THE SPIRITUALITY OF DAVID BRAINERD:
A SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE

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APPROVAL SHEET

THE SPIRITUALITY OF DAVID BRAINERD:

A SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE

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To my parents, Peter Noel and Jannifer Sue Tyrpak,
the primary examples and teachers through which "the Lord . . .
brought me to a hearty desire to exalt him, to set him on the throne
and to 'seek first his Kingdom,' . . . which is the foundation
of the religion Jesus Christ has taught" (Matt 6:33)

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PREFACE

I am grateful to many people without whose encouragements this thesis would never have been written. First, I thank my immediate family. Hannah, thank you for your loving commitment to me. Throughout the hundreds of hours I invested in this paper, you have wonderfully cared for our four children (we only had two children when we began to pursue this degree), you have graciously tolerated my absence on many evenings and "days off," and you never stopped encouraging me to finish. You are my dearest friend and teammate. Thank you, Karis, Tori, Jordan, and Vera. You have followed Mommy's lead in your constant happiness for me as I have worked so hard at becoming a doctor, even though the kind of doctor that I actually will be is not nearly as exciting as the kind of doctor that most of you imagine I will be.

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Finally, thank you, Dad and Mom. I dedicate this thesis to you. Almost twenty years ago you gave me my first copy of Brainerd's diary. It was one of hundreds of excellent books you have encouraged me to read throughout the years. Thank you for nurturing me to value books, education, history, theology, and critical thinking. Most significantly, by your example and teaching you have nurtured me to treasure the Scripture and the glorious Savior whom it reveals. I will never cease to thank you for your love for me—nor will I ever cease to thank God for you.

Joe Tyrpak

Madison, Ohio

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

David Brainerd (1718–1747) was born in Haddam, Connecticut. His father Hezekiah died when David was nine years old, and his mother, Dorothy, died when he was thirteen. Brainerd believed that he was converted at twenty-one, a few months before entering college. (For a timeline of Brainerd's adult life, see figure 1.) At twenty-three, Brainerd was expelled from his ministerial studies at Yale College for privately criticizing a tutor's lack of spirituality. After his expulsion, Brainerd was supported by a few ministers in Connecticut, with whom he finished his education and by whom he was licensed to preach. Within a few months of his itinerant preaching, Brainerd was commissioned to serve as a missionary to the American Indians under the auspices of the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of the Gospel (SSPCK).[1] For his first year of mission work (April 1743–May 1744), he was stationed at Kaunaumeek (present day East Nassau, New York) under the oversight of John Sergeant (1710–1749), who lived twenty miles east in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. For his second year of work (May 1744–June 1745), he evangelized the Indians at the Forks of the Delaware (present day Easton, Pennsylvania). Finally, Brainerd moved to Crossweeksung (present day Crosswicks, New Jersey) and worked among the native Americans from June 1745 to June 1746. In that year Brainerd baptized thirty-eight Indian adults who had converted to Christianity. In the spring of 1746 Brainerd moved this fledgling congregation from Crossweeksung to Cranberry (present day Cranbury, New Jersey) and remained with

[1] Much of the wording in this paragraph is adapted from Joseph K. Tyrpak, "David Brainerd (1718–1747)," in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, ed. Harry S. Stout (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 75.

them until illness forced him to leave later that fall. In 1746 the SSPCK published Brainerd's ministry journals from the year in Crossweeksung.[2]

Brainerd, who had been prone to debilitating sickness since his college years, had to leave his missionary work in November 1746 to recuperate. In October 1747, at the age of twenty-nine, he died of tuberculosis in the home of Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) in Northampton, Massachusetts.[3] Within two years of Brainerd's passing, Edwards published *The Life of David Brainerd*,[4] and it has been Edwards's most popular publication.[5]

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[2] Although both parts of this Brainerd's ministry journal were published in one volume in late 1746 under the title *Mr. Brainerd's Journal among the Indians*, in the present study they will be referred to as two separate titles, *Mirabilia Dei* and *Divine Grace Display'd*. David Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei inter Indicos, or the Rise and Progress of a Remarkable Work of Grace Amongst a Number of the Indians in the Provinces of New-Jersey and Pennsylvania, Justly Represented in a Journal Kept by Order of the Honourable Society (in Scotland) for Propagating Christian Knowledge* in *Mr. Brainerd's Journal among the Indians* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1746), iii–80; David Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd or the Continuance and Progress of a Remarkable Work of Grace Among Some of the Indians Belonging to the Provinces of New-Jersey and Pennsylvania, Justly Represented in a Journal Kept by Order of the Honourable Society (in Scotland) for Propagating Christian Knowledge* in *Mr. Brainerd's Journal among the Indians* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1746), 81–248. Brainerd submitted the first part, *Mirabilia Dei*, on November 20, 1745, and the second part, *Divine Grace Display'd*, on June 20, 1746. Edwards had access to the first half of Brainerd's journal, *Mirabilia Dei*, probably through the SSPCK, and he rejoiced in the report of Brainerd's success in an April 1746 sermon titled "Into the Highways and Hedges."

[3] Edwards and Brainerd had met for the first time at Yale College's commencement in September 1743 when Edwards mediated between Brainerd and the college authorities, who decided not to issue Brainerd's degree without another full year of study.

[4] Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Norman Pettit (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

[5] Joseph A. Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work: 'The Life of David Brainerd' and Nineteenth Century Evangelical Culture," *Church History* (June 1985), 188. Johnson reports forty-seven primary publications and nineteen secondary publications on David Brainerd between 1749–1957. Thomas H. Johnson, *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards, 1703–1758: A Bibliography*, ed. M. X. Lesser (New York: B. Franklin, 1970), 68–89.

<table>
<tr><th>Year</th><th>Event</th><th>Part in Edwards's Life</th></tr>
<tr><td>1739</td><td>— April 10, twenty-first birthday
— July 12, date to which he assigned his conversion
— September, began studies at Yale</td><td rowspan="2">I</td></tr>
<tr><td>1740</td><td>— January, briefly left Yale due to measles
— August - November 6, left Yale due to sickness (he "spit blood")</td></tr>
<tr><td>1741</td><td>— February, last diary entry until April 1, 1742
— November, expelled from Yale; lived with J. Mills in Ripton (CT)</td><td>Thirteen months of discarded diaries</td></tr>
<tr><td>1742</td><td>— April 1, Diary began again
— July 29, licensed to preach by Assn. in Fairfield County (CT)
— November 25, commisioned as missionary to Indians by SSPCK</td><td>II
III
IV</td></tr>
<tr><td>1743</td><td>— April 1, began first ministry assignment at Kaunaumeek (NY)
— September 14, plead for degree conferral; met Edwards</td><td rowspan="2">V</td></tr>
<tr><td>1744</td><td>— May 13, began second ministry assignment at the Forks (PA)
— June 12, ordained to ministry in New York; Pemberton preaches
— Oct 2-10, first journey to Susquehanna settlements (PA)</td></tr>
<tr><td>1745</td><td>— May 8-30, second journey to Susquehanna settlements
— June 19, began third ministry assignment in Crossweeksung (NJ)
— September 9-30, third journey to Susquehanna settlments
— November 20, sent first half of journal, Mirabilia, to SSPCK</td><td rowspan="2">VI
VII</td></tr>
<tr><td>1746</td><td>— March 24, land cleared at Cranberry (settlement moved by May 3)
— June 20, sent second half of journal, Divine Grace Display'd
— August 12 - September 13, fourth journey to Susequhanna
— November 3, left Indians to convalesce; lived with J. Dickinson (NJ)</td></tr>
<tr><td>1747</td><td>— May 28, arrived at the Edwards's home in Northampton (MA)
— June 9 - July 25, six-week trip to Boston for convalescence
— October 9, dies of consumption</td><td>VIII</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1. Timeline of Brainerd's adult life

Other than the Bible itself, *The Life of David Brainerd* seems to have been the most significant book in the birth of the nineteenth-century missionary movement, influencing Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and William Carey (1761–1834), Henry Martyn (1781–1812), Adoniram and Ann Judson (1788–1850 and 1789–1826, respectively), and the Student Volunteer Movement under the leadership of A. T. Pierson (1837–1911) and A. J. Gordon (1836–1895).[6] Yet, even though *The Life of David Brainerd* is commonly viewed as a text for missionary inspiration, Jonathan Edwards's primary intent[7] in publishing Brainerd's diaries was to promote a healthy view of evangelical spirituality.[8]

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[6] John Grigg most thoroughly catalogues the influence of the publication of Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd*. John Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of An Evangelical Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 164–87. Kenneth Minkema observes, "Supposedly, there was hardly an American missionary foreign or domestic, that did not have a copy of the book [Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd*] in his or her trunk or saddlebag as an inspiration. The work also influenced mission work abroad, such as the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society in the late eighteenth century." Kenneth P. Minkema, "*The Life of David Brainerd* (1749)," in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, ed. Harry S. Stout (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 353.

[7] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 89. In the opening sentence of his preface, Edwards states that his goal in publishing this volume is "recommending true religion." *The Life of David Brainerd* (1749) was, in Edwards's intention, the biographical counterpart to his previous work *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746). See also Norman Pettit, *The Heart Renewed: Assurance of Salvation in New England Spiritual Life* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 124. Pettit teaches that "Brainerd personified for Edwards *the* ethical man" (italics original). However, Mark Rogers cautions historians not to "downplay" Edwards's missionary intentions. He effectively argues that Edwards clearly intended to promote both true spirituality as well as "passion for the worldwide spread of the gospel." Mark C. Rogers, "A Missional Eschatology: Jonathan Edwards, Future Prophecy, and the Spread of the Gospel," *Fides et Historia* 41, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2009): 37.

[8] *Spirituality* is a confusing term today. As Howard reports, there are "some thirty-five different definitions of *spirituality*" currently in circulation. Evan B. Howard, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 15. Similarly, Haykin notes that *spirituality* "seems to mean everything—and consequently means nothing." Michael A. G. Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2007), xviii. This study will assume Alister McGrath's definition of *spirituality*. McGrath teaches that the term is not meant to emphasize the non-physical or the "purely intellectual" or "purely interiorized" life, but instead "the total integration of faith and everyday life." Alister McGrath. *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 124–25. Similarly, Glen Scorgie defines *spirituality* as "the domain of lived Christian experience." Glen G. Scorgie et al., eds., *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this study is to theologically critique the spirituality of David Brainerd in order to promote a healthier understanding and practice of biblical spirituality among evangelical Christians.[9] This study will examine Brainerd's understanding of where the spiritual life begins (i.e., conversion), his understanding of the essence of spirituality as unselfish love (i.e., disinterested benevolence), and his understanding of the daily experience of spirituality (especially, maintaining a diary to gauge one's evangelical humiliation). Based on the theological critique, this study will recommend several ways in which the modern evangelical church should be shaped by the biblically-evaluated model of historic evangelical spirituality that David Brainerd provides.

Reasons for the Study

Although David Brainerd's diaries have been internationally influential for almost three centuries, they have received little *theological* critique. Over the past century

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(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 27. In other words, *spirituality* refers the way in which one's Christian faith is lived out day to day. The term *evangelical spirituality* refers to the spirituality that (a) centers on the Bible, (b) begins with conversion, (c) stresses the heart of the gospel—the death and resurrection of Jesus, (d) is active in private and corporate disciplines, and (e) rejects crucial facets of Orthodox and Catholic spirituality such as penance, images, and the mediation of saints. This five-faceted understanding is a composite definition, using the insights of Adam, McGrath, Haykin, Howard, and Whitney. Peter Adam, *Hearing God's Words: Exploring Biblical Spirituality*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 39–40; McGrath, *Evangelicalism & the Future*, 134–37; Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near*, xiii; Howard, *The Brazos Introduction*, 15–17; Evan Howard, "Evangelical Spirituality," in *Four Views on Christian Spirituality*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Bruce Demarest (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 161–62; Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 15. Unless otherwise specified, the terms *spirituality* and *evangelical spirituality* will be used interchangeably.

[9] Throughout this study, the term *evangelical* will assume David Bebbington's "quadrilateral": *Evangelical* refers to Christianity that is marked by "*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross." D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2–3, italics original.

Brainerd's writing has been critically analyzed from a historical perspective. For example, many historians have clarified common misunderstandings: They demonstrate that David Brainerd was in fact allowed back into Yale College (although he chose not to reenroll)[10] and that there is in fact no evidence of romance between David Brainerd and Edwards's daughter, Jerusha.[11] Historian Joseph Conforti has explored the development of Brainerd's disinterested benevolence, especially in the generation of theologians immediately following Edwards.[12] In addition, Norman Pettit has explored the historical issues of Jonathan Edwards's editing of Brainerd's diaries and Edwards's intention in publishing *The Life of David Brainerd*.[13] Within the last decade John Grigg wrote the definitive critical history of David Brainerd, uncovering rich historical detail regarding the religious dissension of the era and the way Brainerd's missionary policies were similar to and different from other missionaries at the time.[14] But as a careful historian,

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[10] For example, George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 324–25.

[11] Patricia J. Tracy, "The Romance of David Brainerd and Jerusha Edwards," in *Three Essays in Honor of the Publication of "The Life of David Brainerd"* (New Haven, CT: Privately Published, 1985), 28–36. Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 310. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 329, 568–69. Shockingly, even monumental church historian Latourette assumes the legendary thinking that David and Jerusha were engaged. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, vol. 2, A. D. 1500 – A. D. 1975* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1975). His only mention of Brainerd identifies him as "the prospective son-in-law of Jonathan Edwards" (961–62).

[12] Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work," 196, 199. See also, Joseph A. Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, & American Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 71–86; Joseph A. Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregational Ministry, and Reform in New England Between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1981).

[13] Norman Pettit, "Comments on the Manuscript and Text" in *Three Essays in Honor of the Publication of "The Life of David Brainerd"* (New Haven, CT: Privately Published, 1985), 23–27; Norman Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," in *The Life of David Brainerd*, vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 1–85.

[14] Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 3–4, 12–25, 47–49, 58–59, 87, 101–02, 118–19, 189. Grigg's most significant contribution is his summary of the various ways

Grigg deliberately avoids any examination of David Brainerd's psychology[15] and offers no biblical evaluation of Brainerd's convictions.

Brainerd has also been critically analyzed from a missions history perspective. For example, Henry Warner Bowden, Stephen Neill, and Ruth Tucker offer critical analyses of the cultural imperialism and long-term ineffectiveness (mostly due to political oppression outside of Brainerd's control) in Brainerd's missionary efforts of the American Indians.[16] In fact, Bowden is so negatively critical of Brainerd's missionary work that he exclaims, "Holding such convictions about Indians and beset by misgivings concerning himself, it is remarkable that Brainerd contributed anything at all beneficial to missions."[17] On the other hand, Richard Pointer argues that most scholars have "minimized or ignored" the influence of the Indians on Brainerd as a missionary as well as the heroic Indians who tenderly responded to this white man and his message.[18]

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that people used Brainerd's life to serve their agendas (190). He shows that Jonathan Edwards edited Brainerd's revivalistic enthusiasm to exemplify his Calvinism (113, 135–39, 146), that John Wesley edited Brainerd's (and Edwards's) Calvinism to make Brainerd a model single minister (147, 158–63), and that the Student Volunteer Movement edited Brainerd's weaknesses and stressed his romance to make him a strong hero for aspiring missionaries and cultural activists (175–81).

[15] Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 6.

[16] Henry Warner Bowden. *American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict*, in *Chicago History of American Religion*, ed. Martin E. Marty (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 152–57; Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 193; Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 96.

[17] Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions*, 154.

[18] Richard W. Pointer, "'Poor Indians' and the 'Poor in Spirit': The Indian Impact on David Brainerd," *The New England Quarterly* (September 1994), 404, 418–20, 424.

Brainerd has also been critically analyzed from a more psychological perspective. The two most significant studies were published by David Weddle and Julius Rubin.[19] Weddle, a professor of religion, bluntly states the thesis of his article:

> I shall argue that the life of Brainerd is, at best, an ambiguous example of Edwards's theology of religious experience, since Brainerd waged a life-long struggle with melancholy, manifested in morbid self-condemnation, obsessive self-interest, and the glorification of death.[20]

After criticizing Brainerd's gnostic dualism, insensitivity to nature, and preference for solitude, he offers explanations for Brainerd's anxiety and low self-esteem, even suggesting that Brainerd manifested the symptoms of "an abused child" because he viewed God as "the arbitrary Father whose approval . . . must be anxiously sought, but who disapproves of the very anxiety prompting one to seek that approval."[21] Unsurprisingly, then, Weddle concludes that Brainerd was a poor model of "sound spirituality" because "Brainerd was not a [psychologically] healthy man."[22] A few years after Weddle, sociologist Julius Rubin wrote that Edwards's portrayal of Brainerd is a prime example of "valorized melancholy" in the eighteenth century.[23] Rubin suggests that David Brainerd viewed his melancholy as the crucial flipside of his closeness to God:

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[19] David L. Weddle, "The Melancholy Saint: Jonathan Edwards's Interpretation of David Brainerd as a Model of Evangelical Spirituality," *The Harvard Theological Review* 81, no. 3 (July 1988), 297–318; Julius H. Rubin, *Religious Melancholy and Protestant Experience in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[20] Weddle, "The Melancholy Saint," 298.

[21] Weddle, "The Melancholy Saint," 301–03.

[22] Weddle, "The Melancholy Saint," 317–18.

[23] Rubin, *Religious Melancholy and Protestant Experience*, 98. Rubin defines melancholy as "an affect, a distinctive stance toward life, a grieving over the loss of God's love, and an obsession and psychopathology associated with the spiritual itinerary of conversion" (vii). He explains a "cruel irony": "Believers who strive to cultivate a lifelong, personal relationship with God, often find themselves bereft of the Spirit—forsaken by God. Those devoted to making a Christian life by ceaselessly nurturing their souls embrace a regimen of obsessional pathology that puts their psyches in jeopardy" (238–39).

"The heights of rapture, of God's love ravishing the heart, came from the depths of religious melancholy. Melancholy was that 'pleasing pain' that augured a transient season of consolation."[24]

Yet, despite these recent historical, missiological, and psychological critiques of Brainerd, his supposedly model spirituality has received little theological analysis. This study attempts to address the need for a substantive theological critique of David Brainerd's spirituality.

Observations

Since Brainerd's death in 1747, numerous historians, pastors, and theologians have published recommendations of Brainerd's life and spirituality, but with little substantive critique. Twenty publications stand out as worthy of review.[25] Of course, in

[24] Rubin, *Religious Melancholy and Protestant Experience*, 95. Rubin never mentions Edwards's own disclaimers about Brainerd's melancholy. He also misreports Brainerd's conversion experience by one year (93).

[25] Several Brainerd biographies of poorer quality are not considered in this list of publications that recommend Brainerd's spirituality. For example, Oswald J. Smith, *David Brainerd: The Man of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1941); Richard A. Hasler, *Journey with David Brainerd: Forty Days or Forty Nights with David Brainerd* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002); Vernon Howard, *David Brainerd: Trailblazer to the Indians* (Dallas: Scripture Memory Fellowship, n.d.); and William Thomson Hanzsche, *Forgotten Founding Fathers of the American Church and State* (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1954). While commending Brainerd's spirituality, Smith offers only three insights regarding Brainerd: how Brainerd criticized Whittelsey (Smith, *David Brainerd: The Man of Prayer*, 22), how Brainerd may have "failed God" if he had become a pastor (45–46), and how Brainerd was engaged to Jerusha (83). Hasler commends these forty brief excerpts from *The Life of David Brainerd* to aid those who "are searching passionately for a direct, immediate and personal experience of God" (Hasler, *Journey with David Brainerd*, 7). Using Brainerd's words to encounter God is not *immediate*—and Brainerd would hate to be thought of as a mediator. Howard views Brainerd as an example for children, but he misrepresents the nature of Brainerd's diary, suggesting that it "often reads like an exciting novel of early American days. It is packed with thrilling adventures" (Howard, *David Brainerd: Trailblazer*, 15). Hanzsche is the worst example of fictionalized hagiography regarding Brainerd. In addition to wrongly defining "pathetical" (Hanzsche, *Forgotten Founding Fathers*, 96), inventing dialogue (109–10), and calling "the story of Jerusha and David is one of the great love stories of all time" (110–11), he actually claims that Brainerd "tackled and solved the problem which distresses the modern world—the problem of race and class prejudice" (89; see also 111), not only toward Indians, but also toward blacks (113–15).

1749 Jonathan Edwards became the first pastor-theologian to recommend in print Brainerd's spirituality. In his first edition of *The Life of David Brainerd*, Edwards recommended Brainerd as an example of Calvinistic faith which leads to a life of unenthusiastic, humble, disciplined, and persevering service.[26] Edwards's primary criticisms of Brainerd pertained to his melancholy and to his "excessive[ness] in his labors," yet such critiques were not developed.[27]

Second, in 1768 Methodism's founder John Wesley (1703–1791) published a pocket-sized edition of Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd* in which he recommended Brainerd as a role model of spirituality, but only after excising Edwards's recommendations of Brainerd's Calvinism.[28] Third, in 1812 the English minister John Styles (1782–1849) published a significantly edited version of *The Life of David Brainerd* in which he interwove some of Brainerd's letters and many of his own biographical accounts.[29] Styles commends Brainerd as an exceptional example worth imitating; as an example of solid conversion; and as an example of disinterested motive, conduct, and love.[30] Styles's most significant theological criticism pertains to Brainerd's

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[26] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 93, 96, 500–502, 502–11, 522–25.

[27] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 91, 95.

[28] John Wesley, *An Extract of the Life of the Late Rev. David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians*, 3rd ed. (London: G. Paramore, 1793). Wesley removed about half of Edwards's reflections on Brainerd, cropping what amounts to forty-two pages of refection in Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd* down to thirteen smaller pages in Wesley's *Extract* (263–75). Wesley excised Edwards's comments about Brainerd's non-enthusiasm, about his concerns regarding self-love in religion, about his exemplary Calvinism, and about his confidence in the "enlargement of the kingdom of Christ in the world" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 502–06, 510–20, 522–30, and 531–34, respectively).

[29] John Styles, *The Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1812). Styles believes that "the worthy author [Edwards]" did "not us[e] sufficiently the pruning knife" (11).

[30] Throughout the book Styles commends Brainerd as an example (Styles, *The Life of David Brainerd*, 289–91), both of how to approach the ministry with a humble sense of insufficiency (41) and how to redeem every minute and hour (245–46). Styles believes that the manner in which Brainerd was converted was crucial to his effectiveness

melancholy. He suggests that Brainerd's mindset as recorded in his diary evidences more consistent awareness of his sin than of Jesus's grace.[31]

Fourth, in 1829 the Scottish hymn writer James Montgomery (1771–1854) published an introduction to Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd* in which he notes "two subjects that appear to have especially exercised Brainerd's mind, and to one or other of which many of his sufferings may be traced. These were, the manner of acceptance with God, and the evidence of divine life within himself." Yet, Montgomery immediately notes: "On neither of these would it become the present writer to expatiate largely in this place."[32] Fifth, in 1834 Edward Bickersteth (1786–1850), an evangelical Anglican, wrote an introduction to Brainerd's exemplary life in which he briefly criticized Brainerd's thinking that God's glory and man's happiness were at odds.[33] Sixth, in 1837 William

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in ministry (25). He also highlights the doctrines that Brainerd taught as foundational to conversion (78). And Styles frequently comments on Brainerd's unselfish love (44, 54, 83, 290).

[31] Although Styles suggests that Brainerd's early melancholy was a direct attack of Satan (Styles, *The Life of David Brainerd*, 44–45), he later states that Brainerd's depression was significantly influenced by his physical condition (48–49) and was due mainly to his accurate but imbalanced sense of his own sinfulness (50).

[32] James Montgomery, "An Introductory Essay," in *Life of the Rev. David Brainerd, Missionary to the American Indians* by Jonathan Edwards (Glasgow: William Collins, 1829), xxxvi. Montgomery teaches that Brainerd's concern with those who believed "that *Christ died for me in particular*" pertained to abuses of that truth by antinomians and professing believers who boasted of their shallow experience, "not the truth itself" (xxxvii, italics original). Further, Brainerd was not concerned with assurance but with unfounded assurance, or, assurance that was not backed up by a changed life. In Montgomery's words, Brainerd was concerned with "the counterfeit of a good thing" (xxxviii). Montgomery, however, describes Brainerd's understanding of disinterested love for God as "an extravagance . . . not to be found in the Bible, and a refinement inconsistent with the simplicity of the gospel" (xl–xli). He continues, "We *must* love God for his own sake; we must love Him with heart, soul, mind, and strength, for the glory, excellence, and holiness of the divine character; but where is it revealed, that this exaltation above all self-interestedness is attainable, till we know, *by* experience, the mercy of his love to us, utterly and everlastingly unworthy of it as we are?" (xli, italics original).

[33] Edward Bickersteth, introduction to *The Life of the Rev. David Brainerd, Missionary to the North American Indians*, ed. Josiah Pratt (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1834), viii–ix.

Peabody (1799–1847), a New England Unitarian, published a biography of Brainerd, recommending Brainerd's spirituality.[34] In it he traced Brainerd's preference for solitude to his tragic upbringing, Brainerd's constant traveling to his physical disease, and Brainerd's gloomy outlook on nature to his depression.[35] Seventh, the Scottish pastor and poet Horatius Bonar (1808–1889) published a thirty-page preface to the 1858 edition of Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd* in which he commended Brainerd's habit of "closet-solitude."[36] Although Bonar warns against imitation and admits a few imperfections—including Brainerd's subjectivity, mysticism, and "less frequent reference to Christ . . . than we think Scriptural"—he offers not a single example or substantive critique of any one of those issues.[37]

Eighth, in 1884 the American Presbyterian minister and prolific author James Manning Sherwood (1814–1890) published an "Introduction on the Life and Character of David Brainerd"[38] in which he claims that "no better manual of Christian experience has ever been given to the world, bating [i.e., excepting] the vein of morbid melancholy which runs throughout. No loftier example of Christian heroism and consecration to the work and purpose of Christianity has been held up since the apostolic age."[39] Sherwood

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[34] William B. O. Peabody, "Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians," in *Lives of Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd,* ed. Jared Sparks (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1837), 294, 322, 372.

[35] Peabody, "Life of David Brainerd," 265, 276, 313, 349. Although he relates the mutual admiration between David Brainerd and Jerusha Edwards, Peabody does not suggest a bit of romance between them (363–64).

[36] Horatius Bonar, preface to *The Life of David Brainerd: Missionary to the Indians* by Jonathan Edwards (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1858), vii.

[37] Bonar, preface, xiii.

[38] J. M. Sherwood, "Introduction on the Life and Character of David Brainerd," in *Memoirs of Rev. David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians of North America* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884). Sherwood's article seems to be racist at two points: in describing the Indians (xlvi) and in calling Anglo-Saxons to exercise their supremacy through Christian missions (l–li).

[39] Sherwood, "Introduction on the Life and Character," xxv.

offers much more praise of Brainerd, but no further criticism. Ninth, in 1903 Jesse Page wrote a generally accurate and admiring account of Brainerd's life in which he made a few theological observations regarding Brainerd's Calvinism, view of conversion, and extreme asceticism.[40] But Page offered no substantial evaluation. Tenth, in 1950 reporter and biographer Richard Day wrote a lengthy but awkward account of Brainerd's life.[41] In it Day sharply criticizes Brainerd's Calvinism, Brainerd's view of the Holy Spirit, Brainerd's adoption of Edwards's supposedly works-oriented view of assurance, and Brainerd's concern with self-love in religion.[42] Yet he offers no substantive, biblical critique of such matters.

Eleventh, in 1961 David Wynbeek published the most comprehensive-to-date historical account of Brainerd's life.[43] Wynbeek criticizes Brainerd's mysticism and

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[40] Jesse Page, *David Brainerd: The Apostle to the North American Indians* (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., n.d. [1903]). Page exaggerates some statements (52) and reports some fictional detail (21), including the romance with Jerusha (118, 146). Theologically, Page connects Brainerd's self-examination with his strict Calvinism (25, 30, 105), comments that Brainerd's life decisions could be perceived as "contradictory" to "human nature" (117), reports Brainerd's concerns—especially toward the end of his life—with self-love in religion (132, 135–38), and offers a few observations regarding Brainerd's view of conversion as requiring "preparatory work" (123, 140).

[41] Richard Ellsworth Day, *Flagellant on Horseback: The Life Story of David Brainerd* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1950). Day's biography of Brainerd borders on a "stream of consciousness" presentation, including numerous dialogues between the author and Brainerd as well as continual shifts from the author's time period to Brainerd's in the eighteenth century. Day also seems obsessed with the alleged David-Jerusha romance (24, 24, 76, 82–83, 114, 145, 167, 177–78, 188, 209, 212, 237, 240–43, 248).

[42] Day, *Flagellant on Horseback*, 45, 190–91. Day suggests that Brainerd's belief that "it was heresy for a Christian to teach or think that Christ died for him *personally*" was "simply flagellantism raised to the nth power. . . . Self must be entirely blotted out" (74–75, italics original).

[43] David Wynbeek, *David Brainerd, Beloved Yankee* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 7. Wynbeek relates much helpful and interesting detail, including a summary of Brainerd's preaching texts (145–46), the *three* reasons for Brainerd's expulsion (32), backgrounds of each person Brainerd rode and lodged with (e.g., 33, 79, 91, 112, 116–17, 129), Tautamy's biography (99–100, 106, 120–21, 152–53, 177), the background of Brainerd's first convert (156–58), the centrality of psalm-singing (23, 200, 219, 235, 241), information on Indian culture and divisions (77, 89, 109, 135),

ascetic rejection of the "enjoyments of this lower world," yet he offers no biblical analysis of such tendencies.[44] Twelfth, in 1965 the young pastor John Thornbury penned an essay which excessively praises Brainerd's example.[45] He briefly criticizes the missionary's depression and asceticism, and he suggests that Brainerd may have actually been converted prior to his reported conversion experience.[46] Yet Thornbury does not explore such criticisms; he only mentions them.

The thirteenth noteworthy biographical commendation of Brainerd is Clyde Kilby's fifty-page chapter published in 1966.[47] This history of Brainerd offers the most substantive, albeit brief, theological critique of any Brainerd biographer.[48] Kilby strongly

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interactions with the Moravians (e.g., 43, 98, 113, 133, 136, 168–69), several extant artifacts (94, 118, 215, 232), and Brainerd's financial involvement in social causes (48, 63, 126, 128, 186, 199–200). On the other hand, Wynbeek also promotes much speculation (e.g., 26, 56, 81, 85, 233), especially regarding David and Jerusha's relationship (69, 70, 73, 107, 111, 212–13, 239, 242).

[44] Wynbeek, *David Brainerd, Beloved Yankee*, 34, 55, 75, 122.

[45] John Thornbury, "David Brainerd," in *Five Pioneer Missionaries: David Brainerd, William C. Burns, John Eliot, Henry Martyn, John G. Paton* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 16, 21, 83–84. Similar to a comment that Sherwood made, Thornbury writes that David Brainerd "shines brightest of all in the great galaxy of missionary stars" (16). Toward the conclusion of his essay, Thornbury asks, "Undoubtedly Brainerd had his faults, but where can we go, outside the New Testament, to find his equal as an example of self-sacrifice and suffering for the sake of Christ and His gospel?" (84).

[46] Thornbury, "David Brainerd," 20, 63, 83.

[47] Clyde S. Kilby, "David Brainerd: Knight of the Grail," in *Heroic Colonial Christians* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1966), 151–206.

[48] Although Kilby's chapter on Brainerd has some strengths, it also has some weaknesses. For example, the editor suggests that Kilby did "extensive research that . . . brought to light previously undisclosed material on [Brainerd]" (11), yet that newly discovered material seems to be a fictionalized diary of Esther Burr, authored by Jeremiah Rankin, in which Kilby finds proof of the David-Jerusha romance (178–80). Jeremiah Eames Rankin, *Esther Burr's Journal* (Washington, DC: Howard University Print, 1901), 28–29, 34–41. In fact, Esther Edwards Burr did not begin writing a diary until 1754. Esther Edwards Burr, *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754–1757*, ed. Carol F. Karlsen and Laurie Crumpacker (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), ix.

critiques Brainerd's "seeming total disregard of the heavens and the earth as the handiwork of God."[49] Kilby also takes note of Brainerd's view that conversion is gradual, his aversion to self-love in religion, and his strange delight in considering his own vileness.[50] Yet, in the end, Clyde Kilby admires David Brainerd's single-minded dedication to God without offering biblical critiques of Brainerd's perspective on spirituality.[51]

Fourteenth, in 1985 pastor Tom Wells wrote a brief chapter in which he recommended Brainerd's God-centered passion, yet he offered not a single critique of Brainerd.[52] Fifteenth, in 1995 John Thornbury published a second time on Brainerd—this time a full-length biography.[53] Although Thornbury's historical detail primarily repeats insights from Wynbeek and Pettit, his pastoral criticisms of Brainerd's views of conversion, love, and discipline are mostly original.[54] Yet Thornbury offers only

[49] Kilby, "David Brainerd: Knight of the Grail," 182–84.

[50] Kilby, "David Brainerd: Knight of the Grail," 163, 184–95. Kilby observes that Brainerd seemed to pursue his "endless ups and downs" until "he came to recognize [his] fits of dejection as sinful" (185–86). Kilby explores Brainerd's "most abject confessions of his vileness" (187–88) as well as his "martyr feeling," especially after college (189), and he notes that Brainerd seemed to make progress in growing out of "dependence on [his] frames and spiritual feelings [Feb. 17, 1743]" (190–91). Yet, Kilby observes, Brainerd could never let go of self-examination for "the soul seeks God only when it finds a need. The need arises from a sense of sin and the consequent misery. Therefore the sense of sin and misery are to be cultivated" (194). Kilby's exploration of Brainerd's pursuit of humiliation is helpful, but he does not offer critique about whether such ideas are biblical.

[51] Kilby, "David Brainerd: Knight of the Grail," 202–03.

[52] Tom Wells, *A Vision for Missions* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985).

[53] John Thornbury, *David Brainerd: Pioneer Missionary to the American Indians* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1996). This work exceeds three hundred pages, whereas his essay from three decades earlier was ninety pages.

