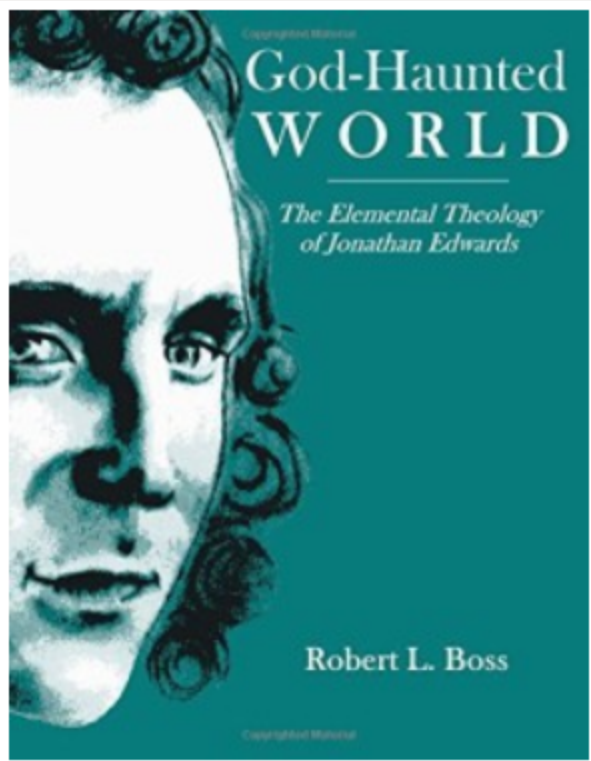


## Sweeney’s Booknotes: God-Haunted World: The Elemental Theology of Jonathan Edwards

by Doug Sweeney | October 12th, 2015

Robert L. Boss, *God-Haunted World: The Elemental Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (privately printed, 2015)



Despite the frightening connotations of its eye-catching but nonetheless misleading title, this self-published monograph repays careful attention with a primer on what others have described as Edwards’ quest to reenchant the natural world in the age of the Enlightenment.

Its author started the project as a doctoral dissertation under the guidance of Robert Caldwell at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (in Ft. Worth, Texas). In its current, published form, it appears on sturdy paper in an easy-to-read format, with insightful, summative side bars and 142 well-placed illustrations.

As Boss describes the book, it “is a visual exploration of the nexus between Scripture and Nature” in Edwards’ private manuscripts (p. 1). “In his personal notebooks and throughout his preaching and writing, Edwards unveils a God-haunted world,” the author explains, “in which we are surrounded by signs, symbols, and emblems that serve as windows to spiritual reality” (p. 3).

He focuses most closely on Edwards’ “Images of Divine Things,” a notebook on divine types found throughout the natural world. He categorizes this manuscript as an early modern emblem book that follows in the train of those by Bishop Joseph Hall, Ralph Austen, John Bunyan, Benjamin Keach, and the young Cotton Mather—all of whom read the physical world as a poetic composition symbolizing the truth and beauty of God, an effort in what Boss calls *reinscripturation*.

Why *reinscripturation* instead of the usual *reenchantment*? Because, Boss contends, Edwards labored “to recover the spiritual and distinctly biblical dimension of creation,” an effort often slighted in rehearsals of *reenchantment*. In fact, as Boss makes his case, Edwards’ *reinscripturation* of the natural world around him “is key to understanding the distinctively biblical and emblematic worldview evident within his emblem book ‘Images of Divine Things’” (p. 12). It is a key, in other words, to Edwards’ natural typology.

Boss is right about this. I recommend his book to everyone who is interested in typology and/or Edwards’ radically theocentric vision of the cosmos.

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