteenth century the affecting power of the atonement was the immensity of Christ’s suffering. Brainerd found Isaiah’s message the most potent for making converts. Champions of Evangelicalism in the nineteenth century, such as Spurgeon and Moody, agreed that to be a Christian was to suffer just like Christ. This imitation was the best encapsulation of the process of sanctification, or how the believer became holy. Moody wrote, “trouble is coming. No one is exempt. God has had one Son without sin, but he has never had one without sorrow.” He then explained “Jesus Christ, our Master, suffered as few men ever suffered, and He died very young. Ours is a path of sorrow and suffering, and it is sweet to hear the Master say ‘I will be with you in trouble.’”¹¹⁹ The enterprise of being a Christian mandated that the believer suffer, but evangelicals believed they suffered *with* Christ, and in the process glorified God and reached absolute holiness and the cessation of suffering when their earthly life passed to the next.

¹¹⁸ Brainerd, in Edwards, *Life of Brainerd*, 307, 295, and 296.

¹¹⁹ Fitt, *The D.L. Moody Year Book*, 124.

CONCLUSION

“Those storms and tempests are yet before you.”* The Evangelical Embrace of Suffering

The arms of your hands be made strong, by the right hand of the mighty God of Jacob

Genesis 49:24

Evangelical expressions of faith continued to proliferate within Anglo-American Christendom through the close of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. For example, the Student Mission Movement that started in 1886 reinvigorated the missionary zeal within Evangelicalism for the dawning century and, as John Grigg convincingly outlines, also helped extend interest in David Brainerd (1718-1747) to evangelicals of the twentieth century. Brainerd, Grigg argues convincingly, not only showed young believers how to pray, but also demonstrated a “brave self-denial” that was necessary for any evangelistic effort.¹ By 1940, Thomas H. Johnson had also proven, in his *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards*, that Edwards’s *Life of David Brainerd* had been consistently reprinted in Europe and America for almost two-hundred years.² Beyond the re-printings of Edwards’s *Life of Brainerd*, Evangelical missionaries like Claud Field offered their own retellings of Brainerd and other “heroes of the missionary enterprise” as early as 1908. Field worked to inspire and guide young Christians on how to “be willing to sever the tenderest ties” to serve Christ and advance the Gospel message to

* “David Brainerd to his brother John,” in Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. Norman Pettit, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 498-499.

¹ John A. Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of an American Evangelical Icon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 176-181. For more on the Student Mission Movement see Michael Parker, *The Kingdom of Character: The Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (1886-1926)* (Lanham, MD: American Society of Missiology and University Press of America, 1998).

² Thomas H. Johnson, *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940). See also Grigg, *Lives of Brainerd*, 195-197.

those in need.³ Well before Field presented the “heroics” of missionaries like Brainerd to a new generation of faithful, Christians across the evangelical spectrum had been regularly exposed to sermons and treatises from ministers and influential Church leaders, like Edmond de Pressensé, exposing the “mysteries of suffering,” its necessity, and its “relation to the Christian life.” Pressensé’s *The Mystery of Suffering and Other Discourses* was translated to English for American audiences as early as 1869 and belonged to a series of evangelical works that consistently, as I have shown, maintained that by suffering the Christian “shows whether [they] love Christ only in the day of prosperity, or whether, [they love] Him for His own sake [and] bless Him even amidst privations and beneath the cross.”⁴ It is clear that by the beginning of the twentieth century David Brainerd’s enduring legacy as the evangelical embodiment of Christian discipleship was regularly understood as the willingness to suffer all things in pursuit of Christ and the enlargement of his kingdom.

Evangelicalism’s embrace of suffering, and Brainerd’s enduring link to its religious purposes, figure prominently in such works as Richard Ellsworth Day’s *Flagellant on Horseback: The Life Story of David Brainerd* (1950). Day published his retelling of Brainerd’s life with the intent of having it read solely as a devotional guide and inspirational work for evangelical Christians that called special attention to Brainerd’s “methods of travail.” In the opening letter (“Belle Mare”) to his readers, Day recreates an imagined encounter with Brainerd while researching his book and dramatically recounts how when asked about his “methods” for missionary work, Brainerd responded with an eloquent simplicity that “I have known but one

³ Claud Field, *Heroes of Missionary Enterprise: True Stories of the Intrepid Braver and Stirring Adventures of Missionaries with Uncivilised Man, Wild Beasts, and the Forces of Nature in all Parts of the World* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1908), 7.