[54] Regarding Brainerd's view of conversion, Thornbury observes the tension in Puritan doctrine between obligation and inability (Thornbury, *David Brainerd: Pioneer Missionary*, 52) and that two expectations—the "wicket gate" expectation of a preparation period and the Hopkinsian expectation that one who is converted must first be willing to be damned—could be unbiblical (56–57, 203, 206, 210). Regarding

suggestive critiques rather than substantive evaluation. Sixteenth, in 2001 pastor-theologian John Piper published a conference sermon on David Brainerd, recommending him as a model of God's strength being displayed in human weakness.[55] Following Kilby, Piper critiques Brainerd's "bleak outlook on nature," and he also highlights Brainerd's struggle to love the Indians.[56] But Piper's criticisms end there.

Seventeenth, in 2009 Vance Christie published a popular book-length biography of Brainerd.[57] It is similar to Thornbury's book-length contribution in that he largely builds on the prior research by Wynbeek and Pettit.[58] Christie offers pastorally insightful evaluations of Brainerd's depression, workaholism, and journaling.[59] Christie helpfully contrasts Brainerd's view of conversion from that of the Moravians and antinomians,[60] but his theological critique goes no further, and the reader is left to wonder

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Brainerd's view of the centrality of love in spirituality, Thornbury emphasizes Brainerd's deep concern with self-interest and self-love in religion (95, 114–15, 282–83, 303). Regarding Brainerd's view of the spiritual disciplines, Thornbury repeatedly summarizes Brainerd's understanding of the diligent use of the "means of grace" (124, 175–77, 221–22).

[55] 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), 132. Piper follows John Styles, who taught that Brainerd was a modern illustration of Paul's statement in 2 Cor 12:9 (Styles, *The Life of David Brainerd*, 14). Almost a decade before he published this conference sermon, Piper had repeatedly commended Brainerd in his inspiring practical theology of missions: John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 37, 72–73, 91–92.

[56] Piper, *The Hidden Smile of God*, 140–43, 144.

[57] Vance Christie, *David Brainerd: A Flame for God* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2009).

[58] Pettit and Wynbeek dominate Christie's resources, comprising together approximately 85 percent of his citations.

[59] On Brainerd's depression, see Christie, *David Brainerd: A Flame for God*, 8. On Brainerd's workaholism, consider pp. 10, 27, 147, 236. Such criticisms of Brainerd's workaholism follow Edwards's suggestive remarks. On Brainerd's journaling, see pp. 42–43.

[60] Christie, *David Brainerd: A Flame for God*, 67, 183, 285, 289–90.

which viewpoint Christie himself finds most biblically compelling. Eighteenth, in 2012 seminary president Danny Akin urged evangelicals to imitate Brainerd's love for Christ.[61] Akin, however, does not offer a single critical reflection regarding any facet of Brainerd's life or ministry. Nineteenth, in 2013 pastor Steven Lawson published a simple, inspirational sermon on David Brainerd in which he recommended his exemplary "zeal," "dependence," "extreme humility," "awareness of sin," and "eternal perspective."[62] He offers two possibly critical remarks: that Brainerd's "diary records excessive self-examination" and that Brainerd had "high standards for what constitutes a true conversion." But his critiques end with those brief comments.

Twentieth (and finally), in 2016 Dustin Benge published an edited selection of Brainerd's diaries for which he wrote a thirty-page preface. Benge explores how Brainerd's devotional experience highlighted four of Edwards's twelve positive religious affections: "[1] evangelical humiliation; [2] a change of nature; [3] sensitivity toward sins; and, [4] finally, holiness of life."[63] Yet Benge offers only one criticism of a "propensity toward depression [which] became a serious problem in Brainerd's life."[64]

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[61] Daniel L. Akin, *Ten Who Changed the World* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012). In reviewing Brainerd's ministerial sufferings, Akin repeats F. W. Boreham's invented story about Brainerd's encounter with a rattlesnake, which miraculously did not bite him as he prayed—while Indian assassins supposedly looked on (114). John Grigg teaches that this "folklore" was popularized by an article that Mrs. Walter Person authored in the 1940s. Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 190–91.

[62] Steven Lawson, "The Life of David Brainerd," One Passion Ministries, last modified 2013, accessed February 3, 2014, http://www.onepassionministries.org/david-brainerd.

[63] Dustin W. Benge, *Sweetly Set on God: The Piety of David Brainerd*, Profiles in Reformed Spirituality (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), 12. These affections are Edwards's sixth, seventh, ninth, and twelfth positive affections, respectively.

[64] Benge, *Sweetly Set on God*, 25–26. Although Brainerd's "propensity toward depression became a serious problem," Benge writes that "this propensity does not necessarily indicate a spiritual deficiency on his part." Benge probably means that Brainerd's depression was a physical matter rather than a spiritual one. (The term "spiritual deficiency" comes from Vance Christie.)

Statement of the Problem

So, throughout the past three centuries Brainerd biographers[65] have offered occasional and very brief theological criticisms of various facets of his spirituality, including his views of conversion, depression, mysticism, the natural world, work, other cultures, and self-examination. However, no historian, missiologist, sociologist, biographer, or pastor-theologian has offered a substantive theological critique of Brainerd's spirituality. No one has critically and thoroughly examined whether his views of spirituality's beginning (i.e., conversion), spirituality's essence (i.e., love or disinterested benevolence), and spirituality's discipline (especially, the daily pursuit of evangelical humiliation through personal self-loathing) were explicitly biblical.[66] Instead,

[65] The above list of biographers does not consider the helpful biographies of David Brainerd written to commend his life and example to children. There are three well-researched and generally accurate accounts of Brainerd's life for children: Ranelda Hunsicker, *David Brainerd*, Men of Faith (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1999); Kath Dredge, *Living 4 God: Learning from the Lives of William Tyndale, John Newton, David Brainerd, and Eric Liddell* (Leominster, England: Day One Publications, 2001); and Brian H. Cosby, *David Brainerd: A Love for the Lost* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2011). As one would expect, each of these children's biographies portrays Brainerd heroically, and not one of them offers substantive theological critique.

[66] One facet of Brainerd's theology has been substantively critiqued: his eschatology. In 1971 Iain Murray argued that the Puritan eschatological conviction regarding a global spread of Christianity prior to the return of Jesus was immensely practical, resulting in worship, prayer, and missionary endeavor. Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971, 2014). Throughout the book, Murray explores the biblical foundations for such a hope, including the Abrahamic Covenant (42), numerous psalms (97, 248), and especially Romans 11 (61–69, 76–77). Murray taught that Jonathan Edwards dominantly spread his eschatological hope to the modern missions movement through his publication of *The Life of David Brainerd* (89–106, 117–25, 145, 235). A generation after Murray, James DeJong wrote a doctoral thesis which surveyed the millennial expectations throughout colonial America. James A. DeJong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions 1640–1810* (Laurel, MS: Audubon Press, 2006). DeJong surveys the biblical bases and diversity of millennial expectations in both pre-colonial and colonial Puritanism. He clarifies that David Brainerd's constant longings for "the kingdom of Christ in the world" and for the "future prosperity of Zion" were longings for the millennium to come as a result of the gospel's worldwide spread (125, 135–36, 148–50). DeJong also teaches that one reason for the popularity of Edwards's publication of *The Life of David Brainerd* was the widespread "vision of the fulfillment of God's promises for the universal spread of Christianity" (123). Soon after DeJong, Mark Rogers explored Edwards's eschatology in

pastors and theologians who recommend his spirituality seem to largely assume the biblical accuracy of Brainerd's understanding and practice of spirituality. Such an assumption may be rooted in an uncritical reading of Brainerd or in a deeper assumption regarding the biblical accuracy of Edwards's concept of spirituality. Or, assuming that Brainerd's spirituality is biblical may reveal an underlying evangelical pragmatism: that the evangelistic success of David Brainerd and the international popularity of his diaries legitimize his spirituality.

More than thirty years ago, historian Joseph Conforti lamented how Edwards's *The Life of David Brainerd*, one of the most influential books in the history of American religion, "has failed to attract scholarly attention."[67] A decade later, he published the same concern: how "little scholarly analysis" there existed "of the missionary or of the biography itself."[68] Since Conforti's expressions of concern, there has been some scholarly attention on *The Life of David Brainerd* from historians, missiologists, and sociologists. However, critical attention from theologians remains almost non-existent.

Thesis Statement

While David Brainerd represents a helpful model of evangelical spirituality, his understanding and practice of spirituality tended toward extremes, especially in the ways he viewed conversion, love for God, and daily humiliation. Yet such excesses do not render his example of spirituality unworthy of recommendation. Rather, evangelicals

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his article titled, "A Missional Eschatology." After examining Edwards's biblical convictions (25–26), Rogers highlighted the connection between Brainerd's (and Edwards's) eschatological hope and missionary zeal (30–39). So, in at least one facet of Brainerd's theology—his eschatology, scholars have offered substantive theological critique. But there has been no substantive theological critique of Brainerd's spirituality, the facet of theology for which he is best known and originally published.

[67] Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work," 190; see also 198.

[68] Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, & American Culture*, 64.

today should critically use Brainerd's example as one resource in their rich, distinctive tradition of biblical spirituality.

Methodology

This thesis will be proven by examining David Brainerd's own writings to accurately state his understanding of spirituality. Chapter 2 examines and summarizes David Brainerd's understanding of conversion, the point at which spiritual life begins. Chapter 3 examines and summarizes Brainerd's view of the essence of spirituality as unselfish love for God (i.e., disinterested benevolence). Chapter 4 examines and summarizes his understanding of the daily habits of spirituality, especially Brainerd's use of a journal to gauge his evangelical humiliation—humiliation which has personal self-loathing as a central feature. After stating Brainerd's understanding of spirituality in each of these three areas, chapter 5 offers a substantive theological critique of each facet of Brainerd's understanding,[69] offering at the end of each critique ways in which Brainerd's spirituality should influence today's church.[70]

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[69] In theological critique I have followed D. A. Carson's understanding of the five categories of theological study: exegetical theology, biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, and practical theology. Andrew David Naselli, "D. A. Carson's Theological Method," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 2 (Autumn 2011): 245–74. According to Carson, exegesis seeks to understand "the author's intent . . . in the text" (258). Biblical theology "inductively and historically focus[es] on the whole Bible or select biblical corpora" (258). Systematic theology "is organized on atemporal principles of logic, order, and need" (259). Historical theology is "the study of the changing face of theology across time" (259). Practical theology "applies (i.e., cross-culturally contextualizes) [the other four areas of theology] to help people glorify God by living wisely with a biblical worldview" (268).

[70] I approach this theological criticism of Brainerd with a recognition of my own complacency by comparison. John Thornbury's questions echo in my mind: "Which of us dare for one moment claim to have been exercised in soul to . . . the extent that is made public by the self-revelation of our missionary in his Diary and Journal? . . . Which of us, after reading Brainerd's writings, dare claim to be at best more than a pale shadow of this . . . child of the living God?" (Thornbury, "David Brainerd," 87).

CHAPTER 2

DAVID BRAINERD'S UNDERSTANDING OF CONVERSION: THE BEGINNING POINT OF AUTHENTIC SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

In the eighteenth century an emphasis on the need for personal conversion emerged, and it became the distinctive mark of evangelical Christianity.[1] David Brainerd, who lived and ministered at the crux of this transitional period,[2] viewed evangelical conversion as the necessary starting point of spirituality. After recounting his own conversion experience, he explained the significance of conversion to spirituality:

> Thus the Lord, I trust, brought me to a hearty desire to exalt him, to set him on the throne, and to 'seek first his Kingdom,' i.e., principally and ultimately to aim at his honor and glory as the King and sovereign of the universe, which is the foundation of the religion of Jesus Christ has taught (Matt. 6:33).[3]

Since he believed that conversion is the starting point of true piety, Brainerd also believed that seeking the conversion of others was central to his ministerial calling. On

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[1] Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 322–23. Kidd explains that the "First Great Awakening . . . was a long Great Awakening [1735–1785]" and what made it so "great" is that "it produced the evangelical movement" with "the conversion experience" as its "raison d'être."

[2] Andrew F. Walls, "Missions and Historical Memory: Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd," in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 257, 260. Walls's main point is that Brainerd was a major transitional figure in evangelicalism, a "protest movement" that made a sharp "distinction between real and nominal Christianity" within a professing Christian culture.

[3] Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Norman Pettit (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 139.

June 11, 1744, he preached his "probation sermon" before the presbytery in Newark on the words of the Lord to Paul, "I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:17–18).[4] Throughout his remarkable eighteen months of missionary work in New Jersey,[5] David Brainerd was instrumental in forty-three adult conversions.[6]

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[4] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 251–52; see also 250, 572, 579. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations throughout this thesis are from the English Standard Version.

[5] Brainerd sought the conversion of others prior to his missionary endeavors, including during his years at Yale. Fellow student Samuel Hopkins recounted,

> Several of these [fellow students at Yale who, I believe, were genuine Christians] appeared with an extraordinary zeal, and concern for the members of college; and without paying regard to the distinctions of higher and lower classes, they visited every room in college, and discoursed freely and with the greatest plainness with each one . . . setting before them their danger, and exhorting them to repent. . . . These persons above mentioned, who thus distinguished themselves in zeal were two of them my class-mates, Buell and Youngs. The other was David Brainard. . . . At length Brainard came into my room, I being there alone. . . . In his conversation with me, he observed that he believed it impossible for a person to be converted and to be a real christian without feeling his heart, at sometimes at least, sensibly and greatly affected with the character of Christ, and strongly going out after him. . . . This observation struck conviction into my mind. I verily believed it to be true, and at the same time, was conscious that I had never experienced any thing of this kind; and that I was a stranger to the exercise of real christianity. . . . At length as I was in my closet one evening, while I was meditating, and in my devotions, a new and wonderful scene opened to my view. I had a sense of the being and presence of God, as I never had before; it being more of a reality, and more affecting and glorious, than I had ever before perceived. And the character of Jesus Christ the mediator came into view, and appeared such a reality, and so glorious; and the way of salvation by him so wise, important and desirable, that I was astonished at myself that I had never seen these things before. . . . I was greatly affected, in the view of my own depravity, the sinfulness, guilt, and odiousness of my character; and tears flowed in great plenty. After some time I left my closet, and went into the adjoining room, no other person being then there. I walked the room, all intent on these subjects, and took up Watts's version of the psalms, and opened it at the fifty-first psalm, and read the first, second and third parts in long metre with strong affections, and made it all my own language, and thought it was the language of my heart to God; I dwelled upon it with pleasure, and wept much.

Samuel Hopkins, *Sketches of the Life of the Late, Rev. Samuel Hopkins, D. D., Written by Himself, with Marginal Notes from His Private Diary*, ed. Stephen West (Hartford, CT: Hudson and Goodwin: 1805), 32–36.

[6] By June 20, 1746 (twelve months after arriving), Brainerd had baptized thirty-eight adult Indians. See David Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd or the*

Understanding Brainerd's view of conversion is crucial to understanding his view of spirituality. Yet Brainerd never wrote a treatise on conversion. Therefore, a summary of what he believed about conversion must be obtained by synthesizing his extant writings, giving particular attention to the historical influences on his view of conversion, the doctrinal foundation that he considered necessary for conversion, the methods he used to promote conversion, and his detailed conversion accounts.

Formative Historical Influences on David Brainerd's Understanding of Conversion

In his introduction to his private diary where he recounts his own conversion experience, Brainerd indicates that he read books frequently. He read the entire Bible twice the year before his conversion.[7] In a few places of that account, Brainerd indicates that he read several books, but he does not mention specific authors or titles of the books that he read. It seems likely that two of the unspecified books that Brainerd read were

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Continuance and Progress of a Remarkable Work of Grace Among Some of the Indians Belonging to the Provinces of New-Jersey and Pennsylvania, Justly Represented in a Journal Kept by Order of the Honourable Society (in Scotland) for Propagating Christian Knowledge in *Mr. Brainerd's Journal among the Indians* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1746), 183–84. Brainerd explains his carefulness about identifying converts:

> It must be noted that have baptiz'd no Adults, but such as appear'd to have a Work of special Grace wrought in their Hearts: I mean such who have had the Experience not only of the awakening and humbling, but (in a Judgment of Charity) of the renewing and comforting Influences of the divine Spirit. Altho' there are many others under solemn Concern for their Souls, who (I apprehend) are Persons of sufficient Knowledge, and visible Seriousness, *at present*, to render them proper Subjects of the Ordinance of Baptism. Yet since they give no comfortable Evidences of having as yet pass'd a saving Change, but only appear under Convictions of their Sin and Misery . . . I have thought proper hitherto to omit the Baptism of any but such who give some *hopeful* Evidences of a saving Change, altho' I don't pretend to determine positively respecting the States of any.

By the time Brainerd left Cranberry in November 1746 (nearly eighteen months after he first arrived), he had baptized forty-three adult Native Americans (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 433).

[7] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 104.

John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Thomas Shepard's *Sound Believer*.[8] At a few points in his conversion account, Brainerd specifically mentioned two publications that

[8] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 112, 130. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which is to Come*, in *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 3:1–244. Bunyan's most famous work was originally published in 1678. In the first pages of his allegory, Bunyan outlines his general understanding of how conversion proceeds: A sinner gets burdened about his sin through reading the Scripture and begins a journey toward "the wicket [i.e., very narrow] gate" (89–90); he then overcomes numerous discouragements from friends (90–91), much personal depression (92), and temptations to trust his own law-keeping (92–96); finally, his burden falls off when he gets a vision of the cross (102). Like Bunyan's Christian, David Brainerd experienced much depression and he endured many temptations to trust his righteousness. As Brainerd was trusting "the covenant of works," he used a metaphor to describe his frustration: "Sometimes there appeared mountains before me to obstruct my hopes of mercy" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 106–07). This imagery is similar to Bunyan's depiction of Christian walking by Mount Sinai and feeling the increasing weight of his burden. Like Bunyan's Christian, Brainerd also he grew discouraged that "the 'gate' appeared so very 'straight' that it looked next to impossible to 'get in'" (107). While this statement echoes Matthew 7, it may also echo the beginning of Bunyan's story. When Christian first encounters Evangelist, Evangelist points Christian toward the wicket gate. Brainerd issued Evangelist's instruction to Tautamy: "Exhorted my interpreter to 'strive to enter in at the strait gate" (279). Finally, while struggling in the preparatory throes of conversion, David Brainerd describes a vision, which Edwards omitted, of "a stately house" against which he "had been heaping up dirt, filth, and rubbish . . . supposing I was doing the building some service" (134–35). Brainerd's imagery seems somewhat akin Bunyan's Interpreter's House in which Christian was showed a filthy, dusty room. So, although Brainerd never explicitly affirms that Bunyan's allegory was formative in his childhood, it seems likely that it was. In fact, biographers James Montgomery and David Wynbeek suggest that Brainerd was familiar with Bunyan's classic. See James Montgomery, "An Introductory Essay," in *Life of the Rev. David Brainerd, Missionary to the American Indians* by Jonathan Edwards (Glasgow: William Collins, 1829), xxxiii; David Wynbeek, *David Brainerd, Beloved Yankee* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 15. Brainerd also seemed to be influenced by Shepard's published description of conversion. Thomas Shepard, *Sound Believer: A Treatise of Evangelical Conversion; Discovering the Work of Christ's Spirit in Reconciling of a Sinner to God*, in *The Works of Thomas Shepard* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 1:177–80. Shepard teaches that the God's humbling work prior to conversion typically happens in four parts. First, the Spirit reveals the "secret corruption of the soul in every duty which it never saw before" (177). Second, the Spirit "irritat[es] or stir[s] up . . . original corruption . . . [revealing] a more hellish nature than ever before" (178). Third, the Spirit "wear[ies] the soul by its own endeavors, until it can stir no more" (179). Fourth, the Spirit "clear[s] up the equity and justice of God in the law, if the Lord should never pity nor pardon it" (180). As will be seen, Brainerd's account of his own conversion seems to follow this pattern closely.

particularly influenced his view of conversion: James Janeway's *A Token for Children*[9] and Solomon Stoddard's *Guide to Christ*.[10]

James Janeway's *A Token for Children*

Brainerd recalled early 1732 when a fatal disease spread through Haddam and his mother died. He explains that as a thirteen-year-old, he

> took delight in reading, especially Mr. Janeway, *Token for Children*; I felt sometimes much melted in duties and took great delight in the performance of them and I sometimes hoped that I was converted or at least in a good and hopeful way for heaven and happiness, not knowing what conversion was. The Spirit of God at this time proceeded far with me.[11]

Although reading Janeway's *Token* did not immediately lead to his conversion, Brainerd believed that God used it to bring him "far" down the road that would end there. Historian John Grigg explains that Brainerd, who wrote this detailed account of his conversion on his deathbed, probably remembered Janeway's book with "delight" because one of the stories so paralleled his own experience of infirmity:

> Brainerd may have found inspiration in Janeway's fifth example, which recounted the "pious Life, and joyful death, of a child which Dyed when he was about 12 years old, 1632" and who "had no sooner learned to speak, but he took himself to prayer." The young boy in this account suffered from a "lingering disease" and, in an effort to comfort him, some of those at his bedside told him "of possessions that must fall to his Portion." Unimpressed, the youngster replied: "And what are these? Said he. I had rather have the Kingdom of Heaven, than a thousand such inheritances."[12]

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[9] James Janeway, *A Token for Children, Being an Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives and Joyful Deaths, of Several Young Children* (Worchester, MA: James R. Hutchins, 1795). This book was first published in England in 1671 and first published in America in 1700.

[10] Solomon Stoddard, *A Guide to Christ, or, The Way of Directing Souls that are Under the Work of Conversion* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993). This book was originally published in 1714.

[11] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 101–2.

[12] John Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of An Evangelical Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 30–31. Grigg explains that "Janeway's work—a collection of stories about thirteen children who came to salvation in their preteen years—was extraordinarily popular and widely read in New England."

Janeway influenced Brainerd to understand that the fear of death, especially in childhood, was part of God's way of bringing a sinner to conversion.

Solomon Stoddard's *Guide to Christ*

In early 1739 (the six months prior to his conversion), Brainerd recounted how he struggled to accept several doctrinal truths of Christianity. During these wrestlings, especially his wrestling with what it means to believe, Brainerd wrote,

> I read Mr. Stoddard's *Guide to Christ* (which, I trust, in the hand of God was the happy means of my conversion) and my heart rose against the author; for though he told me my very heart all along under convictions . . . yet in this spot he failed, he did not tell me anything that I could do that would bring me to Christ, but seemed at last to leave me as it were with a great gulf between me and Christ, which I seemed to have no direction to get through.[13]

Stoddard's *Guide* is pastoral manual that counsels unbelievers who are struggling in about fifty different ways in the pains of "preparation"—a term that Stoddard defines as "humiliation before faith."[14] In two of the case studies, Stoddard

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[13] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 123.

[14] Stoddard, *Guide to Christ*, xv. Stoddard believed that such a preparatory period was indicated in numerous Bible passages such as Acts 9:4–5; 16:29–31; Romans 7:9; Mark 12:34; John 5:44; Luke 13:24; and Revelation 22:17 (xvi–xvii). He offers about fifty case studies that involve the kinds of concerns experienced by people who are in the throes of preparation (1–70). John Grigg provides a helpful overview of Stoddard's view of preparation:

> [Stoddard] taught that conversion was preceded by a period of spiritual preparation that involved misery, humiliation, and repentance. Conversion itself was not a gradual progression but a single moment, rooted in an experiential conviction of sin and a very real fear of hell, when God swept away the sinners' fears and sins and brought them new life. . . . As people went through their preparations, they could expect moments of false confidence, which were rooted in their own righteousness and not in God's. In one sense, preparation was to teach sinners that their own works counted for nothing. Once they firmly grasped this, conversion would follow. The Stoddardean model was one where most of the process of salvation was located in the struggles of preparation which conversion was a single moment, almost lost in the preceding details. (Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 10)

Other facets of Stoddard's view of conversion are helpfully explained in Michael Schuldiner, "Solomon Stoddard and the Process of Conversion," *Early American Literature* 17 (1982–83): 215–26. Schuldiner demonstrates that Stoddard's view of the process of conversion develops between 1662 and 1687, three decades before his *Guide to Christ*. Stoddard saw three phases in the conversion process: having faith, increasing in faith, and possessing a growing faith (217). He believed that true conversion had only taken place for those in the final phase, but the Lord's Supper was appropriate to

dealt with the seeker who, like Brainerd, "objects that the sin of Adam is imputed to him" and reacts "against the severity of God's law."[15] In these cases, Stoddard urged seekers to consider the fact of civil representation and to consider the deterrence, appropriateness, and innocence of legal penalties.[16] Interestingly, Stoddard sought to remove obstacles but did not urge a way forward. Yet Brainerd believed that Stoddard's unwillingness to suggest a next step—to offer, as it were, a clear answer to the jailer's famous question, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30)—was ultimately helpful, though immediately frustrating.[17]

The Westminster Catechism

Although Brainerd did not mention it in the account of his own conversion, one other resource that influenced his view of conversion was the Westminster Assembly's catechisms. As a child and as a student Brainerd would have certainly learned the essence of these theological summaries that were published seventy years before his birth.[18] That

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administer to those in the second. In other words, according to Stoddard, "the Lord's Supper is a converting ordinance" (222–23). It must be noted that, although Brainerd appreciated Stoddard's *Guide to Christ*, he differed with Stoddard's view of the Supper, only administering it to those whom he had baptized—those who had already given evidence of authentic conversion.

[15] Stoddard, *Guide to Christ*, 44–45.

[16] Stoddard, *Guide to Christ*, 44–45. Stoddard explains, "God's law makes no man miserable; they make themselves miserable and are cruel to their own souls when they sin against Him." This fact that the strict law actually *causes* no one to sin is what is meant by the "innocence" of the law and its penalties.

[17] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 123.

[18] Beginning in 1722 every Yale College tutor was required to affirm the Saybrook edition of the Confession of Faith, whose definitions of saving faith and repentance were based on the Westminster wording. *A Confession of Faith, Owned and Consented to, by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches in the Colony of Connecticut, in New-England, Assembled by Delegation at Saybrook, September 9th, 1708* (Bridgeport, CT: Lockwood & Backus, 1810), 49–51 [chaps. 14–15]. See also Roger L. Geiger, *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 23.

he embraced the standard Reformed view of saving faith and repentance is evident from the fact that the *Shorter Catechism* was one of his primary tools in evangelism and discipleship.[19] The Westminster Confession of Faith defined faith and repentance in this way:

> The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word. . . . The principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life. . . .
>
> Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ. By it, a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature, and righteous law of God; and upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.[20]

From Janeway, Brainerd understood that fear was a normal part (though not the definitive part) of convictions that lead to conversion. From Stoddard, Brainerd understood that an extended period of preparation preceded conversion and that the wise pastor would keep individuals in this period of preparation. From the Catechism, Brainerd understood that saving faith and repentance are Spirit-produced graces ordinarily given to those who have heard the biblical gospel preached.

Doctrinal Foundations that David Brainerd Taught as Necessary to Conversion

To understand Brainerd's theology of conversion, it is crucial to recognize the doctrinal truths he considered to be foundational to it. He clearly outlines these fundamental truths in five parts of his writings.

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[19] Brainerd refers to his use of the Westminster Confession on several occasions. See Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 202–8; Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 345, 529, 586. Compare the wording in the Saybrook *Confession of Faith* with the wording with Questions 86–89 in the Westminster *Shorter Catechism*.

[20] *The Humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines now by Authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster concerning a Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: Evan Tyler, 1647), chaps. 14–15. The spelling and capitalization is modernized.

First, in the diary entry on August 14, 1743, Brainerd explains what he preached to the Indians:

> Endeavored to show my poor ignorant people what we are to believe of Christ, and that we must believe in Christ in order to salvation. 1st we must believe that there was and is such a person as Jesus Christ, that he was born into the world, lived a holy life, permitted ungodly men to rise against him and put him to death, but that he still gave up his life freely for sinners, etc. 2nd that he was indeed the Son of God and so God as well as man and that he proved this by his miracles, etc., and 3rd this glorious person, being both God and man, is a complete and sufficient Saviour, able to save the greatest of sinners, etc., and then endeavored to show them what a saving faith was, and what a man must feel in order to come to Jesus Christ.[21]

In order for people to be converted, they must understand who Jesus is, what he did, and what it means to have faith in him.

Second, in a personal letter to Ebenezer Pemberton (dated November 5, 1744), Brainerd described the evangelistic preaching that characterized his first eighteen months of missionary endeavor:

> In my labors with them, in order "to turn them from darkness to light", I . . . endeavored to set before them . . . the most important and necessary truths of Christianity; such as most immediately concerned their speedy conversion to God, and such as I judged had the greatest tendency (as means) to effect that glorious change in them. But especially I made it the scope and drift of all my labors to lead them into a thorough acquaintance with these two things.
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> First, the sinfulness and misery of the estate they were naturally in: the evil of their hearts, the pollution of their natures, the heavy guilt they were under, and their exposedness to everlasting punishment; as also their utter inability to save themselves . . . and consequently their extreme need of Christ to save them.
>
> And secondly, I frequently endeavored to open to them the fullness, all-sufficiency, and freeness of that redemption which the Son of God has wrought out by his obedience and sufferings for perishing sinners; how this provision he had made was suited to all their wants, and how he called and invited them to accept of everlasting life freely, notwithstanding all their sinfulness, inability, unworthiness, etc.[22]

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[21] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 213. Edwards omitted this passage, which is contained on an extant manuscript leaf.

[22] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 572–74.

For Brainerd, "the most important and necessary truths of Christianity" for someone to understand in order to be converted include man's desperate sinfulness and Christ's unique ability to graciously save.

Third, in his general remarks at the end the second part of his published journal (which he submitted June 20, 1746), Brainerd comments on "the Preaching God made Use of for the awakening of Sinners, and the Propagation of this *Work of Grace among the Indians.*"

> 'Twas the principal Scope and Drift of all my Discourses to this People for several Months together (after having taught them something of the Being and Perfections of God, his Creation of Man in a State of Rectitude and Happiness; and the Obligations Mankind were thence under to love and honour him) to lead them into an Acquaintance with their deplorable State by Nature, *as fallen Creatures*: Their *Inability* to extricate and deliver themselves from it: The *utter Insufficiency* of any *external* Reformations and Amendments of Life, or of any religious Performances . . . to bring them into the Favour of God. . . . And thence to shew them their *absolute* need of Christ to redeem and save them from the Misery of their fallen State.—To open his All-sufficiency and Willingness to save the Chief of Sinners.—The *Freeness* and *Riches* of his divine Grace, propos'd *without Money and without Price*, to all that will accept the Offer.—And thereupon to press them *without delay* to betake themselves to him, under a Sense of their Misery and *undone* Estate, for Relief and everlasting Salvation.—And to shew them the abundant Encouragement the Gospel proposes to needy perishing and helpless Sinners, in order to engage them so to do.
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> . . . Whatever Subject I have been treating upon, after having spent Time sufficient to explain and illustrate the Truths contain'd therein, I have been *naturally* and *easily* led to *Christ* as the *Substance* of ever Subject . . . either in Regard of his Undertaking, Incarnation, Satisfaction, admirable Fitness for the Work of Man's Redemption, or the infinite Need that Sinner's stand in of an Interest in him; which has open'd the Way for a continued Strain of Gospel-Invitation to perishing Souls, to come *empty* and *naked*, *weary* and *heavy-laden*, and cast themselves upon him.[23]

In evangelism Brainerd believed it necessary to teach the basic doctrines of creation, the Fall, human inability, and divine grace. Yet, Brainerd always sought to teach these truths in connection with truth about the person and work of Jesus.

Fourth, in his diary entry for October 5, 1746, Brainerd offers the most developed sermon summary to be found in his writings. That day he had expounded to

[23] Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 170–74.

the Indians the words of John the Baptist—"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)—and he summarizes his three points of explanation:

> I. In what respects Christ is called the "Lamb of God"; and observed that he is so called (1) from the purity and innocency of his nature; (2) from his meekness and patience under sufferings; (3) from his being that atonement which was pointed out in the sacrifice of lambs, and in particular by the paschal lamb.
>
> II. Considered how and in what sense he 'takes away the sin of the world': And observed that the means and manner in and by which he takes away the sins of men was his 'giving himself for them', doing and suffering in their room and stead, etc. And he is said to take away the sin of the world not because all the world shall actually be redeemed from sin by him, but because (1) he has done and suffered sufficient to answer for the sins of the world, and so to redeem all mankind (2) he actually does take away the sins of the elect world.
>
> And III. Considered how we are to 'behold' him in order to have our sins taken away. (1) Not with our bodily eyes: nor (2) by imagining him on the cross, etc.; but by a spiritual view of his glory and goodness, engaging the soul to rely on him, etc.[24]

Using biblical theology Brainerd taught potential converts how the Old Testament pictured Christ's sinless person and substitutionary atonement. He carefully delineated his teaching from universalism and clearly explained the nature of faith.

Fifth, while Brainerd was convalescing in Boston, he entered into a debate on July 20, 1747, "against that opinion, that the essence of saving faith lies in believing 'that Christ died for me in particular,' and that this is the first act of faith in a true believer's closing with Christ." Edwards, who clearly sided with Brainerd in the debate, described the report he heard:

> In which debate he [Brainerd] made this plain declaration (at the same time confirming what he said by many arguments), that the essence of saving faith was wholly left out of that definition of saving faith which that gentleman has published; and that the faith which he had defined had nothing of God in it, nothing above nature, nor indeed above the power of the devils [Brainerd was alluding to Jas 2:19]; and that all such as had this faith, and had no better, surely perish.[25]

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[24] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 432–33.

[25] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 456.

It is generally agreed that the "gentleman" whom Brainerd debated was Boston pastor, Andrew Croswell (1709–1785).[26] Historian Leigh Eric Schmidt agrees and explains that Brainerd identified Croswell's teachings as "dangerous and destructive," while Croswell "abhorred Brainerd's spirituality," charging Brainerd with a "gloomy" Christian life because he thought so little of Jesus's blood.[27]

In sum, Brainerd understood that, before sinners could be converted, they must understand the Bible's teaching on creation and the fall of humanity into sin. They must understand Christ's person and work, they must understand the nature of saving faith—especially that its essence is *not* a conviction "that Christ died for me in particular" but "a spiritual view of his glory and goodness," and they must be invited to accept the relief he freely offers.

Practical Methods that David Brainerd Employed to Promote Conversion

Brainerd used two primary strategies in his efforts to convert the Indians: prayer and instruction.

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[26] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 456.

