

## Notebooks

As collections of entries on various subjects quickly multiplied, these all needed to be bound so as to keep the pages together and in order. In his youth, Edwards compiled manuscripts, such as his diary, on loose sheets. But on January 14, 1722/3, more than a year after starting the diary, he decided it was time to bind them: "About ten o'clock in the morning, made this book, and put these papers in it."<sup>1</sup> This was before he was married, and while it has been assumed that, once he was wed, Edwards's wife (and later his daughters) did this task, all evidence points to Edwards doing his own stitching—though the thread he used was most likely spun by the females of the house.<sup>2</sup>

As with the production of writing supplies, notebook construction was for Edwards a homegrown, handmade process. Although by the mid-eighteenth century bound ledgers and other sorts of blank books were becoming available for purchase, Edwards seems to have preferred to construct his own, not only to save expense but because it allowed for flexibility of size and arrangement. Edwards's method, as was common for the time, was stab sewing, in which a needle and thread would be drawn through the assembled pages at the margin, usually in three to five holes, depending on the size of the paper, and knotted at an end hole. Sometimes, perhaps because the sheets were not bound tightly enough or the first stitching had become loose, he added a new set of stitches through different holes. He ran the thread through the holes, connecting them, so that the thread paralleled the left edge of the paper, several millimeters from that edge.

Edwards also fabricated covers for his notebooks, often from pieces of the rugged, coarse brown wrappers in which reams of paper were sold. For ease of reference, he wrote the name of the notebook on the cover several times, back and front, and in two directions, so that no matter which way the notebook was lying on the table or in the drawer, he could know what it was at a glance. This minimized the problem of accidentally writing entries in one notebook that were meant for another, which happened on occasion, particularly as his notebooks multiplied. More eccentrically, or experimentally, he used whatever came to hand. The cover of the first volume of "Notes on Scripture" is made from a piece of oilcloth that, Stephen J. Stein conjectures, was probably originally used to wrap imported twilled fabric.<sup>3</sup> And "History of Redemption," book 1, is wrapped in a piece of wallpaper, perhaps a fragment from the lot with which one of the rooms of Edwards's house was decorated.

Sometimes, to stiffen a cover, Edwards pasted a piece of paper to the inside. To cite just one instance, he glued to the front inside cover of the "Faith" notebook a portion of a copy of the printed elegy for George Whitefield's publicist, William Seward, who died in October 1740.<sup>4</sup> Edwards began "Faith" in early 1728 but did not make the sheets into a book until at least twelve years later. This demonstrates his habit of stitching and covering pages of notes only after having collected a substantial

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<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16, *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn (New Haven, Conn., 1998), 764.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Jane Greenfield, "Notable Bindings 8," *Yale University Library Gazette* 68, nos. 1–2 (October 1993): 71–73, which examines the construction of "Efficacious Grace," bk. 2.

<sup>3</sup> For an example of a misplaced entry, see "Long Series," no. 49, in "Things To Be Considered an[d] Written Fully About," which was originally mistakenly written after "Short Series," no. 24. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 6, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven, Conn., 1980), 225, 246. On the cover of "Notes on Scriptures," bk. 1, see *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 15, *Notes on Scripture*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New Haven, Conn., 1998), 36, 36 n. 4. "History of Redemption," bk. 1, is in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online (WJEO)*, vol. 31, <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse>.

<sup>4</sup> "Faith" in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 21, *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee (New Haven, Conn., 2003), 414–68, esp. 415. The other part of the broadside is glued to the inside back cover of Edwards's Hebrew and Greek Bible, in Special Collections, Firestone Library, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.

amount of material, enough to make it worthwhile to go through the labor, and after having judged the accumulated entries worth keeping, or worth keeping together.

