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Jonathan Edwards, Slavery, and Africa Missions

Wayne Alan Detzler

I Edwards and the European Pietists and Evangelicals¹

Geography indeed separated Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) from European Pietists and emerging English evangelicals. In fact, the term 'evangelical' appeared during the eighteenth century as a description of the impact of John Wesley (1703-1791) on Britain and beyond. Despite the ocean between them, Jonathan Edwards was closely akin to both Calvinist and Arminian preachers, George Whitefield (1714-1770) and John Wesley. He drew heavily also on the Pietist circle arising from August Hermann Francke (1696-1769) in Halle, Germany. Considering the primitive state of communication in the

eighteenth century, this spiritual closeness is as singular as it is significant.

Early German translations of Jonathan Edwards' writings confirm this theological and philosophical connection to Continental movements. Professor Jan Stievertmann of Heidelberg University traced these in *Faithful Translations: New Discoveries on the German Pietist Reception of Jonathan Edwards*. Stievertmann shows two strains of interest in and influence by Edwards. These two strains are represented by the two translations which Stievertmann discusses. In the first, writing from a traditional Lutheran standpoint, Johann Adam Steinmetz (1689-1762) produced a strong Lutheran translation of Edwards' *Faithful Narrative* in 1738. In this project Steinmetz enjoyed both the approval of the Francke Foundation in Halle and the patronage of Prussia's King Friedrich Wilhelm I (1688-1740). Steinmetz titled his work *Glaubwürdige Nachricht*.

¹ This article could also be titled, 'Jonathan Edwards, Grandfather of the Modern Missionary Movement'. As the study progresses, justification for this claim will become more evident.

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It is a literal representation of *Faithful Narrative*.²

A second translation emanated from Solingen in the Rhineland. Johann Schmitz adapted Edwards for the Reformed wing of German Protestantism. He named his translation *Erweckliche Nachricht aus Northampton in Neu-England* (*Revival News from Northampton in New England*). Not only did Schmitz abridge the text, but he also misspelled the author's name, 'Jonathan Edwardt' (sic). The Solingen edition concentrated heavily on Jonathan Edwards' Reformed theology, emphasizing the sovereign grace of God as well as the unlimited nature of free grace.³ This also identified Jonathan Edwards as champion of sovereign grace among American Reformed theologians.

Alongside Prussia and the Rhineland, another locus of eighteenth century interest in the British and American awakenings is found in Augsburg. It centred upon the impactful ministry of Johann August Urlsperger (1728-1806). In addition to his preaching in the major churches of Augsburg, Urlsperger also founded in 1780 the ecumenical German Society of Friends and Devotees of Christian Truth and Godliness. It became known under the more popular name of *Christentums-gesellschaft* (Christianity Society). This movement cultivated lively connections with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in London.

Arising from the *Christentums-gesellschaft* were the German Tract Soci-

ety (1802), the German Bible Society (1804, simultaneous with the British and Foreign Bible Society), and the Basel Mission Society (1815). Urlsperger was likewise aware of the ministry and writings of Jonathan Edwards.⁴ Ecumenism would dominate the international religious scene until 1830, when a more narrow confessionalism emerged in America, Britain, and Europe.

II Edwards and Emerging Missions Education

Not only did the writings of Jonathan Edwards affect a rising tide of evangelical religion in Europe. One recalls that Jonathan Edwards had been trained for ministry at Yale Divinity School. The instructional model of this school shaped the emergence of education for both clergy and missionaries in Europe. Professor Adriaan Neele adds understanding from his perspective in South Africa. Jonathan Edwards had studied the work of Frances Turretin (1623-1687), a Swiss-Italian Reformed theologian. Turretin espoused the teaching of John Calvin. Turretin distinguished himself also as a teacher of Reformation history at the Geneva Academy. His writings endeared him to the Puritans in England and also in the American colonies.

Likewise Jonathan Edwards studied the works of Petrus von Maastricht (1630-1706) who was well schooled in Reformed theology, and taught at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. Maastricht tried to build bridges of ecumenical goodwill between the

2 Jan Stievermann, 'Faithful Translations: New Discoveries on the German Pietist Reception of Jonathan Edwards', *Church History*, 83 (September 2014), 324-66.

3 Jan Stievermann, 'Faithful Translations'.

4 Jan Stievermann, 'Faithful Translations'.

warring factions of Dutch theologians,⁵ but unfortunately, his ecumenical hopes exceeded his performance as a peacemaker.