[27] Leigh Eric Schmidt, "'A Second and Glorious Reformation': The New Light Extremism of Andrew Croswell," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (April 1986): 232–33. Schmidt also points out that Croswell was as important an influence in the eighteenth century as James Davenport (215). Croswell was particularly noted for siding with the extremes of the Great Awakening, including his strong promotion of the doctrine of "personal assurance of salvation" (217, 225), his support of Whitfield in an argument with an Anglican over *sola fide* (217), his engagement in itinerant ministry (218), his encouragement of women in ministry (220) and of racial equality (237), his "vigorous defense of Davenport" and condemnation of Brainerd's mentor and friend, Jonathan Dickinson, as a "Christ despising and Soul murdering" minister (223). Croswell's embrace of "full assurance," especially in his 1745 publication *What Is Christ to Me, if He Is Not Mine?* led many to identify him as an antinomian (225). Croswell believed that the church must move away from the Puritan view of "conversion 'by Degrees'" and embrace the view that conversion can happen "in the *twinkling of an Eye*" (230). To Croswell's opponents, his doctrines sounded boastfully confident and "eclipsed evangelical humility" (235). While many Puritans taught that sanctification is a crucial part of the believer's assurance, Croswell taught that "assurance of justification came in faith, not works" (239).

Prayer

For Brainerd prayer was the most crucial strategy and therefore the most consistently employed. On August 28, 1746, Brainerd surveyed the ministry opportunity in Shamokin (present day Sunbury, Pennsylvania) for the fourth time.[28] He intended to settle here among the Indians in the near future. "Under great concern of mind" regarding this upcoming endeavor, he wrote:

> Was full of concern for the kingdom of Christ, and found some enlargement of soul in prayer, both in secret and in my family. Scarcely ever saw more clearly, than this day, that 'tis God's work to convert souls, and especially poor heathens: I knew I could not touch them; I saw I could only speak to "dry bones", but could give them no sense of what I said. My eyes were up to God for help: I could say the work was his; and if done, the glory would be his.[29]

Brainerd prayed continually for the conversion of the Indians, he prayed vigorously—often with perspiration[30]—he sometimes prayed ejaculatory prayers in the moment of preaching,[31] and his prayers were fueled by his eschatological confidence: that the gospel

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[28] Refer to figure 1 on p. 3 of this thesis.

[29] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 422; see also 254–55.

[30] Consider these excerpts from Brainerd's diary. "In the forenoon, I felt a power of intercession for precious immortal souls, for the advancement of the kingdom of my dear Lord and Saviour in the world; . . . had special enlargement in pleading for the enlightening and conversion of the poor heathen. In the afternoon, God 'was with me of a truth.' Oh 'twas blessed company indeed! God enabled me to agonize in prayer that I was quite wet with sweat, though in the shade, and the wind cool. My soul was drawn out very much for the world; I grasped for multitudes of souls" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 162). "This morning spent about two hours in secret duties, and was enabled more than ordinarily to agonize for immortal souls; though it was early in the morning, and the sun scarcely shined at all, yet my body was quite wet with sweat" (163). "I set apart this day for secret fasting and prayer, to entreat God to direct and bless me with regard to the great work I have in view, of 'preaching the Gospel'. . . . At night, the Lord visited me marvelously in prayer; I think my soul never was in such an agony before: I felt no restraint; for the treasures of divine grace were opened to me: I wrestled for . . . the ingathering of souls. . . . I was in such an agony . . . that I was all over wet with sweat" (169–70). As Brainerd was despondent over the upcoming idolatrous feast, he "withdrew for prayer." He continues: "In prayer I was exceedingly enlarged. . . . I was in such anguish, and pleaded with so much earnestness and importunity, that when I rose from my knees I felt extremely weak and overcome; I could scarcely walk straight, my joints were loosed, the sweat ran down my face and body" (261).

[31] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 243, 254, 256.

message would be embraced by a dominant portion of peoples on earth prior to the Christ's return.[32] One diary entry reveals Brainerd's anticipation:

> Had some rising hopes sometimes, that "God would arise and have mercy on Zion speedily." My heart is indeed refreshed when I have any prevailing hopes of Zion's prosperity. Oh, that I may see the glorious day when Zion shall become the "joy of the whole earth"![33]

With this eschatological hope, Brainerd typically prayed in this manner:

> Had freedom and comfort in prayer several times; especially had some rising hopes of Zion's enlargement and prosperity. And oh, how refreshing were these hopes to my soul! Oh, that the kingdom of the dear Lord might come! Oh, that the poor Indians might quickly be gathered in, in great numbers![34]

The closer Brainerd approached death, the more he was burdened for the Indians' conversion and the more he was confident of the gospel's success.[35] Edwards describes the final two weeks of Brainerd's life:

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[32] For more on Brainerd's eschatology, see n. 66 in chap. 1 of this thesis.

[33] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 223. See also 228, 230, 353, 373, 382, 461. Brainerd describes one facet of a public gathering for worship in August 1746: "Opened the two last stanzas of the 72nd Psalm; at which time God was present with us; especially while I insisted upon the promise of 'all nations blessing' the great Redeemer: My soul was refreshed to think that this day, this blessed glorious season, should surely come" (418).

[34] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 383. A few more quotations from the diary reveal the tenor of Brainerd's prayer for conversion with eschatological conviction. "In the evening, was refreshed in prayer, with the hopes of the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world" (158). "God gave me to wrestle earnestly for others, for the kingdom of Christ in the world. . . . Had raised hopes today respecting the heathen. Oh, that God would bring in great numbers of 'em to Jesus Christ! I can't but hope I shall see that glorious day" (159). "I was specially assisted to intercede and plead for poor souls, and for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom in the world" (160; see also 166, 177, 179, 198, 216, 234, 236–37, 263, 266, 268, 275, 277, 280, 285, 286, 303, 364–66, 401–02, 407, 421).

[35] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 446, 459. Edwards described his firsthand experience of Brainerd's prayer life from May to October 1747: "In his prayers, he insisted much on the prosperity of Zion, the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and the flourishing and propagation of religion among the Indians. . . . As long as he lived, he was much in speaking of that future prosperity of Zion that is so often foretold and promised in the Scripture: It was a theme he delighted to dwell upon; and his mind seemed to be carried forth with earnest concern about it, and intense desires . . . yea, the nearer death advanced, and the more the symptoms of its approach increased, still the more did his mind seem to be taken up with this subject" (see also 473, 476).

> He also was much in expressing his longings that the Church of Christ on earth might flourish, and Christ's kingdom here might be advanced, notwithstanding he was about to leave the earth and should not with his eyes behold the desirable event, nor be instrumental in promoting it. He said to me one morning as I came into the room, "My thoughts have been employed on the old dear theme, the prosperity of God's Church on earth. As I waked out of sleep, 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. 'Tis that especially makes me long for it." He expressed much hope that a glorious advancement of Christ's kingdom was near at hand. . . . He expressed on his deathbed a full persuasion that he should in heaven see the prosperity of the Church on earth, and should rejoice with Christ therein.[36]

Instruction

In seeking the conversion of others, Brainerd also employed instruction. When entering an Indian territory, he would first seek permission of the Indian king to instruct the people.[37] After establishing a regular routine of instruction, Brainerd would build a house among the natives.[38] Brainerd sought to employ a translator,[39] learn the language himself,[40] and translate psalms and prayers into that language.[41] Being mentored under

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[36] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 470–71. Edwards underscored the final words that Brainerd dictated to be recorded in his diary: "Oh, that his kingdom might come in the world; that they might all love and glorify him for what he is in himself; and that the blessed Redeemer might 'see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.' Oh, 'come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen'" (474).

[37] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 248, 268, 421, 576–79.

[38] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 430. Brainerd was somewhat unusual in this respect. Fisher notes that the Moravian missionaries were more welcomed than others by the Indians because they lived among the natives (81). Linford D. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 81.

[39] David Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei inter Indicos, or the Rise and Progress of a Remarkable Work of Grace Amongst a Number of the Indians in the Provinces of New-Jersey and Pennsylvania, Justly Represented in a Journal Kept by Order of the Honourable Society (in Scotland) for Propagating Christian Knowledge* in *Mr. Brainerd's Journal among the Indians* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1746), 70–72. See also Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd*, 96, 117.

[40] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 228, 574.

[41] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 222, 254, 258. For Brainerd's own example of consistently using the psalter in daily life, see David Wynbeek, *David Brainerd, Beloved Yankee* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 200, 219, 235, 241.

John Sergeant, Brainerd also sought to establish schools among the Indians.[42] Brainerd's doctrinal instruction was both public and private,[43] his instruction was both expository and catechetical,[44] and his instruction was both destructive and constructive. That is, through instruction Brainerd sought to remove objections that Indians had toward Christianity and to construct a worldview for the Indians in which concepts necessary to conversion would fit. For example, Brainerd had to dismantle Indian polytheism, pagan traditions, as well as wrong understandings of Christianity.[45] At the same time Brainerd's instruction involved the construction of a conceptual framework for truths such as inner being, vertical justice, depravity, and substitution.[46]

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[42] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 463, 570–81; see also Norman Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," *The Life of David Brainerd,* vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 61–62.

[43] Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei*, 79–80. In Brainerd's strategy, private conversation was the necessary flipside to preaching. When Brainerd noticed a hearer under concern, he would engage him or her in private conversation: "As these poor ignorant *Pagans* stood in need of having *Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept*, in order to their being instructed and grounded in the Principles of Christianity, so I preached *publickly, and taught from House to House* almost every Day for *whole Weeks* together, when I was with them. And my *publick* Discourses did not then make up one Half of my work, while there was so many constantly coming to me with that important Enquiry, *What must we do to be saved?* And opening to me the various Exercises of their Minds." He refers to private instruction in more than thirty journal entries.

[44] Brainerd explained his catechetical method in his journal on December 21, 1745 (*Divine Grace Display'd*, 90). See also his journal entries for January 5 and January 19, 1746 (103–4, 107–8). He found the teaching of the catechism to be both profitable for both the discipleship of Christians and the evangelism of non-Christians.

[45] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 576–80. Brainerd explained to Ebenezer Pemberton that the Indians believed that the whites were made by a different God, that many Indians believed that spirits had communicated to them in dreams or that Powwows could hex them, that the Indians preferred to "live as their fathers lived and go to their fathers when they die," and that Indians' minds are typically "filled with prejudices against Christianity, on account of the vicious lives and unchristian behavior of some that are called Christians" (579–80). In fact, Brainerd had been rejected by the authorities at Minissink because the King "inquired why I desired the Indians to become Christians, seeing the Christians were so much worse than the Indians are in their present state. The Christians, he said, would lie, steal, and drink worse than the Indians" (576).

[46] The crucial doctrinal foundations in which Brainerd instructed the Indians has been explained in detail above. Brainerd lamented, "There is no Point of *Christian Doctrine* but what they are either wholly ignorant of, or extremely confus'd in their

Personal Accounts of Conversion That David Brainerd Described

Brainerd recounted several conversions in detail. Only the three most detailed conversion narratives will be considered. The first account is his own conversion which he recorded in the introduction to his private diary.[47] The second and third accounts, those of Moses Tinda Tautamy and the woman "reconcil'd to divine *Sovereignty*," respectively, come from in his ministry journals.[48]

Brainerd's Account of His Own Conversion

Brainerd wrote about the day of his conversion: "This happy season to my soul was Lord's Day 12 of July as I remember, 1739."[49] In July 1739 Brainerd was twenty-one years old. However, his conversion narrative began thirteen years earlier when he

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Notions about. And therefore 'tis necessary they should be instructed in every Truth, even in those that are the most easy and obvious" (*Divine Grace Display'd*, 214–37). He would begin by teaching the dichotomist nature of every human: "that there is something in them that is capable of Joy and Pleasure, when their *Bodies* are sick and much pained." From there Brainerd taught (using the Indian's own beliefs) that the soul will live even after the body dies and that his message pertains to the joy of this immortal part of them. After his explanation of these doctrinal foundations, Brainerd reviewed how he taught total depravity using the "*natural* Inclination" of "*little Children*" and God's positive demand in the great commandment. He also reviewed how difficult it was to teach legal indebtedness and the substitutionary payment of a debt.

[47] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 101–42.

[48] Brainerd recounts Tautamy's conversion in his entry for Sunday, July 21, 1745 (Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei*, 7–15) and the conversion of the woman "reconcil'd to divine Sovereignty" on Sundays, February 9 and March 9, 1746 (Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 114–16, 122–29). Another detailed and interesting conversion narrative that is not considered in this examination is the conversion of "the Conjurer," which Brainerd recounts on May 9, 1746 (Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 154–61).

[49] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 140. Except for the date of his conversion, all of Brainerd's diary and journal entries (as well as Edwards's dates) match the pre-1752 Julian calendar as opposed to the post-1752 Gregorian calendar (1740 and 1744 were leap years). According to the Gregorian calendar (that Brainerd never used otherwise) July 12, 1739, was a Sunday. On the Julian calendar (that perfectly matches the rest of Brainerd's more than six hundred dates), July 12 was a Thursday. The nearest Sunday was July 15. Therefore, it is likely that Brainerd was actually converted on Sunday, July 15, 1739, yet he did not accurately recall the date.

remembered being shaken by the fear of death—a fear that would intensify before he was converted.[50] Brainerd especially recounted the details of the final year of this pre-conversion period. Of that time he said: "I was a very good Pharisee, i.e., had a very good outside, but rested entirely on my duties, though I was not sensible of it."[51] He came to a sense of the "amazing danger" of his condition, yet he retained a "latent hope of recommending [himself] to God by [his] religious duties."[52] Over the next few months, he came to understand that his religious works were motivated by selfishness rather than God's glory and that his heart was "vile and hellish."[53] During the final months before his conversion, Brainerd "often quarreled with God for laying the guilt of Adam's sin to [him]," but he thought that God was working in him "a deep humiliation in order for a saving close with Jesus Christ."[54] In fact, in a footnote he explained: "Thus scores of times I thought myself humbled and prepared for grace."[55] Yet his "corrupt nature was ever irritated" with "the strictness of the divine Law," with "faith alone [as] the condition of salvation," with his inability to "find out how to believe or come to Christ, nor what faith was," and with "the sovereignty of God."[56] Brainerd elaborated on this struggle with God's sovereignty:

> I could not bear that it should be wholly at God's pleasure to save or damn me just as he would: And in this case the 9th chap. of Rom. from the 11 verse to 23 was a constant vexation to me, more especially verse 21. . . . When I thought I was almost humbled, and almost resigned to God's disposal, and hoped I had almost obtained that submission that God required, upon reading or meditating this passage over, my

[50] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 101.

[51] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 105.

[52] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 105–6.

[53] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 108–9, 134–37.

[54] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 113, 116.

[55] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 119.

[56] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 119–24.

> heart would frequently be riled (O how easy 'tis to mistake in this neglect of humiliation!) I thought if the potter had power over the clay, that was a case far different from this; the vessels that he makes to dishonor are not wronged, do not undergo everlasting distress; but how can it be just for God to make a creature to subject it to everlasting punishment and extreme distress and anguish? And these were no injections of Satan; for my very heart was engaged thus against God, when I read or thought that God made us for his own glory, and would surely be glorified in us some way or other whatever it costs us, that he would send all the men in the world to hell, rather than lose the least part of his honor, this used to throw me into almost a rage with God. . . . To think that [God] would be glorified in [my damnation] irritated my corrupt nature still more! . . . All these things gave me such a dreadful prospect of myself that I was more than ever afraid to submit myself into the hands of a sovereign God.[57]

Although Brainerd did not want to admit his dislike of this sovereign God—for it would mean that he "was wholly 'dead and in trespasses and sins' (Eph. 2:1,5), that there was not the least spark of spiritual life or goodness in [him]"—when he did admit his lostness and inability he "became a suitable object for the compassion of Jesus Christ to be set upon, since he came 'to seek and to save that which is lost' (Luke 19:10)."[58]

"Here in a mournful melancholy state" Brainerd took a walk in order to pray. He describes what happened:

> Having been thus endeavoring to pray (though very stupid and senseless) for near about half an hour, and by this time the sun was scarce half an hour high, as I remember, as I was walking in a dark thick grove, "unspeakable glory" seemed to open to the view and apprehension of my soul. By the glory I saw I don't mean any external brightness, for I saw no such thing, nor do I intend any imagination of a body of light or splendor somewhere away in the third heaven, or anything of that nature. But it was a new inward apprehension or view that I had of God. . . . This was something, I knew, that I never had seen before or anything comparable to it for excellency and beauty. . . . I had now no particular apprehension of any one person in the Trinity . . . but it appeared to be divine glory and splendor that I then beheld. And my soul "rejoiced with joy unspeakable" to see such a God, such a glorious divine being, and I was inwardly pleased and satisfied that he should be God over all forever and ever. My soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellency, the loveliness and the greatness and other perfections of God that I was even swallowed up in him, at least to that degree that I had no thought, as I remember at first, about my own salvation or scarce that there was such a creature as I.

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[57] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 124–26. Brainerd believed that throughout his wrestling with the reality of God's sovereignty "the Spirit of God was powerfully at work with me, and used, as it were, to call upon me to submit myself into the hands of a sovereign God" (127). Edwards omitted most of this portion of Brainerd's conversion account.

[58] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 127–33.

> . . . I continued in this state of inward joy, peace and yet astonishment, till near dark without any sensible abatement, and then began to think and examine what I had seen and felt. And felt sweetly composed in my mind all the evening following. . . . At this time the way of salvation opened to me with such infinite wisdom, suitableness, and excellency that I wondered I should ever think of any other way of salvation, was amazed I had not dropped my own contrivances, and complied with this lovely blessed and excellent way before. If I could have been saved by my own duties or any other way that I had formerly contrived, my whole soul would have refused. I wondered all the world did not comply with this way of salvation entirely by the "righteousness of Christ."[59]

Brainerd described his conversion experience in terms of being instantaneously and immediately pierced, as with a non-physical light, with a "new inward apprehension" of the "divine glory and splendor." In that moment, he realized the "excellency and beauty" of the sovereignty and "other perfections." He also realized the "lovely blessed and excellent" "way of salvation entirely by the imputed 'righteousness of Christ.'"[60]

Brainerd's Account of Moses Tautamy's Conversion

A second conversion that Brainerd recounted at length is the conversion of his interpreter, Moses Tautamy, who was in his fifties at the time. On July 21, 1745, Brainerd baptized Tautamy and his wife at the Forks of the Delaware. He summarized their experience in his ministry journal:

> They are both, Persons of some *experimental* Knowledge in Religion; have both been awaken'd to a solemn Concern for their Souls; have to appearance, been brought to a Sense of their Misery and *Undonness* in themselves; have both appear'd to be comforted with divine Consolations; and 'tis apparent both have pass'd a *great*, and I can't but hope a *saving* Change.[61]

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[59] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd,* 138–40.

[60] In reading Brainerd's own conversion narrative, it is difficult not to think that he had read Jonathan Edwards's sermon, "A Divine and Supernatural Life," published in 1734 when Brainerd was about sixteen. See Phillip A. Hussey, "A Divine and Supernatural Light (1734)," in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, ed. Harry S. Stout (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 151–52. Hussey explains that, for Edwards, "divine light is a real 'sense and apprehension of the divine excellency' of the subject matter of the Word of God, that is, of Christ and of the gospel."

[61] Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei*, 8.

Brainerd offered further detail regarding Moses's conversion. When Brainerd first employed him the previous summer, Tautamy desired that the Indians embrace the English way of life but had no concern for Christianity.[62] Although he interpreted for many sermons that Brainerd preached, Tautamy was rarely "awaken'd to a concern for his Soul," until he became sick for many weeks in the Fall of 1744.[63] In this weak state, Tautamy's "Mind was burden'd from Day to Day; and 'twas now his great Enquiry, *What he should do to be saved*. His spiritual Trouble prevail'd till at length his Sleep, in a Measure, departed from him."[64] In this agony, Tautamy envisioned "an *impassible Mountain* before him," which "*signify'd just nothing at all for him to strive and struggle any more*"—in other words, it revealed Tautamy's complete inability to save himself.[65] At this time Tautamy confessed that he had "never done one good Thing" (that is, "from a right *Principle*, and with a right *View*, tho' he had done many Things that were *materially* Good and Right") and that "he was now on the Brink of endless Misery."[66]

> After he had been for some Time in this Condition, sensible of the impossibility of his helping himself by any Thing he could do . . . so that he had given up all for lost, as to his own Attempts, and was become more calm and compos'd: Then, he says, it was born in upon his Mind as if it had been audibly spoken to him, There is Hope, there is Hope. Whereupon his Soul seem'd to rest and be in some Measure satisfy'd, tho' he had no considerable Joy.
>
> He can't here remember distinctly any Views he had of Christ, or give any clear Account of his Soul's Acceptance of him, which makes his Experience appear the more doubtful. . . . But these Exercises of Soul were attended and follow'd with a very great Change in the Man, so that it might justly be said, he was become another Man, if not a new Man.[67]

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[62] Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei*, 8–9.

[63] Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei*, 9–10.

[64] Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei*, 10.

[65] Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei*, 10–11.

[66] Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei*, 11–12.

[67] Brainerd, *Mirabilia Dei*, 13. Brainerd goes on to recount Tautamy's transformed "Temper, Discourse and Behavior," his new "admirable Fervency" in interpreting, and his loss of "any hankering Desire after [*strong Drink*]"—changes that

From his account of Tautamy's conversion, Brainerd indicated his expectation that conversion involves an agonizing period of preparation, that conversion involves an immediate and new realization regarding the hope of the gospel, and that the chief evidence of conversion is a changed life.

Brainerd's Account of the Conversion of the Woman "Reconcil'd to Divine Sovereignty"

The third detailed conversion narrative pertains to an Indian woman whom Brainerd described on February 9, 1746, as

> a poor *heaven laden* Soul, who had been long under spiritual Distress, as constant and pressing as ever I saw, that was now brought to a comfortable *Calm*, and seem'd to be bow'd and reconcil'd to divine *Sovereignty*; and told me, *She now saw and felt 'twas right God should do with her as he pleas'd. And her Heart felt pleased and satisfied it should be so*. Altho' of late she had often found her Heart rise and quarel with God because he would, *if he pleas'd*, send her to Hell after all she had done, or could do to save herself, &c. And added, That the *heavy Burden* she had lain under, was now remov'd: . . . That she felt she never could do any Thing to save herself, but must perish forever if Christ did not *do all* for her: That she did not deserve he should help her; and that 'twould be *right* if he should leave her to perish. But Christ could save her, tho' she could *do nothing* to save herself, &c. And here she seemed to rest.[68]

One month later, on March 9, this woman experienced "remarkable Comfort" and "sensible Satisfaction" for the first time.[69] Brainerd described what happened after corporate worship as many Indians were gathered in his house.

> While we were singing, there was one (the Woman mention'd in my *Journal* of *Feb*. 9.) who, I may venture to say, if I may be allow'd to say so much of any Person I ever saw, was fill'd *with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*, & could not but burst forth in Prayer and Praises to God before us all, with many Tears, crying sometimes in *English* and sometimes in *Indian, O blessed Lord, do come, do come! O do take*

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had endured for "more than six Months" by the time Brainerd was writing this report (14). In his editorial footnotes to Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd*, Norman Pettit observes that Jonathan Edwards did not refer his readers to Brainerd's accounts of conversion, "possibly because of the excessive zeal displayed" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 254, 392).

[68] Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 115–16.

[69] Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 127.

> *me away, do let me die and go to Jesus Christ! I am afraid if I live I shall Sin again! O do let me die now! O dear Jesus, do come! I can't stay, I can't stay! O how can I live in this World! Do take my Soul away from this Sinful Place! O let me never Sin any more! O what shall I do, what shall I do! Dear Jesus, O dear Jesus, &c.*[70]

After Brainerd examined her with questions about Christ's sweetness and sufficiency, he commented:

> I am very sensible there may be *great Joys* arising even to an extacy, where there is still no *substantial* Evidence of their being well-grounded. But in the present Case there seem'd to be no Evidence wanting, in Order to prove this Joy to be divine, either in Regard of its Preparatives, Attendants, or Consequents.[71]

Brainerd then elaborated on his understanding of genuine conversion. He defined conversion as a "sweet and surprising Extacy" that "*spring*[s] from a true *spiritual* Discovery of the Glory, ravishing Beauty and Excellency of Christ."[72] He clarified that this ecstasy springs

> not from any *gross* imaginary Notions of his human Nature; such as that of seeing him in *such* a Place or Posture, as hanging on the Cross, as bleeding, dying, as gently smiling, and the like; which Delusions some have been carried away with. Nor did it rise from a *sordid selfish* Apprehension of *her* having any Benefit whatsoever conferred on her, but from a View of his *personal* Excellency, and *transcendant* Loveliness, which drew forth those vehement Desires of enjoying him she now manifested.[73]

Brainerd also explained what he meant by the "Preparatives, Attendants, or Consequents" of this divinely-wrought joy—i.e., conversion. The preparatives of conversion consist in being "bow'd and broken under Convictions of Sin and Misery" because of the "Hardness and Rebellion of [one's own] Heart" and because of one's own unwillingness "to come to Christ for Salvation," as well as in being "bow'd and reconcil'd to divine *Sovereignty*" so that one's conversion is not sought "thro' fear of *Hell*."[74] The attendants

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[70] Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 124–25.

[71] Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 126.

[72] Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 127.

[73] Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 127. See the discussion regarding Andrew Croswell earlier in this chapter and the discussion regarding the Moravian views of love in the next chapter.

[74] Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 126–27.

of converting joy include a "resign[ation] to the divine Will," "the most tender Sense of the Evil of Sin," even "longing to die that [one] might be delivered from it," and "the most humbling Sense of [one's] own Meanness and Unworthiness."[75] The consequents of conversion include tenderness, broken-heartedness, brotherly love, godliness, and humility.[76]

Conclusion: A Systematic Summary of David Brainerd's Understanding of Conversion

A succinct, systematic summary of Brainerd's theology of conversion can now be articulated. It has six facets.

First, conversion is spiritual apprehension. Brainerd's described conversion as an "inward apprehension" or "spiritual view" that produces indescribable joy, echoing the language of Paul (in 2 Cor 4:6) and of Peter (in 1 Pet 1:8). He was convinced that the very nature of saving faith involved not mere knowledge or persuasion but delightful rest in Christ. So Brainerd described this inward apprehension as joy, rest, comfort, and even ecstasy. Conversion is experienced when the heart realizes and relishes the glorious beauty of God in Christ.

Second, conversion is supernaturally motivated. For Brainerd, this new joy must be "above nature," or beyond natural explanation. It must be a response to God's

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[75] Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 128. Later in his appendix, Brainerd describes several more attendant joys: "The *Comfort* that Persons have obtain'd after their Distresses, has likewise in general appear'd solid, well grounded and scriptural; arising from a spiritual and *supernatural Illumination* of Mind,—a View of divine Things (in a Measure) *as they are*,—a complacency of Soul in the divine Perfections,—and a peculiar Satisfaction in the *Way of Salvation*, by free *sovereign Grace* in the great Redeemer" (189).

[76] Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 129. Brainerd describes this newly converted woman in these terms: "She since [her conversion] appears to be a most tender, broken-hearted, affectionate, devout, and humble Christian, as exemplary in Life and Conversation as any Person in my Congregation. May she still *grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of Christ*."

glory in himself and cannot be grounded merely an individual's desire to have or claim to possess personal salvation. In other words, true conversion is not merely desiring to escape hell, merely professing to follow Christ, merely feeling or imagining that God is favorable, or merely thinking that "Jesus died for me" in particular. Instead, it is being awestruck over God's majesty and goodness revealed in Christ.

Third, conversion is the work of God. In Brainerd's view, conversion was not the work of a human but of God. And, because only God could give a person this inward apprehension of divine beauty, Brainerd prayed constantly and hopefully to God for the conversion of others.

Fourth, conversion is rooted in thorough biblical instruction. Brainerd understood that biblical teaching was foundational to conversion—that an individual could apprehend with the heart only what he or she already understood in the mind. He knew that, for an individual to experience conversion, he or she must understand foundational biblical concepts such as God, creation, law, sin, condemnation, inability, Jesus's historicity and divinity, Jesus's substitutionary atonement, the nature of saving faith, and Jesus's free invitation. He also knew that such concepts must supplant a person's previous viewpoints. So, for Brainerd, thorough biblical teaching was the normal means to bring about conversion.

Fifth, conversion is preceded by a period of spiritual preparation. Brainerd believed that conversion happened in an instant. (He believed that his own conversion took place on July 12, 1739.) This divinely-given inward apprehension struck the heart like a light, which Brainerd repeatedly insisted was conceptual rather than physical. However, Brainerd expected conversion to be preceded by an arduous stage of preparation in which the individual would be "affected," "awakened," and "under concern." In this preparatory phase (which could last years), an individual would progress from pride and complacency to fear and works-dependency to irritation and repulsion to

utter despair and hopelessness to settled resignation that the sovereign God can do as he pleases, even send the sinner to hell.

Sixth, conversion is evident in enduring change. Brainerd did not believe that the genuineness of one's conversion could be discerned in an instant. Genuine conversion was only proven by long-term life change in which the fruits of the Spirit, especially hatred for sin and humble submissiveness under God's sovereign will, were manifest in persevering and increasing degrees.

CHAPTER 3

DAVID BRAINERD'S UNDERSTANDING OF LOVE: THE ESSENCE OF AUTHENTIC SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

Evangelicals understand that spirituality is simply "lived conversion,"[1] and Brainerd's views highlight this understanding. His convictions regarding conversion deeply influenced his convictions about the essence of spirituality.

Brainerd understood that, in conversion, God had given him "a new apprehension . . . to see . . . such a glorious divine being."[2] This view led him to personal resignation before God's sovereignty. He described the change that took place in this way: "I was inwardly pleased and satisfied that he should be God over all forever and ever." Such personal resignation certainly meant that he was content to "be wholly at God's pleasure to save or damn [him] just as he would."[3] And, although prior to conversion his religion had been characterized by "self-interest" and "nothing but self-worship,"[4] his new converting view of God expunged such self-interest:

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[1] Evan B. Howard, "Evangelical Spirituality," in *Four Views on Christian Spirituality*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Bruce Demarest (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 165. By "lived conversion" Howard means that "conversion is arguably the most significant element in evangelical spirituality, for through authentic conversion, religion—true religion—is found and maintained. . . . Conversion is the mechanism through which union with God is established and maintained" (165, 167).

[2] Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Norman Pettit (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 138–39.

[3] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 124.

[4] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 137.

> My soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellency, the loveliness and the greatness and other perfections of God that I was even swallowed up in him, at least to that degree that I had no thought, as I remember at first, about my own salvation or scarce that there was such a creature as I.
>
> Thus the Lord, I trust, brought me to a hearty desire to exalt him, to set him on the throne, and to "seek first his Kingdom," i.e., principally and ultimately to aim at his honor and glory as the King and sovereign of the universe, which is the foundation of the religion of Jesus Christ has taught (Matt. 6:33).[5]

For Brainerd, conversion involved a spiritual apprehension of God's glory that led to a personal resignation under God's sovereign will and to a displacement of all self-interest in the all-consuming interest of glorifying God. It will be seen that his understanding of spirituality fit this same basic mold: He was converted in order to live a life "aim[ed] at [God's] honor and glory," "satisfied that [God] should be God," and "swallowed up in [God]."

Brainerd's understanding of the essence of spirituality can be traced from his early views that he expounded in his first two years of ministry, to his developing views that he expressed throughout his five years of diary entries, to his most mature views that he repeatedly articulated in the six months prior to his passing in October 1747.

David Brainerd's Early Articulations of the Essence of Spirituality

Brainerd's early views regarding the essence of spirituality are crucially expounded in his licensing sermon on Romans 8:2 and in his "dialogue between the various powers and affections of the mind."

Brainerd's Licensing Sermon (1742)

Nine months after being expelled from Yale, Brainerd preached a licensing sermon on Thursday, July 29, 1742, before the "Association of the Eastern District of Fairfield County at its meeting in Danbury [Connecticut]." He described the event:

[5] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 139.

> Was examined . . . as to my learning and also my experiences in religion, and received from them a license to preach the Gospel of Christ. Afterwards felt much devoted to God; joined in prayer with one of the ministers, my peculiar friend, in a convenient place; went to bed resolving to live devoted to God all my days.[6]

Historian John Grigg is quite certain that Brainerd's only extant sermon manuscript, a sermon on Romans 8:2—"The law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death"—is the message that Brainerd preached on this occasion.[7] Grigg summarizes the sermon's emphasis: "God's Spirit creates within a Christian a 'principle of spiritual life' that operates through faith and works by love. The Christian thus desires to stop sinning not through fear of judgment but out of love for God."[8] Brainerd taught that this principle of the spiritual life "actually operate[s] in a believer's life" in three ways:

> First, a believer might draw near to God as an act of faith. Second, the believer might experience an outpouring of love "which many waters cannot quench." Finally, the soul might repent over its barrenness and desire to be more like God. . . . The true faith that flows from this spiritual principle is a "living faith" that "works by love" and "purifies the heart." In fact, this living faith is so dynamic that it enables one to "fulfill the Great Command" to love one's neighbor as oneself.[9]

In his licensing sermon, Brainerd thus taught that the essence of spirituality involves Spirit-wrought life that breathes trust in God and love for God, hatred of sin and longing for perfection, and love for others that prioritizes their concerns over one's own.

Brainerd's Dialogue (1744)

In the final weeks of January and the first week of February, 1744, Brainerd expressed numerous thoughts on the essence of spirituality. Three of Brainerd's

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[6] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 174.

[7] John A. Grigg, "'A Principle of Spiritual Life': David Brainerd's Surviving Sermon," *The New England Quarterly* (June 2004): 277–78. Grigg describes the artifact: "Held by the manuscripts division of the Yale Divinity School Library, the sermon is written in small script on eight notebook-sized pages" (274).

[8] Grigg, "A Principle of Spiritual Life," 274.

[9] Grigg, "A Principle of Spiritual Life," 279.

expressions during this period, the last of which is his most creative, deserve consideration.

