

Part One: Introduction: Historical, Cultural, and Social Contexts

1. Overture to a Symphony

This book endeavors to summarize Edwards’ theology along the whole range of “themes” he explored.

TRINITARIAN COMMUNICATION	CREATURELY PARTICIPATION	NECESSITARIAN DISPOSITIONALISM	THEOCENTRIC VOLUNTARISM	HARMONIOUS CONSTITUTIONALISM
The relationships among the persons of the Trinity are love and beauty themselves, overflowing in the creation of the world.	God’s communication from the perspective of moral beings, a corollary of Trinitarian communication.	The essence of a thing is what it is by nature inclined to do; in a moral being the sum of its affections reveal its disposition, and it will always act accordingly.	God wills first in all moral beings’ willing (predestination), including going first in regeneration.	All aspects of salvation work together, all mutually dependent on each other, both in the believer (e.g., faith and love) and in all history.

2. Edwards: A Theological Life

A biographical overview.

3. Edwards’s Intellectual Context

Edwards was the heir of 17th-century Puritan scholasticism; he operated in a New England undergoing “anglicization” and confronted the wide spectrum of rationalistic viewpoints that saw human agency as necessary for virtue.

4. Edwards’s Spirituality

Edwards spirituality blended rigorous discipline seeking God with mystical enjoyment of God awaiting consummation in the eternal state.

5. The Question of Development: Did Edwards Change?

Edwards’ interest took successive “turns” during his life—from empirical spiritual experience (mid- to late 1730s) to rigorous personal ethics (early to mid-1740s) to the nature of the church and sacraments (late 1740s) to Calvinist polemics (late 1740s to early 1750s) to the history of religions (mid- to late 1750s).

Part Two: Topics in Edwards’s Theology

SECTION 1: METHODS AND STRATEGIES

6. Beauty and Aesthetics

At the heart of Edwards’ theology is beauty—the excellence of relations inherent in the Trinity, reflected in the creation.

7. Metaphysics

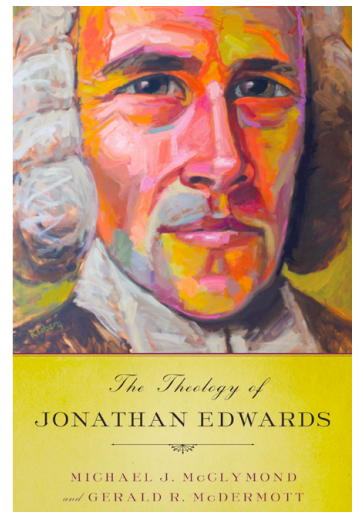
Edwards traced three paths to God via metaphysical argumentation: God’s power exhibited in atoms’ resistance to other atoms, the impossibility of “nothing” existing, and all things that exist being ideas in the mind of God.

8. Typology: Scripture, Nature, and All of Reality

Edwards believed that not only Scripture but also nature and history consist of objective realities that signify divinely communicated truths.

9. Revelation: Scripture, Reason, and Tradition

God communicates objective truths and subjective apprehension of those truths through Scripture; reason can grasp truth about God but unless regenerated cannot grasp knowledge for salvation; Edwards downplayed tradition in theory but depended on it in practice.



10. Apologetics

Edwards confronted deist attacks on orthodoxy with arguments from historical evidence, arguments from inner experience, and attempts to orient all fields of knowledge to Christian theology.

11. Biblical Exegesis

Edwards argued for the Bible's veracity through historical-critical methods, but he also insisted on the necessary work of the Holy Spirit to make it a saving message to the reader and to illuminate the spiritual meaning tied to but transcending the literal sense of the text.

12. The Concept of a History of Redemption

Edwards was prevented by death from summarizing Christian theology in the framework of a global historical narrative that included non-Western religions and cultures and the "secular" arts and sciences.