Dr. Neele makes the point that evolving theological and missiological education in Europe was shaped strongly by the writings of Jonathan Edwards. Neele found traces of this influence in the Basel Mission School, founded in 1815 in the wake of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. He discerned the influence of Edwards also on the missionary training institution founded by Johannes Jänicke (1748-1827) in Berlin. Jänicke's small seminary thrived due to the patronage of King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia (1770-1840). Jänicke attracted to Berlin several notable Moravians, such as Baron Ernst von Kottwitz (1757-1843), who developed a small circle of influential theologians including August Tholuck (1799-1877) and August Neander (1789-1850).

When the Prussians defeated Napoleon at Grossbeeren, King Friedrich Wilhelm III hosted a victory banquet. On that occasion he applauded the significance of Jänicke:

Sirs, I will tell you who won [the Battle of Grossbeeren]. We did not, we only played a part. The man who won the battle is Pastor Jänicke [the Moravian], who spent day and night with his congregation kneeling and calling on the Lord, our God.

The king's religious rhetoric existed alongside his conservative political philosophy. While acclaiming pastors such as Jänicke, the king also repressed conventicles. He feared that spontaneous house gatherings might foment democratic resistance to the monarchy. The spectre of Napoleon hovered like an angel of death over the king's long reign.⁶

Another training centre for missionaries was the Rhineland Mission. There Johann Christian Wallman (1811-1865) also relied on the works of Jonathan Edwards in developing training programs. Notice the flurry of missiological education in the eighteenth century. This has been ignored largely by subsequent missiologists on both sides of the Atlantic. In reality, it probably traced its roots to the virile missionary-sending atmosphere of the Moravians under the leadership of Zinzendorf.

When the Scot, Robert Haldane, settled in Geneva shortly after the Battle of Waterloo, he conducted a regular Bible study. As he taught the New Testament book of Romans a spiritual awakening erupted. This spread throughout the Francophone world under the general term, *Réveil*. While lecturing at the prestigious *Société des Amies*, Haldane made frequent references to Jonathan Edwards as the foremost authority on Reformed theology.⁷ Already Jonathan

5 Jonathan Edwards, 'Works of Jonathan Edwards online', (WJE) 16:217, as quoted in Adriaan C. Neele, 'Theological education of nineteenth-century French Missionaries: An Appropriate Catholicity of Classical Christian Theology', *Studies in Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 39/2 (December 2013), 150.

6 Albert Emil Bruckner, *Erweckungsbewegungen: ihre Geschichte und Frucht für die christliche Kirche* (Hamburg: Agentur des Rauhen Hauses, 1909), 123.

7 These lectures were later published as, Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, 9th ed. (Edinburgh: William Oliphant & Co., 1874), 117, 206, 488, 527.

Edwards' writings had achieved for him distinction at the very pinnacle of American theological thought.

It seems as if in both Germany and France an elementary missiology was coming to life. Its nature was theological not anthropological. For this reason the works of Jonathan Edwards were formative. Wilbert Schenk noticed this lack of anthropological missiology and traced the beginning of Continental missiological studies to Gustav Warneck (1834-1910). Warneck's *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* first appeared in 1874, but his magnum opus, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, did not come until 1892. It is the contention of this author and also that of both Neele and Stievernann that a primitive missiology preceded the dispatch of the first European missionaries to Africa.⁸ Eighteenth-century mission grew out of a symbiotic relationship between English Anglicans and German Lutherans. After all, they were both offspring of the Protestant Reformation, restless siblings in spirit.

Early Continental missionary activity seemed to grow as a natural progeny of the revival movements in both French and German Europe. Indeed, the period of time between 1800 and 1830 was marked by an ecumenism born out of necessity. Across denominational lines Christians who were part of those revival movements engaged in mission.⁹

There was a deep theological basis

to the renewal, and Jonathan Edwards' writings buttressed those beliefs. However, parallel to the awakening in America there was a seething social issue. That festering sore on the body politic was slavery, and Jonathan Edwards engaged also with this issue.