First, on January 21, twenty-five-year-old David Brainerd wrote from Kaunaumeek to his youngest brother Israel, who was eighteen and still lived in Haddam. Brainerd acknowledged that in the absence of both parents, his letter was written with both brotherly and parental concern. He began:

> My Dear Brother, There is but one thing that deserves our highest care and most ardent desires; and that is that we may answer the great end for which we were made; viz., to glorify that God who has given us our beings and all our comforts, and do all the good we possibly can to our fellow men while we live in the world. . . . Yet, alas, how little is this thought of among mankind! Most men seem to "live to themselves" without much regard to the glory of God or the good of their fellow creatures; they earnestly desire and eagerly pursue after the riches, the honors, and the pleasures of life, as if they really supposed that wealth, or greatness, or merriment, could make their immortal souls happy. But alas, what false and delusive dreams are these! And how miserable will those ere long be who are not awaked out of them to see that all their happiness consists in "living to God," and in becoming "holy as he is holy!"[10]

Second, on the evening of January 24, he was "unexpectedly visited by a considerable number of people with whom I was enabled to converse profitably of divine things."[11] He explained the subject of his conversation with them:

> Took pains to describe the difference between a regular and irregular self-love: the one consisting with a supreme love to God, but the other not; the former united God's glory and the soul's happiness, that they become one common interest, but the latter disjoining and separating God's glory and the man's happiness, seeking the latter with a neglect of the former. Illustrated this by that genuine love that is found between the sexes; which is diverse from that which is wrought up towards a person only by rational arguments or hope of self-interest. Love is a pleasing passion; it affords pleasure to the mind where it is; but yet true genuine love is not nor can be placed upon any object with that design of pleasing itself with the feeling of it in a man's own breast.[12]

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[10] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 487.

[11] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 235.

[12] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 235. This distinction between regular and irregular self-love has its roots in the Western tradition of Augustine of Hippo (354–430). Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Augustine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 137. O'Donovan sees three different usages of "self-love" in Augustine: "[1] an unfavorable tone [i.e., usage], which it [the term *self-love*] represents the root of all sin and rebellion against God; [2] a neutral tone, to represent the natural

Ten days after this evening of profitable conversation, Brainerd recorded in his diary on February 3, 1744, that he enjoyed a delightful contemplation on spirituality.[13] This contemplation has been preserved in written form in a meditation in Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd*. The third and climactic expression of Brainerd's early understanding of the essence of spirituality is titled "a scheme of dialogue between the various powers and affections of the mind, as they are found alternately whispering in the godly soul."[14] In the dialogue Brainerd shows how religion progresses in the soul through a fifteen-stage dialogue of the heart's affections with each other.[15] He introduces the three primary subjects. First, "Understanding" realizes that it is dependent on something outside itself for happiness and "discover[s] the excellency and glory of God, that he is the fountain of goodness and well-spring of happiness."[16] Second, "Will . . . freely choos[es] this God for its supreme happiness."[17] Third, "Ardent Love . . . passionately long[s] to please and

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condition either of man's animal or of his rational nature; [3] a favorable tone, to represent man's discovery of his true welfare in God." See also Bernard V. Brady, *Christian Love: How Christians Through the Ages Have Understood Love* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003). According to Brady, Augustine taught that "we are all lovers" and that "loving is an essential part of our nature as persons. . . . When Augustine says that we are lovers, he is saying that we are naturally attracted to things and to people" (83). Augustine defined love as "a desire, a motion of the soul," and he taught that "true love is the desire for something for its own sake" (84). Further, he taught that "we are to love others, not in themselves, but for the sake of God" (102) and that "love for others demands that we help them love God" (105). Augustine distinguished between good and bad kinds of self-love—between delighting in God and pursuing selfishness (109–10).

[13] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 236.

[14] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 477.

[15] *Inside Out* is a contemporary animated film that illustrates the kind of "dialogue between the soul's affections" that Brainerd had in mind. Disney/Pixar, *Inside Out*, DVD, directed by Pete Docter (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2015).

[16] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 477.

[17] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 477.

glorify the divine being, to be in every respect conformed to him, and in that way to enjoy him."[18] Brainerd continues to explain how this love for God in a person behaves:

> This Love or Desire represented as most genuine; not induced by mean and mercenary views; not primarily springing from selfish hopes of salvation, whereby the divine glories would be sacrificed to the idol self; not arising from slavish fear of divine anger in case of neglect, nor yet from hopes of feeling the sweetness of that tender and pleasant passion of love in one's own breast; but from a just esteem of the beauteous object beloved.[19]

Brainerd's dialogue continues, fourth, with Understanding realizing that, although perfect enjoyment of God cannot be experienced until glory, God "may be enjoyed in some measure now, viz., by the same knowledge begetting Likeness and Love, which will be answered with returns of Love and the smiles of God's countenance, which are better than life."[20] When that is understood then the fifth affection, "Holy Desire" speaks: it craves perfection.[21] Sixth, Understanding again speaks, accepting present trials because they prepare the believer for such glory.[22] Once Understanding embraces the goodness of trials, the next three affections speak: "Holy Impatience . . . complain[s] of the sins and sorrows of life," "Tender Conscience comes in and meekly reproves the complaints of Impatience," then "Judgment" assesses that, on the one hand, Impatience is right to long for perfection and rest, yet, on the other hand, Impatience is wrong when it "springs from self love and want of resignation and humility."[23]

Tenth, "Godly Sorrow . . . moan[s] . . . that God must still be dishonored" while "the soul being still in a world of sin, and itself imperfect."[24] Then "Holy

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[18] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 477.

[19] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 477–78.

[20] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 478.

[21] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 478.

[22] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 478.

[23] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 478–80.

[24] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 480.

Confidence" clings to the promise of Romans 8:39, while "Godly Fear, or Holy Jealousy, here steps in" and warns that such "hopes of persevering grace" could be "presumption" in disguise.[25] The thirteenth facet of the soul to speak up is "Reflection," which points to "past experiences" such as "the preparatory work of conviction and humiliation" in the soul, the "manifestation . . . of the glory of God in Jesus Christ" to the soul, and the soul's admir[ation of] that glory and cho[ice of] that God for his only portion," not out of the fear of hell or out of an eagerness for the reward of salvation, "but from a just esteem of that beauteous and glorious object."[26] Reflection also remembers "how he has likewise scores of times felt his soul mourn for sin" and "longed exceedingly to be . . . 'holy as God is holy;' and counted it present heaven to be of a heavenly temper: How he has frequently rejoiced to think of being forever subject to . . . God."[27]

Penultimately, "Spiritual Sensation, being awakened, comes in and declares that she now feels . . . that [God] is the only supreme good, the only soul-satisfying happiness."[28] Like numerous affections that have already spoken, she too longs to live sinlessly—with complete devotion to God like the angels now possess. Fifteenthly (and finally), "Holy Resolution" responds by "determining to 'follow hard after God' and continually pursue a life of conformity to him."[29] Brainerd explains the motivation behind this resolve:

> The soul [ought] always to remember that God is the only source of happiness, . . . that earth has nothing in it desirable for itself, or any further than God is seen in it; and that the knowledge of God in Christ, begetting and maintaining love, and

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[25] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 480.

[26] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 480–81.

[27] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 481.

[28] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 481.

[29] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 482.

> mortifying sensual and fleshly appetites, is the way to be holy on earth, and so to be attempered [i.e., adapted] to the complete holiness of the heavenly world.[30]

According to Brainerd's dialogue, spirituality is, at root, affection in the soul for God.[31] This affection is stirred by an accurate understanding of the glory of God, and it includes "ardent love . . . to glorify God," "holy desire" to be "perfect," "holy impatience" with "the sins and sorrows of life," "godly sorrow . . . that God must be dishonored," "holy confidence . . . that death will ere long put a happy period to all sin and sorrow," "holy fear" that such confidence could be "presumption," "spiritual sensation" (i.e., feeling) that longs for angel-like devotedness, and "holy resolution" that commits oneself "to pursue a life of conformity to [God]." Each of these affections is motivated entirely by God's glory and not out of self-interest—"not primarily" to avoid judgment, to attain personal salvation, or to enjoy the feeling of being loved by him.

His diary entries seem to indicate that he began writing this dialogue on Friday, February 3, 1744, and completed it four days later, on the Tuesday, February 7.[32] On that Tuesday, Brainerd's entry repeated what he had written of "Spiritual Sensation," the fourteenth aspect of his dialogue. On that day and the few surrounding days, Brainerd was quite focused on his "temper":

> Monday, February 6. . . . Longing especially for the complete mortification of sensuality and pride, and for resignation to God's dispensations, at all times, as through grace I felt it at this time. I did not desire deliverance from any difficulty that attends my circumstances, unless God was willing. Oh, how comfortable is this temper![33]

> Tuesday, February 7. . . . Felt something spiritual, devout, resigned, and mortified to the world, much of the day; and especially towards and in the evening. Blessed by God, that he enables me to love him for himself.[34]

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[30] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 482.

[31] In fact, on October 19, 1746, Brainerd offers "lively religious affection" as the most succinct gloss of the term *spirituality* (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 434).

[32] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 236–37.

[33] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 237.

[34] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 238.

> Friday, February 10. . . . I have no confidence to hold up my face, even before my fellow worms; but only when my soul confides in God, and I find the sweet temper of Christ, the spirit of humility, solemnity, and mortification, and resignation, alive in my soul.[35]

From Brainerd's early articulations, the essence of spiritual life consists in loving God and others. This addresses one's primary problem—namely, irregular self-love—and it fulfills one's created purpose. An individual's love for God is evident in a temper, or frame of mind, that is marked by strong affections of soul. Negatively, these affections hate sin in every form because it dishonors God—they detest loving anything other than God for its own sake and any love that makes oneself ultimate. Positively, these affections crave perfection because God would thereby be appropriately honored, yet they accept imperfection and consequently resolve to pursue holiness. Thus, authentic spiritual love for God has for its motivation God's own glory rather than the soul's selfish interest apart from God.

David Brainerd's Developing Understanding of the Essence of Spirituality

According to Brainerd, love for God and love for self through seeking worldly enjoyments in themselves were like enemies vying for supremacy as the soul's ultimate source of happiness. As he had written in his letter to his brother Israel, to live for oneself and "earnestly desire and eagerly pursue" one's own happiness in the world was the primary competitor to living for the "the great end for which we were made; viz., to glorify that God who has given us our beings and all our comforts, and do all the good we possibly can to our fellow men while we live in the world." Therefore, understanding Brainerd's view of the essence of spirituality as affection for God must be filled out by understanding his view of worldliness, the greatest opponent to pious living.

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[35] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 239.

In his private diary Brainerd kept daily record of his spirituality—his affections for God. As already mentioned, he referred to his spiritual, affectionate frame of mind as a "heavenly temper," "the sweet temper of Christ," or a "Gospel temper."[36] On a daily basis, Brainerd was examining whether his mindset evidenced positive affections such as love for God and negative affections such as deadness to the world.[37]

Brainerd's Commitment to Weanedness from the World

Brainerd was continually examining the relationship between his love for God and his love for everything else in the world. He was concerned that finding happiness in the world would displace finding happiness in God, so he counseled others: "Never expect any satisfaction or happiness from the world. If you hope for happiness *in* the world, hope for it from God and not *from* the world."[38] Early in his adult life (the week after his twenty-fourth birthday) Brainerd penned two poems. Each of them evidences that he had committed himself to deadness to the world:

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[36] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 189, 191, 193–94, 195, 196, 227, 234, 254, 276, 283–84, 292, 303, 338, 345, 443, 444, 449–52. To describe a mind controlled by spiritual affections, Brainerd also speaks of a "divine temper," "childlike temper," "filial temper," "divine dispositions," and "Godlike tempers." When he read back through his diaries on his death bed, Brainerd was "considerably refreshed with what [he] met with in them. . . . [He] could not but rejoice and bless God for what passed long ago, which without writing had been entirely lost" (462). Brainerd was encouraged to see that his affections were sincere, consistent, and strongly indicative of genuine religion.

[37] In his diary Brainerd regularly tracked his enjoyment of God's presence, resignation to God's will and to his present circumstances and future sufferings, hatred of indwelling sin and anticipation of death in order to be delivered from it, burden for entire devotedness to God, love for mankind and especially his enemies, freedom from bitterness and from divisiveness (what he called a "party spirit"), desire for God's blessing on his friends and for God's conversion of the Indians, confidence in the advance of Christ's kingdom, sincerity and compassion in his preaching, and weanedness from the world.

[38] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 488. His counsel continued: "Don't think you shall be more happy if you live to such or such a state of life, if you live to be for yourself, to be settled in the world, or if you should gain an estate in it: but look upon it that you shall then be happy when you can be constantly employed for God and not for yourself."

Farewell, vain world; my soul can bid adieu:
My Saviour's taught me to abandon you.
Your charms may gratify a sensual mind;
Not please a soul wholly for God designed.
Forbear to entice, cease then my soul to call:
'Tis fixed, through grace; my God shall be my all.
While he thus lets me heavenly glories view,
Your beauties fade, my heart's no room for you.

Lord, I'm a stranger here alone;
Earth no true comforts can afford:
Yet, absent from my dearest One,
My soul delights to cry, my Lord!
Jesus, my Lord, my only love,
Possess my soul, nor thence depart:
Grant me kind visits, heavenly dove;
My God shall then have all my heart.[39]

Brainerd's desire was that Jesus be his "only love" and God "have all [his] heart," leaving "no room" for the "charms" of this "vain world." One of his chief priorities was to live as a "stranger and pilgrim on the earth" (Heb 11:13) and his diary entries reveal a preoccupation with this facet of his "temper."[40] For example,

> Monday, July 19 [1742]. My desires seem especially to be carried out after weanedness from the world, perfect deadness to it, and to be even crucified to all its allurements. My soul longs to feel itself more of a "pilgrim" and "stranger" here below; that nothing may divert me from pressing through the lonely desert, till I arrive at my Father's house.[41]

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[39] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 163–64. These poems have been adapted for singing. See David Brainerd, Joseph Tyrpak, and Paul Keew, "Wandr'ing Pilgrim," hymn, n.p.: Church Works Media/Watchsong, 2015.

[40] This wording, "stranger and pilgrim," is taken from the King James Version, only it has been altered from plural to singular.

[41] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 173. Brainerd communicates much of the same thing the following day, and Edwards describes his diary for July 23–28 to include a record of his "experiences, such as . . . weanedness from the world, being sensibly a pilgrim and stranger on the earth" (174; see also 145, 179, 183–84, 197, 226, 259, 263, 490 [which was written on July 31, 1744], 271, 368, 401).

Brainerd's Pursuit of Weanedness from the World

Although Brainerd had committed himself to deadness to the world, he struggled to keep his heart from seeking happiness in the world rather than in God. His concern was that he would be guilty of spiritual idolatry:

> Thursday, December 8 [1743]. My mind was much distracted with different affections. Seemed to be at an amazing distance from God: and looking round in the world, to see if there was not some happiness to be derived from it. God, and certain objects in the world, seemed each to invite my heart and affections; and my soul seemed to be distracted between them. I have not been so much beset with the world for a long time; and that with relation to some particular objects which I thought myself most dead to. But even while I was desiring to please myself with any thing below, guilt, sorrow, and perplexity attended the first motions of desire. Indeed, I can't see the appearance of pleasure and happiness in the world, as I used to do: And blessed be God for any habitual deadness to the world. I found no peace, or deliverance from this distraction and perplexity of mind 'till I found access to the throne of grace: And as soon as I had any sense of God, and things divine, the allurements of the world vanished, and my heart was determined for God. But my soul mourned over my folly, that I should desire any pleasure, but only in God. God forgive my spiritual idolatry.[42]

For Brainerd, seeking happiness in anything other than in God was idolatrous. So Brainerd wrestled with his worldliness because he understood it to be antithetical to the essence of spirituality: affection for God. Throughout his life, Brainerd rigorously watched his heart toward life's enjoyments because nothing less than the essence of true spirituality was at stake.

The enjoyments which he monitored included the comforts of friendship,[43] food and drink, rest and relaxation, and tranquility in a nice home. He was convinced that

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[42] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 229–30.

[43] Brainerd's wrestling with the proper enjoyment of friends will not be explored in the following discussion. However, a few quotations will provide a brief description of the tension he experienced. He "besought the Lord that [he] might not be too much pleased and amused with dear friends" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 244). Yet he came to delight in God in friends—"Friends are a great comfort; and 'tis God that gives them" (289). He longed for a teammate, admitting the struggles of being surrounded by Indian ways and of being "intirely alone"—especially considering that Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs (David Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd or the Continuance and Progress of a Remarkable Work of Grace Among Some of the Indians Belonging to the Provinces of New-Jersey and Pennsylvania, Justly Represented in a Journal Kept by Order of the Honourable Society [in Scotland] for Propagating Christian Knowledge* in *Mr. Brainerd's Journal among the Indians* [Philadelphia:

such comforts could never satisfy, that they were fleeting and a "puff of wind," that they were tasteless and empty, and that they were of no value in comparison with joys to be found in God himself.[44] So, in February 1744, he "felt no disposition to eat or drink for the sake of the pleasure of it, but only to support [his] nature and fit [him] for divine service."[45] In April 1744 Brainerd declined two calls to settled pastoral ministry because "he was determined to forsake all outward comforts to be enjoyed in English settlements."[46] In July 1744 he admitted, "God does not permit me to please or comfort myself with hopes of . . . enjoying worldly comforts."[47] And in November 1744, after attempting to travel fifty miles in bad weather while sick, Brainerd praised God for protecting him in danger and described his reaction to this trial:

> Such fatigues and hardships as these serve to wean me more from the earth; and, I trust, will make heaven the sweeter. Formerly, when I was thus exposed to cold, rain, etc., I was ready to please myself with the thoughts of enjoying a comfortable house, a warm fire, and other outward comforts; but now these have less place in my heart (through the grace of God) and my eye is more to God for comfort.[48]

William Bradford, 1746], 237–39). Brainerd also admitted that "part of the happiness of heaven . . . consists in the communion of saints" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 380). Yet, during the last two weeks of his life, Brainerd revealed his weanedness from the world with regard to friends: "I am almost in eternity. I long to be there. My work is done: I have done with all my friends: all the world is nothing to me" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 470).

[44] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 490, 233, 262, 234, 242, 277, 391.

[45] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 241.

[46] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 245.

[47] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 263.

[48] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 273–74. See also his expression on December 6, 1744: "I have been disposed to . . . yield an unbecoming respect to some earthly objects, as if happiness were to be derived from them" (275).

Brainerd's Maturity in His Approach to Earthly Enjoyments

Those quotations describe his views in 1744.[49] Yet over time he admitted some development in his perspective toward "outward comforts." In April 1745, near the end of his second year of ministry, Brainerd came to see, especially through his experience of constant exhaustion, the "duty of diver[sion]:"

> Oh, how heavily does time pass away, when I can do nothing to any good purpose; but seem obliged to pass away precious time! But of late, I have seen it my duty to divert myself by all lawful means, that I may be fit, at least some small part of my time, to labour for God. And here is the difference between my present diversions, and those I once pursued, when in a natural state. Then I made a god of diversions, delighted in them with a neglect of God, and drew my highest satisfaction from them: now I use them as means to help me in living to God; fixedly delighting in him, and not in them, drawing my highest satisfaction from him. Then they were my all; now they are only means leading to my all. And those things that are the greatest diversion when pursued with this view, do not tend to hinder but promote my spirituality; and I see now, more than ever, that they are absolutely necessary.[50]

So Brainerd came to understand that diversions (such as relaxation) could "promote [his] spirituality" and were neither bad nor optional but "absolutely necessary." Yet he remained committed to delighting in them only insofar as they are a "means to help [one] in living to God" and insofar as "God is seen in them":

> My affections soared aloft to the blessed Author of every dear enjoyment. I viewed the emptiness and unsatisfactory nature of the most desirable earthly objects, any further than God is seen in them: and longed for a life of spirituality and inward purity; without which, I saw, there could be no true pleasure.[51]

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[49] Richard W. Pointer, "'Poor Indians' and the 'Poor in Spirit': The Indian Impact on David Brainerd," *The New England Quarterly* (September 1994): 411. Pointer observes that Brainerd's difficult living among the Indians at Kaunaumeek during 1743–1744 "clearly deepened his alienation from 'all earthly pleasures.'"

[50] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 292–93. Three months later Edwards explains that Brainerd "found it necessary to give himself some relaxation" (302).

[51] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 358. Later he expressed his concern that his enjoyment of outward comforts could "degenerate into what was merely selfish, without any supreme aim at the glory of God in them" (443).

Brainerd's Difficult Decision Regarding a More Comfortable Ministry

In May 1746, toward the end of his remarkably successful year of missionary service in New Jersey, Brainerd wrestled over a decision regarding the next phase of his ministry, a decision in which he wrestled with his approach to outward comforts.[52] On the one hand, he could "settle among [his] people" in New Jersey and transition from being an itinerant missionary to an established pastor. In considering this option, he refused "to consult [his] ease and worldly comfort," which certainly would increase in this course of action. Instead, his driving consideration for settling in New Jersey was that God had made him the spiritual father of this congregation, so, he thought, "It might be [God's] design to give me a quiet settlement and a stated home of my own." Brainerd said that this option "was not altogether disagreeable" to him because of his "great desire of enjoying conveniences and opportunities for profitable studies."

On the other hand, Brainerd still wanted to serve as an itinerant missionary. He explained the throes of decision-making and the option he ultimately chose:

> It appeared to me, that God's dealings towards me had fitted me for a life of solitariness and hardship; it appeared to me I had nothing to lose, nothing to do with earth, and consequently nothing to lose by a total renunciation of it: And it appeared just right that I should be destitute of house and home, and many comforts of life which I rejoiced to see others of God's people enjoy. And at the same time, I saw so much of the excellency of Christ's kingdom, and the infinite desirableness of its advancement in the world, that it swallowed up all my other thoughts; and made me willing, yea, even rejoice, to be made a pilgrim or hermit in the wilderness, to my dying moment, if I might thereby promote the blessed interest of the great Redeemer. . . . The language of my thoughts and disposition . . . now were, "Here I am, Lord, send me; . . . send me from all that is called comfort in earth." . . . And at the same time I had as quick and lively a sense of the value of worldly comforts as ever I had; but only saw them infinitely overmatched by the worth of Christ's kingdom and the propagation of his blessed Gospel. The quiet settlement, the certain place of abode, the tender friendship which I thought I might be likely to enjoy in consequence of such circumstances, appeared as valuable to me, considered absolutely and in themselves, as ever before; but considered comparatively, they appeared nothing: Compared with the value and preciousness of an enlargement of Christ's kingdom, they vanished like the stars before the rising sun. And sure I am, that although the comfortable accommodations of life appeared valuable and dear to

[52] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 400–402. All of the quotations in this paragraph are taken from this diary entry on May 22, 1746.

> me, yet I did surrender and resign myself, soul and body, to the service of God and promotion of Christ's kingdom; though it should be in the loss of them all.[53]

In Brainerd's thinking, spirituality's essence was devoted affection for God and the advancement of his glory. Earthly comforts were "valuable," but "comparatively nothing."

Throughout his ministry, Brainerd's use of outward comforts developed: from his poems of renunciation in 1742 to his extreme carefulness in 1743–1744 to his admission in 1745 that diversions were necessary to, finally, his decision in 1746 that he reject legitimate enjoyments for the comparative worth of the kingdom. Brainerd wanted his renunciation of and careful use of worldly enjoyments to highlight the essence of spirituality: loving God with supreme and exclusive devotion.

David Brainerd's Most Mature Expressions of the Essence of Spirituality

During the final four months of his life, Brainerd reflected repeatedly and deeply on the essence of true spirituality. These most mature articulations of his viewpoint are expressed in his private meditations, personal letters, preface to Shepard's diary, and final "sermon."

Brainerd's Meditations While in Boston (June–July 1747)

The sickly Brainerd arrived at the Edwards's Northampton home on Thursday, May 28, 1747. Edwards said that Brainerd "appear[ed] vastly better than, by his account, he had been in the winter," yet the Edwards's doctor examined Brainerd and "plainly told

[53] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 400–02. Later that summer Brainerd explained, "There is no comfort, I find, in any enjoyment, without enjoying God, and being engaged in his service. . . . Had the most agreeable conversation that ever I remember in all my life, upon God's being 'all in all,' and all enjoyments being just *that* to us which God makes them, and no more. 'Tis good to begin and end with God. Oh, how does a sweet solemnity lay a foundation for true pleasure and happiness!" (412). In other words, true happiness is experienced, only when God himself is enjoyed in any outward enjoyment.

him that there were great evidences of his being in a confirmed consumption, and that he could give him no encouragement that he should ever recover."[54] So, within two weeks of his arrival in Northampton, Brainerd undertook a six-week trip to Boston because horseback riding was "advised by physicians . . . as what would tend, above any other means, to prolong his life."[55] During his first week in Boston, Brainerd "was taken exceeding ill, and brought to the gates of death."[56] However, "on the third day of [his] illness," Brainerd said that he "enjoyed much serenity of mind and clearness of thought as perhaps [he] ever did in [his] life."[57] Here on June 18, 1747, he described in detail what he saw so clearly:

> The essence of religion consist[s] in the soul's conformity to God, and acting above all selfish views, for his glory, longing to be for him, to live for him, and please and honor him in all things; and this from a clear view of his excellency and worthiness in himself, to be loved, adored, worshipped, and served by all intelligent creatures. Thus I saw that when a soul loves God with a supreme love, he therein acts like the blessed God himself, who most justly loves himself in that manner: So when God's interest and his are become one, and he longs that God should be glorified, . . . herein also he acts in conformity to God: In like manner, when the soul is fully resigned to, and rests satisfied and contented with, the divine will, here it is also "conformed" to God.
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> I saw further that as this divine temper, whereby the soul exalts God and treads self in the dust, is wrought in the soul by God's discovering his own glorious perfections "in the face of Jesus Christ" to it, by the special influences of the Holy Spirit, so he cannot but have regard to it, as his own work; and as it is his image in the soul, he cannot but take delight in it. . . . The next thing I had then to do was to inquire whether this was my religion: And here God was pleased to help me. . . . Although I could discover much corruption attending my best duties, many selfish views and carnal ends, much spiritual pride and self-exaltation, . . . yet God was pleased, as I was reviewing, quickly to put this question out of doubt, by showing me that I had from time to time acted above the utmost influence of mere self love; that I had longed to please and glorify him as my highest happiness, etc. And this review was through grace attended with a present feeling of the same divine temper of mind; I felt now pleased to think of the glory of God, and longed for heaven as a

[54] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 445–47.

[55] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 447. Brainerd left Northampton for Boston on Tuesday, June 9, 1747, and returned on Saturday, July 25 (447–57).

[56] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 448.

[57] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 448.

> state wherein I might glorify God perfectly, rather than a place of happiness for myself. . . . I did not now want any of the sudden suggestions which many are so pleased with, that "Christ and his benefits are mine," that "God loves me," etc. in order to give me satisfaction about my state: No, my soul now abhorred those delusions of Satan, which are thought to be the immediate witness of the Spirit, while there is nothing but an empty suggestion of a certain fact without any gracious discovery of the divine glory or of the Spirit's work in their own hearts.
>
> These things I saw with great clearness when I was thought to be dying. And God gave me great concern for his Church . . . because that false religion, those heats of imagination and wild and selfish commotions of the animal affections which attended the work of grace, had prevailed so far. This was that which my mind dwelt upon, almost day and night. . . . I saw the great misery of all was that so few saw any manner of difference between those exercises that were spiritual and holy, and those which have self-love only for their beginning, center, and end.[58]

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[58] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 449–51. The "false religion" over which Brainerd expresses concern involved the Moravian missionaries and their views of conversion. See Norman Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," in *The Life of David Brainerd*, vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 31–32. Pettit reviews some of the history of Moravian missions in Georgia in 1735, in New England in 1740, and in Pennsylvania in 1742–1743. He concisely explains the differences between Brainerd and the Moravians:

> Unlike Brainerd, for whom salvation was a process of guilt and pain, the Moravians stressed joyful love of the divine. . . . As opposed to Brainerd, who demanded convincing relations of the conversion experience, the Moravian missionaries were content with a mere profession of faith. Moreover, where Brainerd strictly catechized his charges, the Brethren rejected 'the method of teaching them such matters as they can keep in their head, and learn by rote, to say after one.' Above all, and much to Brainerd's distress, these missionaries greatly stressed the image of Christ on the cross—noting his blood and wounds. (31–32)

See also Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 201; John Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of An Evangelical Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 53, 80; David Wynbeek, *David Brainerd, Beloved Yankee* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 193–97. See also Joseph Bellamy, "True Religion Delineated," in *The Great Awakening: Documents on the Revival of Religion, 1740–1745*, ed. Richard L. Bushman (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 153. Bellamy, Brainerd's lifelong friend, concluded his 1750 sermon by contrasting his own doctrine with the doctrine of the Moravians:

> The enthusiast, from a firm persuasion of the pardon of his sins, and the love of Christ, may be so full of joy and love, zeal and devotion, as to think himself a most eminent saint; but there is nothing of the nature of true holiness . . . for it is self, and nothing but set, that is the principal, centre, and end of all their religion. . . . They do not know God, or care for him, but are wholly taken up about their own interest. That Moravian maxim, 'That salvation consists in the forgiveness of sins,' exhibits the true picture of the heart of the best hypocrite in the world; while that in 2 Cor. iii.18, is peculiar to the godly—'We all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory. (Bellamy, "True Religion Delineated," 153)

So, Brainerd's clearest thoughts and most developed description of the essence of spirituality refer to it as love for God which is, in fact, conformity to God—conformity to God's own love, interest, will, and image. This love for and likeness to God finds its "highest happiness" in God's glory and not in "happiness for [it]self." Further, actual conformity to God's likeness in intent, affection, and action is the only sure proof of true spirituality. It is "that 'holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.'"[59]

Brainerd's Letters to His Two Brothers (June–July 1747)

During this time of illness in Boston, Brainerd "was enabled to write a number of important letters to friends in remote places."[60] On June 30, 1747, David Brainerd wrote a letter from Boston to his youngest brother, Israel, who was studying for the ministry at Yale. In the letter David explains that everyone around him believed his death to be imminent and that he had been thinking much about eternity—both the "happy state" of those with the Lord and "the anguish . . . for those who are Christless." He then spoke directly to Israel:

> And you, my dear brother, I have been particularly concerned for; and wondered I so much neglected conversing with you about your spiritual state at our last meeting. Oh, my brother, let me then beseech you now to examine whether you are indeed a "new creature"? Whether you have ever acted above self? Whether the glory of God has ever been the sweetest, highest concern with you? Whether you have ever been reconciled to all the perfections of God; in a word, whether God has been your "portion," and a holy conformity to him your chief delight?[61]

[59] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 444.

[60] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 451.

[61] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 493. Israel, who was seven years younger than David, came to visit his older brother in Boston before July 19 (455), and he accompanied David on the four-day trip back to Northampton (457). Israel stayed with David in Northampton from Saturday, July 25, through Wednesday, July 29 (457). Israel returned to David's bedside on Thursday, September 17, and remained with David until his death on October 9 (464). Within seven months of receiving the letter, Israel died in New Haven on January 26, 1748, less than four months after David died in Northampton (317).

Brainerd was convinced that the surest mark of genuine spirituality was, stated negatively, "act[ing] above self" or unselfish living and, stated positively, living with God's glory as one's "highest concern" and "chief delight."

Around the same time David Brainerd sent a letter to his younger brother John who had taken the responsibility for David's congregation of Indians in New Jersey. David offered John counsel that was quite similar to what he had given Israel:

> And now, my dear brother, as I must press you to pursue after personal holiness, to be as much in fasting and prayer as your health will allow, and to live above the rate of common Christians; so I must entreat you solemnly to attend to your public work: labor to distinguish between true and false religion: and to that end, watch the motions of God's Spirit upon your own heart; look to him for help; and impartially compare your affections with his Word. Read Mr. Edwards on the *Affections*, where the essence and soul of religion is clearly distinguished from false affections. Value religious joys according to the subject matter of them: There are many that rejoice in their supposed justification; but what do these joys argue but only that they love themselves? Whereas, in true spiritual joys, the soul rejoices in God for what he is in himself; blesses God for his holiness, sovereignty, power, faithfulness, and all his perfections. . . . Now when men thus rejoice in the perfections of God, and in the infinite excellency of the "way of salvation by Christ," and in the holy commands of God, which are a transcript of his holy nature, these joys are divine and spiritual. Our joys will stand by us at the hour of death, if we can be then satisfied that we have thus acted above self, and in a disinterested manner (if I may so express it) rejoiced in the glory of the blessed God.—I fear you are not sufficiently aware how much false religion there is in the world. . . . Set yourself, my brother, to crush all appearances of this nature among the Indians, and never encourage any degrees of heat without light. Charge my people in the name of their dying minister . . . to live and walk as becomes the Gospel. . . . Always insist that their experiences are rotten, that their joys are delusive, although they may have been rapt up into the "third heaven" in their own conceit by them, unless the main tenor of their lives be spiritual, watchful, and holy.[62]

[62] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 496–99. David Brainerd's reference to "common Christians" may refer to unconverted individuals who profess Christianity. (See Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd*, 209–10.) In an editorial footnote (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 497), Jonathan Edwards clarified that he reluctantly retained in the text Brainerd's references to Edwards's own *Treatise on Religious Affections* because, on the one hand, it proved that Brainerd's spirituality was not rooted in "enthusiastical impulses" but included a high "esteem[of] holy practice" and because, on the other hand, it demonstrated that Edwards's publication was not opposed to fervent practical religion. *Religious Affections* had been published in June, so Brainerd must have read this volume within the past few weeks in Boston (as soon as it had been published). The SSPCK commissioned David's brother John, younger by two years, to continue the work among this fledgling congregation of Indians (442). About a century later, a relative published an account of John's life and ministry. 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).

These two personal letters from David Brainerd to his brothers indicate that his most mature understanding of the essence of spirituality emphasized love for God that was "above self" or "disinterested (if I may so express it)." This disinterested love had been commended by Ebenezer Pemberton upon Brainerd's ordination,[63] it would be commended by Jonathan Edwards in his reflections upon Brainerd's life,[64] and it would be adjusted and promoted as the distinctive feature of the New Divinity in the next generation, especially by Samuel Hopkins (whom Brainerd had evangelized at Yale).[65]

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[63] Ebenezer Pemberton (1705–1777) was the pastor of the Presbyterian church in New York City and the chairman of the New York board of the SSPCK (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 29, 39). At Brainerd's ordination in Newark on June 12, 1744, Pemberton preached a sermon on Luke 14:23, "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled." He titled his sermon "The Duty of Ministers." This ordination sermon was printed in the 1765 edition Edwards's *Life of David Brainerd*. Ebenezer Pemberton, "An Ordination Sermon," in *An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr David Brainerd* by Jonathan Edwards (Edinburgh: John Gray and Gavin Alson, 1765), 475–91. In the sermon, Pemberton preached that "it is the great duty of the ministers of the gospel 'to compel sinners to come in,' and accept the blessings of the gospel" (481). He explained that the apostles demonstrated that such compulsion must not be "by the destructive methods of fire and sword" but rather by their own submission to persecution (482). The apostles "sacrificed their very lives in the cause of God" and, "instead of calling for 'fire from heaven' to destroy their opposers, they compassionated their ignorance, instructed them with *meekness*, counselled and exhorted them with 'all longsuffering and doctrine,' and even spent their dying breath in praying for their conviction and conversion, that they might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (482). Then Pemberton applied this point to Brainerd: "In imitation of these primitive doctors of the Christian church . . . it is the duty of the ministers of the present day to use the same methods. . . . A disinterested zeal for the glory of God, a stedfast adherence to the truth, and unshaken fidelity in our Master's cause, with universal benevolence to mankind, must constantly animate our public discourses, and be conspicuous in our private conversation and behavior" (482). He then expressed his certainty that God had "designed" Brainerd for such a task: "to engage in this mission with an ardent love to God, the universal Father of mankind, with a disinterested zeal for the honour of Christ, the compassionate friend of sinners, and with tender concern for the perishing souls of a 'people that sit in darkness'" (487).