SECTION 2: THE TRIUNE GOD, THE ANGELS, AND HEAVEN

13. God as Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Edwards started with the Persons in God (explained as "fountain," "idea," and "act," or "happiness," "knowledge," and "love") and employed beauty to express God's oneness; he contested rationalists' arguments against the mystery of the Trinity and asserted a necessary correspondence between the immanent and economic Trinity.

14. The End of God in Creation

Edwards argued in *End of Creation* in terms familiar to Enlightenment ethics and Catholic teleology that God's glory is humanity's (participatory) happiness and that God is both self-sufficient and self-diffusive.

15. Providence and History

In *A History of the Work of Redemption*, Edwards claimed God's work of redemption to be the single theme, revealed in the Scriptures, that describes the meaning of history as a series of cycles of advance and defeat that nevertheless progress toward final, victorious completion.

16. The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

Edwards viewed Christ as agent of creation as well as redemption through his covenant with the Father and God-satisfying life and death; Edwards marveled in hypostatic union but seemed to accent the divine side.

17. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the bond between the Father and the Son, between the Son's divine and human natures, and between God and the believer; his presence in the believer is salvation, conversion, and sanctification.

18. The Angels in the Plan of Salvation

Edwards saw angels as the other half (with humans) of a single society and crucial actors on both sides of the work of redemption.

19. Heaven Is a World of Love

Heaven is a place where the beauty and love of God are apparent, drawing in those humans who belong there as an immense, unendingly increasing amplification of the best of human society.

SECTION 3: THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND DIVINE GRACE

20. The Affections and the Human Person

"Affections" are the central inclinations or preferences in the human person that affect the person's perception, emotion, and choice; conversion is the apprehension of divine excellency and love of it for its own sake, resulting in observable holy practice.

21. Edwards's Calvinism and Theology of the Covenants

Edwards affirmed Calvinism and covenant theology, but he defined the covenants of works and grace and church and national covenants as outworkings of the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, and he espoused infralapsarianism to prioritize God's goodness over his wrath.

22. Free Will and Original Sin

In his attack on contemporary Arminianism, Edwards defined the will as the mind's choice based on the affections, which are also the seat of virtue; Edwards made the case for universal depravity and the imputation of

Adam's sin to all humanity, but his occasionalism and explanation for how a good Adam could fall into sin without making God responsible has come under criticism.

23. Salvation, Grace, and Faith: An Overview

Saving grace is the Holy Spirit of love infused into the person, conforming the affections to the Spirit's own, resulting in virtuous love, by God's efficacious, unconditional initiative; faith is the disposition that both apprehends and trusts God out of love for him, resulting in works that may assure the believer.

24. Conversion: A Divine and Supernatural Light

With or without preparatory means, God instantaneously bestows "light" on an individual who then "sees" and loves God's excellency with an interior sense more basic than cognition; that disposition (regeneration) may precede repentance and faith (conversion).

25. Justification and Sanctification

Faith unites a person to Christ so that his righteousness becomes one's own (justification), and because faith is the alteration of one's disposition toward God, it necessarily entails increasing obedience through suffering (sanctification) as well.

26. The Theme of Divinization

Edwards understood God to create beings to be "swallowed up" in God and partake of his nature by joyously apprehending him.

27. Theology of Revival

Edwards was overjoyed at the Holy Spirit's reviving work but cautioned people neither to be turned off by its unusually demonstrative concomitants nor to make them the proof of its reality; he also participated in a transatlantic conversation to encourage revival.

SECTION 4: CHURCH, ETHICS, ESCHATOLOGY, AND SOCIETY

28. The Church

God created the earthly church to experience a foretaste of its destiny, the full participation of all its members in the communication of the Trinity; Edwards viewed Catholicism as antichrist was but was charitable towards other Protestant denominations and preferred Presbyterianism to his native Congregationalism.

29. Edwards on (and in) Ministry

With suffering and disciplining love, pastors are to reveal to, refresh, and direct their flocks by caring for souls with prayer and humble correction; Edwards practiced what he preached, but his personality, rules on the sacraments, and admonition of the complacent led to his dismissal from Northampton.