III Edwards and Evolving Views on Slavery

It is Dr. Kenneth Minkema who has given exhaustive attention to the matter of Jonathan Edwards and slavery. He has documented carefully the Edwards' family history of slaveholding. Jonathan Edwards' father, the Rev Timothy Edwards (1688-1759) of East Windsor, Connecticut, owned at least one slave named Ansars. Likewise the maternal grandfather of Edwards, the Rev Solomon Stoddard (1643-1729), owned slaves.¹⁰

Jonathan Edwards visited the slave market at Newport, Rhode Island in 1731. There he purchased a female slave, aged fourteen, on June 7, 1731, and the name given to Jonathan Edwards' slave was Venus. Colonial law in Massachusetts specified humane treatment for slaves held within the colony. This marked a progressive approach in strong contrast with many plantations in the southern colonies, where brutality was often compounded by the plantation system of agriculture. It regarded slaves as chattels and treated them as such.¹¹

Because most academics and clergy

⁸ Wayne A. Detzler, 'Seeds of Missiology in the German *Erweckung* (1815-1848)', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 38/2 (June 1995), 231.

⁹ Johannes Aagaard, *Mission, Konfession, Kirche* (Lund: Gleerup, 1967), 1, 287.

¹⁰ Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards' Defense of Slavery', *The Massachusetts Historical Review*, vol. 4, Race and Slavery (2002), 24.

¹¹ Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards' Defense of Slavery', 28.

in the north were ignorant of the dark side of slavery, they wrote from a theological perspective. In fact, some contemporary theological writers viewed slavery as an instrument in the process of converting Africans. Edwards concurred with this 'Christian view' of slavery. In *Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival* published in 1743 he wrote: 'Many poor negroes had been wrought upon [converted] and changed.'¹² Edwards was the first New England clergyman to baptize slaves into the Christian church.¹³

Despite owning slaves, Jonathan Edwards condemned the vulgarity of the slave trade. This distinction is important for the development of our case. He defended the traditional view that slaves should be 'debtors, children of slaves, and war captives'. However, he condemned the forays of slave traders into Africa, whereby they took captive and sold as slaves citizens of another land. Edwards denied that, 'nations have any power or business to disfranchise all the nations of Africa'. Additionally he commented that this involved 'a greater encroach[ment] on their liberties than even the opposers of this trade them[selves] do suppose this trade'.¹⁴

Jonathan Edwards was well aware of the abusive aspects of slavery in New England, where many married couples were forced to live separately. Although more rare than in other plac-

es, compulsory breeding of slave children did occur also in New England. If the slaveholder died, slave families were often broken up as part of the legacy.¹⁵

In his defence of slavery Jonathan Edwards marshalled exegetical support. For instance, he took exception to the view that 'loving one's neighbour' undercut the concept of slavery. He applied rigour to the issue, and concluded that God had 'winked' at the slave trade in previous times, in 'times of darkness'. Here he quotes St Paul's speech in Athens (Acts 17:30). Then Edwards asserted, 'God don't [sic] wink at such things now.'¹⁶

There is ample evidence that Edwards associated both spiritually and also intellectually with the Fathers of Awakening in the United Kingdom. He carried on lively correspondence with George Whitefield (1714-1770), who visited the colonies and engaged in the Great Awakening. Likewise Edwards corresponded with John Wesley (1703-91), who was maturing in his hatred for the slave trade.¹⁷

One recalls that the dying wish of John Wesley was the abolition of the slave trade. Indeed he opposed the very institution of slavery. From his deathbed Wesley wrote these words to William Wilberforce (1759-1833):

Balam, 24 February 1791

Dear Sir:

Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as *Athanasius contra*

12 *WJE*, 4:330.

13 Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards' Defense of Slavery', 54 n49.

14 Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards on Slavery and the Slave Trade', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 54/4 (October 1997), 831.

15 Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards' Defense of Slavery', 38.

16 Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards' Defense'.

17 Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards' Defense', 39.

mundum, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? O be not weary of well doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

Reading this morning a tract wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a 'law' in our colonies that the *oath* of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this?

That he who has guided you from youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of, dear sir,

Your affectionate servant,
John Wesley¹⁸

One notices in this comprehensive letter from the dying patriarch, a remarkable awareness of the issues involved in slavery. Wesley calls it an 'execrable villainy'. He likewise regards American slavery as a particularly despicable version, because good men have come to its defence. In Wesley's

opinion the African has no legal redress whatsoever against the white slave holder, and this seems universal throughout the colonial holdings of the British crown. The dying preacher cries out: 'What villainy is this?' Then he passes to young William Wilberforce the leadership of an anti-slavery movement.

Certainly this vehemence by Wesley was neither new, nor was it lost on his trans-Atlantic friend, Jonathan Edwards. For Wesley the war against slavery and the slave trade were as compelling as was his gospel preaching and his passion for perpetuating the movement within the class system of religious conventicles.