[64] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 532. Edwards believed that Brainerd's life manifested a concern for Christ's kingdom "beyond all private and selfish views! being animated by a pure love to Christ, an earnest desire of his glory, and a disinterested affection to the souls of mankind."

[65] For Brainerd's proselytizing of Samuel Hopkins, refer to n. 5 in chap. 2. See Joseph A. Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregational Ministry, and Reform in New England Between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1981). Conforti explains that even though

Historian Joseph Conforti defines disinterested benevolence (i.e., love) in the way that Edwards understood it:

> Through regeneration . . . a genuine Christian had benevolent affection implanted in the heart that motivated the convert to love and seek the good of Being in general. Such true virtue was disinterested in the sense that the regenerate person desired no individual good separate and distinct from the benevolence of Being in general.[66]

Hopkins was Edwards's student, he "found serious flaws in his mentor's theology," especially in Edwards's view of virtue (110). Hopkins was bothered that Edwards could allow for "secondary virtue," that is, "an inferior form of virtue [that] resulted from the operation of reason, conscience, moral sense, and even self-love" (113–14). It disturbed Hopkins that Edwards could describe any actions from an unregenerate person as virtuous or that Edwards could teach that self-love could be unselfish (115–16). By contrast, Hopkins taught that "disinterested benevolence was [God's] primary moral attribute. . . . God is not a selfish, 'ambitious Being who desires the praise . . . of his creatures;' rather he is an infinitely good One who aims at making them happy without any selfish end'" (118). (On p. 163 Conforti explains that Hopkins, in keeping with his view of God's selflessness, espoused and promoted the moral government theory of the atonement rather than the satisfaction theory.) Thus, in human love Hopkins pitted disinterested benevolence and self-love against each other and taught that "every human being's heart was filled with either totally self-interested or totally disinterested affections, and a gulf existed between these moral states which only the Holy Spirit could close" (119). See Stephen G. Post, *A Theory of Agape: On the Meaning of Christian Love* (London: Associated University Presses, 1990). Post's book promotes *unselfish* but not *selfless* love. On p. 37 he summarizes Hopkins's legacy:

> Hopkins . . . replaced the virtue of unselfishness with the negative ideal of selflessness in an exaggerated attack on self-regard. His utter rejection of self-regard and the desire for happiness entered into the American religious tradition and set one-way love on a pinnacle. Antislavery endeavors, missionary activities, and benevolence societies of all types were fueled by a rigidly self-sacrificial conception of love.

Earlier Post had observed that "the ideal of disinterested love smacks of a false sense of independence and self-sufficiency," quoting C. S. Lewis, who said, "Only a 'silly creature' would boast before God, 'I love you disinterestedly'" (23). Post shows that Edwards rejected the willing-to-be-damned doctrine and believed that a person's regard for his own happiness "is as necessary to his own nature as the faculty of the will is" (40). He shows that Edwards found this concept of self-love throughout the Bible—anywhere that God counsels humans to consider their own future (41). According to Post, "Edwards sought to put self-regard in its place rather than to eclipse it" (42). Post develops his argument by demonstrating that God's love is self-concerned, not disinterested. He reviews some of the prophets' language in which God agonizes like a rejected husband over Israel, his wife. Post concludes that "this biblical language indicates that mutuality [in love] is a moral excellence" (56). Similarly, Post argues that Jesus, our quintessential example, demonstrated love that was unselfish but not selfless (57–60).

[66] Joseph A. Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, & American Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 64, 75–76. 86. Conforti teaches that Edwards used Brainerd to teach that "true holiness [is] radical disinterested benevolence" and that Brainerd "personified" it for both Edwards and Hopkins. The concept of disinterestedness is closely related to one's view of self-love.

This definition of disinterested love aptly describes not only Edwards's conception but Brainerd's conception of "a regular and irregular self-love" as well.[67] Historian George

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For Augustine's views of self-love, refer to n. 12 above. See also Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981). Fiering helpfully observes that by Jonathan Edwards's day, philosophical debates about motivations for love and self-analysis "for the purity of one's motivations was a part of daily life in New England, as many surviving diaries reveal" (151). Bruce Davidson helpfully clarifies that Edwards distinguished between four kinds of self-love, only one of which was sinful—even though he did not prefer the term *self-love* to describe the other three. Bruce W. Davidson, "Self-Love," in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, ed. Harry S. Stout (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 523–24. One of Edwards's crucial clarifications must be mentioned. See Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits; or, Christian Love as Manifested in the Heart and Life* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1852). In this 1738 sermon manuscript, Edwards commented on Paul's statement in 1 Cor 13:5, "[charity] seeketh not her own," and explained that although "the spirit of charity, or Christian love, is the opposite of a selfish spirit," "charity, or the spirit of Christian love is not contrary to all self-love" (226, 229). He continued his explanation on p. 229:

> It is not a thing contrary to Christianity that a man should love himself, or which is the same thing, should love his own happiness. If Christianity did indeed tend to destroy a man's love to himself, and to his own happiness, it would therein tend to destroy the very spirit of humanity; but the very announcement of the gospel, as a system of 'peace on earth and good-will toward men' (Luke ii. 14), shows that it is not only destructive of humanity, but in the highest degree promotive of its spirit. That a man should love his unhappiness, is as necessary to his nature as the faculty of the will is; and it is impossible that such a love should be destroyed in any other way than by destroying his being.

So, by disinterested love, Edwards meant unselfish love or love that is "under the government of divine love" rather than "self-love [as the] absolute master of [the] soul" (227–28). So, with great saneness, Norman Fiering clarifies what Edwards cannot mean when he speaks of disinterested love:

> [It] makes no sense for a person to declare that his or her love God is superior to self-love, if by self-love is meant the human capacity to delight and anything, since equivalent to one's love to God is one's disposition to delight in him and his good. Moralists who ask people to do away with concern for their own happiness in favor of love to God are speaking nonsense

Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought,* 157. Fiering again speaks sanely: "[Absolutely] disinterested love to God is impossible because the desire for happiness is intrinsic to all willing or loving whatsoever, and God is the necessary end of the search for happiness. Logically, one cannot be disinterested about the source or basis of all interest" (161). Of course, what Edwards meant by disinterested love was love without *ultimately* selfish interest, and Fiering explains why selfish love for God evidences no genuine spirituality: "A person whose love to God is founded primarily on God's profitableness for him or her is no different from the dog who loves his master for his kindness" (165).

[67] Refer to the above discussion regarding Brainerd's entry on January 24, 1744.

Marsden observes that the most significant facet of Edwards's theological legacy is his promotion of disinterested benevolence, of which David Brainerd was his chief example.[68]

Brainerd's Preface to Shepard's Diary (August 1747)

During this same season, in early August 1747, Brainerd "wrote a *Preface* to a diary of the famous Mr. Shepard's . . . having been urged to it by those gentlemen in Boston who had the care of the publication."[69] Thomas Shepard (1605–1649) had pastored in Newtown (present day Cambridge), Massachusetts for thirteen years (1636–1649).[70] In the two weeks preceding the writing of his preface to Shepard's diary, Brainerd was preoccupied with thoughts on the marks of genuine religion. Edwards described Brainerd's mindset at the time:

> He was much in speaking of the nature of true religion of heart and practice. As distinguished from its various counterfeits; expressing his great concern that the latter did so much prevail in many places. He often manifested his great abhorrence of all such doctrines and principles in religion as in any wise savored of, and had any (though but a remote) tendency to, Antinomianism; of all such notions as seemed to diminish the necessity of holiness of life . . . under a pretense of depreciating our works and magnifying God's free grace. He spake often, with much detestation, of such experiences and pretended discoveries and joys as have nothing of the nature of sanctification in them, and don't tend to strictness,

[68] George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 499.

[69] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 460; see also 451.

[70] Timothy H. Robinson, "Shepard, Thomas (1605–1649)," in *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*, ed. Harry S. Stout (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 530. Robinson summarizes Shepard's view of true spirituality: "The experience of grace infuses the believer with spiritual illumination, granting a new nature that enables the understanding and will to act in concert with the Spirit in the process of sanctification. Acts of holiness arising from the pure love and longing for Christ are the marks of genuine religious experience." Norman Fiering indicates that Thomas Shepard was a promoter of the willingness to be damned as a crucial facet of the preparations of authentic conversion (Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 161).

> tenderness, and diligence in religion, and meekness and benevolence towards mankind, and an humble behavior.[71]

In that frame of mind, Brainerd wrote his preface to the diary of Thomas Shepard.[72] In the preface Brainerd defined "the essence of true religion . . . in being conformed to the image of Christ, not in point of zeal and fervency only, but in all divine tempers and practices."[73] He described Shepard as one who "valued nothing in religion that was not done with a view to the glory of God,"[74] and he recounts one of Shepard's entries in which Shepard grieved:

> When I looked over the day, I saw how I fell short of God and Christ, and how I had spent one hour unprofitably. And why? Because, though the thing I did was good, yet because I intended not God in it as my last end . . . and so set myself to please God, therefore I was unprofitable.[75]

Brainerd applied Shepard's model to his readers: "O that others from this example would learn to lay the stress of religion here, and labor that whether they live they might live to the Lord, or whether they die they might die to the Lord."[76]

Brainerd promoted Shepard's diary so that "true religion be justly delineated" in order to convince unbelievers of its power and to expose hypocritical religion.[77] Brainerd had become convinced that "the present state of religion" was only nominally Christian.[78] In fact, it was "irreligious, a mixture of self-love, imagination, and spiritual

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[71] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 458.

[72] David Brainerd, preface to *Meditations and Spiritual Experiences of Mr. Thomas Shepard* (Boston: Rogers & Fowle, 1747), 10–16.

[73] Brainerd, preface, 14.

[74] Brainerd, preface, 15.

[75] Brainerd, preface, 16.

[76] Brainerd, preface, 16.

[77] Brainerd, preface, 10–11.

[78] Brainerd, preface, 11.

pride."[79] He explains that the self-love that characterized the nominal Christianity of his day was rooted in people's experience in conversion:

> It is to be feared that the conversions of some have no better foundation than this, viz., that after they have been under some concern for their souls a while, and, it may be, manifested some very great and uncommon distress and agonies, they have on a sudden imagined they saw Christ in some posture or other, perhaps on the cross, bleeding and dying for their sins, or it may be smiling on them, and thereby signifying his love to them; and that these and the like things, though mere imaginations, which have nothing spiritual in them, have instantly removed all their fears and distresses, filled them with raptures of joy, and made them imagine they loved Christ with all their hearts, when the bottom of all was nothing but self-love. For when they imagined that Christ had been so good to them as to save them, and, as it were, to single them out of all the world, they could not but feel some kind of natural gratitude to him, although they never had any spiritual view of his divine glory, excellency, and beauty, and consequently never had any love to him for himself.[80]

In Brainerd's understanding, the essential mark of true religion was a love for God that was founded upon a spiritual perception of God's glory in himself and that resulted in persevering life change. By contrast, the distinguishing mark of hypocritical religion was only experiencing some thankfulness to God for his perceived personal kindness. For Brainerd, this latter experience was merely natural; it was nothing but irregular self-love disguised as spirituality.

Brainerd's Final "Sermon"
(September 1747)

On September 19, 1747, Brainerd delivered what was afterward described as "the last sermon that ever he should preach."[81] At this point, Brainerd was completely confined to his bedroom, "taken with something of a diarrhea," barely able to walk, and eager to finally "gratify those desires" for death so that he could "serve God perfectly."[82] Brainerd asked one by his bedside to write down his thoughts:

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[79] Brainerd, preface, 11.

[80] Brainerd, preface, 12.

[81] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 467.

[82] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 464.

> While I attempted to walk a little, my thoughts turned thus; "How infinitely sweet it is to love God and be all for him!" Upon which it was suggested to me, "You are not an angel, not lively and active." To which my whole soul immediately replied, "I as sincerely desire to love and glorify God, as any angel in heaven." Upon which it was suggested again, "But you are filthy, not fit for heaven." Hereupon instantly appeared the blessed robes of Christ's righteousness, which I could not but exult and triumph in; and I viewed the infinite excellency of God, and my soul even broke with longings that God should be glorified. I thought of dignity in heaven; but instantly the thought returned, "I don't go to heaven to get honor, but to give all possible glory and praise. . . . My heaven is to please God, and glorify him, and give all to him, and to be wholly devoted to his glory; that is the heaven I long for; that is my religion, and that is my happiness, and always was ever since I suppose I had any true religion. . . . I don't go to heaven to be advanced, but to give honor to God. 'Tis no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven, whether I have a high or low seat there; but to love and please and glorify God is all.[83]

Brainerd then started to counsel those around him, including Edwards's own children.

Edwards records:

> He applied himself to some of my younger children at this time; calling them to him and speaking to 'em one by one; setting before them, in a very plain manner, the nature and essence of true piety, and its great importance and necessity; earnestly warning them not to rest in anything short of that true and thorough change of heart, and a life devoted to God; . . . enforcing his counsels with this, that his words were the words of a dying man: Said he, "I shall die here, and here I shall be buried, and here you will see my grave. . . . When you see my grave, then remember what I said to you while I was alive: then think with yourself how that man that lies in that grave counselled and warned me to prepare for death."[84]

For Brainerd, "my religion" was synonymous with "my happiness," and "the nature and essence of true piety" involved "a life devoted to God." In other words, true religion was a life in which an individual's happiness was found in devotion to God that grew out of a spiritual perception of God's "infinite excellency," including the "blessed robes of Christ's righteousness."

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[83] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 464–65. Brainerd's experience of Christ's robes "instantly appear[ing]" to his mind could be inconsistent with the concerns he expressed in Shepard's preface regarding comfort derived from mental impressions.

[84] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 466–67.

Conclusion: A Systematic Summary of David Brainerd's Understanding of the Essence of Spirituality

A systematic summary of Brainerd's understanding of love as the essence of spirituality can now be stated in five parts.

First, spirituality is love. Brainerd understood that the essence of authentic spirituality was love for God and others. True spirituality is a life of "supreme love" for God. It involves "regular self-love" in which an individual seeks her or his "highest happiness" and "chief delight" in total conformity to God. The individual loves others as an outworking of this supreme love for God: because loving others is Godlike and in order that others might see God's glory.

Second, spirituality is supernatural love. Although this love for God is a person's choice, it is only a response to the soul's enthrallment with God's perfections (which began at conversion). This enthrallment with God is the Holy Spirit's work. It is "begotten and maintained" by "a knowledge of God in Christ," a realization of "the infinite excellency of God," or "a just esteem of the beauteous object beloved." And this enthrallment longs "to go to heaven" in order to be "wholly devoted to his glory." This final conformity to God's Son will certainly delight God the Father. So, the essence of spirituality is love that is entirely centered on God, that is begun by God, that seeks conformity to God, and that will be pleasing to God. In Brainerd's words, this love has for its "beginning, center, and end" enthrallment with God.

Third, spirituality is strongly affectional love. According to Brainerd, this love for God is multi-faceted in its strong yet imperfect affections. These loving affections include continual admiration of God's glory, obsession with anticipated perfection, impatience with the delay until total conformity to God is realized, sorrow over remaining sin, confidence in grace, fear of presumption in assurance, and resolution to live for God. Although this multi-faceted love is never perfect, it results in increasing

hatred of sin and conformity to God. Thus, it is distinct from mere enthusiasm and chiefly evident in life change.

Fourth, spirituality is unadulterated love. Devotion to God must maintain exclusivity; love for God expels love for anything else for its own sake. So love for anything other than God must be enjoyed only as a way of enjoying God and never sought apart from God—as a god. Earthly comforts, necessary as they are, must be enjoyed only as gifts from "the blessed Author of every dear enjoyment," only to renew strength for serving him, only in the amount that God allows, and always sacrificed for the greater worth of God's glorious kingdom when calling demands it.

Fifth, spirituality is disinterested love. True spirituality involves love for God that is "above self." It is not irregular self-love in disguise. Irregular self-love is apparent love for God that this *ultimately* aimed at personal interest in "selfish hopes of salvation," "slavish fear" of judgment, or "feeling the sweetness" of being personally loved by him. Such love is merely natural, not supernatural. Brainerd clarified, however, that, in contrast to that irregular self-love that ultimately seeks its own happiness, there is "regular self-love" that involves seeking one's own happiness *in* God's glory.

CHAPTER 4

DAVID BRAINERD'S UNDERSTANDING OF EVANGELICAL HUMILIATION: THE DAILY EXPERIENCE OF AUTHENTIC SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

As observed at the outset of the previous chapter, evangelicals have consistently viewed spirituality as living in light of the realities grasped at conversion. In teaching on the new birth in 1741, Jonathan Dickinson (1688–1747)—one of Brainerd's ministerial mentors, SSPCK overseers, frequent hosts, and closest personal friends[1]—described "sanctification" as "continued *Views* of spiritual Things *as they are*."[2] He explained:

> And what Way is this glorious Work of Grace carried on in the Soul, but by continued Assistances of the blessed Spirit to act *reasonably*; and to maintain a lively Apprehension and Impression of invisible Realities? How comes the Believer to *hate every false Way*; but by a lively View of the Vileness and Unreasonableness of sinning against God? What excites him to live in the Love of God; but a realizing Impression of the Excellency of his Nature . . . ? The extraordinary Influences of the Spirit in his immediate Communications of Light and Joy to the Believer, are but still a brighter Discovery of Things *as they are*. . . . The whole Work of Sanctification is carried on by Illumination, and by the Soul's being brought,

[1] Dickinson, who pastored the Presbyterian church in Elizabethtown (present day Elizabeth), New Jersey, and who was three decades older than Brainerd, asked the sickly Brainerd, who was convalescing in his New Jersey home to, officiate in his second marriage on April 7, 1747. See Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Norman Pettit (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 54–55, 441.

[2] Jonathan Dickinson, "True Scripture Doctrine," in *The Great Awakening: Documents on the Revival of Religion, 1740–1745*, ed. Richard L. Bushman (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 82. This observation is the sermon's fifth and concluding point. In points one and two Dickinson preached that for sinners to experience the new birth, they must first realize their plight and unworthiness (78–79). In points three and four he taught that sinners must not only seek Christ but, based on the Spirit's illumination, actually turn to him (80–81).

> through the Influences of God's Spirit, to the Exercise of Knowledge and Understanding.[3]

Brainerd's conviction that spirituality is living in light of the realities perceived at conversion is clearly seen in his view of evangelical humiliation, in the *continuation* of what Dickinson called a "lively view of the vileness and unreasonableness of sinning against God."

Prior to his conversion Brainerd manifested a fear of condemnation "from a view of my sins and vileness,"[4] and in that season he sought "to read something to enhance and aggravate [his] concern . . . [in order not to] lose those convictions and so return again to a secure state as the dog to his vomit."[5] He "was brought to see and feel" that Paul's descriptions of human nature aptly described him: "The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed it cannot" (Rom 8:7).[6]

One week after his conversion in July 1739, Brainerd described his continued experience of this sense of sinfulness:

> [I was] under great distress, but not of the same kind with my distress under convictions. I was afraid, ashamed, and guilty, to come before God, and was exceedingly pressed with a sense of guilt and I knew the sin that caused this amazing guilt before God. But 'twas not long before I felt, I trust, true repentance and joy in God.[7]

These experiences of painful distress due to his sense of indwelling corruption characterized his inner life during his experience of preparation, they characterized his

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[3] Dickinson, "True Scripture Doctrine," 82–83.

[4] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 106. "When the discoveries of my vile and hellish heart were made to me the sight was so dreadful and showed me so plainly my exposedness to damnation that I could not endure it. . . . One night I remember in particular, wherein I was walking solitary abroad, and the Lord opened to me such a sense of my sin and danger that I feared the ground would cleave under my feet and become my grave" (109–11).

[5] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 111–12.

[6] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 116.

[7] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 141.

life almost immediately after his conversion, and they continued to characterize his daily life until he died. In May 1747, three days before his arrival at the Edwards's home and four months prior to his passing, Brainerd

> could not but think . . . that much more of true religion consists in deep humility, brokenness of heart, and an abasing sense of barrenness and want of grace and holiness, than most who are called Christians imagine; especially those who have been esteemed the converts of the late day; many of whom seem to know of no other religion but elevated joys and affections, arising only from some flights of imagination, or some suggestion made to their mind, of Christ's being "their's," God's "loving them," and the like.[8]

In Brainerd's understanding and practice, the daily experience of authentic spirituality involved "deep humility, brokenness of heart, and an abasing sense of barrenness"—in short, what was called *evangelical humiliation*. This chapter will expound Brainerd's personal experience of evangelical humiliation throughout his adult life, then it will summarize the way he modeled one crucial facet of the Augustinian-Calvinistic Puritan tradition.

David Brainerd's Personal Experience of Evangelical Humiliation Throughout His Adult Life

Edwards explained in his preface to his account of Brainerd's life that "what Mr. Brainerd wrote in his diary . . . was written only for his own private use, and not . . . with any design that the world should ever see it, either while he lived or after his death."[9] From the way Brainerd counseled others to make use of diaries, it is clear that he used his diary to "watch the motions of God's Spirit upon [his] own heart" and to "observ[e] the motions and dispositions of our own hearts, whence we may learn the corruptions that lodge there, and our constant need of help from God for the performance of the least duty."[10] Brainerd understood journaling as part of his daily "precious duties

[8] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 445.

[9] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 96.

[10] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 497, 495.

of secret prayer and self-examination,"[11] and his self-examination was particularly comprised of humiliation. This first section of the chapter will review Brainerd's personal experience of evangelical humiliation as he tracked it in his diary entries throughout the five major stages of his adult life.[12]

The First Period: Itinerant Preaching (April 1742–March 1743)

In his very first post-college diary entry that Edwards published, Brainerd wrote in his journal:

> April 1, 1742. I seem to be declining, with respect to my life and warmth in divine things: had not so free access to God in prayer as usual of late. Oh, that God would humble me deeply in the dust before him! I deserve hell every day, for not loving my Lord more, who has (I trust) loved me and given himself for me; and every time I am enabled to exercise any grace renewedly, I am renewedly indebted to the God of all grace for special assistance. "Where then is boasting?" Surely "it is excluded," when we think how we are dependent on God for the being and every act of grace. Oh, if ever I get to heaven, it will be because God wills, and nothing else; for I never did anything of myself but get away from God! My soul will be astonished at the unsearchable riches of divine grace, when I arrive at the mansions which the blessed Saviour is gone before to prepare.[13]

This first entry manifests several themes that characterize Brainerd's diary entries: his sense of closeness to God, his pursuit of humility, his relishing of divine grace, his longing for heaven, and his unwillingness to absolutely presume that he was going to heaven (even though he was certain he would "arrive" there). In this entry Brainerd pursues humility by considering his creatureliness and sinfulness before God as well as his complete dependence on God for any "exercise of grace."

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[11] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 147, see also 143. Brainerd seemed to understand self-examination as part of the biblical duty of watchfulness (Luke 12:37), and journaling was one facet of his diligent application of these commands (415, see also 498).

[12] Each period is roughly one year but summarizing Brainerd's experience according to ministerial phase pursues a more natural division of his life than dividing it according to calendar years.

[13] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 157–58.

Throughout this one-year period of Brainerd's life, Edwards recorded one hundred forty-five diary entries.[14] In eighty-five of them (59 percent of the published diary entries) Brainerd manifested evangelical humiliation. In other words, he wrote about his awareness of his prevailing corruption, his meanness and vileness, his unworthiness, his barrenness and deadness of heart, the sins of youth, his shortcomings and poor devotion, his bitterness and ingratitude, his stubbornness and "warmth of temper," and/or the fact that he cannot live constantly to God.[15] However, throughout this

[14] The first period is from April 1, 1742–March 20, 1743. It is Brainerd's preparation for missionary work as recorded in Edwards's Parts II, III, and IV (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 157–201).

[15] Brainerd records evangelical humiliation in the first three months of this period (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 157–72): "I deserve hell every day for not loving my Lord more" (April 1); "my heart was wandering and lifeless" (April 4); "I saw myself mean and vile" (April 6); "I see myself infinitely vile and unworthy" (April 9); "am so low . . . and am made to 'possess the sins of my youth,' and the dreadful sin of my nature, and am all sin; I can't think, nor act, but every motion is sin" (April 10); "felt but little life" (April 11); "saw myself to be very mean and vile" (April 13); "longed for . . . the mortification of indwelling corruption, especially spiritual pride" (April 14); "Alas, my barrenness is such that God might well say, 'Cut it down'" (April 16, 17); "had a view of my shortcomings: It seemed to me that I had done as it were nothing for God, and that I had never had lived to him but a few hours of my life" (April 18); "how poorly have I answered the vows I made this time twelve-month, to be wholly the Lord's, to be forever devoted to his service!" (April 20, his twenty-fourth birthday); "felt something of spiritual pride stirring" (April 26); "I mourned over 'the body of death' that is in me: It grieved me exceedingly that I could not pray to and praise God with my heart full of divine heavenly love (April 27); "sin hung heavy upon me; for God discovered to me the corruption of my heart" (April 28); "nothing grieves me so much as that I cannot live constantly to God's glory" (April 30); "God was pleased this morning to give me such a sight of myself as made me appear very vile in my own eyes: I felt corruption stirring in my heart, which I could by no means suppress: felt more and more deserted: was exceeding weak, and almost sick with my inward trials" (May 2); "had a sense of vile ingratitude" (May 3); "Oh, dreadful! what a vile wretch I am!" (May 9); "was very dull most of the day; had little spirituality" (May 11); "had a distressing view of the pride and enmity and vileness of my heart" (May 12); "saw so much of the wickedness of my heart that I longed to get away from myself. I never before thought there was so much spiritual pride in my soul: I felt almost pressed to death with my own vileness. Oh, what a 'body of death' is there in me!" (May 13); "appeared exceeding vile in my own eyes, saw much pride and stubbornness in my heart. Indeed I never saw such a week before, as this; for I have been almost ready to die with the view of the wickedness of my heart" (May 15); "I feel much deserted: But all this teaches me my nothingness and vileness more than ever" (June 6); "I felt a great desire that all God's people might know how mean and little and vile I am, that they might see I am nothing that so they may pray for me aright" (June 7); "I never felt it so sweet to be nothing, and less than nothing, and to be accounted nothing" (June 8); "I see myself very helpless" (June 12); "saw myself very vile and

first period, the aspect of his personal sinfulness that seemed to grieve him more consistently than any other was his spiritual pride.[16] For example:

> Lord's Day, May 9 [1742]. I think I never felt so much of the cursed pride of my heart, as well as the stubbornness of my will before. Oh, dreadful! what a vile wretch I am! I could not submit to be nothing and to lie down in the dust! Oh, that God would humble me in the dust! I felt myself such a sinner, all day, that I had scarce any comfort. Oh, when shall I be "delivered from the body of this death?" I greatly feared lest through stupidity and carelessness I should lose the benefit of these trials. Oh, that they might be sanctified to my soul! Nothing seemed to touch me but only this, that I was a sinner.[17]

This passage reveals that Brainerd considered humiliation to be a beneficial trial, and he did not seek to alleviate the experience. On a few occasions Brainerd's considerations of his sinfulness led him to confession and repentance,[18] but most days he did not seek to move past these humbling thoughts of his "vileness." For example,

> Saturday, November 27 [1742]. Committed my soul to God with some degree of comfort; left New York about nine in the morning; came away with a distressing sense still of my unspeakable unworthiness. Surely I may well love all my brethren; for none of them all is so vile as I; whatever they do outwardly, yet it seems to me none is conscious of so much guilt before God. Oh, my leanness, my barrenness, my carnality, and past bitterness, and want of a Gospel temper! These things oppress my soul.[19]

On several occasions he referred to these beneficial humiliations as an educational classroom or an athletic regimen:

> Monday, March 7 [1743]. This morning when I arose, I found my heart go forth after God in longing desires of conformity to him, and in secret prayer found

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worthless. Oh, that I may always lie low in the dust!" (June 13); "Oh, how short do I fall of my duty in my sweetest moments!" (June 15); "considering my great unfitness for the work of the ministry, my present deadness, and total inability to do anything for the glory of God" (June 18); "I saw myself so vile" (June 30).

[16] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 161, 164, 166, 167, 168, 176, 177; see also 240, 278.

[17] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 166–67.

[18] See, for example, April 6, 1742 ("Then I cried to God to wash away my soul and cleanse me from my exceeding filthiness, to give me repentance and pardon.") and August 17, 1742 (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 158–59, 176).

[19] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 189.

> myself sweetly quickened and drawn out in praises to God for all he had done to and for me, and for all my inward trials and distresses of late; my heart ascribed glory, glory, glory to the blessed God! And bid welcome to all inward distress again, if God saw meet to exercise me with it.[20]

In fact, Brainerd regularly described his personal sense of abasement in desirable terms.

> Wednesday, April 28 [1742]. . . . In the evening my heart seemed sweetly to melt and I trust, was really humbled for indwelling corruption, and I "mourned like a dove." I felt that all my unhappiness arose from my being a sinner; for with resignation I could bid welcome all other trials; but sin hung heavy upon me; for God discovered to me the corruption of my heart: so that I went to bed with a heavy heart, because I was a sinner; though I did not in the least doubt of God's love. Oh, that God would "purge away my dross, and take away my tin," and make me seven times refined![21]

> Lord's Day, October 17 [1742]. . . . This evening, in secret prayer, I felt exceeding solemn, and such longing desires after deliverance from sin, and after conformity to God as melted my heart. Oh, I longed to be "delivered from this body of death!" I felt inward pleasing pain, that I could not be conformed to God entirely, fully and forever. . . . Blessed be the Lord for these trials and distresses, as they are blessed for my humbling.[22]

> Thursday, November 4 [1742]. Saw much of my nothingness most of this day; but felt concerned that I had no more sense of my insufficiency and unworthiness. Oh, 'tis sweet "lying in the dust!" But 'tis distressing to feel in my soul that hell of corruption which still remains in me. . . . Of late, God has been pleased to keep my soul hungry, almost continually; so that I have been filled with a kind of pleasing pain: When I really enjoy God, I feel my desires of him the more insatiable, and my thirstings after holiness the more unquenchable; and the Lord will not allow me to feel as though I were fully supplied and satisfied, but keeps me still reaching forward; and I feel barren and empty, as though I could not live without more of God in me; I feel ashamed and guilty before God. Oh, I see "the Law is spiritual, but I am carnal!" I don't, I can't live to God. Oh, for holiness! Oh, for more of God in my soul! Oh, this pleasing pain! It makes my soul press after God; the language of it is, "Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake in God's likeness" (Ps. 17:15), but never, never before: and consequently I am engaged to "press toward the mark," day by day. Oh, that I may feel this continual hunger, and not be retarded, but rather animated by every cluster from Canaan, to reach forward in the narrow way, for the full enjoyment and possession of the heavenly inheritance! O that I may never loiter in my heavenly journey![23]

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[20] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 199. See also his entries on April 10, 1742 ("Oh, that all my late distresses and apprehensions might prove but Christ's school, to make me fit for greater service by learning me the great lesson of humility!") and December 12, 1742 ("I have reason to think that my religion is become more refined and spiritual, by means of my late inward conflicts") (159–60, 190–91).

[21] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 165–66.

[22] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 182–83.

[23] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 185–86.

> Lord's Day, December 19 [1742]. . . . In the evening, enjoyed something of the divine presence; had a humbling sense of my vileness, barrenness, and sinfulness.[24]

In other words, his "day to day" objective was to sense his humbling lack of conformity to God's likeness so that he would continually pursue the goal of Christlikness. So, he described this right sense of the wrong lurking within him as his "heart seem[ing] sweetly to melt," as "inward pleasing pain," and as an "enjoy[able]" manifestation "of the divine presence."

The Second Period: Kaunaumeek
(April 1743–June 1744)

Edwards included one hundred forty of Brainerd's diary entries during his first year of missionary work under the oversight of John Sergeant.[25] Forty-eight of these entries (34 percent of the published diary entries) evidence Brainerd's experience of evangelical humiliation. Four entries illustrate his experience of humiliation during this period:

> Wednesday, April 13 [1743]. My heart was overwhelmed within me; I verily thought I was the meanest, vilest, most helpless, guilty, ignorant, benighted, creature living. And yet I knew what God had done for my soul, at the same time: though sometimes I was assaulted with damping doubts and fears whether it was possible for such a wretch as I to be in a state of grace.[26]

> Lord's Day, October 16 [1743]. In the evening, God was pleased to give me a feeling sense of my own unworthiness; but through divine goodness such as tended to draw [me to], rather than drive me from, God: It filled me with solemnity. I retired alone (having at this time a friend with me) and poured out my soul to God, with much freedom; and yet in anguish, to find myself so unspeakably sinful and unworthy before a holy God.[27]

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[24] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 192.

[25] The second period is Brainerd's stint in Kaunaumeek from April 1, 1743–June 12, 1744 as recorded in Edwards's Part V (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 202–52).

[26] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 203–4.

[27] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 222–23.

> Wednesday, February 22 [1744]. In the morning, had as clear a sense of the exceeding pollution of my nature as ever I remember to have had in my life. I then appeared to myself inexpressibly loathsome and defiled: Sins of childhood, of early youth, and such follies as I had not thought of for years together (as I remember), came now fresh to my view as if committed but yesterday, and appeared in the most odious colors: They appeared more in numbers than the hairs of my head: Yea, they "went over my head as an heavy burden." In the evening, the hand of faith seemed to be strengthened in God: My soul seemed to rest and acquiesce in him: Was supported under my burdens, reading the 125th Psalm: Found that it was sweet and comfortable to lean on God.[28]

> Tuesday, May 15 [1744]. Still much engaged in my studies; and enjoyed more health than I have for some time past: But was something dejected in spirit with a sense of my meanness; seemed as if I could never do anything at all to any good purpose by reason of ignorance and folly. Oh, that a sense of these things might work more habitual humility in my soul![29]

These entries indicate that Brainerd's experience of evangelical humiliation was mixed with assurances of "what God had done for [his] soul," and it did not cripple his ministry but instead led him to "lean on God" and to long for "habitual humility." Throughout this period Brainerd was frequently oppressed with his "misimprovement of time" and even more by the "sins of youth," including past "party spirit."[30] Certainly, these past sins included his behavior at college, for it was during this period that Brainerd returned to Yale to apologize and request the conferral of his degree.[31]

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[28] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 239–40.

