

*Edwards in Our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping of American Religion.*  
Edited by Sang Hyun Lee and Allen C. Guelzo. William B. Eerdmans Publishing  
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Jonathan Edwards (1708-58) is perhaps the foremost of America's evangelical theologians and philosophers. He is also regarded as the 18<sup>th</sup> century's most powerful exponent of experimental Calvinism. It has been said that Puritanism reached its fullest bloom in his life and ministry.

Edwards graduated from Yale in 1720. In 1724, he became pastor of the church at Northampton, Massachusetts, a colleague of his grandfather Samuel Stoddard until the latter's death in 1729. He succeeded his grandfather in the Northampton church. Under the influence of Edward's powerful preaching, the Great Awakening occurred in 1734-35 and a geographically more extensive revival in 1740-41. He became a close friend of George Whitefield (1714-1770), then itinerating in America. His congregation dismissed him after a controversy over the standards for admission to church membership.

He then ministered in frontier Stockbridge, Massachusetts, in congregations of whites and Indians. He died of inoculation for smallpox, only a few weeks after he began his work as president of the College of New Jersey.

In his busy schedule as pastor and revivalist, Edwards found time to compose works on theology and philosophy, which still challenge scholars today. He was a complete stranger to that separation of "heart" and "head" that has often plagued evangelicalism. His sermons were erudite, demonstrating his rigorous scholarly work he engaged in as a pastor who cared for the souls and minds of his flock. As recent as the 1990s some leaders of the Toronto Blessing movement, which attracted so much media attention because of its strange and even bizarre manifestations, claimed that Jonathan Edwards would have supported holy laughter, tears, groans, falling down, etc. But Walter V.L. Eversley definitively shows in his essay The Pastor as Revivalist that Edwards excoriated dependence on the unsanctified imagination, which leads to emotional excesses.

The nine essays in this book originated as papers by "Edwarsean" scholars for the fourth American conference on Jonathan Edwards held in Philadelphia in 1996. They focus on Edwards as pastor, philosopher, and theologian. The learned essayists show that Edward's philosophy is able to stimulate reflection on topics relevant for our time. Historians, theologians, ethicists interested in Edwards will find the essays a good contribution to the exploration of this great man's thought and spiritual life. But students of Edwards should be careful and discriminating as they read *Edwards in Our Time*. Some of the essayists are chiefly interested in him as a great thinker, a great writer, a great ethicist, rather than in his stalwart orthodox faith and as the theologian of the First Great Awakening.

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