

Jonathan Edwards

On

World Christianity: Ecumenism, Interfaith Dialogue, and Religious Awakening



"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 Edwards as a Global Theologian

**October 6-9, 2011
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

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."

Jonathan Edwards, at the hands of his commentators over the past three centuries or so, has undergone a gradual expansion of his appeal and significance. Initially he was mainly the subject of highly polemical in-house disputes between the men of the New Divinity and their opponents who took sides over issues like his treatment of free will. George Bancroft neatly summed up Edwards' parochial status in the mid-eighteenth century (and the first half of the next century) when he counseled, "he that will know the workings of the mind of New England in the middle of the last century, and the throbbings of its heart, must give his days and nights to the study of Jonathan Edwards." In that period Edwards was little more than the key to understanding a regional mentality. In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, a more cosmopolitan Edwards was revealed who could rightfully take his place on the international stage as a philosopher brooking comparison with his famous contemporaries Berkeley and Hume. Until recently, Edwards has been mainly the study of liberal humanists, among whom Perry Miller is paradigmatic. Now, though, Edwards has been discovered by evangelical Christians, and not merely as a figure of historical and academic interest, but as a living presence and a continuing source of inspiration and instruction. His celebrity status among this group is symbolized by a popular t-shirt emblazoned with the device, "Jonathan Edwards is My Home Boy"—incidentally, a curious tribute to one who called no man master! But the scope of Edwards' significance has widened even further. Michael McClymond and Gerry McDermott have dubbed Edwards the "Global Theologian for Twenty-First-Century Christianity," the theme of their forthcoming monograph, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, from Oxford University Press. They regard Edwards as nothing less than the *via media* "between Western (Latin) Christianity and the Christian East, between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, between theological conservatism and liberalism, and between non-Charismatic and Charismatic Christianity." There is a parallel here between Edwards and his older contemporary, Johann Sebastian Bach. For most of his life Bach, who never traveled more than two hundred miles from his birthplace, wrote music for the Lutheran Church. His contemporary reputation was as a provincial church cantor, virtuoso organist, and teacher, but little more. Now he is justly regarded as the universal musician *par excellence*, the alpha and omega of music. The same may be said of Edwards as the universal theologian.

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.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6TH, 2011

CONVOCATION

1:00-1:15 p.m.

- Greetings from The Rev. Mark Seifried & Richard A. S. Hall

HISTORY I

1:15-2:15 p.m.

- “The Rise of Arminianism in 18th Century Connecticut River Valley”
-- *Peter Jung*

2:15-3:15 p.m.

- “‘Their Foot Shall (Not?) Slide in Due Time’: Jonathan Edwards and Rob Bell on Terror in Theology and Witness”
-- *Owen Strachan*
-- *Wes Pastor*

3:30-4:30 p.m.

- “Revival Defined and Defended: How Jonathan Edwards and the New Lights Used America's First Christian Periodical to Quiet Critics and Quell Radicals”
-- *Collin Hansen*

4:30-5:30 p.m.

- “Jonathan Edwards, 2011 and Beyond: What did America's Most Brilliant Evangelist Predict for this Generation?”
-- *Robert Lee*

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7TH, 2011

HISTORY II

9:00-10:00 a.m.

- “Edwards & Panentheism”
-- *Jeffrey McPherson*
-- *Richard A. S. Hall (Commentator)*

SOTERIOLOGY

10:00-11:00 a.m.

- " Language in the Stockbridge Mission: Extremely Barbarous and Barren"
-- *Ian McFadden*
-- *Kenneth Minkema (Commentator)*

11:15-12:15 p.m.

- “Jerusha Edwards: A Heart Uncommonly Devoted to God”
-- *Joseph Harrod*
-- *David White (Commentator)*

12:15 -1:30 LUNCH

1:30-2:30 p.m.

- “Of Greatest Importance: Jonathan Edwards and True Conversion”
-- *Wes Pastor*
-- *Collin Hansen (Commentator)*

2:30-3:30 p.m.

- “Jonathan Edwards and Justification: Living Traditions and Ecumenical Dialogue”
-- *Jonathan Huggins*
-- *Adriaan Neele (Commentator)*

3:45-4:45 p.m.

- “A True and Seeming Atonement”
-- *S. Mark Hamilton*

8:00 p.m. **CONCERT:** "The Surprising Work of God":
Music: Jeff Olmsted
Words: Jonathan Edwards and Jeff Olmsted.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8TH, 2011

ECUMENICISM I

9:00-10:00 a.m.

- "The Thought of Jonathan Edwards in its Seventeenth-Century Context"
-- *Herbert W. Richardson*

10:00-11:00 a.m.

- Jonathan Edwards, Infinite Culpability and the *Revolt of the Elites*
-- *Howard G. Callaway*

11:00-12:15 p.m.

- Interdenominational Dialogue: Jonathan Edwards as a Proto-Baptist
-- *Chris Chun*
-- *Howard G. Callaway (Commentator)*

12:15-1:30: LUNCH

1:30-2:30 p.m.

- "Not One of Us: Jonathan Edwards and the Specter of Ecumenism"
-- *John J. Bombaro*
-- *Owen Strachan (Commentator)*

2:30-3:30 p.m.

- "Reading Edwards as the Universal Theologian"
-- *David White*
-- *Robert Lee (Commentator)*

3:45-4:45 p.m.

- The Personalistic Pluralism of Jonathan Edwards & George H. Howison
-- *Richard A. S. Hall*

BANQUET: Publick House, Sturbridge, Massachusetts. Time to be announced.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, 2007

10:00-11:00 a.m.

- Service of Worship
The Rev. Mark Seifried, Preacher

11:00-12:00 noon

- Coffee Hour

LOCATION

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

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

FORBES LIBRARY

We will have our local history room open with Edwards related items on display and available to researchers on Thursday, Friday, Saturday 1-5. We are happy to provide the conference with coffee, cider and morning goodies and cookies, brownies and cold drinks in the afternoon on both Friday and Saturday. Elise Bernier-Feeley will be attending the conference on Friday afternoon and all day Saturday. Susan Stinson, the library's Writer in Residence will also be attending both days. I will be there on Saturday.

Julie H. Bartlett
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Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library & Museum
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SPONSORSHIP

This conference is sponsored by The Edwin Mellen Press, an international publisher of scholarly books acquired by research libraries throughout the world. The Press publishes specialized research: monographs, bibliographies, concordances, dictionaries, commentaries, translations, critical editions, methodological studies, criticism, conference proceedings, and multi-volume sets. The Press publishes approximately 425 new titles a year, over two dozen continuing series, academic journals, and the research generated by several scholarly institutes. It was established in Canada in 1974, the United States in 1978, and Great Britain in 1987. The conference is co-sponsored by Forbes Library.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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