As time went on, he became proficient at constructing his notebooks to the point that he could be quite exact in his preferences. In the cover of the second of the four volumes of “Notes on Scripture,” he wrote this memorandum: “If I live to make another book of this sort, to observe to cut the gashes for the stitching in deeper and not so near to the joinings of the stitch, that the book may open more freely and fully. And let the sheets be divided into twice so small divisions, and starch no paper in a paper cover, for that makes it crack. And if that don't do, try next stitching the backs of all the divisions of sheets to a slip of leather, and sew the cover over the leather.”<sup>5</sup> The second volume of “Notes on Scripture” is fairly typical for thickness among Edwards’s collection of notebooks, totaling ninety-eight leaves. Early in his life, Edwards had used single sheets or folded leaves, consecutively stacked, to compose notebooks. As he became more proficient at creating notebooks and had more paper available, he would take a pile of folio sheets—in the case of the second book of “Notes on Scripture,” forty-nine of them—and would fold the whole thing in half, creating what is called an infolded quire. This was an efficient way to construct a notebook because he could put his stitches through the fold. However, when he wanted to gather together several small infolded quires, the only way to make the stitch holes through the entire stack was with a knife or awl. When he cut the “gashes” for the holes, therefore, he wanted to go “deeper,” or farther away from the left, or fold, of the pages. This was apparently one solution to prevent the stitch holes from being torn through to the edge of the page and yet still allow for the pages to open easily. Another way, as he describes in his memorandum, was to take a strip of leather and attach it to the separate folds, thereby creating a spine of sorts under the cover. None of Edwards’s extant notebooks after “Notes on Scripture,” book 2, utilizes starch or a slip of leather, but this comment demonstrates the extent to which he was concerned about the workability of his manuscript corpus.

Edwards’s handwriting, as almost everyone’s does, evolved over time—and for the worse. Regardless of the period, in his manuscripts we can distinguish a “private” versus a “public” hand. The private hand was the one he used for temporary notes, memorandums, drafts of letters, and nearly all of his sermons, which only he would have to use, and often only for a short time. He took little care with documents that fall in this category, resulting in some autographs that are very difficult to decipher indeed because they are hastily written and full of deletions, interlineations, relocations, and outlined passages. Edwards reserved his public hand, as the name implies, primarily for documents that would be read by others, including sent letters and fair copies of sermons and essays to be published.<sup>6</sup> However, even when Edwards was on his best calligraphic behavior, his writing was, to put it kindly, a real challenge for his readers. Isaac Watts, trying to justify the errors in the 1737 London imprint of *A Faithful Narrative of a Surprising Work of God*, complained of the size of Edwards’s hand in his

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<sup>5</sup> *Works*, 15: 40.

<sup>6</sup> For samples of Edwards’s orthography, see “Appendix C: The Evolution of Edwards’ Early Handwriting,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, *The “Miscellanies,”* (Entry Nos. a–z, aa–zz, 1–500), ed. Thomas A. Schafer (New Haven, Conn., 1994), 562–65, esp. 13: 562–64, which shows obvious changes even from 1720 to 1731. Edwards usually sent a fair copy to the printer and retained a penultimate draft, replete with deletions, insertions, and dislocations, for himself. See for example the manuscripts of “Rom. 4:5 [Justification by Faith Alone]” (no. 343), in *WJEO*, vol. 49; “Preface to *Farewell Sermon*,” in *WJEO* vol. 38; and “*Misrepresentations Corrected*” Draft, *WJEO*, vol. 33, the latter of which is the most complete draft of a treatise by Edwards to survive. A rare example of a fair copy that found its way back to Edwards is the fragment from the treatise *Original Sin* (*WJEO*, vol. 34) preserving the original version of pt. 1, chap. 1, sec. 8, and the latter part of pt. 2, chap. 4, sec. 1, to the conclusion of the treatise. The first piece contains marginalia by the printer: “on page 46, in the left margin, appears a notation in a different hand, ‘p. 81G,’ that refers to the corresponding place in the printed text” of Samuel Kneeland’s first edition of 1758 (Headnote to “Fragment II,” *ibid.*).

