'A GOOD AND SENSIBLE MAN':
JOHN WESLEY'S READING AND USE OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

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Abstract:

This paper will examine John Wesley's reading of Jonathan Edwards and the manner in which he mediated Edwards to 'the people called Methodist' through the editing, publishing, and dissemination of Edwards' works. It will include a consideration of the 1778 sermon, 'Some Account of the Late Work of God in America' in which Wesley co-opts Edwards for use in a historical narrative designed to legitimate Methodism as a genuine work of God as well as to extend Wesley's opposition to the democratic spirit that had led to the American Revolution. Wesley describes his own work in Georgia and the awakening in Northampton reported in Edwards' Faithful Narrative of a Suprising Work of God (1736), as though they were two parts of a continuous and converging stream. In so doing he smooths over the historical complexities and continuities, rewriting history to serve his own purposes. Though Wesley's admiration for Edwards is clear his selective use of the latter's writings was guided by the conviction that they contained 'wholesome food...mixed with much deadly poison.'

Introduction

There is a clear trend in the study of the origins of evangelicalism to stress its international dimensions. Britain and America were by no means isolated from events in central Europe that gave rise to new religious minorities which were focused on personal spiritual renewal, partly as a means of resisting absorption by church and state. As David Hempton states it, 'Religious identities in the British Isles are not as hermetically sealed as they first appear.'

In [the displaced and persecuted minorities of Habsburg-dominated central Europe] a tangled web of circulating literature, itinerant revivalists and folk migrations combine to show that the great awakening of the eighteenth century was more of an international event than many have imagined, and cannot be reduced to the social and economic peculiarities of specific places, however much they may have shaped the distinctive local expression of revival enthusiasm.

Reg Ward insisted that eighteenth-century revivalism could ‘only be understood in the widest possible area “between the Russian and American frontiers of the European world.”’ That’s a lot of territory indeed. Methodism emerged largely as a result of international networks of piety and cannot be understood apart from this global context.

In earlier histories of revival, the tendency has been to use the term ‘Great Awakening’ for the American context and ‘Evangelical Revival’ for the British context but using separate nomenclature obscures the international nature of the movement. The term ‘transatlantic’ also has its limitations because it is usually understood to mean Britain on the one side and America on the other. The global dimensions of religious revival make the story more

1 David Hempton, Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 151.
2 Hempton, Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland, 151.
complex than that. While Britain and America were overwhelmingly Anglo and Anglo-Celtic in the eighteenth century both were also sites of significant non-Anglo people and cultures. The rise of Methodism is inexplicable without reference to European diaspora populations in Britain and America including Moravians, Palatines, Huguenots, and Swedes. John Wesley was connected to the leaders of these movements and his contacts open up insights into the complex web of international networks that created the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century. This paper will consider Wesley’s appropriation and use of the writings of the New England revivalist Jonathan Edwards and argue that such use indicated a genuine (though qualified) respect for Edwards and at the same time served to legitimate Methodism as a genuine work of God.

Wesley’s Reading of Edwards

John Wesley first read Jonathan Edwards’ *Faithful Narrative of a Suprising Work of God* on 9 October 1738 en route to Oxford. ‘In walking I read the truly surprising narrative of the conversions lately wrought in and about the town of Northampton in New England. Surely, “this is the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in our eyes!”’ He abridged the work for Methodists in 1744, and forty years after his first reading he could still describe it as ‘a particular and beautiful account’ of a ‘wonderful work of God.’

Albert Outler saw Wesley’s reading of the *Faithful Narrative* as one of several ‘climactic experiences’ of 1738, which included the influences of the Moravians and Salzburgers in Georgia, his Aldersgate experience on 24 May, and his pilgrimages soon after to the Moravian communities of Marienborn and Hernhutt. The reading of the *Faithful Narrative* ‘shook’ him because it spoke of a revival being stirred by a form of pietism much like his own yet at a time of instability in his own personal journey, as he found himself even after Aldersgate, still ‘beating the air’ in trying to reconcile his theology of justification with his personal experience. According to Outler this set of cumulative experiences drove him back to his own Anglican tradition where in the Edwardian Homilies he found an articulation of the doctrine of justification, ‘the theological font of his own heritage,’ which ‘remained as a fixed benchmark for the rest of his theological development.’