Beyond the British Isles Jonathan Edwards drew heavily also on the religious treasury of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf (1700-1770). By the same token, Edwards was well aware of the awakening at Halle, and especially of its guiding light, August Hermann Francke (1663-1727).¹⁹ In many ways Zinzendorf and Francke formed separate tracks for the early awakening in German-speaking Europe. Nevertheless, Jonathan Edwards drew from both for the benefit that each offered. Zinzendorf especially had introduced to Protestantism both the emotional warmth of a mystical awakening and the pragmatic practice of dispersing missionaries to areas hitherto unreached by the Christian message. Zinzendorf planted the seed idea of Protestant cross-cultural missionary activity.

Early in his life Jonathan Edwards had come to oppose the slave trade. Dr.

¹⁸ John Wesley Letter to William Wilberforce, February 24, 1791. [http://www.whattimeitis.org/ComingEvents/Wesley to Wilberforce.htm](http://www.whattimeitis.org/ComingEvents/Wesley%20to%20Wilberforce.htm). Accessed December 8, 2014.

¹⁹ Wesley, Letter to Wilberforce, 39.

Minkema recently discovered a draft from the hand of Jonathan Edwards bearing the date of 1738-42. It reveals the widespread practice of slaveholding in the vicinity of Northampton, Massachusetts. This letter is significant on two levels. First, it displays the evolving viewpoints of Jonathan Edwards. Second, it demonstrates the seeds of a movement that would become much larger in the nineteenth century.

Although his arguments against slavery are not stated explicitly, they may be inferred from the draft. Jonathan Edwards is moving toward the viewpoint of accepting slaveholding but rejecting the slave trade.²⁰ Again, the early date of this draft must remain as a reminder that the views of Edwards were growing, and they would continue to change over the remaining years of his life.

Jonathan Edwards cited the views of a valued voice of his day, Samuel Sewall (1652-1730), a judge, a businessman, and a printer. In 1700 he had released an essay under the title, 'The Selling of Joseph'. In this slim volume he had criticized the very practice of the slave trade. In turn he was criticized for this 'progressive' view.²¹

Jonathan Edwards foresaw an eschatological era, a 'millennium' in which righteousness rules. This was not a minutely defined concept of eschatology, but it was rather a statement of the

Scripture teaching concerning the coming kingdom of God. He would derive evidence from the writings of Hebrew prophets such as Isaiah, Hosea, and Malachi. Also, Edwards would invest some degree of literal interpretation in the kingdom teaching of Jesus. He summarized his kingdom time under the generic term, 'glorious times'. He expected to see 'books of devotion, the most divine and angelic strains from among the Hottentots, and the press shall groan in wild Tartary'.²²

This writing was conditioned by the revivalist fervour of the Great Awakening, in which Jonathan Edwards had played a major part. No doubt his readers interpreted his vision for Hottentot and Tartar conversion as part of his dynamic approach to communication. He went on to imagine a future time when Negroes and Indians would be converted to Christianity. They would unleash a veritable torrent of excellent books published in Africa, Ethiopia, and Turkey.²³ One would ask whether Edwards predicated these hopes on the early days of Christianity, when North Africa produced such a great voice for truth as St. Augustine. Indeed, through the first five centuries of Christianity North Africa, Turkey (Asia Minor), and Ethiopia were veritable seedbeds of religious creativity.

From a practical standpoint, the movement in New England of ethnic minorities seeking church membership encouraged Edwards. Already Africans

20 Edwards Papers, folder ND 2.13. Franklin Trask Library, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts, as quoted in Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards on Slavery and the Slave Trade', 823-4.

21 *The Diary and Life of Samuel Sewall*, edited by Mel Yazawa (Boston: Bedford Books, 1998).

22 Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards on Slavery', 828. Minkema here cites, Stout et al., eds., *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 9: *A History of the Work of Redemption*, ed. John F. Wilson (New Haven, 1989), 480.

