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The New England Theology: From Jonathan Edwards to Edwards Amasa Park

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The New England Theology: From Jonathan Edwards to Edwards Amasa Park

Abstract

This collection draws together the key works of those who followed in Jonathan Edwards's theological footsteps, showing how one unique tradition shaped American theology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Keywords

Religion, New England, Theology, Jonathan Edwards, Edwards Amasa Park

Disciplines

Cultural History | History | History of Religion | Practical Theology | Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion | Social History | United States History

Comments

Attached is the introduction of Dr. Allen C. Guelzo's book, *The New England Theology: Jonathan Edwards to Edwards Amasa Park*.

Introduction

We beg leave, therefore, first of all, to explain the term, New England Theology. It signifies the formal creed which a majority of the most eminent theologians in New England have explicitly or implicitly sanctioned, during and since the time of Edwards. It denotes the spirit and genius of the system openly avowed or logically involved, in their writings. It includes not the peculiarities in which Edwards differed, as he is known to have differed, from the larger part of his most eminent followers; nor the peculiarities in which any one of his followers differed, as some of them did, from the larger part of the others; but it comprehends the principles, with their logical sequences, which the greater number of our most celebrated divines have approved expressly or by implication.

Edwards Amasa Park, *New England Theology* (1852)

In the spring of 1858, an Illinois newspaper editor looked around the landscape of America—which, among other things, included a major national financial depression, an upcoming senatorial contest, and the uproar over slavery in the Kansas-Nebraska territories—and decided that the most important news was about religious revival. “There is no one topic . . . so frequently the subject of discussion as the religious awakening now agitating the land,” wrote Charles Lanphier. This revival of religion was “a natural reaction from the materialism of the last twenty years.” But the “reaction” took the form of religious revival, partly because that was how Americans dealt “at periodical intervals” with the contradictions and stresses of their culture and partly because revivals had “received the sanction on this side of the Atlantic of Jonathan Edwards, the great metaphysician of his century.”¹

1. Charles Lanphier, “Religious Revivals,” *Illinois State Register*, March 26, 1858, 2.

Editor Lanphier seems not to have noticed that he was placing this laurel on the head of Edwards almost exactly one hundred years after Edwards's death at Princeton. But the coincidence was a telling one. Ezra Stiles, who had grown up knowing Edwards and disagreeing with most of Edwards's thinking, was sure at that time that "in another Generation" Edwards would "pass into as transient Notice perhaps scarce above Oblivion, as Willard or Twiss, or Norton" and be "looked upon as singular and whimsical."² Stiles was a stalwart of what became known as Old Calvinism—the established, parish-based system of Congregationalist Calvinism that had been in place since the Puritan founding of Massachusetts Bay in 1630. Edwards's complaint had been that Old Calvinism had gone stale, substituting a civil but uninspiring version of Calvinism for the passionate and living piety of the Puritan founders. Edwards's sympathies lay in the direction of the new Pietism, whose best-known English-speaking apostles were John Wesley and George Whitefield. When Whitefield arrived in New England in 1739, preaching revival and renewal, Edwards fell in alongside him and became the primary defender of what would soon become known simply as the Great Awakening.

Edwards hoped, in his devout heart of hearts, that the Great Awakening was the overture to the day of judgment and the millennium, when "religion shall in every respect be uppermost in the world."³ But the Awakening burned through its own energies, and when Edwards tried to force the Northampton church to rewrite its understanding of church membership, based on the more demanding piety of the revival, the members resisted him and then in 1750 fired him. Instead of hailing the "dawning of a general revival of the Christian church," Edwards took up the day-to-day routine of superintending the mission station of the Massachusetts Commissioners for the Propagation of the Gospel at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he preached to two hundred Stockbridge Mahicans (in English, using a translator; he never tried to learn the Mahican language, although his six-year-old son picked it up effortlessly and wrote a study of it, *Observations on the Language of the Muhhekanew Indians*, in 1788) and an English congregation that was not entirely eager to have him as its pastor. Edwards's own attention soon strayed back to his early enchantment with philosophy, and, between 1750 and 1757, he

2. Cited in Franklin B. Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D.*, vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner, 1901), 275.