That Edwards was an important influence on Wesley is clear from the latter’s publishing activity. He published an extract of The *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741) in July 1744. [Is this the sermon preached by Edwards at Yale?] On Monday 12 May 1746 at the Bristol Conference both the *Faithful Narrative* and the *Distinguishing Marks* were read by the preachers (possibly out loud). On Saturday 9 December 1749 Wesley read Edwards’ popular *Life of David Brainerd* which had been published that year. In 1768 he published his own abridgment of the 1765 English edition and urged the preachers at the Conference of that year to:

Let every preacher read carefully over the life of Mr. Brainerd. 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

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4 Journal (BCE), 19:16.
to God and man. We want nothing but this. Then the word and the devil must fall under our feet.\footnote{9}{Henry Rack, ed. The Methodist Societies, Works (BCE) vol. 10: 365.}

While he rejoiced at the way God had once more ‘surely…given to the Gentiles repentance unto life,’ Wesley also had some criticism for Brainerd.

Yet amidst so great matter of joy I could not but grieve at this, that even so good a man as Mr. Brainerd should be ‘wise above that is written’ [1 Cor. 4:6] in condemning what the Scripture nowhere condemns, in prescribing to God the way wherein he should work, and (in effect) applauding himself and magnifying his own work above that which God wrought in Scotland or among the English in New England; whereas in truth the work among the Indians, great as it was, was not to be compared with that at Cambuslang, Kilsyth, or Northampton.\footnote{10}{Wesley, Journal entry for Monday 4 Dec, 1749, in Journals and Diaries III Works (BCE) 20: 315.}

Wesley abridged Edwards’s Treatise on Religious Affections (1746) in 1773.\footnote{11}{Though it appeared in an edition of his Works in 1773 (vol. XXIII), it was not published separately during Wesley’s lifetime. Works [BCE] Journals and Diaries 18: 11 fn. 44.}

His most extended interaction with Edwards’s ideas in print is probably Thoughts upon Necessity (written from Glasgow and dated 4 May 1774), in which Wesley responded to David Hume’s essay, Of Liberty and Necessity and its attempt to preserve human freedom within the overall framework of determinism.\footnote{12}{John Wesley, ‘Thoughts upon Necessity,’ Works (Jackson), 10: 460, 463. 467, 475.}


Wesley rejected the determinism of both Hume and Edwards because he could not ‘believe the noblest creature in the visible world to be only a fine piece of clockwork.’\footnote{14}{John Wesley, ‘Thoughts upon Necessity,’ Works (Jackson), 10: 456 (456-474)\footnote{15}{John Wesley, ‘Thoughts upon Necessity,’ Works (Jackson), 10: 460, 463.\footnote{16}{John Wesley, ‘Thoughts upon Necessity,’ Works (Jackson), 10: 467.\footnote{17}{John Wesley, ‘Thoughts upon Necessity,’ Works (Jackson), 10: 474-80, quote on 475.}}

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In a further Thought on Necessity, Wesley refers to ‘that great man, President Edwards of New-England,’ in his reply to Dr. Hartley’s ‘Essay on Man.’\footnote{18}{Hartley had reduced all human action to vibrations within the brain giving the doctrine of necessity a physiological foundation. Wesley asked why Hartley would publish such ideas, seeing they would destroy morality by leaving no room for either vice or virtue. ‘Why? Because his brain vibrated in such a matter that he could not help it.’ Edwards, according to Wesley, makes the same error in his reply to David Hume’s Of Liberty and Necessity.舒适。}
attributing all actions of the will to the effects of impression upon the pineal gland or some other part of the brain. ‘Where is liberty then? It is excluded. All you see, is one connected chain, fixed as the pillars of heaven…inevitable necessity governs all things, and men have no more liberty than stones.’

Wesley is not wishing to champion any doctrine of free will however, in his rejection of this particular view of necessity. He goes on to insist that free will is as incapable of determining human action as reason. Both have no more pull over human nature ‘than a thread of tow that has touched the fire.’ The will is always subject to divine grace and two texts must always be placed together - ‘Without me, ye can do nothing’ and ‘I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.’ In the final analysis, for Wesley, neither reason nor free will are the determining factors in human volition, but the power and the grace of God in Christ.