23 Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards on Slavery'.

and Indians (Native Americans) were being admitted into membership. This movement was pronounced during the 1730s in both Massachusetts and Connecticut.²⁴

Jonathan Edwards extended the gospel invitation to both 'black and white'. He challenged them to 'hearken to the call of Christ', believing that the Christian message was a great equalizer. Of course, this viewpoint was quite foreign to his age. Indeed, this sociological position would set the pace for the emerging evangelical movement not only in the American colonies, but perhaps also to some degree in Britain and even in Europe.²⁵

Despite his developing views, Jonathan Edwards continued to be a slaveholder. When temporary exile took him to the Mission House in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Edwards brought with him a slave named Rose. Later records show that Rose was freed by 1771. Edwards may have freed her when he moved in 1758 to Princeton to assume the presidency of The College of New Jersey (later Princeton University). Still he continued to own slaves until his untimely death.²⁶

In 1753 Jonathan Edwards wrote his final will and testament. Included in his possessions was a slave boy

named Titus. Perhaps he was the son of a slave family Edwards had owned. It is not clear whether Titus was the son of Joan and Rose Binney, or perhaps another couple identified as Joseph and Sue. The boy was listed under 'Quick Stock' and valued at £30.²⁷ Although he entertained serious questions about the process of buying and selling human beings, he deemed it pragmatic and even compassionate to own and care for personal slaves.

IV The Slave Trade and Early Protestant Missions to Africa

Ambiguity marked many slaveholders, yet abhorrence of the slave trade animated an ecumenical assemblage of luminaries on both sides of the Atlantic. It actually led to the birth of the modern missionary movement that gathered up the strands of slave trade reform. George Whitefield (1714-1770) helped to unite the evangelical movement by participation in the American Great Awakening. It was in America that Whitefield observed slavery first hand. One must ask whether John Wesley (1703-1791) had formed opinions during his short stint of ministry in Savannah in Georgia colony. After all, Savannah was an epicenter of southern slavery.

Once back in England Wesley attacked the issue of slavery with evangelical fervour. This can be seen in his above-mentioned deathbed letter to young William Wilberforce (1759-

24 Lorenzo J. Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 268, as cited in Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards on Slavery', 828.

25 Miller, 'Jonathan Edwards' Sociology of the Great Awakening', *New England Quarterly*, 21 (1948), 72, 77 as cited in Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards on Slavery', 829 n.19.

26 Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards' Defense of Slavery', 43.

27 Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards' Defense of Slavery', 43-44. Edwards to Joseph Bellamy, February 28, 1754, in *WJE*, 16:622. Edwards to Esther Edwards Burr, November 20, 1757, in *WJE*, 16:731.

1833). One must note that Wilberforce was born the year after Jonathan Edwards died. Wilberforce represented the next generation that would take hatred of the slave trade into a new century, the nineteenth century. They were of a mind not only to espouse the cause, but also to act upon their conviction. One course of action was legislative activism, of which Wilberforce was the primary proponent.

As the movement against slave trade gathered speed its advocates were 'The Fathers of the Victorians'. Ford K. Brown explored and expounded the story of this intrepid band of Christian activists in a book under that title.²⁸ Brown correctly located the centre of this flurry of activity in the south London suburb of Clapham. The Rev John Venn (1759-1813) was both the Rector of Clapham and the spiritual dynamic behind the intense social action of his parishioners.

As the eighteenth century waned William Wilberforce became the titular leader of the so-called Clapham Sect. A galaxy of social activist stars surrounded him. Henry Thornton (1760-1814), like Wilberforce, was a Member of Parliament from Yorkshire. He was a near neighbour of Wilberforce in Clapham.²⁹ Another member of the Clapham Sect was James Stephen (1758-1832). After the death of his first wife, Stephen married Wilberforce's sister. He too was a

Member of Parliament and an activist in the abolition movement.

Another member of the Clapham Sect was Zachary Macaulay (1768-1838). He became the Governor of Sierra Leone, the colony that was organized to receive freed slaves and also to erect a wall of resistance against the slave trade. Slave traders heaped hatred on Sierra Leone and all involved with the colony. As governor Macaulay was able to welcome the first, tentative attempt to bring missionaries to Africa.³⁰

The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was founded on 12 April 1799 in Aldersgate Street in the City of London. The majority of founding members were also associated with the Clapham Sect. Pleading pressure of work, Wilberforce deferred to Henry Thornton, MP as first president of the CMS. Be it here noted that Aldersgate Street had gained something of a cult presence because of the 'sudden conversion' of John Wesley in 1738. There he attended a Bible study meeting led by Moravians under the auspices of the Church of England.³¹

After the closing of monasteries and religious orders, the Church of England had no means of deploying missionary workers. This especially impacted its role in the non-Christian world. Thus the newly born CMS agreed to abide by the liturgical lines of the Church

²⁸ Ford K. Brown, *Fathers of the Victorians; the Age of Wilberforce* (Cambridge: University Press, 1961).