3. Gerald R. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 65; see also Jonathan Edwards, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival*, in *The Great Awakening, The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 4, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 353.

composed three great treatises in moral philosophy—on *Original Sin*, *Freedom of the Will*, and *The Nature of True Virtue*—all the while praying for a new awakening until the trustees of the infant college at Princeton invited him to take up the presidency there in 1757. But the books did not sell well, and Edwards fell ill from the complications of a smallpox inoculation at Princeton. He died there on March 22, 1758, “without the least appearance of murmuring through the whole.”⁴

Although Ezra Stiles expected that Edwards’s reputation would disappear in the same uncomplaining fashion, the result over the next century was the exact opposite. His students, Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins, took up in the 1750s and 1760s where Edwards left off, and the result, to Stiles’s dismay, was the formulation of an Edwardsean “New Divinity,” the first generation of a distinctively New England theology.⁵

Bellamy and Hopkins saw, as the Old Calvinists did not, how very directly Edwards’s writings spoke to the central concerns of Americans as they descended into the storm of the Revolutionary decades. First, however much Edwards’s dismissal from Northampton looked like New Englanders’ repudiating revivalism as a device for stoking up the spiritual temperature of their churches, Bellamy and Hopkins were convinced that Edwards’s fall only underscored the degree of New England’s apostasy from true Calvinism and the need to redouble the effort to provoke revival. The weapon Edwards put into their hands was contained in the treatise *Freedom of the Will*, in which Edwards confected an ingenious reconciliation of absolute Calvinist predestination with a demand for immediate and utter surrender of a person’s will to the demand for conversion and holiness.

When God decrees an act, Edwards wrote, that act becomes *necessary*. But acts can become necessary in one of two ways: God can physically compel someone, even while the person really wants to do something else. Or an act becomes necessary when a person already has a psychological inclination toward that act, and the more intense a person’s inclination, the more likely it is that it will be acted on in a predictable fashion. Edwards called the necessity that involves force *natural necessity*. No one under the force of natural necessity can be held morally accountable for what he or she does. But the necessity that arises from

4. William Shippen to Sarah Edwards, March 22, 1758, cited in George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 494.

5. We use “New England Theology” (as it was used in the nineteenth century) to refer to the Edwardsean tradition or school of thought: the tradition beginning with Edwards, running through the New Divinity from Samuel Hopkins and Joseph Bellamy to Nathanael Emmons, and extending to more ambiguous figures who nevertheless claimed a linkage to Edwards, from Nathaniel W. Taylor, Lyman Beecher, and Charles G. Finney to the last of the school’s stalwarts, Andover’s Edwards Amasa Park.

people's own inclinations is *moral necessity*. Since no one is actually using force in moral necessity, such people can be held responsible for their actions; in fact, the *greater* the force of an evil inclination on their actions, the *more* accountable they are, precisely because they have all the natural, physical power they need to do otherwise. In practical terms, this meant that people could not excuse themselves from the call to repentance and conversion on the grounds of *inability*. They had arms and legs and lips and a brain, and they could use them to bow the knee in repentance—and do it *now*, without waiting for some external, natural necessity to get them to do it. If we were to look at this as a modern psychologist might, we would say that Edwards was creating a moment of catharsis by telling them that, despite their sinful inclinations, they were fully responsible to repent and believe.

Second, Edwards also confronted the incapacity of conventional Calvinism to deal with the blandishments of the Enlightenment. The skeptical luminaries of the British Enlightenment, from Hobbes to Hume, had turned Calvinism on its head, not by denouncing predestination but by co-opting it and making material substances and forces the absolute determiners of all human actions. To save any place for the activity of human spirit, Calvinist divines in England and New England diluted Calvin's determinism with doses of free willism—Arminianism, after the seventeenth-century Dutch opponent of Calvinism—and once they began diluting, there was not much they did not dilute, including the Trinity. Edwards, on the other hand, made it clear that the best defense against atheistic determinism was an aggressive Calvinistic offense, and the formulas he developed in the treatises of the 1750s allowed Hopkins and Bellamy to combine the most *ultra* forms of Calvinism with the rhetoric of free choice and to do it with demands for revival and moral purism that made the Old Calvinists blanch.