In his journal entry for 16 June 1775, Wesley compared the awakening in England with that in Scotland and New England. God had undoubtedly ‘laid bare his arm’ in all three places but he considered England to be more significant for the following reasons. More people were reached and their transformation was more rapid. The change people experienced was clearer, deeper and more long lasting. Where Scotland and New England saw God move for weeks or months at a time, in England the work has extended over eighteen years without interruption. In Scotland and New England, God used ‘a considerable number’ of prominent and talented clergy but in England, God had used ‘only two or three inconsiderable clergy, with a few, young, raw, unlettered men’ opposed by clergy and laity alike. A week later on 23 June, he took up the same line of thought, this time asking why the revival had ground to a halt in Scotland and New England. Many of the leaders of the revival became wise in their own eyes and thought that God could not work but through them. ‘Many of them were bigots, immoderately attached either to their own opinions or mode of worship.’ Somewhat uncharitably perhaps, Wesley claims ‘Mr. Edwards himself was not clear of this. But the Scotch bigots were beyond all others, placing Arminianism (so called) on a level with Deism, and the Church of England with that of Rome…No marvel then that the Spirit of God was grieved. Let us profit by their example.’

In his 1773 abridgment of Edwards’s Treatise on Religious Affections (1746), Wesley saw the many that fell away after the New England revival as proof that a believer ‘may make shipwreck of the faith,’ Edwards determined instead that such people were never genuinely converted in the first place.

In order to do this, he heaps together so many curious, subtle, metaphysical distinctions, as are sufficient to puzzle the brain, and confound the intellects, of all the plain men and women in the universe, and to make them doubt of, if not wholly deny, all the works which God wrought in their souls.

Out of this dangerous heap, wherein much wholesome food is mixed with much deadly poison, I have selected many remarks and admonitions which may be of great use to the children of God.

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19 John Wesley, ‘A Thought on Necessity,’ Works (Jackson), 10: 475-76.
21 Wesley, Works Journals and Diaries IV (BCE), 18-19.
22 Wesley, Works Journals and Diaries IV (BCE), 19-20.
23 ‘List of Works Revised and Abridged by the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., with the Prefaces by which They are Accompanied,’ in Works (Jackson), XIV: 269-70.
A worldwide view of the movement of grace was part of the legacy of the pietist world to the evangelicals. Exchange of information of this kind was one of the ways in which expectations were created which were satisfied by the spread of the revival itself. In the 1740s John Erskine and other spokesmen for the Scots’ revivals…exchanged correspondence and literature with Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Prince, and other American friends of Whitefield, from which developed an historical view that God’s saving activity was not, as the hypercalvinists alleged, at an ebb, but at a flood tide a view massively documented in standard works such as John Gillies, *Historical collections relating to remarkable periods of the success of the gospel*. (4 vols 1754-96), and its successors.25

Wesley traces the ‘first wheel’ in terms of his ministry in Georgia believing that in 1736 God had begun a work of grace in that southern colony.26 This is an interesting description given that historians often view Wesley’s brief two years in Georgia from 1736-37 as marked by personal and professional failure and as something of a spiritual wasteland. This suits the evangelical narrative of the religious seeker who must first reach the bottom of the barrel before finding the ‘glorious liberty’ entailed in the new birth. It is certainly not that the established narrative is without compelling historical evidence; the problem is that historians have sometimes found it difficult to see the Georgia sojourn on its own terms, divorced from later developments. Geordan Hammond’s recent study, *John Wesley in America*, presents a convincing case that Wesley’s time in Georgia was not a failure or a mere prelude to greater things; rather it provided an opportunity for Wesley to apply the disciplines and practices of primitive Christianity that had fascinated him since his days as a student at Oxford.27