²⁹ Kevin Belmonte, *William Wilberforce* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 139. 'Henry Thornton', <http://spartacus-educational.com/REthorntonH.htm>. Accessed December 10, 2014.

³⁰ 'Zachary Macaulay,' <http://spartacus-educational.com/REVmacaulayZ.htm>. Accessed December 10, 2014.

³¹ The 'Aldersgate Experience' is discussed in the following articles: 'John Wesley', 'Protestantism', *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/13584/>. Accessed December 11, 2014.

of England, although the organization was free of episcopal, even clerical, control. It was primarily a lay movement.

Founders of the CMS under the leadership of Wilberforce and Thornton were committed to three purposes: 'abolition of the slave trade, social reform at home, and world evangelisation [sic]'.³² It is the stated view of this author that, '[Wilberforce] undoubtedly saw the missionaries as agents to lay the axe at the root of slavery, the slave trade in Africa'.³³

Furthermore, the Clapham founders assumed that Anglican clergy would volunteer to serve under the new organization. However, as is often the case, laity and clergy differed in response. English clergymen did not come forward to serve in Africa and Asia. Indeed, for the duration of the nineteenth century, the CMS maintained strong relationships with Continental Churches and seminaries and the first missionaries of the CMS were German Lutherans.³⁴

Thus it was missionary activity that wed the Clapham Sect (not the Anglican Church) to the continental awakening. As is also often the case, laypeople led the way to productive ecumenical cooperation.

V The German Source for CMS Missionaries

In search of such missionary candidates, the governing body turned to their Continental siblings, the German awakening movement. Johannes Gossner's fledgling seminary in Berlin dispatched on March 8, 1804 Melchior Renner and Peter Hartwig to Sierre Leone.³⁵ Eugene Stock comments in his landmark *History of the Church Missionary Society*: 'The missionaries were instructed to wean native chiefs away from the trade [of slaves] and to portray slavery as immoral'.³⁶

The first missionary-receiving nation in Africa was Sierra Leone, founded by British anti-slavery leaders. However, the history of Sierra Leone is marked by its strategic value as a trading outlet. In 1792 John Clarkson (1764-1828) established the Sierra Leone Trading Company. It was an expression of the so-called Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade. This action drew the hatred of many nations throughout Africa which had profited from the blood business of slave trading.³⁷

In addition to Gossner's little seminary, others also emerged in Germany. Johannes Jänicke (1748-1827) established a training centre based on the distinctive missiology of the Moravi-

32 'A brief history of the CMS', <http://www.cms-uk.org/default.aspx?Tabid=181>. Accessed December 11, 2014.

33 Wayne Alan Detzler, 'British and American Contributions to the "Erweckung" in Germany, 1815-1848', (Unpublished PhD dissertation. University of Manchester, 1974) 32 6n47.

34 'A brief history of the CMS', Canon Max Warren. <http://www.cms-uk.org/Whoware/AboutCMS/History/FourstagesinCMSHistory/tabid/182/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>. Accessed December 15, 2014.

35 Detzler, 'British and American Contributions', 325.

36 Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*. 2 vols (London: Church Missionary Society, 1916), 1, 83.

37 The Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global Migration of African Peoples, The University of York, Canada. www.tubmaninstitute.ca/cites/default/files/file/CA1_E2. Accessed December 12, 2014.

ans. He was the foremost Moravian pastor in Germany for most of the early nineteenth century.³⁸

The most comprehensive and ecumenical expression of the *Erweckung* in German-speaking Europe was the *Christentumsgesellschaft* (the Christian Society). Founded by Johannes Urlsperger, it drew together the disparate branches of Protestant awakening, liturgy, and theology.³⁹ In fact, southern Germany and northern Switzerland have been to this very day a seedbed of theological speculation and experimentation. This predisposes the region to true Christian liberality.

It was the *Christentumsgesellschaft* that birthed in 1815 the Basel Mission. The venerable Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805-1880) dispatched the first missionaries to Tranquebar, India in 1846. This resulted amazingly in the establishment of the Anglican Church in Asia, including the appointment of Samuel Gobat (1799-1879) to be the first Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem in 1846.⁴⁰

Despite the fact that many of the early German missionaries served to build the Anglican Communion, German Lutherans still rallied to the cause. In 1823 the distinguished professor of ecclesiastical history at Berlin, Johann August Wilhelm Neander (1789-1850), issued an appeal for funds to support missionaries. He ti-

tled this effort, 'An Appeal on Behalf of the Heathen'.⁴¹ Ironically, his appeal coincided with a hiatus in missionary sending. No further missionaries were sent from Berlin until after the transition to confessional missionary activity around 1830.