30. The Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Edwards saw sacraments as the dramatic, real presence of Christ united to his church—in baptism, which conditionally brings children of believers into the church, and the Lord's Supper, the memorial of Christ's covenant with the church.

31. The Voice of the Great God: A Theology of Preaching

Edwards preached terror, good news, how to obtain salvation, comfort, and God's excellency, relying on God to affect his hearers powerfully through succinct expression of his main point, vivid imagery, and rigorous logic, and working hard to develop an extemporaneous style.

32. Public Theology, Society, and America

Edwards believed that government's execution of its duties was important because the community's well-being was important to God; though he believed in patriotism, he did not think it necessarily indicated virtue in those who had it, as it easily turns to pride.

33. True Virtue, Christian Love, and Ethical Theory

True virtue is the foundational virtue of benevolent love, which is the beautiful operation of the intra-Trinitarian life, instantiated among human beings—a virtue that the unregenerate may simulate but only the regenerate possess.

34. Edwards on (and in) Mission

Edwards saw the propagation of the gospel by missionary divines as the stimulant to revival and the hidden driver of history; his mission to and advocacy for the Stockbridge Indians showed a growing recognition of their equality with whites because both were equally depraved and needy of grace.

35. Eschatology

Edwards insisted on the reality of eternal hell, described as the excruciating presence of God to the deserving damned who hated him; he forecast a 250-year, turbulent period of increasing revival leading to a millennium of unprecedented peace on earth followed by Christ's final judgment of all which would once and for all establish God's justice.

36. Christianity and Other Religions

Edwards believed that the *prisca theologia* from Noah and then from the Jews had been partially transmitted to most peoples, that God even employed pagan religious features as types of the gospel, and that God may dispose non-Christians to salvation prior to them hearing and believing the gospel.

Part Three: Legacies and Affinities: Edwards's Disciples and Interpreters

37. Selective Readings: Edwards and the New Divinity

Edwardseans of the 18th and 19th centuries were a diverse bunch who disagreed among themselves, but all sought to apply a selection of Edwards' philosophical and ethical ideas to maintain a form of Calvinism compatible with revivalism against both Old Calvinist and liberal critics.

38. Mixed Reactions: Princeton and Andover Seminaries and Nineteenth-Century American Culture

Princetonians liked Edwards' Calvinist polemics but disapproved of his philosophical innovations and revival theology; Andover and Yale accommodated what they could of Edwards to Scottish common sense realism; and in the latter half of the 19th century Edwards' focus on (an odious) God caused his neglect.

39. New Beginnings: The Twentieth-Century Recovery of Jonathan Edwards

A few 20th-century appreciators of Edwards climaxed in Perry Miller's artful (and controversial) intellectual biography, which stimulated the Yale edition project, which facilitated massively expanding interest in Edwards.

40. Interpretations I: Edwards and Modern Philosophy

From the 19th century to the present Edwards' thought has inspired and influenced philosophers in various and divergent ways.

41. Interpretations II: Jonathan Edwards and the Reformed Tradition

Edwards was authentically Reformed but developed the tradition in innovative ways not unlike Karl Barth.

42. Interpretations III: Edwards and the Revival Tradition

From his death to the present, Edwards has been criticized, ignored, and cited as evidence in debates about the nature, signs, and value of revival.

43. Interpretations IV: Edwards and the Catholic and Orthodox Traditions

Edwards has affinities to Catholic thought on spiritual discernment, analogy of being (notably between human and divine love), and salvation by created grace, and to Orthodox thought on Trinitarian metaphysics and salvation by participation in God.

44. Interpretations V: Edwards and Contemporary Theology

Edwards' thought has launched recent discussions among theologians as to ethics, aesthetics, the priority of God, narrative, God's sovereignty, public theology, and world religions, with new explorations on the horizon.

45. Conclusion: Edwards as Theological Bridge

Edwards was rooted in the Reformed tradition, but his many-sidedness makes him a meeting place between East and West, Protestant and Catholic, liberal and conservative, and charismatic and non-charismatic.