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26 Wesley, *The Late Work of God in North-America*, 4-12.
27 Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2014). One of the great strengths of this book is that it draws upon primary sources on the colony of Georgia that Wesley biographers have neglected and that are helpful in shedding new light on Wesley’s time there. These include The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia and the diaries and journals of trustees of the colony such as John Perceval, first Earl of Egmont and William Stephens, trustee of the colony during Wesley’s last months there. The author is careful not to rely solely on Wesley’s published journals recognising that these are constructed accounts designed for public consumption. Though Henry Rack described the Georgia journals as ‘a selective and slanted account,’ (Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*. 3rd ed. (London: Epworth, 2002), 113), Hammond nonetheless concludes after crosschecking Wesley’s private diaries as well as the journals of Charles Wesley, Benjamin Ingham, Thomas Causton and many others, that they remain ‘an accurate and reliable picture.’ (Hammond, John Wesley in America, 11). This book is also the first full length treatment of the influence of the so-called ‘Usager’ Non-Jurors on Wesley’s liturgical and
in the American wilderness he was given the opportunity to apply pastoral practices that would later be adapted and developed in the Methodist movement. It is not that this was not a personally turbulent time for Wesley (his failed romance with Sophia Hopkey and his unpopularity with some of his parishioners are well known) but the greater significance of this period of Wesley’s life is that it enabled him to experiment with the ideal of ‘Primitive Christianity’ in ways that shaped the later development of Methodism. Georgia should, then, not be seen as a lacuna in Wesley’s spiritual journey but as a defining period.

Wesley included the English, the Moravians, and the Germans from Saltzburg as the beneficiaries of the work of grace in Georgia. At the same time Wesley affirms that an awakening of the English took place in Savannah and Frederica and links this to the New England Awakening in Northampton, Massachusetts and ‘adjoining towns’ an account of which was published by Jonathan Edwards in the *Faithful Narrative*. ‘I suppose, there had been no influence in America, of so swift and deep a work of Grace, for an hundred years before: Nay, nor perhaps since the English settled there.’28 The following year the work spread from New England to the South and at the same time proceeded northward from Georgia in a kind of pincer movement.”29 In 1738 George Whitefield came to Georgia to assist Wesley either in preaching to the Indians or to the settlers, but because Wesley had left for England before Whitefield arrived he preached only to the settlers. He began in Georgia and then preached his way north through ‘South and North Carolina’ and ‘in the intermediate provinces’ until he came to New England. Whitefield made many converts along the way, so that ‘by his Ministry a line of Communication was formed, quite from Georgia to New England.’ Over several years Whitefield made ‘several more journeys through the Provinces’ [in fact he made seven] and God prospered the work greatly.30

This linking of Georgia with Edward’s famous revival is an interesting strategy and an instance of breathtaking hubris. Wesley describes his own work in Georgia and the awakening in Northampton, as though they were two parts of a continuous and converging stream, connected by the itinerancy of his Oxford colleague George Whitefield. In doing this he smooths over the historical complexities and continuities, rewriting history to serve his own purposes.

On Whitefield’s final journey he was saddened to find that most who formerly been awakened had now fallen away, and very few had ‘brought forth fruit to perfection.’31 Wesley seizes upon this observation to set forth (in a back handed way) the value of the Methodist system of classes and bands.

> And what wonder? For it was a true saying, which was common in the ancient church, ‘The soul and the body make a man, and the Spirit and discipline make a Christian.’ But those who were more or less affected by Whitefield’s preaching, had no discipline at all. They had no sacrificial practice. The ‘Non-Jurors’ were those Anglican clergy who refused to sign the Oath of Allegiance to William (1689-1702) and Mary (1689-94) because of their support for the deposed Stuart monarchy. Non-Jurists had a fascination for the practices of the early church and sought to re-establish many of them in the Church of England. The ‘Usagers’ were a party of Non-Jurors who were committed to the ‘use’ of (1) Mixing water with the Eucharistic wine (2) a prayer of oblation over the elements understood as a representative sacrifice (3) a prayer of blessing over the Eucharistic elements and (4) prayer for the faithful dead during the Eucharist.