Missionaries could never escape criticism. The *Allgemeine Kirchenzeitung* (general church newspaper) was published in Darmstadt. It was the voice of scientific theology and higher criticism in the first half of the nineteenth century. Its editors and contributors regarded the *Erweckung* in general as a mystical movement devoid of either logical thinking or modern (so-called *neological*) activity. Thus an editorial published in 1827 condemned missionary agencies as being more mindlessly mystical than socially active. The *Allgemeine Kirchenzeitung* writers appeared to be relatively free of serious journalistic restraint.⁴²

A more sympathetic assessment of the early missionary movement occurs in the dissertation of Johannes Aargaard. He freely concedes that the early English/European missionary movement was not designed to transfer the organized (confessional) church to Africa and Asia. Rather, it was mainly an expression of evangelical English social activism until 1830.⁴³ Both Aargaard and Warneck trace the transition from ecumenical missions to confessional missions to the emer-

38 Detzler, 'British and American Contributions', 320.

39 Detzler, 'British and American Contributions', 232, cf. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 1, 117-119.

40 Detzler, 'British and American Contributions', 236-236.

41 Detzler, 'British and American Contributions', 330.

42 *Allgemeine Kirchenzeitung* (Darmstadt, July 10, 1827).

43 Johannes Aargaard, *Mission, Konfession, Kirche*, as cited in Wayne Alan Detzler, 'British and American Contributions', 318.

gence of theological sophistication in Germany. In a sense, this development represents a philosophical triumph for the *Allgemeine Kirchenzeitung* and its rationalistic approach.

The fact remains, however, that mission was mainly an instrument of the anti-slave trade movement at least until 1830. By that time the House of Commons was wrestling with the abolition of slavery in general. Also, in the colonies there was an abolition movement building.

VI The Cautionary Tale of Renner and Hartwig

In 1802 Jänicke's embryonic training centre dispatched to England two graduates, Peter Hartwig and Melchior Renner who had been ordained in 1803, possibly by the (German) Lutheran Church in England. When the CMS engaged their services, their first stop was Clapham and the Society For Mission to Africa and Asia (later to be called the Church Missionary Society).⁴⁴

While preparing for their assignment to Sierra Leone, Peter Hartwig met and married on 4 January 1804 Sarah Winzer, former governess of the Rev John Venn's family. Soon thereafter Renner and Hartwig were dispatched together with Sarah to Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone.⁴⁵

In 1805 Hartwig took his first missionary journey to Rio Pongo, where he received hospitality from slave trad-

ers. Hartwig sent no journal accounts to the Corresponding Committee, the oversight body of the CMS. Returning from this first journey, Hartwig entered into a period of inactivity due to the 'indisposition of his wife'. Additionally when Hartwig preached, 'his discourses were rather too severe concerning the conduct of Europeans'.⁴⁶

Due to ill health Mrs. Hartwig returned to England in 1806. By that time Renner had been ordered by the Governor of Sierra Leone to leave his quarters and take up residence with the Hartwigs. It was Renner who reported: 'It was soon visible that they [Renner and Hartwig] could not well agree on managing the house jointly'. Hartwig exacerbated the situation by discussing it with 'his ill-chosen friends', i.e. non-missionaries. To ease the situation the Corresponding Committee sent Hartwig to Mandingo County 'to keep him out of mischief'.

The situation reached a crisis in 1807, and Renner records this in his detailed report to the Corresponding Committee:

About this time Hartwig would be no longer under the restraint of the 'Cor[responding] Com[mittee]', and did not want direction from the Society, but determined to go into the country, but Alas! Not to pursue his pretended zeal in the Mission, but to turn Slave Trader at once. He got a passage in a vessel, where he sent his trunks on board. But his intention was detected by the Cor[responding] 'Com[mittee]', let fetch his trunks back, supposing that he had packed up some of the

⁴⁴ Tubman MSS.CA1/E2/131 (Toronto: York University).

⁴⁵ Melchior Renner, 'A Short Account of the Mission and Missionaries in Africa', (January 1812). Tubman MSS, CA1/E2/131.