[29] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 249.

[30] Regarding his use of time, see Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 208, 215, 228, 229, 230, 486, 240, 248; see also 192, 283, 302. Regarding his "sins of youth," see pp. 206, 208, 238, 239; see also 258, 282. Regarding his party spirit, see pp. 203, 243.

[31] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 218–20. Brainerd's meeting with the Yale administration took place on Thursday, September 15, 1743, the day after his class graduated. This occasion was the first time that Brainerd met Edwards, who was at Yale to help with the mediation (445).

The Third Period: Forks of the Delaware
(June 1744–June 1745)

Jonathan Edwards included one hundred and three of Brainerd's diary entries during this year of ministry in eastern Pennsylvania.[32] Brainerd manifested a sense of evangelical humiliation in thirty-three of them (32 percent of the published diary entries). A few of his entries from this period demonstrate that his humiliation was regularly mingled with confidence in God's love, that he generally viewed his humiliation positively because it encouraged faithfulness in ministry, and that "wandering thoughts" seemed to be the plague of his conscience during this phase of ministry:[33]

> Friday, October 26 [1744]. In the morning my soul was melted with a sense of divine goodness and mercy to such a vile unworthy worm as I: Delighted to lean upon God and place my whole trust in him: My soul was exceedingly grieved for sin, and prized and longed after holiness; it wounded my heart deeply, yet sweetly, to think how I had abused a kind God. I longed to be perfectly holy, that I might not grieve a gracious God; who will continue to love, notwithstanding his love is abused: I longed for holiness more for this end than I did for my own happiness sake: And yet this was my greatest happiness, never more to dishonor, but always to glorify the blessed God. Afterwards, rode up to the Indians in the afternoon.[34]

> Thursday, December 13 [1744]. . . . In the general, was greatly exercised with wanderings; so that in the evening it seemed as if I had need to pray for nothing so much as for the pardon of sins committed in the day past, and the vileness I then found in myself. The sins I had most sense of were pride and wandering thoughts, whereby I mocked God. The former of these cursed iniquities excited me to think of writing, preaching, or converting heathen, or performing some other great work, that my name might live when I should be dead. My soul was in anguish and ready to drop into despair, to find so much of that cursed temper. With this and the other evil I labored under, viz., wandering thoughts, I was almost overwhelmed, and even ready to give over striving after a spirit of devotion; and oftentimes sunk into a considerable degree of despondency, and thought I was "more brutish than any man." Yet after all my sorrows, I trust through grace, this day and the exercises of it have been for my good, and taught me more of my corruption, and weakness without Christ, than I knew before.[35]

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[32] The third period is Brainerd's time at the Forks from June 13, 1744–June 18, 1745 as recorded in Edwards's Part VI (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 253–97).

[33] Regarding his wandering thoughts, see Ibid., 256, 268, 278. Brainerd also seems to be bothered by his seeming lack of usefulness (438, 440–42, 447).

[34] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 271–72.

[35] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 277–78.

The Fourth Period: New Jersey
(June 1745–September 1746)

During the fifteen months of this fourth period[36] Brainerd experienced the "rise and progress of a remarkable work of grace amongst a number of the Indians." Yet throughout the one hundred sixty-nine entries in his private diary that Edwards includes, Brainerd recounted his experience of evangelical humiliation thirty-five times (21 percent of the published diary entries). Six entries from this time period highlight crucial features of Brainerd's understanding of evangelical humiliation:

> Friday, June 21 [1745]. . . . In the evening, was refreshed in secret prayer: Saw myself a poor worthless creature, without wisdom to direct or strength to help myself. Oh, blessed be God that lays me under a happy, a blessed necessity of living upon himself![37]

> Lord's Day, July 28 [1745]. In the evening my soul was melted and my heart broken with a sense of past barrenness and deadness: And oh, how I then longed to live to God and "bring forth much fruit" to his glory![38]

> Monday, August 19 [1745]. Near noon I rode to Freehold and preached to a considerable assembly, from Matt. 5:3. It pleased God to leave me to be very dry and barren; so that I don't remember to have been so straightened for a whole twelve month past. God is just, and he has made my soul acquiesce in his will in this regard. 'Tis contrary to "flesh and blood," to be cut off from all freedom in a large auditory, where their expectations are much raised: but so it was with me: And God helped me to say "Amen" to it; good is the will of the Lord.[39]

> Tuesday, October 29 [1745]. About noon, rode and viewed the Indian lands at Cranberry: Was much dejected and greatly perplexed in mind: Knew not how to see anybody again, my soul was so sunk within me. Oh, that these trials might make me more humble and holy! Oh, that God would keep me from giving way to sinful dejection, which may hinder my usefulness![40]

> "Wednesday, January 1, 1745–6. . . . I am this day beginning a new year; and God has carried me through numerous trials and labors in the past. He has

[36] The fourth period is Brainerd's fruitful year in New Jersey (June 19, 1745–September 20, 1746) as recorded in Edwards's Part VII (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd,* 299–428).

[37] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 299–300.

[38] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 303.

[39] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 316.

[40] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 336.

> amazingly supported my feeble frame; for "having obtained help of God, I continue to this day." Oh, that I might live nearer to God this year than I did the last. The business I have been called to, and enabled to go through, I know has been as great as nature could bear up under, and what would have sunk and overcome me quite without special support. But alas, alas! Though I have done the labors and endured the trials, with what spirit have I done the one, and born [sic] the other? How cold has been the frame of my heart oftentimes! And how little have I sensibly eyed the glory of God in all my doings and sufferings! . . . The misery is, I could not sensibly labor for God as I would have done. May I for the future be enabled more sensibly to make the glory of God my all![41]

> Wednesday, September 3 [1746]. . . . About noon, rode to a small town of Shauwaunoes, about eight miles distant; spent an hour or two there, and returned to the Delaware town and lodged there. Was scarce ever more confounded with a sense of my own unfruitfulness and unfitness of my work, than now. Oh, what a dead, heartless, barren, unprofitable wretch did I now see myself to be! My spirits were so low, and my bodily strength so wasted, that I could do nothing at all. At length, being much overdone, lay down on a buffalo-skin; but sweat much the whole night.[42]

These entries reveal that Brainerd appreciated evangelical humiliation for the way it compelled him to trust the Lord, that one biblical foundation for Brainerd's understanding of humiliation was Jesus's words in Matthew 5:3—"Blessed are the poor in spirit,"[43] that Brainerd used annual markers to express evangelical humiliation,[44] and that the mixture of evangelical humiliation and physical weakness seemed to aggravate

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[41] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 351.

[42] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 423–24. The entry on October 29, 1745, reveals how, during this period, Brainerd seems to have started to draw a sharp distinction between his humiliation and his depression, for, although he continues to thank God for his dependence-producing experiences of evangelical humiliation, he frequently praises God for delivering him from "those gloomy damps" and "melancholy glooms" (see Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 381–83; see also 390, 415, 416). This growth seems to what Edwards refers to as Brainerd's "graces ripen[ing]" so that he became "more and more distinguishing in his judgment, the longer he lived" (96).

[43] This text was one Brainerd preached repeatedly. He preached on Matthew 5:3 on at least three other occasions: July 23, 1744, April 20, 1745, and October 26, 1746 (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 263, 291, 434–35).

[44] Notice how his birthday reflections sound similar to this New Year's reflection. For example, on April 20, 1743, Brainerd had written:

> Having obtained help of God, I have hitherto lived and am now arrived at the age of 25 years. My soul was pained to think of my barrenness and deadness; that I have lived so little to the glory of the eternal God. I spent the day in the woods alone, and there poured out my complaint to God. Oh, that God would enable me to live to his glory for the future. (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 205)

Brainerd's "low spirits" or depression. Although he continued to experience humiliation for his indwelling corruption, the most dominant and distinct feature of Brainerd's daily entries during this period is his recurring and nearly indomitable praise to the Lord for his goodness.[45]

The Fifth Period: Convalescence
(September 1746–October 1747)

Throughout this final one-year period of Brainerd's life,[46] Jonathan Edwards's publication includes far fewer entries from David Brainerd's diary. Edwards includes just

[45] During this period, Brainerd explicitly praises the Lord in his diary more than forty times, almost twice as much as he does during any of the other periods of his life. Consider the following examples (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 299–332). "Oh, blessed be God, that there remains a rest to his poor weary people!" (June 20); "Oh, blessed be God that lays me under a happy, a blessed necessity of living upon himself!" (June 21); "my soul rejoiced to find, that God enabled me to be faithful, and that he was pleased to awaken these poor Indians by my means" (June 27); "bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not his goodness and tender mercy" (June 28); " could not but lift up my heart to God in prayer, while riding to my lodgings; and blessed be his Name, had assistance and freedom" (June 29); "Oh, 'Blessed be God that I may pray!'" (July 2); "Blessed be God. . . . 'Tis impossible to describe the sweet peace of conscience and tenderness of soul I then enjoyed. Oh, the blessed foretastes of heaven!" (August 24); "I rode to my lodgings in the evening, blessing the Lord for his gracious visitation of the Indians" (August 25); "I went from the Indians to my lodgings, rejoicing for the goodness of God to my poor people. . . . 'Bless the Lord, O my soul'" (August 26); "God gave me the spirit of prayer, and it was a blessed season in that respect. . . . In the evening also my soul rejoiced in God" (September 1); "Blessed be the Lord that lets me see his work going on in one place and another" (September 4); "Oh, 'twas to me a blessed evening of prayer! 'Bless the Lord, O my soul'" (September 8); "My soul cried, 'Lord, set up thy kingdom for thine own glory. . . . Blessed be thy Name forever, that thou art God, and that thou wilt glorify thyself. . . .' I continued long in prayer and praise to God. . . . Was entirely free from that dejection of spirit with which I am frequently exercised. Blessed be God!" (September 14); "My soul 'rejoiced in hope of the glory of God.' . . . Oh, blessed be God, the living God, forever!" (September 27). See other entries from later in this period in which Brainerd is evidently full of praise. These include dozens from 1746, including February 16, 20, 21, 22; April 14, 17, 22; May 6, 11, 16, 18, 23; June 4, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16, 29; July 29, 30; August 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 31; and September 8 (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 363–425). As the entries continue throughout this period, his praise to the Lord specifically for delivering him from dejection becomes more prominent.

[46] The fifth period covers September 21, 1746–October 2, 1747, the final year of Brainerd's life as he sought physical recovery. It is recorded in Edwards's Part VIII (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 429–74). This final portion ends on October 2 rather than October 9, the day Brainerd died, because Edwards notes that October 2 is the final day on which Brainerd dictated a diary entry.

seventy-five entries.[47] Only thirteen of these entries (17 percent of the published diary entries) evidence Brainerd's experience of evangelical humiliation. Nevertheless, these relatively few entries manifest his continued pursuit of humiliation. Three diary entries helpfully illustrate his experience during this period:

> On Wednesday, March 4 [1747], I met with reproof from a friend, which although I thought I did not deserve it from him, yet was (I trust) blessed of God to make me more tenderly afraid of sin, more jealous over myself, and more concerned to keep both heart and life pure and unblameable: It likewise caused me to reflect on my past deadness, and want of spirituality, and to abhor myself, and look on myself as most unworthy.[48]

> Thursday, April 16 [1747]. Was in bitter anguish of soul, in the morning, such as I have scarce ever felt, with a sense of sin and guilt. I continued in distress the whole day, attempting to pray wherever I went; and indeed could not help so doing: but looked upon myself so vile, I dared not look anybody in the face; and was even grieved that anybody should show me any respect, or at least, that they should be so deceived as to think I deserved it.[49]

> Lord's Day, May 17. . . . Spent the forenoon at home, being unable to attend the public worship. At this time God gave me some affecting sense of my own vileness and the exceeding sinfulness of my heart; that there seemed to be nothing but sin and corruption within me. "Innumerable evils compassed me about;" my want of spirituality and holy living, my neglect of God, and living to myself—all the abominations of my heart and life seemed to be open to my view; and I had nothing to say but "God be merciful to me a sinner." Towards noon, I saw, that the grace of God in Christ is infinitely free towards sinners, and such sinners as I was.[50]

This progressive summary of five consecutive periods of Brainerd's adult life reveals that he experienced evangelical humiliation on a regular basis, though its daily regularity seems to have decreased over time—from 59 percent to 34 percent to 32 percent to 21 percent to 17 percent. In other words, in his early adult life Brainerd

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[47] Edwards begins the section with the observation that "henceforward [Mr. Brainerd's] diary is very much interrupted by his illness; under which he was often brought so low as either not to be capable of writing, or not well able to bear the burden of a care so constant as was requisite to recollect every evening what had passed in the day, and digest it and set down an orderly account of it in writing" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 429).

[48] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 439.

[49] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 442.

[50] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 444.

recorded experiences of evangelical humiliation approximately four times per week and toward the end of his adult life he recorded such experiences about one time per week.[51]

The Historical Roots of David Brainerd's Understanding of Evangelical Humiliation

One of the primary reasons that Jonathan Edwards published his *Life of David Brainerd* was to promote Brainerd's experience of evangelical humiliation. Edwards wrote in his "appendix containing some reflections . . . on the preceding memoirs of Mr. Brainerd":

> [Brainerd's] religious illuminations, affections, and comfort, seemed to a great degree to be attended with evangelical humiliation; consisting in a sense of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odiousness; with an answerable disposition and frame of heart. How deeply affected was he almost continually with his great defects in religion; with his vast distance from that spirituality and holy frame of mind that became him; with his ignorance, pride, deadness, unsteadiness, barrenness? He was not only affected with the remembrance of his former sinfulness, before his conversion, but with the sense of his present vileness and pollution. He was not only disposed to think meanly of himself as "before God," and in comparison of him; but "amongst men," and as compared with them. He was apt to think other saints better than he; yea, to look on himself as the meanest and least of saints; yea, very often, as the vilest and worst of mankind.[52]

[51] Of course, such a decrease could reflect Brainerd's imprecision in recording daily experiences and/or Edwards's editing of Brainerd's diaries. But (as will be demonstrated in the next section of the chapter) it was not in their theological interest to remove the evidences of daily evangelical humiliation.

[52] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 500, 506–7. On pp. 545–46 Edwards recounts, after reading Brainerd's personal diaries, his firsthand experience of Brainerd's multi-faceted "religious affections":

> This more abundantly appears by further opportunity of acquaintance with his private journal, or diary, since this [funeral] sermon was delivered. Grace in him seems to have been almost continually, with scarcely the intermission of a day, in very sensible, and indeed vigorous and powerful exercise, in one respect or other. His heart appears to have been exercised, in a continued course, in such things as these that follow: The most ardent and pure love to God; great weanedness from the world, and sense of its vanity; great humiliation; a most abasing sense of his own vileness; a deep sense of indwelling sin, which indeed was most evidently, by far, the greatest burden of his life, and more than all other afflictions that he met with, put together; great brokenness of heart before God, for his small attainments in grace, that he loved God so little, etc., mourning that he was so unprofitable; longings and earnest reachings of soul after holiness; earnest desires that God might be glorified, and that Christ's kingdom might be advanced in the world; wrestlings with God in prayer for these things; delight in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the

In this assessment of Brainerd's humiliation, Edwards actually quotes his own definition of evangelical humiliation that he had published two years earlier in his *Treatise on Religious Affections*. According to Edwards, evangelical humiliation, the sixth of twelve marks of truly gracious affections, is "a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odiousness, with an answerable frame of heart."[53] In *Religious Affections* Edwards distinguishes *evangelical* humiliation from *legal* humiliation, noting that legal humiliation—the personal sense of an individual's sin—marks many unbelievers and signifies only God's common grace, while evangelical humiliation involves self-denial, repentance of sin, submission before God, and mortification of pride.[54]

> way of salvation by him; sweet complaisance in those whose conversation savored of true holiness; compassion to the souls of men, and earnest intercessions in secret for them; great resignation to the will of God; a very frequent, most sensible, renewed renunciation of all things for Christ, and giving up himself wholly to God, in soul and body; great distrust of his own heart, and universal dependence on God; longings after full deliverance from the body of sin and death, and perfect conformity to God, and perfectly glorifying him in heaven; clear views of eternity, almost as though he were actually out of body and had his eyes open in another world; constant watchfulness over his own heart, and continual earnestness in his inward warfare with sin; together with great care, to the utmost, to improve time for God, in his service, and to his glory.

[53] Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, vol. 2 in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 311.

[54] Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 311–12. See also Bellamy, "True Religion Delineated," 150. Three years after Brainerd's death, one of Brainerd's closest friends, Joseph Bellamy, defined the evangelical humiliation that characterizes conversion and true dependence on Christ:

> Evangelical humiliation consists in a sense of our own sinfulness, vileness, odiousness, and ill desert, and in a disposition, thence resulting, to lie down in the dust full of self-loathing and self-abhorrence, abased before the Lord, really accounting ourselves infinitely too bad ever to venture to come into the divine presence in our own names, or to have a thought of mercy from God on the account of our own goodness. And it is this which makes us sensible of our need of a Mediator, and makes us desire to be found, not in ourselves, but in Christ; not having on our own righteousness, but his. No further, therefore, than these views and this temper prevail in us, shall we truly discern any need of Christ, or be heartily inclined to have any respect to him as a Mediator between God and us. There can, therefore, be no more of true faith in exercise, than there is of this true humility.

But Edwards and Brainerd were not original in their view of evangelical humiliation. Instead, their understandings were deeply rooted in Augustinian-Calvinistic Puritanism. John Calvin (1509–1564), "like the monastic and Scholastic moralists, regard[ed] pride as the chief of vices, and humility as the pre-eminent virtue."[55] Calvin counseled his readers:

> Now I do not claim that man, unconvinced, should yield himself voluntarily, and that, if he has any powers, he should turn his mind from them in order that he may be subjected to true humility. But I require only that, laying aside the disease of self-love and ambition, by which he is blinded and thinks more highly of himself than he ought, he rightly recognize himself in the faithful mirror of Scripture.[56]

He defined Christian humility as "an unfeigned submission of our heart, stricken down in earnest with an awareness of its own misery and want."[57] And Calvin believed that contrition, "a wound of the heart that does not permit a man cast to the ground to be raised up," would characterize all those who hope to be exalted at the judgment seat.[58]

William Perkins (1558–1602), William Ames (1576–1633), and Richard Baxter (1615–1691) used the language of "evangelical sorrow," "evangelical humiliation," and "humiliation," respectively, to describe crucial facets of authentic preparation and regeneration.[59] Likewise, Thomas Shepard (1605–1649) expounded this

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[55] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: The Westminster Press, 1960), 269. Calvin quotes Augustine: "If you ask me concerning the precepts of the Christian religion, first, second, third, and always I would answer, 'Humility'" (268–69).

[56] Calvin, *Institutes,* 269–70. Calvin continues to expound the Augustinian view "that the natural gifts [such as understanding and reason] were corrupted in man through sin, but that his supernatural gifts [such as faith, love for God and others, and zeal for obedience] were stripped from him."

[57] Calvin, *Institutes,* 760.

[58] Calvin, *Institutes,* 761.

[59] Richard F. Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather: Origins of American Evangelicalism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1979), 76; Timothy K. Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion: A Study of the Puritan Concept of Becoming a Christian* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications/Mentor, 2007), 86–89. "Baxter pleads for a balance: 'we must be careful to avoid both extremes; and neither neglect the study of ourselves, nor yet exceed in poring on ourselves.' . . . The searching

preparatory work of humiliation in the life of a "sound believer."[60] Shepard understood humiliation to be Christ's work to "fully finish" the work of humbling that that he began in the sinner.[61] He defines humiliation as "that work of the Spirit whereby the soul, being broken off from self-conceit and self-confidence in any good it hath or doth, submitteth unto, or lieth under, God, to be disposed of as he pleaseth."[62] Shepard distinguished "evangelical humiliation" from "legal humiliation," and he understood that evangelical humiliation would continue throughout the Christian life:

> A Christian may be considered in respect of his natural being in himself [i.e., in contrast to what Shepard had just considered: a Christian as he is united with Christ]. . . . Thus, after the least involuntary accidental sin, you may easily see what cause you have to lie down deeply humbled, mourning under the sentence of death; . . . looking upon yourself as you are in yourself, a forlorn castaway, every moment: and this, truly understood, is the foundation of a Christian's sorrow, shame, and confusion of face, self-loathing self-forgetting, self-forsaking, and condemning every day. And, believe it, sir, it is no small piece of a Christian's skill and work to put a difference between himself and himself, himself as he is in Christ, and so to joy and triumph, and himself as he is growing on his first root, and so to sorrow, and loathe and condemn himself.[63]

Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661) stressed the sanctifying role of continuing humiliation over sin in the Christian life. He explained in a personal letter: "The more sense [of death], the more life; the more sense of sin, the less sin."[64] Similarly, John

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light of sacred truth must . . . illuminate him for what he is. Baxter says, 'We would not have you think one jot worse of your condition than it is.' But you must see it as it really is!"

[60] Thomas Shepard, *Sound Believer: A Treatise of Evangelical Conversion; Discovering the Work of Christ's Spirit in Reconciling of a Sinner to God*, in *The Works of Thomas Shepard*, vol. 1 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), 174–90.

[61] Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 174–75. "Having thus wounded a poor sinner, [Christ] goes on to humble him also."

[62] Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 175.

[63] Shepard, *Sound Believer*, 310–12.

[64] James Anderson and A. A. Bonar, eds., *Letters of the Rev. Samuel Rutherford* (Edinburgh: William Whyte and Co., 1848), 269; see also 189–93 where he wrote to William Gordon in a letter: "As far as ye are advanced in the way to heaven, as near ye are to Christ, as much progress as ye have made in the way of mortification, ye will find that ye are far behind, and have most of your work before you" (189–93).

Owen (1616–1683), in his treatise on indwelling sin in believers, urged Christians to say with Paul in Philippians 3 and Romans 7: "I count not myself to have apprehended. . . . I have one within me that is my enemy. . . . I am weary of myself. . . . 'O wretched man that I am!'"[65] According to Owen, this sobering realization should lead every Christian to engage in warfare "chiefly directed . . . upon the affections,"[66] and the best strategy in this fight against indwelling sin is to "walk humbly and mournfully before God."[67] He explains the foundation of this "self-abasement":

> There are two things that are suited to humble the souls of men, and they are, first, a due consideration of God, and then of themselves—of *God*, in his greatness, glory, holiness, power, majesty, and authority; of *ourselves*, in our mean, abject, and sinful condition. Now, of all things in our condition, there is nothing so suited unto this end and purpose as that which lies before us; namely, the vile remainders of enmity against God which are yet in our hearts and natures.[68]

The non-conformist Baptist John Bunyan (1628–1688) also stressed, in vivid allegorical terms, the necessity of humiliation in the Christian life, especially in the

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Alexander Whyte summarized the essence of the Rutherford's words to Gordon: "The nearer to heaven you get, the nearer will you feel to hell." Alexander Whyte, *Samuel Rutherford and Some of His Correspondents* (London: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1894), 103.

[65] John Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation: Three Classic Works by John Owen*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 278, 281.

[66] Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, 281.

[67] Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, 282.

[68] Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, 282. See also J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 196. Packer explains Owen's convictions that "Christian living . . . must be founded upon self-abhorrence and self-distrust because of indwelling sin's presence and power." He quotes Owen: "*Constant self-abasement* . . . is another duty that is directly opposed unto the . . . rule of sin in the soul. No frame of mind is a better antidote against the poison of sin. . . . To keep our souls in a constant state of mourning and self-abasement is the most necessary part of our wisdom" (196, italics original). Edwards's framework for teaching humility (by understanding the relationship between God's glory and man's sinfulness) was similar to Owen's. Edwards taught: "All the men in the world, in judging the degree of their own and others' humility . . . consider two things; viz. the real degree of dignity they stand in; and the degree of abasement, and the relation it bears to that real dignity" (Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 332–33).

second part to his famous *Pilgrim's Progress*.[69] Bunyan depicted Great-heart leading Christiana and her children through the Valley of Humiliation, "as fruitful a place, as any the crow flies over" and "the best and most useful piece of ground in all those parts."[70] This Valley has "very fruitful soil" and "doth bring forth fruit by the handfuls," signifying that, according to James 4:6, God "gives more, more grace unto the humble," and, according to Isaiah 66:2, the King blesses those who are "humble and contrite in spirit."[71] Yet this Valley abuts "the Shadow of Death;" it contains noises of "very great groaning" and "also a kind of a hissing" that often strike sickening fear into the regenerate heart; its only dangers consist of a slippery hill and "a narrow passage, just beyond Forgetful Green," which signify the dangers of being proudly confident after victory and forgetful of God's many mercies.[72]

Brainerd's conception of evangelical humiliation inherited elements from each of these sources, even though it is not possible from his extant writings to discern how direct or conscious the influence. Like Perkins, Ames, and Baxter, Brainerd understood

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[69] John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which is to Come*, in *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 3:205–08. Bunyan's imagery of this Valley of Humiliation began in the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (111–14), but he develops it much more fully in the second part.

[70] Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 3:206.

[71] Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 3:206–8.

[72] Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 3:207–8. In his published explanatory notes on pp. 205–06, William Mason (1719–1791) described what Bunyan intended by the allegory of this Valley:

> What doth this place signify? A deep and abiding sight and sense of our ruined state, lost condition, and desperate circumstances, as fallen sinners. This is absolutely necessary, lest we should think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, For the Lord oft favours us with manifestations of his love, and the comforts of his Spirit; but, through the corruption of our nature, we are prone to be exalted in ourselves, and, as it were, intoxicated by them. . . . Though this Valley of Humiliation, or a clear sight and abiding sense of the sinfulness of our nature, and the wickedness of our hearts, may be very terrifying to pilgrims, . . . yet it is a very safe place . . . for here they find the visits of their Lord, and in the depths of their humility, they behold the heights of his love.

that evangelical humiliation begins prior to conversion. Like Calvin, he understood it to be continuing brokenness. Like Shepard, he understood that "self-loathing" was appropriate "in respect of his natural being in himself." Like Owen, he understood it to be a primary method in mortifying indwelling sin. And, like Rutherford and Bunyan, Brainerd understood humiliation to be the ambivalent frame of mind in which sin was loathed while Christian graces were most fruitfully enjoyed.

Conclusion: A Systematic Summary of David Brainerd's Understanding of Evangelical Humiliation

Having considered Brainerd's expressions of evangelical humiliation along with the tradition in which he stands as one of the most prominent exemplars, it is now possible to systematize his understanding of evangelical humiliation under five headings.

First, humiliation is doubly appropriate. For Brainerd, evangelical humiliation involves both a believer's loathsome sense of his own worthlessness due to his status as a creature as well as his his loathsome sense of his own vileness due to the sin nature that still remains within him. He considered this frame of mind to fulfill Jesus's desire that Christians be "poor in spirit" (Matt 5:3) and to fulfill God's primary concern that all pride be "excluded" from a believer's life (Rom 3:27). Like Job, a humble Christian recognizes his or her sin and confesses: "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6 KJV). Like Paul, the humble believer continually declares, "Wretched man that I am!" and, "I have [not] already obtained . . . or am already perfect" (Rom 7:24; Phil 3:12). And, like the psalmist, a true follower of Christ has no expectation of contentment until "I awake, . . . satisfied with your likeness" (Ps 17:15).

Second, humiliation is a continuation of the humbling at conversion. Brainerd's experience of spiritual humiliation began in the preparatory work of conversion when the Spirit brought him to loathe his sinfulness. However, such humiliation was not fully developed until it drove him to crave the perfect holiness of

Jesus and loathe every imperfection until he arrives there. This humiliation that began in conversion necessarily remains at work in the believer until glorification.

Third, humiliation is beneficial. Brainerd understood evangelical humiliation to be crucial for a believer's daily dependence on God, growth in holiness, mortification of sin, and ministerial fruitfulness. Therefore, experiences of humiliation should be sour (in relation to the loathsomeness of sin in the believer's life) and, at the same time, sweet (in relation to the production of grace in the believer's life).

Fourth, humiliation is a crucial outworking of watchfulness. Brainerd believed that a Christian was required by God to practice constant self-examination and watchfulness—watchfulness that included awareness of one's own experience of evangelical humiliation. Brainerd regarded private journaling as one crucially helpful way to watch the "dispositions" of the human heart, especially its attitude toward its own remaining corruption.

Fifth, humiliation is neither doubt nor depression. Brainerd's experiences of humiliation did not exclude enjoyments of God's love and grace. Instead, they ultimately seemed to enhance them. His humiliation did not lead him to doubt his final salvation. It did not bar his praise or thankfulness. His experiences of humiliation did not diminish his engagement in ministry, even though at times they mixed with his propensity to depression, especially when he was physically exhausted.

CHAPTER 5

A THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF DAVID BRAINERD'S UNDERSTANDING OF SPRITUALITY

Introduction

Jonathan Edwards published *The Life of David Brainerd* because Brainerd's personal life offered the world "a very lively instance to see the nature of true religion," especially that

> the change that was wrought in him at his conversion was agreeable to Scripture representations of that change which is wrought in true conversion; a great and an abiding change, rendering him a new man, a new creature: not only a change as to hope and comfort, and an apprehension of his own good estate; and a transient change, consisting in high flights of passing affection; but a change of nature, a change of the abiding habit and temper of his mind. Not a partial change, . . . but an universal change, both internal and external; as from corrupt and dangerous principles in religion unto the belief of the truth, so from both the habits and the ways of sin, unto universal holiness of heart and practice; from the power and service of Satan unto God.[1]

But Edwards did not imagine that Brainerd's life provided a perfect example. Instead, he admitted that Brainerd's life, along with the life of every other Christian and every other human, contained faults:

> I am far from supposing, that Mr. Brainerd's inward exercises and experiences, or his external conduct, were free from imperfection: The example of Jesus Christ is the only example that ever was set in the human nature, that was altogether perfect; which therefore is a rule to try all other examples by; and the dispositions, frames, and practices of others must be commended and followed no further, than they were followers of Christ.[2]

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[1] Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Norman Pettit (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 500–502.

[2] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 91–96. Edwards also noted that Brainerd was "*excessive in his labors*" (95), that he exhibited "some mixture . . . between what was natural and what was spiritual" (96), and especially that he was given to depression: "He was one who by his constitution and natural temper was so prone to melancholy and

Yet Edwards offers no substantive critique of Brainerd's view of spirituality. Instead, he recommends Brainerd as a model of biblical spirituality.

Since Edwards, many biographers and historians have offered brief theological critiques of Brainerd's views of spirituality, but none have developed them substantially. In what follows, the three main facets of Brainerd's understanding of spirituality will be substantively critiqued and, at the same time, many of these brief theological criticisms by others will be evaluated.

A Theological Critique of David Brainerd's Understanding of Conversion: The Beginning Point of Spirituality

David Brainerd taught the necessity of conversion in a time when that doctrine was being crucially recovered.[3] He clearly embraced the "reformed evangelical" view of

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dejection of spirit" (91). In fact, Edwards admits, "He exceeded all melancholy persons that ever I was aquainted with" (92). But Edwards suggests that Brainerd's propensity to depression was the flipside of "a peculiar strength in his judgment" and that Brainerd grew to understand the distinction between "melancholy and godly sorrow" (92–93). Edwards's observation that Brainerd was the most depressed individual he had ever met should be balanced with his observation when Brainerd arrived at his front doorstep in May 1747: "I found him remarkably sociable, pleasant, and entertaining in his conversation; yet solid, savory, spiritual, and very profitable; appearing meek, modest, and humble; far from any stiffness, moroseness . . ." (445).

[3] David W. Kling, "Conversion to Christianity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 598–622. In his overview of the history of conversion, Kling defines conversion as "a movement from something to something," and "in a Christian context, [this movement] must include Christ—a turning, allegiance, or commitment to Christ, in whom salvation is promised." However, "the experience of conversion as mediated by local faith communities in different times and places displays enormous diversity in theological content, ritual expression, and behavioral expression" (599). Kling describes how European Pietism's and modernity's focus on the individual gave rise to "evangelicalism [which] portrayed conversion as a choice or a decision" (603–04). He writes: "Throughout Christian history, thousands of conversion narratives have been written, though nearly all date from the modern period. . . . In the millennium between the fifth and fifteenth centuries, introspective or dramatic conversions are very rare" (605; it seems that Kling is referring to extant written accounts of personal conversions). During this period, "tradition transition took place among the people of northern and western Europe as pagans replaced their pantheon of gods with the Christian God" (611). In this period, "most people, who were illiterate and improverished, became Christian because they were told to or they followed their ruler or they were born into the faith. This was the normal and natural response in a society where the group or the tribe, not

conversion.[4] More than that, Brainerd's view represents the apostolic view that individuals must fully convert (1 Thess 1:9);[5] that explaining the gospel, both publicly and privately, is the normal means that God uses to bring it about (Rom 10:14; Acts

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the individual, defined the basic unit of society. . . . Their conversions, equated theologically with the rite of baptism, were often superficial" (612). He later uses a quotation from Paul Bradshaw in his comments on this ritual-centered approach to conversion: "Whereas baptism in the New Testament functioned as a ritual expression tied to conversion (baptism followed belief; see Acts 2:41; 8:13), by the fourth century 'the baptismal process become instead a means of conveying a profound experience to the candidates in the hope of bringing about their conversion'" (617–18). See also Lincoln A. Mullen, *The Chance of Salvation: A History of Conversion in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 24–26. Mullen helpfully teaches that "infant baptism was a sign of inherited religion, and adult baptism was a sign of religion as choice." He explains that "because the theological demand that everyone experience heart conversion, regardless of whether they had been baptized or were members of the church, Christianity could not be meaningfully inherited." So, it seems that the ritualistic practice of infant baptism was a crucial component in minimizing the expectation of adult conversion prior to the evangelical movement. For a more thorough explanation of the immediate roots of the centrality of conversion in the eighteenth century evangelical movement, see D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 20–21, 321–25. In addition to the maturation of Pietist and Puritan thinking, Hindmarsh attributes the popularity of the personal conversion narrative in the eighteenth century to increased literacy and news, increased mobility and urbanization, as well as the increase of modern economics and commerce. On pp. 326–29 Hindmarsh demonstrates that Edwards's publication of Brainerd's diary "became a runaway best-seller" and the accounts of conversion in his journal "did much to spread the message that the pagan world could be expected to respond to the simple preaching of the law and gospel."