28 Wesley, *The Late Work of God in North-America*, 5.
29 Wesley, *The Late Work of God in North-America*, 5-6.
shadow of discipline; nothing of the kind. They were formed into no Societies. They had no Christian connexion with each other, nor were ever taught to watch over each other’s souls. So that if any fell into lukewarmness, or even into sin, he had none to lift him up: He might fall lower and lower; yea into hell if he would; for who regarded it?32

Things remained like this until Wesley received several letters from America describing the low state of religion there and requesting that he send some preachers over to help revive the work. This was considered at the 1769 Conference and Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore were sent.33 They preached first in Philadelphia and New York. People responded and Societies were formed ‘and Christian discipline introduced in all its branches.’ Other preachers followed and God also raised up native-born American preachers ‘till there were two and twenty travelling preachers in America, who kept their circuits as regularly as those in England.’34 The work spread to North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the Jerseys and ‘sunk abundantly deeper than it ever had before’ so that ‘at the beginning of the late troubles’ there were three thousand in the Societies.35

Then ‘a bar appeared in the way, a grand hindrance to the progress of Religion.’ An increase in trade bought immense wealth to the American colonies and many grew wealthy. This led to pride and luxury. Abundant banquets filled the tables of Americans, up to twenty dishes at a sitting and this was not condemned but praised as generosity and hospitality.36 Idleness and sloth sprung from this luxury. Young people in perfect health could not even put on their own clothes but had to be dressed by slaves. It is a wonder they did not get slaves to hand feed them as well, as ‘the lordly lubbers in China are fed by a slave standing on each side.’37 Sloth and luxury had led to sexual immorality. A letter from Philadelphia informed Wesley that if he thought the women of England did not abound in chastity, they would pass as vestal virgins compared to the women of Philadelphia.38

Now Wesley traces the second ‘Wheel of Divine Providence’. From the beginning of the American colonies there had been a ‘hankering after Independency’. This is understandable considering the connections they had formed before leaving England and the poor treatment they had received there. They were never well reconciled to the government and they passed that attitude on to their children in their new setting. This was in spite of the many favours and benefits they had received from the English government.39 This spirit prevailed, especially in Boston, as early as 1737, as witnessed by Charles Wesley during his visit there in that year. Many were crying for independence even then but there was no plan to assert it since none thought they could stand against the ‘power of Great Britain.’40

‘Why should these English blockheads rule over us?’ was the general sentiment and this spread to the other colonies. But there was a fear of the French in Canada against which British military power served as a buffer. Once Canada was ceded to Britain, definite plans

32 Wesley, The Late Work of God in North-America, 7-8.
34 Wesley, The Late Work of God in North-America, 8-9.
35 Wesley, The Late Work of God in North-America, 9.
36 Wesley, The Late Work of God in North-America, 10-11.
37 Wesley, The Late Work of God in North-America, 11.
38 Wesley, The Late Work of God in North-America, 12.
40 Wesley, The Late Work of God in North-America, 13-14.
for separation began to be drawn up. An opportunity was provided by the Stamp Act of 1765 and agitators began to press their claims and spread their ideas among the people. They vilified the British Parliament, speaking as if they were the vilest wretches and villains alive. They had not yet turned to attacks upon the king but this was soon to follow. Northern and Southern Colonies then took up arms and formed a Congress. At first they spoke not of independence but only of liberty, but soon they threw off this mask and showed their true intent. Dr. Witherspoon, President of the College in New Jersey addressed the Congress (published in a sermon in 1776) and made it clear that the British Parliament had not understood the extent of American claims. William Pitt’s [‘Lord Chatham’s’] Bill of Reconciliation would never have been consented to in America and it was clear that their agenda was Independence. Once they had defected from the mother country nine tenths of their trade was cut off so they turned to privateering (piracy). But this did not profit them because they lost as many ships as they took. Their fountains of wealth dried up so that they are now as poor as the poorest parts of Scotland or Ireland. Goods are now in such short supply that not only luxury items but food and clothing also are scarce.

So the two wheels have been observed apart:

1. Trade, wealth, pride, luxury, sloth and wantonness on the one hand.
2. The Spirit of Independence spreading north and south on the other.