Third, the Edwardseans had an important lesson in civics to teach, based on Edwards's distinction between force and necessity (although it is safe to say that the Edwardseans were not entirely self-aware of it). Just as Edwards had taught that God rules human conduct by affecting the inclination and not by force, so the Edwardseans transformed New England Calvinism by basing its support on an appeal to public inclination rather than to tax collections reinforced by civil statute. In so doing, they demonstrated that the exclusion of religion from formal public establishment by the American republic's Constitution need not mean the end of the churches' influence on American public life. Closed off from making policy, they made converts. Unable to legislate, they organized independent societies for Bible distribution, for alcoholism reform, for observance of the Sabbath, for suppressing vice and immorality, for the end of slavery. When the French liberal Alexis de Tocqueville took

his celebrated tour of the United States in the 1830s, he was amazed to find that while "in the United States religion" has no "influence on the laws or on the details of political opinions," nevertheless "it directs the mores" and through that "it works to regulate the state."⁶

But if Edwardsean-style revivalism was an important means for igniting public interest in religion, it was also a poor instrument for sustaining it. The demand for immediate repentance and "disinterested benevolence" was, at its most fundamental level, a reflection of the old Puritan weakness for separatism. The revivals called people to repentance, but they also called them out of society, out of their normal relations, out of their everyday moral lives to participate in an intensely demanding but very otherworldly version of Protestant Christianity. The very fact that a revival was judged necessary at all was a judgment on the failures of the regular churches and the impurities of conventional society, and its logical end was to turn people into come-outers of various sorts and to inflate a radical individualism.

Fearsome as the New Divinity became as preachers, they prided themselves just as much on the passion with which they wrote and studied. Nathanael Emmons stoically devoted himself for seventy-eight years to a regimen of ten to sixteen hours a day in his study and wore a gouge in the wainscoting where his feet were propped up. Hopkins met with two of his students to talk theology through the day, then at nightfall saw one of them out to the stable for his horse; they fell to talking some more, and eventually they noticed what they thought was the glow from a fire in the east. It was actually the sun coming up, the next day.⁷

Gradually, the contours of New England religion, during the Revolution and into the nineteenth century, sorted themselves out into three broad categories: the genteel congregations of upper-crust Boston, who eventually went the distance in their embrace of the Enlightenment and turned Unitarian; the Old Calvinists, who struggled to preserve some traditional sense of Calvinist orthodoxy within a state-established parish system in which baptism and communion defined church membership more than conversion; and the Edwardseans, who set the bar of church life as high as Edwardsean revival could put it. There is no "score" to say which of these persuasions eventually "won." But there is no question that the Unitarians became and remained a cultivated, Bostonian taste,

6. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 278.

7. Edwards Amasa Park, "Memoir of Nathanael Emmons," in *The Works of Nathanael Emmons, D.D.*, vol. 1, ed. Jacob Ide (Boston: Congregational Board of Publication, 1861), 60, 66, 105; Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon Books, 1977), 173; and Edwin Pond Parker, ed., *The Autobiography of the Rev. Enoch Pond* (Boston: Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, 1883), 24–27.

while the Old Calvinists eventually dissolved by the 1860s into the first wave of American theological liberalism. The Edwardseans, however, captured the western New England hill country, struck westward along the Erie Canal and turned Upstate New York into the “burned-over district,” followed the arrows of New England migration farther west into the Western Reserve of Ohio, and then went into Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa, founding churches, colleges, and moral reform movements and lighting up the sky with the glow of a Second Great Awakening—and then a third Awakening, the one Charles Lanphier described in 1858.

None of the New Divinity, however, cleared as wide a path for himself as Charles Grandison Finney. Born in western Connecticut, Finney moved to Upstate New York and trained as a lawyer. But in 1821, Finney was dramatically converted and embarked on a new career as a preacher of revivals. No one ever wielded the thunderbolts of immediate repentance and the requirement for perfect, “disinterested” benevolence more powerfully than Finney, and from 1824 to 1832, he ignited revivals all through the Mohawk River valley, advanced to the Chatham Street Chapel and the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City, and eventually became one of the leading lights in founding Oberlin College. Although Finney has been routinely cast as a sort of religious Davy Crockett, preaching free will Arminianism to freely willing American democrats, Finney’s memoirs are teeming with the distinctive Edwardsean vocabulary, and in the 1840s, he was still rejecting “what the Arminians call a *gracious* ability, which terms are a manifest absurdity.”⁸

But while the historical figure of Edwards continued to wax, the figure of his disciples eventually waned. It is possible to take up almost any history of American ideas before the 1980s and find almost no mention whatsoever of the New England Theology or the New Divinity. Henry May, writing in 1976 in *The Enlightenment in America*, gave them all of three pages and concluded that “by 1796, they were winning the pulpits and losing the people” in New England. Sydney Ahlstrom, who wrote *A Religious History of the American People* in 1972, feared that “they degraded Puritan theology by turning it into a lifeless system of apologetics,” and in this Ahlstrom was following the judgment of Joseph Haroutunian in *Piety versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (1932), who found Hopkins and Bellamy guilty of transforming Calvinism “into a vast, complicated, and colorless theological structure, bewildering to

8. Charles Grandison Finney, “Letters on Revivals—No. 4,” *Oberlin Evangelist*, March 12, 1845, 44.

its enemies and ridiculous to its friends.”⁹ Ezra Stiles’s prediction had at last come true—but it was about the Edwardseans, not Edwards.