manuscript version, in which Edwards squeezed into just eight sheets of paper a text that amounted to 132 printed octavo pages. “Mr Edward’s Narrative,” Watts opined, “was written in so small a hand and so hard to be read, that if a word or two was mistaken by the printer or by us, I do not wonder at it; for I am sure I was forced to gness at several words in it.”<sup>7</sup> As time went on, his handwriting became larger and more spread out, perhaps reflecting his need for spectacles as he aged, and he rendered key subject words and phrases in capital letters, the easier to locate passages on particular topics. Yet, however carefully he may have tried to write documents intended for other eyes, his cursive script was apparently always a challenge to all but longtime correspondents. A 1752 letter by Edwards, written to Joseph Paice, a prominent English merchant and director of the South Sea Company, was relayed by the recipient to Thomas Secker, the archbishop of Canterbury, because of information it contained relating to the education of Indian children. But before he sent it on, Paice copied the lengthy epistle, saying in a cover letter to the archbishop, “I would have sent the original, but it is wrote in a hand hardly Legible.”<sup>8</sup> Anyone who has tried to read Edwards’s manuscripts, even those in his best handwriting, can relate to Paice’s lament.

The distinction of public and private hands extends to the different sorts of notebooks Edwards kept. Those that he planned to retain—the prime example being the “Miscellanies”—were, by and large, written in something approaching a public hand, though with abbreviations, symbols, and other features that would not be found in a document for public consumption. Edwards’s notebooks fell into several distinct types. The “Miscellanies,” along with other notebooks he worked on through all or most of his career, such as “Notes on Scripture,” the “Blank Bible,” and “Faith,” are known as substantive notebooks because in these he recorded and developed his ideas. A second major kind is the “regulatory” notebook, which is devoted to schedules or lists regulating or planning Edwards’s literary life. For the purposes of his study practices, the “Catalogue’ of Reading” is a good example. Another is “Subjects of Inquiry,” a late assortment of memorandums outlining projects and study aims. Edwards also employed project-related notebooks, collections of materials that he assembled for short-term use. It was his practice, when drafting a major treatise, to construct a series of working notebooks to which he committed references, transitions, reminders, even potential chapter titles. Two extant examples of this practice are “Affections,” book 7, for *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* of 1746, and “Sacrament,” book 1, compiled for the writing of *An Humble Inquiry* of 1749.<sup>9</sup> From internal references, we know that

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<sup>7</sup> Isaac Watts to Benjamin Colman, May 31, 1738, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2d ser., 9 (February 1895): 359–62 (quotation, 360).

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Paice to Thomas Secker, July 18, 1752, Lambeth 1123, no. 61, Lambeth Palace Library, London; for Edwards’s letter, see Edwards to Paice, Feb. 24, 1751/2, in *Works*, 16: 434–47.

<sup>9</sup> *Works*, vol. 15; *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 24, *The “Blank Bible,” Part 1 and Part 2*, ed. Stein (New Haven, Conn., 2006); *Works*, vol. 21. Ava Chamberlain suggests that Edwards may have made his “Miscellanies” available to his students as part of their training: *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 18, *The “Miscellanies,” (Entry Nos. 501–832)*, ed. Chamberlain (New Haven, Conn., 2000), 9–10. The notebook kept by Joseph Bellamy in 1736, while a student of Edwards, has certain parallels to contemporary “Miscellanies” entries; see MS, Special Collections, Yale Divinity School. On the pedagogical aspects of note taking as opposed to memorization in early modern Europe, see Ann M. Blair, *Too much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, Conn., 2010), chap. 2; Kenneth P. Minkema, “Jonathan Edwards on Education and His Educational Legacy,” in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (Oxford, 2012), 31–50. On “scribal publication,” see Hall, *Ways of Writing: The Practice and Politics of Text-Making in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Philadelphia, 2008), 29–80. On substantive versus regulatory notebooks, see *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 10, *Sermons and Discourses, 1720–1723*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach (New Haven, Conn., 1992), 43, 52–74. “Subjects of Inquiry” appears in *WJEO*, vol. 28. Some notebooks fall somewhere between the substantive and regulatory. The “*Controversies*” Notebook, *WJEO*, vol. 27, for example, was a joining of previously discrete pieces, written from the 1730s to the 1750s, on various subjects, bound together and given a table of contents by Edwards as if they constituted a

in the former series there were at least nine books, and in the latter at least four. These two survive because there were still some scattered passages that Edwards had not used and thought worth saving.