⁴ Edmond de Pressensé, *The Mystery of Suffering and Other Discourses*, trans. Annie Harwood (New York: Carlton and Lanahan, 1869), 72-73.

method...travail!" When Day protested that it sounded like "flagellantism," Brainerd assured his interlocutor that it was, but then rationalized and implored, "everything else has failed. Try it!" Day concedes that it was "fearful" to think of relying on such self-lacerating afflictions to fulfill the Christian's calling, but that by enduring suffering for God, "glory" would come, and that ultimately "travail, it seems, is evermore the dark harbinger of triumph."⁵

The belief that willful suffering was a chief sign of grace received and of complete devotedness to Christ was not pioneered by David Brainerd. Forefathers of the evangelical movement such as Puritan dissenters of varying sectarian suasions, including John Bunyan, had long established the need to *feel* grace in their faith. In his own spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), Bunyan wrote that "I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel, even that under which my poor soul did groan and tremble to astonishment."⁶ Bunyan's *The Pilgrims Progress* (1678), next to the Bible the most popularly circulated and read work late in the eighteenth-century, offered a prototypical allegory in which Christian, an everyman, journeys through trials, temptations, and tribulations on his quest to the "Celestial City." For early Puritan seekers and saints, such as Bunyan, so too later for Brainerd, endurance of suffering while attempting to devote oneself entirely to God was one of the best signs that God had bestowed his grace to a sinner. English-American ministers such as Thomas Shepard, one among many Puritan theologians who experientially recorded their own soul-searing conversions and extremities in the pursuit of an assured sanctification, continued this

⁵ Richard Ellsworth Day, *Flagellant on Horseback: The Life Story of David Brainerd* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1950), 16-17.

⁶ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005), 67. For more on Bunyan and feeling of grace and election see W.R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), 87-88.

theme and reminded his own parishioners that they could look to suffering for “evidence of thy justification and favor with God.”⁷ At least eighty years before Brainerd set out on his mission to American Indians, suffering was regularly looked to as a way to understand and explain the physical manifestations of grace.

When Brainerd first experienced sorrow and agony in his faith during the process of conversion, he mostly did so as a Puritan. He came to believe that it was only by the endurance of great affliction that a sinner would come to know Christ, and that those who did not experience this affliction were unlikely to have received God’s saving grace. His resolve on this matter proved problematic in his young life, since it was his belief in a pained, woe-full conversion that probably cost him his academic career at Yale and a normal path to the ministry. While his expulsion from Yale cast a dark shadow over much of the rest of his life, his compromised path to the ministry through the travails of a mission-centered discipleship is assuredly a pivotal moment in the rise of Anglo-American Evangelicalism and constitutive of the importance of suffering for all followers of Christ.

Brainerd eventually threw himself whole heartedly into his missionary work once it became clear that any reconciliation with Yale and a proper path to a pastorate was unlikely. As a novice missionary, Brainerd at first struggled to make connections with “his people.” He also noticed early on that the people he was sent to convert were suffering mightily in their current state and that the prevailing view that the missionary must civilize the Indians before he converted them did nothing to alleviate the Indian’s condition, nor peaked much interest in Christianity. Thus far, Brainerd was forced to acknowledge the Indian encounter with Europeans

⁷ Thomas Shepard, *The Sound Believer. A Treatise of Evangelical Conversion. Discovering the Work of Christ’s Spirit in Reconciling of a Sinner to God* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 258.

had been overwhelmingly negative. The employment of deception to acquire Indian lands and the willingness to murder in order to punish crimes such as theft had left an altogether negative view of European culture and Christianity among most of the Indians he attempted to reach. Brainerd quickly learned that before anyone listened, he first had to establish among his audience a sense of trust that he was not there to make anyone more like the Europeans by showing them that he was sincerely invested in spreading only the religious message he himself believed. After this, Brainerd also found that much of the emphasis on hellfire and damnation that Christian ministers often relied upon to inspire, even to terrify, sinners to seek out Christ had little effect among the Indians. Prompted by these failures to reformulate his own, different, doctrinal approach, Brainerd turned to and then refined the only method and message he perceived that could create trust and proof of his sincerity – the way to Christ through experiential suffering. By suffering *with* his audience, in their travels and food shortages, he could establish trust and show he believed and was willing to suffer for the message he wanted to share. He also found that the recounting of Christ's immense suffering for the absolution of sinners he never knew drew forth a genuine curiosity and intense interest in the Gospel message, notably beyond what employing the threat of eternal damnation ever created. Brainerd learned that if he were to make converts and show his heart-felt faith, he must suffer boldly in the cause of Christ.