Just how an intellectual and theological movement of such vitality and scope could disappear almost entirely from the attention of American historians and theologians is a curious question. It stems, first, from the almost-entire failure and disappearance of the Edwardseans after the passing of Edwards Amasa Park and the capture of the New England Theology’s most important citadel, Andover Theological Seminary, by the Andover liberals in the 1880s. The fall of Andover was followed in short order by a similar collapse into liberalism at two secondary Edwardsean outposts, Union Theological Seminary and Oberlin College, under the aegis of two Edwardsean-cum-nineteenth-century liberals, Henry Boynton Smith and Henry Churchill King. Unlike the Old School Presbyterians, who found in J. Gresham Machen an intellect of sufficient stature to hand on the legacy of Charles Hodge and Archibald Alexander once Princeton Theological Seminary fell into the hands of liberalism in the 1920s, the New England Theology had no one to carry forward the weight of its tradition. By the time George Nye Boardman and Frank Hugh Foster were writing comprehensive histories of the New England Theology in *A History of the New England Theology* (1899) and *A Genetic History of the New England Theology* (1907), they were also conscious that they were writing its obituary.

The Presbyterian conservatives of Machen’s generation were certainly not inclined to spend much energy on preserving the memory of the New England Theology. Although Edwards ended his days as president of Princeton College, his eventual successor in 1768, the Scottish Presbyterian John Witherspoon, deliberately scoured out every aspect of Edwardseanism in Princeton he could find. Witherspoon was the Scottish equivalent of an Old Calvinist, and those who followed him at the college and later at Princeton Theological Seminary were wary of the theological peculiarities of the New Divinity, especially the suspicious way the New Divinity had played with the nature and extent of the atonement. The Princetonians, and those who succeeded them through Westminster Theological and Reformed Theological seminaries, could not avoid bowing in respect to the figure of Edwards, but it was an Edwards carefully sculpted to resemble Princeton Calvinism and an Edwards who had no heirs. When Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield wrote the entry on “Edwards and the New England Theology” for James Hastings’s *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* in 1912, he could not

9. Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 61; Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 405; and Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932), 71.

avoid hailing Edwards as “the one figure of real greatness in the intellectual life of colonial America.” But he was equally unable to recognize the Edwardseans as Edwards’s legitimate offspring. “It was Edwards’ misfortune that he gave his name to a party,” Warfield wrote, because the New England Theology was “in many respects the exact antipodes of Edwards.”¹⁰ Consequently, modern conservative Reformed theology knows much of Edwards but almost nothing of Edwardseanism.

The New England Theology remained lodged in the dustbin until the 1970s. Sidney Mead wrote a marvelous biography of Nathaniel W. Taylor in 1942, and Ann Douglas included a sharply written chapter on the New Divinity in *The Feminization of American Culture* in 1977. But otherwise, except for unpublished Ph.D. dissertations by Dick van Halsema (1956) and Hugh Knapp (1971), material on the New England Theology was almost impossible to be had. Even when the New Divinity were invited in for a brief appearance, as they were in Stephen Berk’s *Calvinism versus Democracy: Timothy Dwight and the Origins of American Evangelical Orthodoxy* (1974), it was usually to repeat Haroutunian’s contemptuous dismissal. Then in 1977, Joseph Conforti, a student of William McLoughlin at Brown University, wrote a remarkable and sympathetic dissertation on Samuel Hopkins (which he published in 1981 as *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement*), and in 1978, a Sydney Ahlstrom student at Yale, William Breitenbach, wrote an extraordinary (but still unpublished) dissertation titled “The New Divinity and the Era of Moral Accountability.” These two Ph.D. dissertations finally restarted creative work on the New Divinity material, and their reassessment was taken up in a radical new synthesis of American intellectual history in 1985 by Bruce Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey*. The two most recent surveys of American theology, Mark Noll’s *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (2002) and E. Brooks Holifield’s *American Theology: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (2003), devote multiple chapters to the New England Theology.

With them, the New England Theology has been stood back on its feet, although this is a revival conducted as an act of historical research rather than as a devotional pursuit of what the New England theologians liked to call “Consistent Calvinism.” For that reason, this revival might not be significantly different in its novelty from other academic revivals of obscure personae and movements in the American past, nor significantly differing from their tedium. But the reemergence of the

10. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, “Edwards and the New England Theology,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 5, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912), 221, 226.

