

Jonathan Edwards *and the Environment*



"The Oxbow," Thomas Cole's view of the Oxbow, Northampton, Mass, from Mt. Holyoke. 1836 oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art

A conference to consider the relevance of the thought of Jonathan Edwards to our current environmental and ecological concerns.

**October 5-7, 2007
Jonathan Edwards Meetinghouse
(the First Churches)
129 Main Street, Northampton, MA**



Memorial Plaque of Jonathan Edwards unveiled on June 22, 1900 at The First Churches, Northampton, Massachusetts

Convener's Opening Remarks

On the very site where we are now convened, Jonathan Edwards ministered to his congregation for almost a quarter of a century. A memorial to him in the form of a bronze bas-relief sculpted by Herbert Adams is mounted on wall of the sanctuary, part of the fifth meeting house to occupy this site. It was formally unveiled on June 22, 1900 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Edwards' dismissal. This memorial plaque, according to N. H. Gardiner who chaired the committee commissioning it, "represents more than the desire of this church to atone for the past; it represents rather a general sentiment of respect for the illustrious minister who belongs to no single church exclusively, but to the historic Church Universal."

We are convened here at The First Churches to consider the relevance of the thought of Jonathan Edwards to our current environmental and ecological concerns. Edwards was a keen observer of nature, and filled his voluminous notebooks with exact and sometimes poetic descriptions of a wide variety of natural phenomena. He conceived of the world Neo-Platonically as an emanation of God's external glory. He interpreted nature as a book of types or symbols, coordinate with scripture, which shadowed forth moral and spiritual lessons. He highly valued natural beauty since for him it was an image of divine beauty or love. His ethics of benevolence or "consent to being in general" morally enfranchises not only human but all other sentient beings. Clearly, then, Edwards has much to say to those working in the general fields of ecology, environmental philosophy and theology, and in the more specific fields of environmental ethics and aesthetics.

All the conferees are invited to join in establishing and contributing to the work of the Jonathan Edwards Society which is dedicated to promoting ongoing research on America's Spiritual Founding Father.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, 2007

8:30-8:45 a.m. Convocation

- Introductions by The Rev. Peter Ives & Richard A. S. Hall

8:40-9:30 a.m.

- “The Glory of God and the Beauty of the Earth: Interpreting Ecology through Theological Aesthetics”
--*James McPherson*

9:35-10:25 a.m.

- “Jonathan Edwards on the Beauty of the World: Ecological Themes”
--*Darrol M. Bryant*

10:30-11:20 a.m.

- “Abusing Nature,” A Manuscript Sermon”
--*Max Lesser*

11:25-12:15 p.m.

- “More than Metaphors: Jonathan Edwards and the Environment in the Stockbridge Sermons”
--*Stephen J. Nichols*

12:15-1:30 p.m. **LUNCH**

1:30-2:20 p.m.

- “‘Benevolence to Being in general’: The Universality of Edwards’ Nature”
--*James Hewitson*

2:25-3:15 p.m.

- “The Contemplative Nature of Jonathan Edwards’ *Personal Narrative*”
--*Darryl Robert Frayne*

3:20-4:10 p.m.

- “Jonathan Edwards and the Wilderness Tradition Of American Culture”
--*David R. Williams*

4:15-5:05 p.m.

- “John Woolman--Quaker Divine: How His Life and Thought Might Contribute to Our Environmental Discussions”
--*Michael Thompson*

5:10-6:00 p.m.

- “Jonathan Edwards as God’s Gardener and Henry David Thoreau as God’s Warrior: A Comparison and Contrast”
--*Vernice Cain*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6TH, 2007

8:30-9:20 a.m.

- “Jonathan Edwards and the End of the World”
--*Ken Minkema*

9:25-10:15 a.m.

- “A God-Haunted World: An Edwardsean Rationale for Saving the Creation”
--*Robert Boss*

10:20:12:10 p.m.

- “Edwards and Ecology: An Accommodation”
--*David E. White*

12:15-1:05 p.m.

- “Ecological Imagination”
--*Steven Fesmire*

1:05-2:20 p.m. **LUNCH**

2:25-3:15 p.m.

- “The Transcendentalist Deduction of Goodness from Beauty”
--*John Martin*

3:20-4:10 p.m.

- “Spider in a Tree”
--*Susan Stinson*

4:15-5:05 p.m.

- “Human Values & Social Structures: An Edwardsean Reflection on the Moral Environment”
--*John Taylor*

5:10-6:00 p.m.

- “Jonathan Edwards on the ‘Flying’ Spider: A Model of Ecological Thought in Microcosm”
--*Richard Hall*

5:30-7:00 p.m. **RECEPTION (Forbes Library)**

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7TH, 2007

10:00-11:00 a.m.

- Service of Worship
The Rev. Peter Ives, Preacher

11:00-12:00 noon

- Coffee Hour

12:00-1:00

- Business Meeting: The Jonathan Edwards Society

LOCATION

All academic sessions of the conference will be held in The First Churches:

- Address: 129 Main Street, Northampton, MA 0160
- Phone: (413) 584-9392

I wish to thank the following individuals for their indispensable work in the planning and organization of this conference:

- *Peter Ives, Pastor at The First Churches, Northampton, MA*
- *Holly Martineau, Publicist with the Jonathan Edwards Meeting House, Northampton, MA*
- *Elise Bernier-Feeley, Local History & Genealogy Librarian, Forbes Library, Northampton, MA*
- *Julie H. Bartlett, Archivist, Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library & Museum, Hampshire Room for Local History, Forbes Library, Northampton, MA*
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