The record and recommendations of Brainerd's suffering discipleship that he shared in his public and private journals were widely embraced by Christians on both sides of the Atlantic. His sponsoring society, the Society in Scotland for Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), thoroughly believed that the most fitting name for the account that Brainerd sent them

was *Divine Grace Displayed*.⁸ Brainerd succeeded in demonstrating to an emerging transatlantic and evangelical movement that suffering to spread the Word of God required the undeniable display of the reception of God's grace. Through the course of Brainerd's education and ministry, Evangelicalism's most staunch and consistent early apologist, Jonathan Edwards, was simultaneously building a defense of evangelical revivalism by offering an outline of "religious affections" and "Christian Practice" that centered on the willingness to suffer for Christ and his message.⁹ When Edwards first encountered Brainerd, he instantly recognized that Brainerd and his work offered the physical and spiritual embodiment of his theological defense of revivalism. After Brainerd's death, Edwards rushed to publish Brainerd's journal as the capstone and final proof of his belief in the orthodoxy of the revivals and the legitimacy of the evangelical expression of Christianity.

Edwards's endorsement of Brainerd and his suffering discipleship proved so compelling that it made Brainerd the fulcrum of the evangelical understanding of suffering in the life of faith and the sanctification of the believer. Edwards legitimized Evangelicalism by showing that the Puritan "founding fathers" had long relied upon suffering to separate the faithful from the hypocrites.¹⁰ Through his apologetics and promotion of Brainerd as an exemplar, Edwards also "made" suffering evangelical by showing how the endurance and embrace of suffering sanctified the believer since it proved a believer's devotion and, most of all, enlarged the kingdom of Christ. Woeful affliction linked Evangelicalism to the solid orthodox foundations of the Puritan

⁸ See David Brainerd, *Divine Grace Displayed; or the Continuance and Progress of a remarkable work of Grace Among some Indians belonging to the Provinces of New Jersey and Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1746).

⁹ See Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

past, while simultaneously it made suffering central to Evangelicalism's answering of Christ's great commission to bring the Gospel message to all mankind.

By the close of the eighteenth century, Evangelicalism's embrace of suffering was resolute. Calvinist heirs of Edwards such as Samuel Hopkins and even Methodist opponents such as John Wesley recognized and embraced suffering as the best way to both sanctify the believer and draw others to Christ. As the movement continued to grow in the nineteenth century, theologians and evangelists such as Nathaniel Taylor and Charles Finney added to the corpus of evangelical theology, but when it came to "practical" recommendations to fellow ministers, both Finney and Taylor continued to advocate suffering as the best way to reach holiness and "harvest souls."¹¹ The centrality of suffering to the evangelical experience of faith continued through to the later decades of the nineteenth century and was not isolated only to American expressions. Charles H. Spurgeon, England's most prominent evangelical minister, readily embraced suffering in his formulation of "practical Christianity" and showed that because of the human experience of suffering, God relied upon man, not angels, to enlarge his flock.¹² By the end of the nineteenth century, Evangelical Christians knew, via the constant reminders from ministers like Spurgeon, that if they suffered like Brainerd, they would persevere and join him in heaven.

The prominence of a doctrine of suffering that had developed within Evangelicalism only guaranteed that its influence remained in the twentieth century. During the interwar years Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German theologian and later victim of Nazi persecution, presented a

¹¹ See Nathaniel W. Taylor, *Practical Sermons* (New York: Clark, Austin, & Smith, 1858); Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

¹² Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: A Selection From Addresses Delivered to the Student of The Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1875).

summary of “Christian discipleship” to fellow believers in peril that not only embraced suffering as essential to the Christian life, but showed that God’s grace would not come without it.¹³ After the Second World War, those from within the fold of Evangelicalism held to this line, and some still, like Richard Ellsworth Day, continued to look to Brainerd. Day believed that Brainerd was an “example of those who spoke in the Name of the Lord through suffering affliction.”¹⁴ Even more prominent twentieth-century theologians and philosophers, like Paul Tillich, who continued the trend of predecessors like Nathaniel Taylor, produced volumes of complex theological works that were accompanied by practical sermons to students that relied on suffering to break down and explain their complex positions. In *The Shaking of the Foundations*, Tillich maintained that arriving at truth required going “through the depths of suffering,” but reassured his students not to worry since “grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness.”¹⁵ The painful efforts that Brainerd employed to bring others to Christ set a powerful precedent for generations of evangelical believers to come. If a believer were to accept Christ, know the truth, and bring others to Him, they must suffer. For more than two hundred years, this belief was central to Evangelicalism. David Brainerd the eighteenth-century promulgator and popularizer of a doctrine of suffering still endures as a living inspiration for his Evangelical followers weathering the “storms and tempests” of discipleship in the embrace of suffering.

¹³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1963).

¹⁴ Day, *Flagellant on Horseback*, 66.

¹⁵ Paul Tillich, “The Depth of Existence,” in *The Shaking of the Foundations* (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock, 2011 reprint), 61; Tillich, “You are Accepted,” in *Shaking of the Foundations*, 160.

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