New England Theology as a major historical player in American intellectual and religious history does have a number of important claims to advance, suggesting that its staying power may be more than a little resilient. First, the claims of the New England Theology require students of American intellectual history to reconsider the once-prevailing consensus that the history of American ideas is largely a story about Boston, Unitarians, and Harvard—the great convention of American intellectual history, which implies that the whole business can be confined to a narrative that runs from Edwards to Emerson to William James—and to examine the extension of various Continental legacies and conversations into the provinces and into what Bruce Kuklick calls the tradition of “speculative thought.”¹¹

Second, recovering the ideas and texts of the New England Theology in general (and the New Divinity in particular) lays a foundation for understanding the strain of ethical absolutism that underlies nineteenth-century American reform movements. A great deal of this absolutism was owed to Kant and American readers of Kant, beginning with James Marsh and Ralph Waldo Emerson. But Romantic Kantian ethics of the Emersonian sort falls a great deal short of explaining the fiery urgency of William Lloyd Garrison and John Brown, and it is only when we have in hand the puzzle piece of the ethics of disinterested benevolence, which springs from the New Divinity, that we begin to understand what moved John Brown (who grew up under New Divinity preaching in Connecticut) or what makes the evangelical radicalism of the antislavery movement really comprehensible. By the same token, the recovery of the New England Theology makes it clear that the most distinctive form of that absolutism—moral perfectionism—was a Calvinist as much as a Methodist or Holiness innovation. At the end of the day, perhaps *nous sommes tous calvinistes*.

Third, the New England Theology compels us to revisit the history of Reformed theology in America and to broaden the scope of that history to include the multiple forms of evangelical Calvinism that dominated the American horizon in the nineteenth century, forms that could accommodate Charles G. Finney as much as Charles Hodge. Edwards commanded, and still commands, a healthy following among Calvinist Baptists. Isaac Backus, who is known for his writings on church-state separation, introduced Edwardsean views into Baptist thinking, and Jonathan Maxcy made a dent in the New Divinity doctrinal platform with his “Discourse

11. Bruce Kuklick, “The Place of Charles Hodge in the History of Ideas in America,” in *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work*, ed. John H. Stewart and James H. Moorhead (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 64.

Designed to Explain the Doctrine of Atonement" (1796).¹² Early Southern Baptist leaders also appropriated Edwards. William Bullein Johnson, a faithful protégé of Maxcy, along with William Brantly, Luther Rice, and Jesse Mercer, are only the best-known examples of Edwardsean church leaders who played important roles in shaping early Southern Baptist life—most importantly through the founding of the Triennial Convention (1814), predecessor to the Southern Baptist Convention (1845). Even today, John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, publishes widely popular books on Edwards's thought and spirituality and heads a national center, named Desiring God Ministries, devoted in part to sharing Edwardsean views with others.¹³ Within the Southern Baptist Convention, Edwardsean partisanship persists by means of the efforts of the Calvinistic Founders Movement.

The Princetonians, of course, disliked making any concession to the New Englanders and often disputed the New Englanders' title to Calvinism (as Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield did concerning the issue of Finney and Oberlin Perfectionism in a series of articles published posthumously in 1931 as *Studies in Perfectionism*). But however much the Princetonians criticized the New Englanders, it was still a family criticism. However much they might deplore Edwardseanism, from the time of the Great Awakening to the early twentieth century, Presbyterians north and south happily appealed to Edwards as a champion of Calvinist orthodoxy, despite the chronic fears of Old Schoolers regarding the dangers of infection from New England.¹⁴ One modern heir of Princeton Calvinism, John Gerstner (a faculty member at Pittsburgh Seminary as well as Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) plied hundreds of pastors, seminarians, and evangelical laity with Edwards, devoted his summers to poring over Edwards's manuscripts at Yale, and published several books on Edwards's theology.¹⁵ He also made disciples, most importantly

12. Jonathan Maxcy's "Discourse" was anthologized by Edwards Amasa Park in what has become the standard New Divinity volume on the subject: Edwards A. Park, ed., *The Atonement: Discourses and Treatises by Edwards, Smalley, Maxcy, Emmons, Griffin, Burge, and Weeks* (Boston: Congregational Board of Publication, 1859).

13. John Piper's Edwardsean publications include *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1986); *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990); *The Pleasures of God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1991); *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1998); and John Piper and Justin Taylor, eds., *A God Entranced Vision of All Things: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004).