⁴⁶ Renner, 'A Short Account', 131.

Society's books and other things. By this Mr. H[artwig] left not off from his purpose, but set off in a canoe with some Mandingo people, and set himself down with a Slave Trader in Fouricaria. He came to Bariera, and told Mr. Renner that the Cor[responding] Com[mittee] had dismissed him.⁴⁷

The current state of research on this issue emerges from the Harriet Tubman Institute at York University in Toronto, Canada. Professor Paul Lovejoy has referred our inquiry to Katrina Keefer, a PhD research student. In a detailed email she writes:

In summary, the Mousers suggest that Hartwig was placed in an extremely awkward and unfair position by the CMS, Renner, and the colonial authorities. He was being instructed to learn Susu as rapidly as possible by CMS, was being pressured by a frustrated Renner to replace Renner as Colony Chaplain, and pressured by the Governor to teach in situ. His eventual departure after waiting for permission to return to the Susu region was taken as theft of CMS property (which he had on him) as it was not a welcomed departure, which along with his ongoing friendship with the slave-traders of the region amount-

ed to the conclusion that he'd left to become a slave trader himself. I tend to agree with the Mousers' analysis, and think that Hartwig really was villainized for a variety of reasons.⁴⁸

Indeed, the Church Missionary Society in its earlier form sought fulfilment of the eschatological vision that Jonathan Edwards shared with his transatlantic brethren. It was their hope that missionary activity in Africa could lay the axe to the root of slavery by stopping the slave trade. The failure of Peter Hartwig demonstrates the depth and breadth of this assumption among early missionaries and their homeland supporters.

VII Edwards and the Modern Missionary Movement

The rather ragged beginning of missionary activity must not obscure the strength of this movement. The small beachhead in Sierra Leone laid the foundation of greater missionary activity both in Africa and also in India. Although it has not been explored thoroughly, Jonathan Edwards played a foundational role in the emergence of the Protestant missionary movement.

Both Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and William Carey (1761-1834) regarded Jonathan Edwards as 'the Grandfather of Modern Missions'. Both Fuller and Carey had in 1784 gained access to Jonathan Edwards' *Humble Attempt to Promote Prayer for Revival*. Together with the *Journal of David Brainerd* Full-

⁴⁷ Renner, 'A Short Account,' 131. Bruce L Mouser and Nancy Fox Mouser wrote a refutation of this story under the title, *The Reverend Peter Hartwig, Slave Trader or Misunderstood Idealist? Clash of Church Missionary Society Imperial Objectives in Sierra Leone 1804-1815* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003). It seems however, that Renner's primary source report is a more accurate description of the sad saga.

⁴⁸ Katrina Keefer, The Harriet Tubman Institute, York University, Toronto. Email December 16, 2014.

er and Carey cited these writings as a refutation of the Reformed position on soteriology.

Fuller and Carey were Baptist ministers, who would combine to found the Baptist Missionary Society in 1784. This was twelve full years after the publication of Carey's *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. (One recalls that Carey was chided by John Ryland upon the publication of his *Enquiry*. Ryland railed at the young preacher: 'When God wants to save the heathen, He will do it without your help or mine.'⁴⁹ From time immemorial Reformed churchmen contended that evangelical preaching stood in direct contradiction to the sovereign grace of God.)⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Neele, 'Theological education of nineteenth-century French Missionaries', 157.

⁵⁰ As late as the 1980s Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones led a neo-Reformed movement in England called 'The Westminster Fellowship'. He vehemently and categorically contended that God would save the lost by sovereign grace apart from any human persuasion, discussion,

Despite doctrinal bickering the emerging missionary movement melded two noble causes: abolition of the slave trade and the evangelization of Africans. Jonathan Edwards foresaw this blending of purposes, and his experience in the Great Awakening allowed him to surmount the pettiness of lesser clergy. Kenneth Minkema summarizes: 'According to Jonathan Edwards, "Continuing excursions into Africa [or anywhere else] for slaves created resentment against Christian Europeans that could ultimately thwart evangelization"'.⁵¹

This connection was created in the mind of Jonathan Edwards fully fifty years prior to the usually accepted birthdate of European and American Protestant missionary activity. Jonathan Edwards was indeed, 'The Grandfather of Modern Missions'.

or argumentation. He was indeed a modern spokesman of the movement represented by John Ryland in his resistance to William Carey.

⁵¹ Minkema, 'Jonathan Edwards on Slavery and the Slave Trade', 829.