[4] Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation,* Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 237–49. Demarest articulates six historic views of conversion. First, the liberal view, dominated by Catholic scholars, tends to politicize conversion into turning away from first-world comforts and engaging in the work of social justice. Second, the Arminian view is that repentance and faith are human actions that cooperate with God's previous grace-actions toward all humanity. Third, the hyper-Calvinist view believes that it is wrong to offer the gospel to all people. Fourth, existentialists such as Kierkegaard and Tillich believe that conversion is entirely subjective. That is, there is no required object of faith, only the act of faith. Fifth, Karl Barth's view is that conversion is an individual's recognition of what God has already done for humanity in Christ. Sixth, the reformed evangelical view that conversion involves repentance and faith, that these are gifts, that these inevitably changes one's behavior and persevere throughout one's life. He refers to Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, Augustus Strong, and Millard Erickson as proponents.

[5] Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 62–63. "The act of conversion involves a change of direction of the will. There is a decisive happening, a re-orientation of the whole of life."

20:20); that true conversion involves a God-given apprehension of the glory of Christ (2 Cor 3:16–4:6);[6] that true conversion involves both faith and repentance (Acts 20:21);[7] that repentance is more than remorse and saving faith is more than optimism or "irrational commitment"[8] or persuasion of gospel facts (2 Cor 7:9–10; Jas 2:19);[9] that

[6] Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 225. "Paul's language in [ch. 4] v. 6 evocatively describes universally the experience of Christian conversion." See also Charles Hodge, *2 Corinthians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1995), 67. Hodge explained the phrase "the glory of the Lord" in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

> The Lord's glory . . . is (as the context evidently demands), Christ's glory. The glory of Christ is his divine excellence. The believer is enabled to see that Jesus is the Son of God—God manifested in the flesh. This is conversion. . . . The turning to the Lord mentioned in the previous verse involves recognizing Christ as Jehovah. This is not only conversion, it is the highest state of the human soul.

Hodge's comments on 2 Corinthians 4:4 are also instructive: "The glory of Christ is the sum of all the divine and human excellence that is centered in his person, and it makes him the radiant point in the universe, the clearest manifestation of God to his creatures, the object of supreme admiration, adoration, and love by all intelligent beings, and especially his saints. To see this glory is to be saved" (74).

[7] David G. Preston, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 564–65.

> His message is summarized in terms of its final appeal. . . . A call for 'repentance towards God' . . . —a turning away from every form of rebellion in order to serve the living and true God on his own terms—was made to Jews and Gentiles alike. . . . Faith in our Lord Jesus was the positive aspect of such repentance, since Jesus had to be confessed as the only saviour from God's impending judgment. . . . These are really two sides of the same coin. . . . Genuine faith demands repentance, and sincere repentance will continue to flow from saving faith.

[8] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 710.

[9] John Murray, *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), 107–14. Murray defines faith as "a whole-souled movement of self-commitment to Christ for salvation from sin and its consequences" (107). He teaches the threefold nature of faith as "knowledge, conviction, and trust" (110). He explains that repentance is the logical corollary to faith: "If faith is directed to salvation from sin, there must be hatred of sin and the desire to be saved from it. . . . It is impossible to disentangle faith and repentance. Saving faith is permeated with repentance and repentance is permeated with faith" (113). Then he defines repentance—"Repentance consists essentially in change of heart and mind and will . . . respecting God, respecting ourselves, respecting sin, and respecting righteousness" (114)—and shows that the command from God that all humans repent "is a charge invested with the authority and majesty of his sovereignty as Lord of all" (108).

both repentance and faith are gifts that are ultimately attributable to God (Eph 2:8–9; Acts 5:31; 11:18)[10]—which truth necessitates that Christians must pray for others to be converted (Rom 10:1; see also 2 Thess 3:1)[11]—and that, although conversion to Christianity is a one-time occurrence, repenting of sin and trusting Jesus persevere throughout the convert's life (1 Cor 15:1–2).[12] Because Brainerd was convinced of the persevering nature of faith, he did not believe that an individual could be immediately and absolutely certain of his final salvation at the moment of his conversion (Col 1:21–23; Heb 10:36–39). Assurance grows increasingly confident as faith and love endure (1 John 2:3, 24; 3:14, 24).[13] Brainerd's view of conversion was apostolic, and (thankfully) it

[10] J. I. Packer, "Conversion," in *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., ed. D. R. W. Wood (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 223. Packer teaches how the various images of conversion indicate that God must initiate. Such images include "the curing of spiritual impotence," "raising from death," "new birth," "opening of the heart," "enlightening of blind eyes," and "the giving of an understanding." Packer continues, "Man responds to the gospel only because God has first worked in him in this way." Bruce Demarest clarifies that both repentance and faith, according to the Bible, are gifts, and he helpfully and illustratively clarifies that inability does not preclude responsibility (Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 255–56, 262–63). See also Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 108–11. Dever emphasizes that "we will not begin making these right choices [to repent and believe] if God does not first change our heart." He goes on to teach the necessity of God's initiative using Ezek 11, 37; John 6:44; 15:16; Acts 2:39; 16:14; Paul's reference to Joel 2 in Rom 10; 1 Cor 1:18–24; and the references to repentance and faith being gifts in Acts 11:18 and Eph 2:8. See also Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *From Darkness to Life: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament*, in *Overtures to Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter Brueggemann and John R. Donahue (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 44, 124–25, 151.

[11] J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961, 2008), 118–22.

[12] Murray, *Redemption*, 116. Demarest and Grudem concur: "Just as faith is not only a momentary act but an abiding attitude of trust and confidence directed to the Saviour, so repentance results in constant contrition. The broken spirit and the contrite heart are abiding marks of the believing soul" (Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 271); "Scripture thus [based on Heb 11] calls men and women not only to an initial conversion to Christ that enrolls them among the justified, but to a continual conversion that makes them more like Jesus. . . . Progressive conversion validates the reality of initial conversion" (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 717).

[13] Richard Ellsworth Day, *Flagellant on Horseback: The Life Story of David Brainerd* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1950), 190–91. When Day accuses Edwards (and Brainerd) of adding works to grace in his concept of assurance, the burden is on him to prove his own biblical orthodoxy in light of John's first letter. Day's viewpoint seems

has been influential.[14] Although Brainerd embraced an orthodox view of conversion, two weaknesses in his understanding can be identified.

Brainerd's Understanding of Conversion Emphasized Passivity

Brainerd viewed conversion as something that occurs passively rather than actively. In his view, an individual does not convert; an individual *is converted*. He emphasized that conversion is a God-given spiritual apprehension of the glory of Christ. Brainerd tended to speak of conversion in terms of regeneration.[15] So, although he often

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similar to Andrew Croswell's. (See the discussion regarding Brainerd's debate with Croswell in chap. 2 of this thesis.) Edwards emphasized (along with Brainerd) that persevering godliness was stronger proof of one's genuineness than mere profession. See also Stephen R. Holmes, "Religious Affections by Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)," in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 296; J. D. Greear, *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart: How to Know for Sure You are Saved* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013). Holmes explains that Edwards's primary contribution to modern evangelicalism was to clarify that "the true work of the Spirit of God in the converted heart [is], a work that is not, fundamentally, to do with emotional reaction and extraordinary response, although these things might well be present, but is about humble, cheerful, love for God and growth in holiness that lasts a lifetime." In his book on assurance of salvation, Greear explains that salvation "happen[s] in a moment" (44), that "knowing the moment of your conversion is not essential" (90), and that true saving faith "has little to do with intensity of emotion at its beginning and everything to do with its duration over time" (82). He summarizes his argument in the book: "We have identified three primary bases for assurance: a present posture of faith and repentance; perseverance in the faith; and evidences of eternal life in our heart—a love for God and a love for others, particularly other believers. These three combine to give us a powerful sense of assurance that we belong to God" (104).

[14] David W. Bebbington, "Remembered Around the World: The International Scope of Edwards's Legacy," in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 177–200. Bebbington notes that "Edwards's distinction between natural and moral inability," a truth that compelled a Calvinist minister like Brainerd to "challenge [American Indians] to believe," gripped Andrew Fuller and sparked the next massive wave of missionary endeavor (183–84). He teaches that the influence of Edwards is experiencing a global resurgence today (195).

[15] Conversion is a human act in which a sinner decisively turns away from sin and to God, whereas regeneration is God's act of giving spiritual life to the sinner. Murray clarifies that "regeneration is entirely God's activity, while faith and repentance are human actions—God does not believe or repent for us" (Murray, *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied*, 106). See also Stephen S. Smalley, "Conversion," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester: Inter-

explained repentance and faith and invited his hearers to accept the free offer of the gospel, he was reluctant to issue direct, personal commands to repent and believe. Instead, he would wait for God to give repentance. So, when Brainerd was asked by others, "What must I do to be saved?" rather than answering like Paul in Acts 16:30–31, Brainerd would leave the unbeliever to continue in this Spirit-induced state of concern until he or she felt complete inability and until God finally gave comfort (the same way that Solomon Stoddard in *Guide to Christ* had led Brainerd).[16] John Thornbury rightly points out that David Brainerd, in embracing Puritan theology, was "caught in between the two seemingly contradictory realities of obligation and inability."[17] However, the fact that Brainerd was cautious to command a decision meant that he could not be accused of promoting nominalism or "easy believism," especially that which denies any need to repent of sin.[18]

Varsity Press, 1988), 167–68. Smalley simply teaches that regeneration is "God's part" and conversion "man's part." See also Richard F. Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather: Origins of American Evangelicalism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1979), 90–91.

[16] For example, refer back to the discussion of Brainerd's evangelistic approach with Tautamy in chap. 2 of this thesis.

[17] John Thornbury, *David Brainerd: Pioneer Missionary to the American Indians* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1996), 52. See also Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life*, 2nd ed. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), vii, 217–18.

[18] For the early eighteenth-century debate over whether the gospel can be preached to those who have not yet grieved over and repented of their sin, see Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance—Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 58–60. In this book, Ferguson highlights a controversy that began in Scotland around the time of Brainerd's birth in New England. According to Ferguson, the Marrow Men, who were led by Thomas Boston, argued that "repentance, turning from sin, and degrees of conviction do not constitute the grounds on which Christ is offered to us. They may constitute ways in which the Spirit works as the gospel makes its impact on us. But they never form the warrant for repentance and faith." He continues, "Neither conviction nor the forsaking of sin constitutes the warrant for the gospel offer. Christ himself is the warrant, since he is able to save all who come to him. He is offered without conditions." For the modern controversy over whether sinners should be commanded to repent, see Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 265–71. Demarest briefly explains the Lordship Salvation debate in which Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges argued that repentance and submission

Brainerd's Expectation that Conversion was Preceded by Extended Preparation was Formulaic

In Brainerd's understanding, a period of preparation preceded conversion. Like others before him, Brainerd believed that conversion would occur after a long, gradual process of preparation that included intense wrestlings with sin, sense of helpless inability, and settled resignation to God's sovereignty. So, technically speaking, it is inaccurate to say that Brainerd believed in "gradual conversion" or that he "simply did not believe in instantaneous salvation."[19] Instead, Brainerd taught instantaneous

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are unbiblical additions to the simple gospel of faith alone. A. W. Tozer, John Stott, J. I. Packer, James Montgomery Boice, and John MacArthur opposed such teaching. Demarest sides with this latter group and teaches that saving faith demands repentance, involves total commitment, and acknowledges Jesus as Lord. He concludes: "We must avoid a cheap and easy-believism that fails to repent and commit the whole of life to the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Commitment to Christ's Lordship is an intrinsic part of saving faith." See also Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church,* 103–4. Dever teaches that a biblical view of conversion is crucial for church health. He points out that an unbiblically high [i.e., too difficult] view of conversion will lead many true Christians to doubt that they are truly converted while an unbiblically low [i.e., too easy] view of conversion will (much more dangerously) lead to nominalism—to "people who think they are converted when they really are not." See also John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity,* 2nd ed. (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), 107–8; Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People: A Training Manual on the Message and Methods of God-Centered Witnessing,* 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 105. Stott laments the widespread nominal Christianity in the present generation, and he reminds people that Jesus clearly "offered men his salvation" but "demanded their submission." Metzger teaches that conversion involves decision, but he warns against persuasion rooted in self-centered appeals: "Too many of our evangelistic methods are benefits-oriented. Phrases like 'the adventure of the Christian life,' 'the thrill and excitement,' and 'Christ made me happy every day' are not balanced with the cost of discipleship." Compare with Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 219; see also 197–98. Warren models a present-day evangelical who believes in the unfailing effectiveness of evangelism that sensitively targets individuals' felt needs. He writes, "It is my deep conviction that anybody can be won to Christ if you discover the key to his or her heart. That key to each person's heart is unique so it is sometimes difficult to discover. It may take some time to identify it. But the most likely place to start is with the person's felt needs."

[19] Clyde S. Kilby, "David Brainerd: Knight of the Grail," in *Heroic Colonial Christians,* 151–206 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1966), 193; Norman Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," in *The Life of David Brainerd*, vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 7.

conversion after gradual preparation.[20] However, Brainerd's expectation of gradual preparation was too narrowly formulaic. His understanding of the process of conversion did not seem to include biblical examples that lacked an arduous preparation period.[21] And, in most of Brainerd's conversion narratives, his understanding of preparation included *resignatio ad infernum* (i.e., the willingness to be damned).[22] Although his

[20] Edwards (along with his publication of Brainerd) was not opposed to "instantaneous conversion" as much as what might be called "instantaneous assurance." Edwards himself taught that the most convincing feature of true religion is "a great change and an abiding change" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 500–502). At one point Norman Pettit teaches the same: that for Edwards Brainerd "personified true virtue because . . . his acts of Christian practice were the clearest evidence of his faith" (Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," 14). See also Norman Pettit, *The Heart Renewed: Assurance of Salvation in New England Spiritual Life* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 151–52. Pettit explains Edwards's view of assurance which he sought to promote with the publication of Brainerd:

> In regeneration, Edwards maintained, the saint receives spiritual insight that allows him to behold God's excellency. Saving grace is apprehended in acts of love, which are reflections of divine love; and self-examination is directed toward 'signs' of visible sainthood. . . . When the heart is renewed, Christian obedience follows. It is the main evidence of a gracious estate. Holy practice then becomes the evidence of true godliness. . . . The elect are not assured by sudden illuminations or raised affections, but by conformity to the will of God.

[21] Packer, "Conversion," 223. In the New Testament "some [conversions are] more violent and dramatic" such as Paul, Cornelius, and the Philippian jailer, while "some [are] more quiet and unspectacular" such as the Ethiopian eunuch and Lydia.

[22] Douglas A. Sweeney, "Jonathan Edwards and Human Flourishing" (paper presented at the Commonweal Project Spring Colloquium at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, April 28, 2017). Sweeney traces the history of ethical rigorism (with its central feature of willingness to be damned) over five centuries of church history:

> Beginning with Peter Abelard (1079–1142) in the early twelfth century, and continuing with Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308), the radical Franciscans, many late medieval mystics, and most early Protestant leaders (Martin Luther chief among them), an alternative view emerged much less sanguine about self-love. Claiming ancient Christian roots and seeing little practical difference between self-love and selfishness, advocates of this view, known as 'ethical rigorists,' called upon Christians to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Jesus. Touting a willingness to be damned (*resignatio ad infernum*) as the surest sign of piety, they advocated what some called 'disinterested benevolence,' or sometimes 'pure love' (*castus amor*, or, in the French, *pur amour*), the kind of holiness that disregarded personal fulfillment in favor of Christ-like self-abnegation. Reaching great fame (and infamy) in the Roman Catholic mysticism of Madame Jeanne Guyon (1648–1717), the rigorists gained momentum in the late seventeenth century (on the eve of Edwards' birth). Many leading British moralists, Jansenists, and Puritans now warned people away from indulging in self-love. The fierce debate between

writings never explicitly reveal that he taught that a willingness to be damned was a crucial part of preparation for conversion, his narratives suggest that he expected it. Such resignation is not a Scriptural condition of salvation, nor is it humanly possible.[23]

Even though Brainerd seemed to assume that a period of preparation would always precede conversion, his formulaic viewpoint did have some inherent strengths: it ensured a thorough conviction of sin which is foundational to authentic conversion,[24] and it again protected against the decisionism of the modern evangelical viewpoint that the moment of conversion is equivalent to "the sinner's prayer."[25]

Guyon's defender, François Fenelon (1651–1715), and his rival, Bishop Bossuet (1625–1704), was but the best known instance of this lively conversation.

[23] Apparently, Brainerd did not follow Stoddard in rejecting that a penitent must be "willing to be damned." Stoddard had bluntly taught in *Guide to Christ* that

> no man acting understandingly is willing to be damned. . . . It is against nature. Nature teaches every man to desire happiness. Damnation is a dreadful terror to those who know what it is, Isaiah 33:14. . . . No such thing [i.e., that a man be willing to be damned] is required of men. For God has put a spirit of self-love into men and binds them to love themselves, and commands men to be seeking of salvation, John 6:27, Luke 13:24. Such willingness is either only pretended; or, if real, it must arise either from desperate rage and passion, or from some violent pang of false affection to God. The Spirit of God does not stir up such workings in the hearts of men.

Solomon Stoddard, *A Guide to Christ, or, The Way of Directing Souls that are Under the Work of Conversion* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993), 53–54. See also John Piper, "Was Jonathan Edwards a Christian Hedonist?" *Desiring God*, September 29, 1987, accessed March 21, 2018, http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/was-jonathan-edwards-a-christian-hedonist. According to Piper, Jonathan Edwards viewed the teaching that true Christians should be willing to be damned as "inconsistent with itself."

[24] Conversion is needed because of human sin—because people by nature are disobedient to (and therefore distant from) God. See Mark Dever's comments regarding the Bible's depiction of the desperate human condition before conversion. Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 100–101.

[25] Mullen, *The Chance of Salvation*, 27–37. Mullen teaches that "the nineteenth century saw the modification of the Puritan conversion narrative into the sinner's prayer. The sinner's prayer was a way of acknowledging sin and asking for God's mercy in a formulaic, yet spontaneous, prayer. Puritan or early evangelical conversions tended to be gradual. . . . The nineteenth-century ritual was more immediate." He highlights the significant roles of Charles Finney and the American Tract Society in promoting the sinner's prayer as "defin[ing] the moment of salvation," and he contrasts this newer viewpoint with Brainerd's viewpoint. In the throes of preparation prior to his conversion, David Brainerd insisted: "My prayers . . . laid not the least obligation upon God to bestow his grace upon me."

A Theological Critique of David Brainerd's Understanding of Love: The Essence of Spirituality

Brainerd's accurately understood that the essence of authentic spirituality involved unselfish love for God that resulted in unselfish love for others (Matt 22:37–40). In the "great commandment," Jesus "assumes rather than commands self-love;"[26] he combines two Old Testament statements, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, both of which highlight the responsive nature of human love to the glory of God;[27] and Jesus

[26] Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 330.

[27] Certainly, Jesus understood that the command in Deuteronomy to love God was Israel's response to his initiating love for them and that the command in Leviticus to love others was motivated by conformity to God himself (Lev 19:2; see also 11:44–45; 20:7, 26; 21:8). See Leon Morris, *Testaments of Love: A Study of Love in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 40–41. Morris teaches that in Deuteronomy love is commanded. He continues,

> The way we commonly use the term love the response cannot be commanded. . . . In Deuteronomy it is clear that God's love is the great, basic fact, and that this love awakens a response in those who accept it. While it is true that God is the supremely attractive being and that men ought to love him for what he is, it is also true that the Old Testament does not simply cite God's attractiveness to explain man's love for him. It emphasizes the important truth that God loves first, that the love which men have for God can never be other than a response. Men may come to appreciate God's wonderful attractiveness, but that response is second to their initial response to God's great love for them and because God loves men as they are, they ought to make the appropriate response, the response of love to love. Because that is the correct response, it can be commanded.

See also T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 258–60. Alexander highlights the obligatory nature of love:

> Love in Deuteronomy is never presented as . . . just a matter of feelings. Love God had very practical implications for the people. They must fulfill the obligations placed upon them by the covenant. . . . True love will demonstrate itself in perfect obedience. On the other hand, disobedience indicates a failure to love God. . . . Conscious of the Israelites' strong tendency towards disobedience . . . Moses incorporates within his exhortations various comments to encourage obedience. These motivation statements are found throughout Deuteronomy. Interestingly, apart from the longer section of curses in Deuteronomy 28, Moses generally motivates the people by highlighting the positive aspects of obedience. Only rarely does he mention the consequences of disobedience (e.g., 8:19–20). The most common motive is the promise of divine blessing.

Alexander offers more than twenty proof texts from Deuteronomy to demonstrate that God motivates with divine blessings.

teaches that interlocking[28] love for God and love for others is "the overall theme of all Scripture."[29] Although it is by no means the only biblical text that shows the essence of true spirituality,[30] this single text in Matthew 22 is sufficient for establishing the centrality of love for God and others as the essence of true religion—and for demonstrating Brainerd's orthodoxy.[31] So Brainerd was right to locate the essence of spirituality in unselfish affection for God that resulted in self-sacrificing love for others,[32]

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[28] D. A. Carson, *Matthew 13–28*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 464. "The two commandments, Jesus says, stand together. The first without the second is intrinsically impossible (cf. 1 John 4:20), and the second cannot stand without the first—even theoretically—because disciplined altruism is not love. Love in the truest sense demands abandonment of self to God, and God alone is the adequate incentive for such abandonment."

[29] Norman L. Geisler, *The Christian Ethic of Love* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 18. Geisler points his readers to Matt 5:17 and 7:12.

[30] According to several passages in the New Testament, love for Christ is the mark of every true Christian (1 Cor 16:22; Eph 6:24; 1 Pet 1:8–9; Rev 2:1–7). See D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2002), 70. Hiebert teaches that "love for the Lord Jesus is the sure mark of a true Christian (John 8:42; 14:21; 1 Cor. 16:22; Eph. 6:24; 2 Tim. 4:8)." For lucid comments on Paul's meaning in 1 Corinthians 16:22, see Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 838. Paul repeatedly concurs that genuine love for fellow believers is at the heart of genuine spirituality (Rom 13:8–10; 1 Cor 12–14; Gal 5:13–26). Central to Paul's section on "the things of the Spirit," 1 Cor 12–14, is Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 13 on "the absolute *necessity* of love; . . . the *character* of love; and . . . the *permanence* of love" (Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 576, 628, italics original).

[31] Refer to Brainerd's licensing sermon from June 1742 and his letter to Israel from January 1744.

[32] Joseph A. Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work: 'The Life of David Brainerd' and Nineteenth Century Evangelical Culture," *Church History* (June 1985): 200. In view of Brainerd's choice of living situation, career, and ways of spending time, Conforti's suggestion that Brainerd prioritized the concerns of his own soul over others' salvation goes too far. See also Stephen G. Post, *A Theory of Agape: On the Meaning of Christian Love* (London: Associated University Presses, 1990), 68, 73. Post points out that evangelism must be a crucial component of a Christian's love for his or neighbor—that "neighbor-love is clearly driven by the first half of the love commandment, namely the injunction to love God with all one's heart." In other words, love for one's neighbor cannot be reduced to humanitarian benevolence, but must include an evangelistic component. "While the neighbor is loved unconditionally, he or she is also to be urged in the direction of realizing higher spiritual values that issue in true fulfillment." Brainerd's evangelism evidences that he emphasized this kind of love for others. See also Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical*

and he was right to understand love for the world as the primary competitor for an individual's devotion to God (1 John 2:15–17).[33] Nevertheless, Brainerd's accurate teaching that unselfish love encapsulates spirituality's essence had two weaknesses.

Brainerd's Understanding of Love's Motivations was Reductionistic

Brainerd did not always carefully clarify the biblical motivations for love. Although he did not "separate . . . God's glory and his own personal interest,"[34] yet he did not always clarify that an individual's self-interest could be a "regular self-love" that glorifies God by seeking its ultimate enjoyment in him. For example, as detailed above, Brainerd criticized individuals who "never had any spiritual view of his divine glory" for responding with "natural gratitude" to the fact "that Christ had been so good to them as to save them." Or he taught individuals to love God not "from a sordid selfish Apprehension of [the individual] having any Benefit whatsoever conferred" but instead "from a View of his *personal* Excellency, and *transcendant* Loveliness." Such contrasts, however, are not mutually exclusive. According to the Scriptures, God's cannot reveal his holy glory without revealing his covenant-keeping "steadfast love and faithfulness" for people

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(New York: Viking, 2016), 45, 88–89. Keller challenges secularists to consider the contribution of Christianity to world civilization. He shows that Christianity's view of love has led to the most substantive foundation for human rights and equality. In contrast with Greek and Roman thought, "Christianity . . . saw the battle for human virtue . . . was over where to direct the supreme love of your heart. Will it be toward God and your neighbor, no matter who that neighbor is? Or will it be toward power and wealth for yourself and your tribe? . . . Love was required to redirect the human person away from self-centeredness toward serving God and others."

[33] D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Epistles of John: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1991), 100–101. "Love for God and love for the world are by their nature antagonistic and cannot coexist in the same human heart." The "things in the world," according to Hiebert, include nonmoral objects that can "become part of the prohibited world if they cause an attitude of alienation from God."

[34] Edward Bickersteth, introduction to *The Life of the Rev. David Brainerd, Missionary to the North American Indians*, ed. Josiah Pratt (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1834), viii–ix.

(Exod 34:6),[35] and an individual's love for God is necessarily responsive, particularly responsive to his initiating love (1 John 4:19).[36] So an individual's relationship with God

[35] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 138, 141. Gentry teaches that "the major covenants" are "the framework of the biblical metanarrative. . . . They are the backbone of the Bible." He continues,

> At the heart of covenant . . . is a *relationship* between parties characterized by faithfulness and loyalty in love. In the Hebrew of the Old Testament there is a word pair which is consistently used to express this: *hesed* and *emet*. Neither word has a convenient and simple equivalent in English. The first . . . has to do with showing kindness and loyal love. The second . . . can be translated by either 'faithfulness' or 'truth.' . . . The word pair operates, then, within covenant relationships and has to do with demonstrating faithful loyal love with the covenant context.

[36] Refer to n. 27 in the present chapter on the responsiveness of love. Leon Morris simply affirms that "love begets love" (Morris, *Testaments of Love*, 277). For a fuller discussion, see Bernard V. Brady, *Christian Love: How Christians through the Ages Have Understood Love* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 73, 273, 267. Building on other studies, Bernard Brady defines Christian love with five crucial adjectives: "affective, affirming, responsive, unitive, enduring." He bases his definition on the New Testament, especially 1 John of which he says: "The First Letter of John has been cited as the summary of love in the New Testament, the summation of *agape*." Using Brady's insight as a foundation, John's theological reflection on love is encapsulated most succinctly and comprehensively in 1 John 4:7–21. Eight propositions from this passage unlock John's masterly and systematic presentation of Christian love. First, "God is love" (vv. 8, 16). This statement logically implies the Trinitarian nature of God (see also vv. 13–14). Second, the chief manifestation of God's love is in the Son's incarnation and propitiation (vv. 9–10). Third, human sin is fundamentally a love disorder—"not that we have loved God"—and it is a condition in which humans are dead, for which they are under wrath, and from which they need to be rescued (vv. 9–10, 14). Fourth, regeneration by the Spirit produces love in every Christian (vv. 7, 16, 19)—love which is both a response to God's love and a family characteristic. See Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistles of St John*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1892), 147. Westcott explains, "Love is of God, and therefore, since it proceeds from Him, it must be characteristic also of those who partake in His Nature, as His children." Fifth, to love God and others is to obey God's direct command (vv. 7, 20–21) and to fulfill the reason for human existence: to image God (v. 12). See David L. Larsen, *Biblical Spirituality: Discovering the Real Connection between the Bible and Life* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2001), 68. Larsen writes, "God created us by love and for love, in his image." Sixth, while a Christian's love for God is a response to God's initiating love, a Christian's love for other Christians is patterned after God's love (v. 11). That is, its motivation is not in the loveliness of the object loved but in the new nature God has given. Seventh, like Christ a Christian loves not only his Christian brothers but also the hostile world of unbelievers (vv. 14, 17; see also Matt 5:43–48). Eighth and finally, genuine love for God and others has eschatological value (vv. 17–18). Three present realities—believing God's love in Christ, being regenerated by the Spirit to a life of love, and being indwelt by the God of love so that our love grows—give the believer fearless "confidence" as the future "day of judgment" approaches.

involves *mutual* love, love which sees God's benefit-giving love for sinners as part of his "*transcendent* Loveliness" and responds to his love with love and gratitude. In fact, throughout the Bible love for God is consistently illustrated with the mutuality of the marriage covenant.[37] Yet Brainerd tended to stress the distinction between God's love that graciously benefits sinners and God's "personal Excellency," and that explains James Montgomery's apt criticism that Brainerd sought to love God "abstractedly"—to separate God's glorious being from God's glorious actions.[38] Yet, the fact that Brainerd insufficiently nuanced his explanations of the right motives that drive love for God does not mean that such concerns were completely invalid. Brainerd was right to be preoccupied with whether love was selfish or not, and he was right to challenge people to

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[37] Refer to n. 65 in chap. 3 of this thesis for Stephen Post's argument regarding the mutuality of love. See also Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *God's Unfaithful Wife: A Biblical Theology of Spiritual Adultery*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 7, 171–73. Ortlund is convinced that the pairing of God's creation of the universe in Gen 1 with the creation of marriage in Gen 2 shows that human marriage "is a divine creation, intended to reveal the ultimate romance guiding all of time and eternity." He argues that the theme of spiritual adultery pervades the Bible because God's covenantal love demands human faithfulness. For further discussion of the imagery of marital love, see Kenneth Keathley, "The Work of God: Salvation," in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 728. Keathley teaches that "conversion is analogous to taking marriage vows. . . . To say yes to one is to say no to all others. So it is with conversion. Like marriage, converting to Christ is entering into a covenant relationship with God' that is exclusive."

[38] James Montgomery, "An Introductory Essay," in *Life of the Rev. David Brainerd, Missionary to the American Indians* by Jonathan Edwards (Glasgow: William Collins, 1829), xl–xli.

> It may be asked—and it shall be done here with the deepest awe and reverence—was he [i.e., Brainerd] not setting up a standard of devotion not set up in Scripture, and assuming a yoke which Christ hath not laid upon his disciples? Is it not impossible to love, without some motive affecting our own happiness, however unconsciously entertained? . . . Where is it revealed, that this exaltation above all self-interestedness is attainable, till we know, *by* experience, the mercy of his love to us, utterly and everlastingly unworthy of it as we are?—When all reasoning has been exhausted, and all striving proved ineffectual, we must be content to come down to the apostolic principle, or rather to the *matter of fact* stated by the disciple whom Jesus loved, "We love Him, because He first loved us."

Based on Brainerd's early comments on regular self-love, it is clear that he did not exclude all self-interestedness, yet he rarely clarified this understanding.

examine their ultimate motivations. In fact, many people love God selfishly, merely manipulating him for the gifts he gives.[39]

Brainerd's Hesitancy to Love God's Gifts Tended toward Asceticism

Brainerd's strict concern that legitimate earthly delights be enjoyed only to the extent that "God is seen in them" made it difficult for him to really enjoy the good gifts that God created for him to receive with thankfulness (1 Tim 4:1–6).[40] Although Brainerd was never a strict ascetic, embracing or teaching the necessity of any sort of abstinence, he struggled to enjoy food, rest,[41] and nature.[42] Even to the last moments of his life,

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[39] The Bible offers many examples of people who pursue God for selfish reasons: Saul repented only to avoid judgment (1 Sam 15:22–30), the crowds followed Jesus in order to get fed (John 6:26), Simon wanted apostolic power with ambitious intent (Acts 8:9–24). Conversely, the entire book of Job has one dominant goal: to demonstrate that believers do not love God for selfish ends, but for who he is (Job 1:9; 42:1–6). For pointed explanation, see Joseph Caryl, *An Exposition of Job*, ed. John Berrie (Evansville, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1959), xii. Caryl (1602–1673) wrote,

> This book [Job] serves also to confute the slander of worldly men, and Satan, who sometimes affirm that the people of God serve him for their own ends. God did, on purpose, cause these things to be acted, and the history to be written, to stop the mouth of Satan and all iniquity, and to show that his people *follow him for love*; for the excellency they find in him, and in his service. Though he strip them naked of all they have, yet they will cleave to him.

[40] Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 104. "The reception of God's gifts *with thanksgiving* is a typically Pauline theme. Such a note must never be absent from the believer's attitude either to material or to spiritual realities. What is at stake is our whole conception of God. The false teachers . . . were losing sight of [God's] largesse. Those who cannot thank God have no real knowledge of him."

[41] See Joe Tyrpak, *The Life of David Brainerd: A Devotional* (n.p.: Church Works Media, 2015), 17–21. Brainerd was a Sabbatarian. However, he seems never to have taken a day off per week. Jonathan Edwards criticized his "excessive[ness] in his labors" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 95), Joseph Conforti suggested that Brainerd should be criticized for his physically detrimental way of life (Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work," 197), and Vance Christie points out Brainerd's workaholism. See Vance Christie, *David Brainerd: A Flame for God* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2009), 10, 27, 147, 236.

[42] Brainerd often refers to the natural world negatively. For example, he calls it a "huge vacuum," an "empty bubble," a "gloomy mansion," "dull," and a "hideous and howling wilderness" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 234, 242, 267, 271, 486). See

Brainerd never wanted his longing for heaven to be driven by any personal comfort or advancement, even though the Scriptures frequently depict heaven's anticipated comforts and advancement (Rev 21:4; 22:4–5).[43] Although Christians should not imitate every facet of Brainerd's ascetic tendency, they should recognize that it was a weakness that was the flipside of his remarkably strong self-sacrifice for the glory of God and good of others.[44] Further, Christians should learn from Brainerd's deep carefulness that he not provoke the Lord to jealousy[45] by inordinately and idolatrously loving the things of

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William B. O. Peabody, "Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians," in *Lives of Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd*, ed. Jared Sparks (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1837), 276. Since William Peabody, several biographers have alleged Brainerd's dismal view of nature. However, most fail to recognize (like Peabody rightly recognized) that Brainerd did evidence some enjoyment of nature, notably one evening on which he gazed at the northern lights (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 160). So, it is inaccurate to teach, as Kilby did, that Brainerd had "total disregard" of nature, or, as Norman Pettit taught, that "Brainerd never mentioned a natural beauty," or, as John Piper taught, that "Brainerd never mentioned an attractive landscape." See the viewpoints of Clyde S. Kilby, "David Brainerd: Knight of the Grail," in *Heroic Colonial Christians* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1966), 182–84; Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," 23; 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), 140–43; and Thornbury, *David Brainerd: Pioneer Missionary*, 129.