How do these two wheels relate to each other? How does a Wise Providence use one to check the other? By blocking British ships from American ports, trade declined and want ensued. The wheel began to move within the wheel. Once trade and wealth failed so pride failed, luxury was no longer possible, Poverty and want struck at the root of sloth. Now one must work in order to eat. Thus by the Adorable Providence of God, the main hindrances of this work were removed. The vile disease of the spirit of independence provided a cure for all the rest. The destruction of trade has made way for humility, temperance, industry and charity. So the fierceness of the Americans turns to the praise of God and they will learn to value not independence but the genuine British liberty that their ancestors in the earliest colonies had always enjoyed as well as that greater and more glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Brett C. McInnelly in his recent Textual Warfare and the Making of Methodism has investigated the manner in which eighteenth-century Methodist self-identity was formed in the context of public dispute and contestation resolved through textual discourse of various kinds. McInnelly’s work shows how Methodists responded in print to their many critics in such a way as to construct their own identity as a people. Of course Wesley led the way in this ‘textual warfare’ wielding his considerable literary and polemical skills to argue for the legitimacy of Methodism as a genuine work of God. In his providential view of history Wesley saw the American Revolution not simply in political terms. God had worked through it to teach the Americans a lesson. British Americans had been blessed by God under the
crown. They had known revival in Georgia under the Wesleys and in Northampton under Edwards, southern and northern colonies, Arminian and Calvinist, linked together by George Whitefield, the ‘first Methodist,’ the ‘Divine Dramatist’ and the ‘Pedlar of Divinity’ who made such a successful business out of revival and stood at the centre of what came to be known (whether ‘invented’ or not) as ‘the Great Awakening.’ But the Americans had grown fat and kicked in their prosperity, rebelling against their God and their pious king, George III. So God had sent war, the ‘besom of destruction’ to reduce them once again to poverty. In this way they would return once again to their first love.

Conclusions

Wesley’s appropriation of Edwards displays his usual mix of Christian charity and the unconquerable conviction of the rightness of his own opinions. In Edward’s Faithful Narrative he was given a case study that helped confirm the doctrines he had learned from the Moravians and was surprised to find also in his own Anglican tradition. Justification brought with it a deeply-felt awareness of the forgiveness of sins and a filial connection to God as Father and Christ as Saviour. While such a conversion might be accompanied by deeply emotional states that could manifest in surprising and even alarming ways, the genuine fruit of revival was not in such manifestations but in the enduring qualities of holy love – in ‘charity and its fruits.’ Wesley was an astute observer and recorder of religious experience. Too much a ‘man of reason’ to be given to flights of mystical fancy himself (remember his heart was ‘strangely’ warmed as if such emotional states were unusual for him), he looked upon the strange religious manifestations sometimes on display among Methodists with some concern and with perhaps even a trace of envy. His response to such manifestations - they could be either from God, the devil, or ‘animal spirits’ (overwrought emotional states), therefore, one should neither promote nor prohibit them but look instead for lasting holiness as the only genuine fruit of revival - was essentially the same as the approach taken by Edwards in his Religious Affections. Reg Ward and Dick Heitzenrater have argued that,

[W]hat transformed Wesley from a failed missionary into a successful outdoor evangelist was the realistic observation that when he preached after the manner of Jonathan Edwards he got results after the manner of Jonathan Edwards; that he was saved not as Peter Bohler recommended by preaching faith till he had it, but by preaching faith till he observed that other people had it.50

I am not suggesting that Edwards stands out above all other influences on Wesley but simply observing that he was an important part of the complex patchwork of religious ideas and influences that ebbed and flowed throughout the Atlantic world of the eighteenth-century. Just as with George Whitefield, it was Edwards’ Calvinism that came in for Wesley’s most trenchant criticism. Undoubtedly Edwards was ‘a good and sensible man’ yet for Wesley, his writings remained a ‘dangerous heap,’ a mixture of ‘wholesome food’ with ‘deadly poison.’ Edwards was in Wesley’s view among those whose immoderate attachment to Calvinism and bigotry toward ‘Arminians’ had quenched the Spirit and contributed to a loss of revival momentum. (Of course, Wesley could be equally immoderate in his attachment to his own side of the argument and equally bigoted toward Calvinists.) Wesley’s connection of his own work in Georgia with Edwards’ famous revival in Northampton was undoubtedly a self-

serving exercise, an attempt both to legitimise Methodism as a genuine work of God and provide an argument that the hand of Providence stood against the rebellious spirit of American independence. Yet it was also a form of flattery, an indication of how important Wesley saw Edwards. It also may serve as further evidence that the transatlantic evangelicalism of the eighteenth century exhibited the capacity to transcend denominational factionalism in the common cause of the Gospel.