Paper was expensive, so Edwards did what he could to recycle and salvage paper that came into his study and household: prayer bids from his congregation, marriage banns from the town clerk, letter covers from his correspondents, children's writing exercises, bills and receipts, and other scraps are found throughout his manuscript sermons and notebooks—a bonanza for social historians. One unusual notebook is a prime example of Edwards's frugality. The "Book of Minutes on the Arminian Controversy" is made from issues of the *Daily Gazetteer*, a London newspaper. He made the notebook by cutting the sheets, then folding and stitching them so that the margins of the pages were outermost. Into these margins, though they offered no more than two inches of blank space, he committed his thoughts. Late in life, Edwards came into possession of what was apparently a sparsely written, seventeenth-century theological commonplace book, on ruled octavo pages, which he cut up and used for sermons and notebooks (including the last book of the "Miscellanies"), crossing out the entries by the previous owner and turning the pages upside down.<sup>10</sup> This recycling of paper illustrates a common practice of the time; another related habit for some writers was to take received letters and draft their own correspondence or notes perpendicularly over the original.

Most curiously, in later years, especially after the early 1740s, Edwards began to use pieces of rice paper as thin as tracing paper. The scraps of this paper that he salvaged are oddly shaped, often with edges cut unevenly, so that notebooks made from this paper, such as the three on "Efficacious Grace," have a "butterfly effect" when laid open on the table. Here and there a piece retains a stroke of watercolor or a bit of an ink drawing. These pieces of paper were the leftovers from the patterns that Edwards's wife, Sarah Pierpont Edwards, and their daughters used to make fans, both for their own use and, legend has it, to sell in local shops for extra income.<sup>11</sup> Edwards incorporated these most systematically into his sermon booklets after 1742, using pieces of foolscap in front and back to protect the delicate pages within.

The two large drawers in the desk were ample enough for several paperbound folios and quartos, while cubbyholes in the upper desk would have been convenient for frequently used octavos. Storage would not have been a great problem during the 1730s and the even busier 1740s, but as Edwards consulted his growing number of specialized notebooks and his increasing library of printed books in his various intellectual quests, the desk and any supplementary writing surfaces must have been consistently cluttered. The many cross-references in his notebooks to sermons and to other notebooks (frequently added upon later review of the notes and essays) suggest the inevitable circularity of Edwards's movements among his related notebook speculations and secondary sources.<sup>12</sup>

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polemical agenda. On the material evidence of Edwards's creative process as represented in working notebooks, see Kimmach, "Jonathan Edwards' Sermon Mill," *Early American Literature* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1975): 167–78; *Works*, 10: 42–90. "Affections Notebook 'No. 7'" is in *WJEO*, vol. 37; "Sacrament Book 1" is in *WJEO*, vol. 38.

<sup>10</sup> The "Book of Minutes on the Arminian Controversy" is in *WJEO*, vol. 37. See also Edwards's "Original Sin" Notebook, *WJEO*, vol. 34, made from a copy of Antoine Arnauld's *De la Frequent Communion . . .* (Lyon, France, 1739). He removed the cover, then turned the book upside down before writing in the blank margins around the text. Edwards did not read French, and thus the book was useless to him.

<sup>11</sup> "Efficacious Grace," bks. 1–3, in *WJEO*, vol. 21. See also Greenfield, "Notable Bindings 8," *Yale University Library Gazette* 68: 70–73, esp. 71. In July 1744 Edwards recorded receiving from "William Hannam's wife" 3s. 6d. "for a Fan Jerusha did." "Leaf of Accounts, 1740–53," in *WJEO*, vol. 40. Mary Hutchinson Hannam (1699–1785) married William Hannam of Northampton in 1717, and the family removed to Belchertown in ca. 1721; Jerusha Edwards (1730–47) was the Edwardses' second daughter.

<sup>12</sup> See the diagram of notebook cross-references in *Works*, 10: 90.