[43] Motivations for heaven and holiness are multi-faceted. See Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 57–60. God encourages our holiness with many motivations, including the glory of God. Yet the Scriptures also motivate believers to godliness because of its imperative, rightness, personal benefits, avoidance of judgment, winning others, "public good," and because of God's omniscience, Christ's example and return, life's brevity, sin's emptiness, and the believer's union with Christ. Brainerd sometimes gave the impression that the *chief* motivation for holiness or heaven was the *only* motivation.

[44] It is often observed that, in fallen humanity, every strength in character comes with a complementary weakness. For a helpful example of how to graciously view the personal weaknesses of others, see Norman Grubb, *C. T. Studd: Cricketer & Pioneer* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 1982), 9. Grubb reflects on the extremes of his father-in-law, C. T. Studd (1860–1931), in this manner: "A cavalry leader cannot have all the gifts of an administrator, or he would not have the qualities necessary to lead a charge. In this simple fact is the explanation of the shortcomings [in Studd that] some might point out."

[45] D. A. Carson, "Love," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 646–50. Carson writes that "failure to love God lies at the heart of idolatry, and God's response is jealous wrath (*cf.* Exod. 20:4–5; Jas. 4:4–5)."

earth.[46] This worldliness seems to be a particular temptation for those in the prosperous West who, as David Brainerd himself had once done, tend to make "a god of diversions" and "delight[] in them with a neglect of God."[47]

A Theological Critique of David Brainerd's Understanding of Evangelical Humiliation: The Daily Experience of Spirituality

For readers, Brainerd's experience of evangelical humiliation is typically the most notable (and difficult) feature of his spirituality. According to David Weddle, to

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[46] Joe Rigney, *The Things of Earth: Treasuring God by Enjoying His Gifts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 97–99. Rigney teaches that the Bible reveals

> two complementary ways of viewing God's relationship to his gifts. The first is a comparative approach, in which God and his gifts are separated and sat next to each other to determine which is more valuable. In the comparative view, we put God on one side of the scales and his gifts on the other to see which is weightier, more valuable, more glorious. . . . The second approach is the integrated approach. . . . When we love God supremely and fully, we are able to integrate our joy in God and our joy in his gifts, receiving the gifts as shafts of his glory. Supreme love for God orients our affections and orders are desires and integrates our loves. When we love God supremely, we are free to love creation as creation (and not as God). Because the divine excellence is really present in the gift, we are free to enjoy it for his sake. God's gifts become avenues for enjoying him, beams of glory that we chase back to the source. We don't set God and his gifts in opposition to each other, as though they are rivals. . . . It's not enough to distinguish these two ways of relating God to his gifts; we must also know how to relate the two approaches to each other. My contention, based on the overwhelming biblical evidence for the goodness of creation and its capacity to lead us deeper in the knowledge of God, is that the integrated approach is how we should live the bulk of our lives, and the comparative approach is a test to ensure that we maintain supreme and full love for God. The comparative test often takes the form of self-denial or suffering. The loss of good gifts . . . is a test of where our ultimate treasure truly lies. . . . The problem comes when we become permanent test takers, refusing to receive all that God richly provides out of fear of committing idolatry.

[47] Compare with R. Kent Hughes, *Set Apart: Calling a Worldly Church to a Godly Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 44–45. The systematic presentation of Brainerd's teachings regarding loving God through the use of "outward comforts" (refer to the discussion of "unadulterated love" in the conclusion to chap. 3) remarkably aligns with Kent Hughes teaching about "the perversion of pleasure." Hughes describes several ways in which the enjoyments of legitimate "pleasure become twisted"—when humans seek it "apart from" God, fail to thank God for it, consider themselves entitled to it, and "overindulge."

read Brainerd's diary is to read "page after dreary page."[48] Brainerd's constant experience of humiliation is not only difficult to read. For many it is repulsive. In his *Autobiography*, Lyman Beecher describes how Brainerd hindered his "religious awakening" in his junior year at college:

> For cases like mine, Brainerd's Life is a most undesirable thing. It gave me a tinge for years. So Edwards on the Affections—a most overwhelming thing, and to common minds the most entangling. The impressions left by such books were not spiritual, but a state of permanent hypochondria—the horrors of a mind without guidance, motive, or ability to do any thing. They are a bad generation of books, on the whole. Divine sovereignty does the whole in spite of them. I was converted in spite of such books. . . . I have used evangelical philosophy all my lifetime, and relieved people without number out of the sloughs of high Calvinism.[49]

Many biographers, even those who are not as repulsed by Brainerd's journals as Beecher was, describe his diaries as "morbid."[50] Yet such evaluations generally fail to acknowledge Brainerd's objective in diary-keeping,[51] they usually conflate Brainerd's

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[48] David L. Weddle, "The Melancholy Saint: Jonathan Edwards's Interpretation of David Brainerd as a Model of Evangelical Spirituality," in *The Harvard Theological Review* 81, no. 3 (July 1988): 302.

[49] Lyman Beecher, *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D. D.*, vol. 1, ed. Chares Beecher (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1864), 45–47. Similarly, Andrew Walls recounts that many readers of Brainerd's life attributed Brainerd's melancholy to "the theological and pastoral inadequacies of Calvinism." See also Andrew F. Walls, "Missions and Historical Memory: Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd," in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 254. Walls points out that Wesley wished that Brainerd had "understood the doctrine of Christian perfection," while A. J. Gordon wished he had "know[n] the exultant spiritual liberty that was part of the Keswick message." Finally, compare with Jesse Page, *David Brainerd: The Apostle to the North American Indians* (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., n.d. [1903]), 25, 30, 105.

[50] J. M. Sherwood, "Introduction on the Life and Character of David Brainerd," in *Memoirs of Rev. David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians of North America* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884) xxv; Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 196.

[51] Vance Christie is an exception. Early in his biography (Christie, *David Brainerd: A Flame for God*, 41–42), he admits Brainerd's goals in diary-keeping:

> The predominant focus of his private journal was on the condition of his personal spiritual life. This portion of the diary contained scant references to the events of his life, and generally only as those related to his spiritual status. It appears his exclusive purpose in keeping the diary at this time was to carefully analyze, with a

experience of evangelical humiliation with his depression,[52] and they often misrepresent Brainerd's diaries as full of doubts and insecurity,[53] when, in fact, Brainerd frequently describes his sense of assurance.[54] When a reviewer simply understands Brainerd's agony

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> view to improving, his personal spiritual state and his relationship with the Lord. . . . Precisely because he was composing a private journal, he wrote with utter frankness. He made no attempt to conceal or justify his own spiritual shortcomings and struggles, but spoke of them in the plainest and severest of terms. Nor did he rein in the expression of his most intense spiritual devotion for fear that others would think him self-aggrandizing. The unbridled passion and the unvarnished truth of his private journal are two of the primary factors that give it its attractiveness and power. Those same two factors make the reading of his diary an alternately delightful and painful experience.

[52] Again, Vance Christie is exceptional in his approach to Brainerd's depression. He suggests a variety of reasons for it, but he does not attribute it to "a spiritual deficiency on his part." Instead, Brainerd's melancholy likely involved genetic predisposition, childhood tragedy, tuberculosis, his "traumatic" expulsion, apparent ministerial ineffectiveness, and "spiritual warfare" (Christie, *David Brainerd: A Flame for God,* 315–16). Compare with Kilby, "David Brainerd: Knight of the Grail," 162; Henry Warner Bowden. *American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict,* in *Chicago History of American Religion,* ed. Martin E. Marty (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 153; Julius H. Rubin, *Religious Melancholy and Protestant Experience in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 93–98. Some biographers are simply wrong in their suggestions that "there seemed to be no direct relationship between [Brainerd's] bodily illness and his mental depression" (Kilby) or that the true reason for Brainerd's frequent trips was to "escape despair" (Bowden). In fact, Brainerd lamented traveling so much—four thousand miles per year—because it consumed so much of the time in which he would have preferred to study. See Brainerd's own comments in David Brainerd, *Divine Grace Display'd or the Continuance and Progress of a Remarkable Work of Grace Among Some of the Indians Belonging to the Provinces of New-Jersey and Pennsylvania, Justly Represented in a Journal Kept by Order of the Honourable Society (in Scotland) for Propagating Christian Knowledge* in *Mr. Brainerd's Journal among the Indians* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1746), 199–201. Further, Julius Rubin's suggestion that Edwards portrayed Brainerd as an example of "valorized melancholy," ignores the fact that Edwards viewed Brainerd's melancholy as weakness while viewing his evangelical humiliation as a strength. Rubin fails to make any distinction between melancholy and humiliation.

[53] Norman Pettit suggests that Brainerd "could never be sure that his spiritual state was secure" and that "the doubt of one's state of grace [was] a part of the saintly life" (Pettit, "Editor's Introduction," 8, 19). David Weddle teaches that Brainerd's depressions reveal his view of God as "the arbitrary Father whose approval . . . must be anxiously sought, but who disapproves of the very anxiety prompting one to seek that approval" (Weddle, "The Melancholy Saint," 303). In sharp contrast, Brainerd frequently describes his view of God as "a tender father" and his childlike openness in prayer (see, for example, Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd,* 391, 397).

[54] Brainerd frequently expresses that he did *not* doubt (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd,* 204, 205, 485, 209, 278; see also John Piper, *The Hidden Smile of God,* 134,

in journaling as "morbid," such analysis is simplistic and weak, seemingly ignorant of his theology of humiliation and his methodology of self-examination.

Brainerd manifested an orthodox theology of evangelical humiliation. It was founded upon a sober understanding of a human frailty and comparative insignificance (Gen 3:19; Ps 8:4; Eccl 6:10)[55] and a realistic grasp of a Christian as still possessing a sin nature (1 John 1:8, 10).[56] Brainerd manifested an orthodox view of salvation by grace through repentant faith—in which all boasting is entirely excluded (Rom 3:27; 1 Cor 1:30–31; Eph 2:8–9) and in which repentant faith perseveres throughout the Christian life (Col 2:6–7; 1 John 1:9; Ps 51; Rev 2–3).[57] He manifested an orthodox view of

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137), that he did not fear future punishment, and that he was not afraid of death (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 144, 283, 415, 430, 492, 438). Brainerd was persuaded that God would soon deliver him from indwelling sin (166), that "nothing shall ever separate the soul from the love of God in Christ Jesus" (480), "that God alone is 'the author *and finisher* of our faith'" (236, italics mine), and that his confidence before God was the imputed righteousness of Christ (465). What many analysts label as *doubt* would more accurately be termed *modesty* or *carefulness not to be presumptuous*.

[55] Iain Provan, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 130–31. Provan highlights how Ecclesiastes 6:10 alludes to Genesis 1–3. He writes,

> Verse 10 reminds us of our true nature as human beings. Everything that exists has already been "named" in accordance with its true character (e.g., Genesis 2:19–20). This includes "man" (*adam*), who comes from the "dust" (*adama*, Gen. 2:7) and will return to the dust (Eccl. 12:7). Human beings prefer to make a name for themselves (Gen. 11:4); but in fact they already possess one, and it is a name that signifies weakness ("dust") in the face of the almighty Creator.

[56] George J. C. Marchant, "Humility," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 274. "Before God, man is humbled as creature (Gen. 18:27) and sinner (Luke 18:9–14) having nothing to boast in (Rom. 7:18; Gal. 6:3)." See also C. J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2005), 22. "Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness." Further, see John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 84. Stott observes regarding the specific statements in 1 John 1: "To say that we have not sinned is neither just to tell a deliberate lie (6), nor to be deluded (8), but actually to accuse God of lying. . . . This is because his word frequently declares that sin is universal (e.g. 1 Ki. 8:46; Ps. 14:3; Ec. 7:20; Is. 53:6; 64:6), and the word of the gospel, which is a gospel of salvation, clearly assumes the sinfulness of man."

[57] "Just as faith is not only a momentary act but an abiding attitude of trust and confidence directed to the Saviour, so repentance results in constant contrition. The

sanctification that involves diligent spiritual warfare against one's sin nature (Rom 8:12–14; 13:11–14)[58] and of glorification that would not take occur until Jesus is seen (Phil 3:12–21;[59] 2 Cor 5:2; Heb 12:23; 1 John 3:2). Further, his burden to watchful self-

broken spirit and the contrite heart are abiding marks of the believing soul" (Murray, *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied*, 116). See also Mark J. Boda, *Return to Me: A Biblical Theology of Repentance*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 192–94. Boda demonstrates that repentance is a key theme in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament books of Deuteronomy (43, 46), Isaiah (71–72, 76), and 1–2 Chronicles (137), as well as in the New Testament books of Luke-Acts (163–68) and Revelation (178–80). Boda demonstrates that in every section of the Bible repentance is understood to be a change of relationship with God that is marked by inner transformation, usually accompanied by prayer, usually encouraged by a God-ordained leader, always demonstrated in lasting behavioral change, motivated by God's threats of judgments and promises of blessing, practiced by both individuals and the believing community, and ultimately enabled by God (58, 77, 92f, 107, 120–22, 132; see especially the climactic summaries in chapters 11 and 13). Boda teaches that Ezekiel highlights the place of "humiliation" and "loathing" in repentance (93) and that the New Testament repeatedly emphasizes the agony of heart that accompanies repentance (188). Further, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 717. Grudem writes,

> Although it is true that *initial* saving faith and *initial* repentance occur only once in our lives, and when they occur they constitute true conversion, nonetheless, the heart attitudes of repentance and faith only begin at conversion. These same attitudes should continue throughout the course of our Christian lives. Each day there should be heartfelt repentance for sins that we have committed, and faith in Christ to provide for our needs and to empower us to live the Christian life.

[58] See Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 498–99.

[59] See Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 345. For a more pastoral comment, see D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 89–90. "Those who are most saintly are invariably most deeply aware of how sinful they are and of how odious sin is to God." Finally, see J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1967, 2007), 73; Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace: God's Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 43. Bridges further develops Paul's example from three other texts:

> [Paul] not only referred to himself as the least of the apostles, not even deserving to be called an apostle, but he considered himself less than the least of all God's people (1 Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8). And toward the end of his life he referred to himself as the worst of sinners and as a monument to the unlimited patience of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:15–16). If ever there was a person who excelled in the disciplines of the Christian life, in obedience, and in sacrificial service, surely it was Paul. Yet he viewed himself . . . as [a sinner] deeply in need of the grace and mercy of God.

examination was biblical (Prov 4:23; Matt 26:21;[60] 1 Cor 10:11; 1 Tim 4:16; 1 Pet 5:8), and his use of a journal was in keeping with biblical precedent, though not mandated by the Scriptures.[61] Yet, Brainerd's theology and practice of humiliation, though orthodox on the whole, were imbalanced in two interlocking ways.

Brainerd's Self-Examination Emphasized Humanity's Fallenness but Minimized Humanity's Value

When he thought of himself as a man, Brainerd referred to himself about forty times as "unworthy" and five times as "worthless." He frequently expressed the desire to be "nothing,"[62] and his future hope regularly expressed (what Randy Alcorn terms)

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[60] R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 373. France explains Jesus's command that his disciples watch:

> *Watch* means simply "keep awake", and that is certainly its primary sense here [in Matt 26:41]. . . . But we have seen the same word watch used metaphorically in 24:42–43; 25:13, and no doubt expects the exhortation of v. 41 to be applied beyond the problem of inability to keep awake in this unique crisis. The weakness of *the flesh* is a permanent problem for Christian discipleship, which calls for constant vigilance.

[61] Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 195. Whitney commends a private journal as "one of the best places for charting your progress in the other Spiritual Disciplines and for holding yourself accountable to your goals" (195), and he lifts up the journaling example of David Brainerd (199–200). See also David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 128.

[62] Several times Brainerd expresses his desire to be "swallowed up" or "dissolved," his view of himself as "dust and ashes," and "how "sweet [he found it] to be nothing," "having no will or interest of my own" (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 169, 189, 339, see also 407, 417). This view seems to border on a misunderstanding of biblical self-denial that J. I. Packer was tempted to embrace in early adulthood. See his explanation in J. I. Packer, introduction to *Sin and Temptation: The Challenge to Personal Godliness* by John Owen, ed. James M. Houston (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1983), xxvi–xxvii. Packer writes,

> When Jesus called for self-denial, He meant the negating of carnal self—that is to say self-will, self-assertion, the Adamic syndrome, the sinful, egocentric behavior-pattern which one has been developing from birth, the recurring irrational impulse to do anything rather than obey God and embrace what one knows to be right. But what I seemed to hear . . . was a summons to deny personal self.

Christoplatonism.[63] Rather than anticipating a glorified and immortal human body, Brainerd often longed to "leave off the body" and to enter the "world of spirits" where he would be made "like the angels."[64] These features of Brainerd's humiliation reveal that his sense of identity was "incomplete" and needed "balance."[65] He seemed to lack a sense that he was a part of God's originally good creation (Gen 1:26–31); that God's creation, though fallen, still reveals God's glory, goodness, and praiseworthy care (Pss 19, 104, 145); and that he was a valuable image-bearer who was "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps 139:14; see also Gen 9:6; Matt 6:25–29).[66] So, while he was right to long for

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[63] Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004), 475–82; see also 79. According to Alcorn, Christoplatonism describes the Christian version of Plato's erroneous thinking that "the spirit's highest destiny is to be forever free from the body"—that the physical world, including our bodies and the natural creation, are realities "from which we must be delivered." Alcorn writes,

> Because of Christoplatonism's pervasive influence, we resist the biblical picture of bodily resurrection of the dead and life on the New Earth; of eating and drinking in Heaven; of walking and talking, living in dwelling places, traveling down streets, and going through gates from one place to another; and of ruling, working, playing, and engaging in earthly culture. . . . Many Christians imagine they will live forever in a disembodied existence in an immaterial realm.

[64] Brainerd frequently expresses his desire to be like angels (Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 488, 234, 239, 270–71, 303, 463, 475). Only one time does he add to this longing for "the society of angels" the "spirits of just men made perfect" (358). He often refers to heaven as the "immaterial world of spirits" (183, 191, 193, 217, 486), and once he expresses: "Oh, that I were spirit, that I might be active for God! . . . God deliver me from clogs, fetters, and a 'body of death,' that impede my service for him" (379). Readers, however, must recall that, for most of his adult life, Brainerd was physically ill.

[65] I am indebted to David Murray for these categories of incomplete and imbalanced self-identity. David Murray, *Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2017), 112–13, 116–17.

[66] Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, in vol. 5 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 838. VanGemeren explains Ps 139:14:

> God is concerned with the individuals whom he has formed for his purpose. Therefore praise is the proper response to God's grace. . . . The child of God sees God's presence everywhere (vv. 7–12) and experiences the joy of God's watchful eye over him. All of God's works are wonderful, but the believer senses more than any other part of God's creation that he is "fearfully and wonderfully made."

Although Brainerd was imbalanced in his view of his own human value, he did not despise the value of other humans. Certainly, Brainerd's cross-cultural evangelistic efforts reveal that he considered human life to be valuable—more so than many in his day.

perfect humility, he was wrong to desire to be "nothing." While he rightly craved release from his weak body, his future hope seemed to emphasize a less human existence. And, while he was right to view himself as unworthy, he was wrong to view himself as worthless.[67] Despite this imbalance in his view of his own humanity, the evangelical church today can benefit from Brainerd's (over)emphasis on the reality of humanity's fallenness.[68]

Brainerd's Self-Examination Focused More on His Remaining Sinful Nature Than on His Dominant New Nature

Understanding his indwelling sin, Brainerd frequently referred to his vileness, and he was right to do so. But he less frequently spoke of his new nature in union with Christ, which also would have been right. He focused on his vileness much more than he focused on his privileged status as a forgiven sinner, as a treasured saint, as a loved child of God, and as an elect heir of the kingdom.[69] It certainly goes too far to suggest that

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[67] I am indebted to Hoekema for this distinction. Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 99, 104–5. See also Jared Mellinger, *Think Again: Relief from the Burden of Introspection* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2017), 22–23

[68] Two of today's most popular professing evangelical leaders avoid or minimize teaching on humanity's sinfulness. See "The Positivity of Joel Osteen," *CBS News*, March 27, 2016, accessed August 1, 2018, http://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-positivity-of-joel-osteen/; Robert H. Schuller, *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982). For a brief, fair critique of Schuller, see Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 106.

[69] Again, see Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 108–11. Hoekema helpfully teaches,

> On the basis of God's redemptive work . . . a believer's self-image ought to be positive, not negative. . . . Christians should look upon themselves not as being partly in the flesh and partly in the Spirit but as being in the Spirit and as having been delivered from the tyranny of enslavement to the flesh. . . . To those who are in Christ Paul says [in 2 Cor 5:17], You are new creatures now! Not *totally* new, to be sure but *genuinely* new. And we who are believers should see ourselves in this way: no longer as depraved and helpless slaves of sin, but as those who have been created anew in Christ Jesus. . . . All this implies that the Christian believer may have—and should have—a self-image that is primarily positive. Such a positive self-image does not mean "feeling good about ourselves" on the basis of our own achievements

Brainerd did not focus on God's love and grace, for he often describes himself "under a sense of divine love and grace."[70] Yet gracious critics seem to be accurate in their assessment that Brainerd manifested "less frequent reference to Christ . . . than we think scriptural."[71] Biographer John Styles remarked that Brainerd had an accurate sense of his sinfulness: "The remarkable views which [Brainerd] had of the dreadful nature of sin, and of his own deep depravity, produced those sensations of horror and self-loathing, the expressions of which no pious mind can read without a kindred feeling."[72] But, after acknowledging Brainerd's godly abhorrence of his sinful nature, Styles gently critiques:

> But it will be asked, was there no balm for this wound? Yes, . . . there was a Physician who was able to bind up the broken heart. But Brainerd's soul was not so oppressed with a sense of the infinite sufficiency of the remedy as of the desperate nature of the disease. . . . We dishonor the Savior, when we make our depravity greater than his merit and sufficiency; when we are more mortified at the discovery of unexpected sinfulness in our nature, than rejoiced at the thought, that his precious blood cleanseth from all sin.[73]

Brainerd evidenced not an unorthodox self-esteem but an imbalanced one.[74] He seemed to seek the experience of contrition without always moving toward confession,

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> or virtuous behavior. This would be sinful pride. The Christian self-image means looking at ourselves in the light of God's gracious work. . . . This Christian self-image, when properly understood, is the opposite of spiritual pride. It goes hand in hand with a deep conviction of sin and a recognition that we are still far from what we ought to be. It means glorying not in self but in Christ.

[70] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 170; see also 147–49, 150, 169, 230, 239, 271, 443, 444.

[71] Horatius Bonar, preface to *The Life of David Brainerd: Missionary to the Indians,* by Jonathan Edwards (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1858), xiii.

[72] John Styles, *The Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1812), 49–50.

[73] Styles, *The Life of David Brainerd*, 50–51.

[74] Joanna McGrath and Alister McGrath, *Self-Esteem: The Cross and Christian Confidence,* rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002). The McGraths observe that self-esteem consists of global evaluation or judgment about personal acceptability and worthiness to be loved, which carries with it pleasant or unpleasant feelings." They point out that such judgments are "strongly related to the perceived views of the person by important others in his or her life" (36). The dominant point that the authors make in the second half of the book is that a Christian's self-esteem must be dominated by the value

repentance, and the seeking of forgiveness.[75] He seemed to regularly focus on Paul's exclamation, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24), without following it up with an exclamation of confidence: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (7:25).[76] He seemed to express Paul's humbling

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judgment that God makes of her or him. "It is about the way we are viewed by that most significant of all others—God" (104). So, accurate self-esteem is not only rooted in what Christians are as sinful humans (78–85, 106–07), but also in what God has done and will do for Christians. As the McGraths write, "Present self-esteem rests upon God's past acts of redemption and His promise of future transformation. . . . We shall finally be with Christ and like Christ. And in the light of that knowledge, we may value ourselves positively in the present" (136).

[75] Jared Mellinger quotes John Stott: "There is nothing morbid about confession of sins, so long as we go on to give thanks for forgiveness of sins. It is fine to look inwards, so long as it leads us immediately to look outwards and upwards again" (Mellinger, *Think Again*, 111). See also J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 117–18. Jesus commands his followers to pray daily in secret for forgiveness of sins (Matt 6:12). James counsels those under his care to "be wretched and mourn and weep" in order to be cleansed, purified, and exalted (Jas 4:8–10). See Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle of James: An Introduction and Commentary,* The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 149–50. Further, John urges believers who sin to confess their sins with the expectation of forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:8–10), and the apostle Paul instructs believers who are under the conviction of sin to make sure that their grief does not end in sorrow but in repentance (2 Cor 7:8–11). In other words, grief over personal sinfulness is not an end in Christian experience but a means to an end. Yet, Brainerd's descriptions of his grief over his sinfulness only occasionally refer to consequent confession and repentance, with a sense of cleansing and forgiveness. More frequently, he admits that his grief drives him to dependence, but, even so, the majority of his references to grief over sin do not seem to explicitly reveal that he considered it to be a means to an end.

[76] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 390–91. Schreiner explains,

> It would be a mistake to read the whole of Christian experience from this account [in chapter 7], for, as chapter 8 shows, believers by the power of the Spirit are enabled to keep God's law. And yet since believers have not yet experienced the consummation of their redemption, they are keenly aware of their inability to keep God's law. When believers contemplate their own capacities, it is clear that they do not have the resources to do what God demands. In encountering God's demands, we are still conscious of our wretchedness and inherent inability. The struggle with sin continues for believers because we live in the tension between the already and the not yet. . . . Complete deliverance from sin is not available for Christians until the day of redemption. . . . We should not conclude, however, that believers are utterly helpless under the power of sin, for this would leave out Rom. 6 and 8. All believers are frustrated by their failure to keep God's law and long for the day when redemption will be completed and perfection will be theirs. The future tense of [deliver] in Rom. 7:24 indicates that rescue from sin will be completed only on the

question, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor 2:16) without also adding Paul's humble confidence: "Our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant" (3:4–6).[77]

Charles Spurgeon, who could only "blush" with embarrassment when reading Brainerd's remarkable example,[78] noted to his students that this balance for accurate self-assessment is difficult for any believer, including a church leader, to strike:

> We need to know ourselves. . . . There are two schools of experience, and neither is content to learn from the other; let us be content, however, to learn from both. The one school speaks of the child of God as one who knows the deep depravity of his heart, who understands the loathsomeness of his nature, and daily feels that in his flesh there dwelleth no good thing. "That man has not the life of God in his soul," say they, "who does not know and feel this, and feel it by bitter and painful experience from day to day." . . . Let us learn from these one-sided brethren. . . . There is truth on that side of the question. Another school of believers dwell much upon the glorious work of the Spirit of God, and rightly and blessedly so. They believe in the Spirit of God as a cleansing power . . . but frequently they talk as if they had ceased to sin, or to be annoyed by temptation; they glory as if the battle were already fought, and the victory won. Let us learn from these brethren. All the truth they can teach us let us know. Let us become familiar with the hill-tops, and the glory that shines thereon . . . where we may be transfigured with our Lord. Do not be afraid of becoming too holy. . . . I would have you wise on all sides, and able to deal with man both in his conflicts and in his joys, as one familiar with both. Know where Adam left you; know where the Spirit of God has placed you. Do not know either of these so exclusively as to forget the other. . . . Brethren, know man in Christ, and out of Christ. Study him at his best, and study him at his worst.[79]

> last day (cf. 8:23), but it would be a mistake to conclude from this that deliverance at the last day only is contemplated. The genius of Paul's eschatology is that the future has invaded the present. Thus the certainty that believers will conquer death has implications for the present. . . . I agree with those who detect a future deliverance from sin in 7:24, but this should not exclude present victory as well.

[77] Scott J. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 112.

[78] C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), 1:48.

[79] Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 2:33–34. See also Andrew A Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), 279. Spurgeon's counsel was somewhat similar to M'Cheyne's famous words of counsel: "Do not take up your time so much with studying your own heart as with studying *Christ's heart*. 'For every look at self, take ten looks at Christ.'" This M'Cheyne quotation comes from a personal letter dated March 20, 1840. It must be observed that, earlier in his diary, M'Cheyne himself wanted to emulate Brainerd's self-loathing. Here are two brief diary entries from 1832: "June 27.—Life of David Brainerd.

Although Brainerd's humiliation was imbalanced toward negative considerations, it seems that many evangelicals live in regular unawareness of their indwelling corruption and of their proudly independent spirit[80] and, therefore, could learn much from his sober self-assessment.[81] Further, Brainerd's genuine (albeit imbalanced) experience of humiliation produced in him a remarkable strength: He treated the Indians with greater equality and less prejudice in a way that was counter-cultural even among Christian

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Most wonderful man! What conflicts, what depressions, desertions, strength, advancement, victories, within thy torn bosom! I cannot express what I think when I think of thee. To-night, more set upon missionary enterprise than ever. June 28.—Oh for Brainerd's humility and self-loathing dispositions!" (18).

[80] See John Dickson, *Humilitas: A Lost Key to Life, Love, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 183.

[81] Donald S. Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 104. Whitney observes that

> excessive introspection is itself a sinful possibility. But the spirit of the age certainly doesn't incline us to go to extremes in brooding over our sin. Even at church, religious entertainment characterizes more "worship" services than conviction of sin. Sermons are much more likely to be described as upbeat than heart-searching. Guffaws are far more common in church than tears, whether tears of joy *or* of repentance.

See also Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 216–17, 331. Packer writes, "It seems undeniable that the Puritans' passion for spiritual integrity and moral honesty before God, their fear of hypocrisy . . . and the humble self-distrust that led them to constantly check whether they had gone cold towards God, *has no counterpart in the modern-day evangelical ethos*" (italics original). Finally, see John Charles Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (Moscow, ID: Charles Nolan Publishers, 2001), 63–64, 68. Ryle writes, "True Christianity is 'a fight. . . . If [a Christian] had a nature like an angel, and were not a fallen creature, the warfare would not be so essential. But with a corrupt heart, a busy devil, and an ensnaring world, he must either 'fight' or be lost." Ryle later teaches that this

> is a fight of perpetual necessity. It admits of no breathing time, no armistice, no truce. On weekdays as well as on Sundays, in private as well as in public, at home by the family fireside as well as abroad, in little things like the management of tongue and temper, as well as in great ones like the government of kingdoms—the Christian's warfare must unceasingly go on. . . . The worst chains are those which are neither felt nor seen by the prisoner.

leaders in his day.[82] The experience of true humility compels a Christian to honor all men.[83]

Conclusion

Reading in the classics of historic evangelical spirituality should be an experience that is both encouraging and challenging for contemporary evangelical Christians. Unfortunately, however, "evangelicalism has too often become blind to its own heritage."[84] One rich historic source of evangelical spirituality is Edwards's *The Life of David Brainerd*, "the first biography printed in America to gain international recognition and the first full missionary biography ever to be published."[85] Brainerd understood conversion to involve a life-changing perception of the glory of Christ. He understood the essence of authentic spirituality to be unselfish love for God and others, always concerned about spiritual adultery in the form of love for the world. And he sought daily experiences of humiliation over his soon-to-be-eradicated sinfulness. Brainerd's understanding of spirituality, albeit imperfect, is both sharpening and enriching.

There is immense value in seeing how imperfect but authentic Christians throughout history have lived out their faith. In Jerry Sittser's words, studying the history of Christian spirituality will

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[82] His remarkable lack of prejudice is recognized by several historians, even though he still manifested an approach to missions that demonstrated cultural imperialism. See, for example, John Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of An Evangelical Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 87, 118–19, 189; see also Walls, "Missions and Historical Memory," 258.

[83] Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, vol. 2 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 338–39.

[84] Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 126, 137.

[85] Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 307.

> show us that there is more to the Christian faith than what we think and have experienced. It will teach us truths that our contemporary religious blind spots prevent us from seeing, challenge us to read scripture with new eyes, beckon us to practice spiritual disciplines we never tried before, and enable us to view our own time and place from a fresh perspective.[86]

Studying David Brainerd should encourage evangelical Christians who labor patiently for the genuine conversion of others, who seek to live every facet of life with single-minded devotion to God, and who continually grieve over the sin that remains within their own hearts. On the other hand, studying Brainerd should challenge evangelical Christians who tend to be either not careful or not diligent in evangelism, who tend to enjoy life day to day with little conscious thought of God, who tend to relate to God only when they have a need, and who tend to resist any thoughts that are not self-affirming. Of course, being like Brainerd should be no one's goal. If done in the classic evangelical manner (i.e., using the Scripture as one's ultimate authority), studying Brainerd should lead evangelical Christians to a more biblical spirituality, which, in the words of Brainerd, means living day to day with "a hearty desire to exalt [the Lord], to set him on the throne and to 'seek first his Kingdom.'"[87]

[86] Gerald L. Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 18–19.

[87] Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, 139.

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ABSTRACT

THE SPIRITUALITY OF DAVID BRAINERD:
A SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE

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Jonathan Edwards published the diaries of David Brainerd with the primary goal of promoting Brainerd's spirituality. Although Edwards's publication of *The Life of David Brainerd* is his most popular work, Brainerd's view of spirituality has received little critical attention from scholars. This study provides a theological critique of three central facets of David Brainerd's spirituality. First, it examines Brainerd's view of conversion as the beginning point of spirituality and concludes that, although his view of conversion was solidly reformed and evangelical, it tended to be passive and formulaic. Second, this study summarizes Brainerd's view of love as the essence of spirituality. While Brainerd's view of unselfish love for God that expels love for the world is orthodox, Brainerd's articulation of the motivations of love tended to be reductionistic, and his approach toward God's earthly gifts tended to be ascetic. Third, this thesis examines Brainerd's view of evangelical humiliation as the daily experience of spirituality. While his understanding of the need for humiliation was rooted in the biblical truths of human frailty and remaining sin, it tended to emphasize these truths without complementary biblical emphases on humanity's value and the Christian's new nature in Christ. Yet, despite his weaknesses, Brainerd's strong concern for genuine conversion, warning about selfishness in religion, and focus on humiliation are much needed emphases in contemporary evangelical spirituality.

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