14. For a lengthier discussion of Baptist and Presbyterian Edwardseanism, see Douglas A. Sweeney, "Evangelical Tradition in America," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

15. John Gerstner's best-known publications include *Steps to Salvation: The Evangelistic Message of Jonathan Edwards* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959); *Jonathan Edwards on Heaven and Hell* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); *Jonathan Edwards: A Mini-Theology*

R. C. Sproul, who established Ligonier Ministries in the early 1970s near Gerstner's home in western Pennsylvania. A deeply Edwardsean institution, Ligonier Ministries moved to Orlando, Florida, in 1984. Today it sponsors a radio show, a monthly magazine, a multimedia ministry, and numerous seminars. It also owns an Edwardsean firm named *Soli Deo Gloria*, which was founded by Don Kistler, another Edwards partisan.

Edwards, as befits a theologian who straddled at least one denominational fence (between New England Congregationalism and Middle Atlantic Presbyterianism), also managed to acquire a substantial theological following beyond conventional denomination circles. Iain Murray and his Banner of Truth Trust, based in Scotland, have prompted thousands of evangelicals to study Edwards's oeuvre.¹⁶ Evangelical academics such as Paul Helm, George Marsden, Mark Noll, and Gerald McDermott have made the study of Edwards into a scholarly industry.¹⁷ Even theologians within mainline churches, which otherwise seem to hold precious little of Edwards's ideas, have begun to "retrieve" Edwards for the work of constructive theology. Sang Hyun Lee is the best known. His tenure teaching at Princeton Seminary and his work on what he calls Edwards's "dispositional ontology" have contributed both to Edwards studies and to the field of theology.¹⁸ Lee's student, the Japanese theologian Anri Morimoto, has adapted Lee's insights to the field of soteriology, recommending Edwards for use in Roman Catholic-Protestant dialogue.¹⁹ Robert Jonson, though a Lutheran, has also recommended Edwards as

(Wheaton: Tyndale, 1987); and *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 3 vols. (Orlando: Ligonier, 1991-93). For more on recent evangelical uses of Edwards's thought, see Sweeney, "Evangelical Tradition in America."

16. Iain Murray's best-known work is a study of Edwards's life, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987).

17. See, for example, Edwards's *Treatise on Grace, and Other Posthumously Published Writings*, ed. with an introduction by Paul Helm (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971); George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 77-81; Gerald R. McDermott, *Seeing God: Twelve Reliable Signs of True Spirituality* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995); and Gerald R. McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions? Jesus, Revelation, and Religious Traditions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000). Also see the essays in D. G. Hart, Sean Michael Lucas, and Stephen J. Nichols, eds., *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

18. See especially Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Sang Hyun Lee, editor's introduction to Jonathan Edwards, *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 21 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1-106.

19. See especially Anri Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

"America's theologian," one who can aid us in negotiating the forces of the Enlightenment.²⁰

This leads ineluctably to the questions of whether there is an identifiable Edwardsean theological legacy today and whether the New England theologians who followed Edwards are worth rehabilitating as a living component of modern Reformed thinking. It is very much because of those questions, as well as the questions posed by the scholarly revival of interest in the New England Theology, that we have undertaken this collection of the New England Theology's primary texts. The New Englanders' commitment to improving on the past, to recontextualizing even the best of their doctrinal inheritance, and to calling no man master has left the larger world with a set of rich, Edwardsean resources that have rarely been controlled by those opposed to innovation. We hope this volume will help students navigate these vast resources. We also hope it will be used by many present-day theologians who will engage America's first indigenous theological movement.

Most of the readings in this volume were published by Edwards and his followers and are reproduced here in abridged form. One of the texts printed below is published here for the first time. Thanks to Roland Baumann and the Oberlin College Archives for permission to transcribe, edit, and publish "Oberlin Theology" by James Harris Fairchild (James Harris Fairchild Papers, Oberlin College Archives).²¹

The readings have been edited very lightly. Bible references have been regularized, as have the headings within entries. Selections are reproduced verbatim, except where the original punctuation and spelling would prove confusing to modern students and where obvious typographical errors were corrected. The only changes in punctuation that affect our original sources' prose pertain to modern standards for the use of commas (which we have followed). Ellipses mark the spots where material has been deleted. The original authors' footnotes have been deleted without notice.

20. Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

21. This manuscript was later revised and published as "Oberlin Theology," in *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, vol. 7, ed. John McClintock and James Strong (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 277-78.