The Life & Theology of Jonathan Edwards
3HT728/01

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Reformed Theological Seminary – Charlotte
January 24th-28th, 2011
True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

(Malachi 2:6-7, ESV)

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

(1Timothy 4:16, ESV)

“One handful of marbles is all you get.”

The Multifaceted Edwards

Theologian →

Philosopher → ______ & ______

Revivalist/Evangelist →

“Jonathan Edwards was first of all a preacher.”

George M. Marsden (author, Jonathan Edwards: A Life)

“...prompted by his affective theology, Edwards passionately prepared and proclaimed his message in order to guide his flock to their eternal home.”

“The profoundest reasoner, and the greatest divine, in my opinion, that America ever produced.”

Samuel Davies (1723-61, “Apostle of Virginia” and Edwards’ successor at the College of New Jersey)

“He was, in the estimation of the writer, one of the most holy, humble and heavenly-minded men, that the world has seen, since the apostolic age.”

Ashbel Green (1762-1848, eighth president of Princeton)

“The greatest, wisest, humblest and holiest of uninspired men.”

John Collett Ryland (1723-92, Baptist minister and theologian)

“‘The Freedom of the Will’ by Mr. Edwards is the greatest achievement of the human intellect.”

Daniel Webster (1782-1852, Webster’s Dictionary)

“He was the greatest of the sons of men.”

Robert Hall (1764-1831, Baptist minister and theologian)

“Edwards on the Will never was answered and never will be answered.”

Dugald Stewart (1753-1828, Scottish philosopher)

“One of the acutest and most powerful reasoners.”

Edinburgh Review

“His gigantic specimen of theological argument is as near to perfection as we may expect any human composition to approach. He unites the sharpness of the scimitar and the strength of the battle-axe.”

London Quarterly Review
“From the days of Plato there has been no life of more simple and imposing grandeur than that of Jonathan Edwards.”

Westminster Review

“A Prince among preachers. In our day there is no man who comes within a thousand miles of him…”

Lyman Beecher (1775-1863, Presbyterian minister and “New School Calvinist”)

“The most gifted man of the eighteenth century, perhaps the most profound thinker in the world.”

Hollister’s History of Connecticut

“The most original and acute thinker yet produced in America.”

Moses Coit Tyler (1835-1900, writer of American intellectual history)

“We cannot take leave of Edwards, without testifying the whole extent of the reverence that we bear him. The American divine affords, perhaps, the most wondrous example in modern times, of one who stood richly gifted both in natural and spiritual discernment—and we know not what most to admire in him, whether the deep philosophy that issued from his pen, or the humble and child-like piety that issued from his pulpit… As the philosopher he could discern, and discern truly, between the sterling and the counterfeit in Christianity—still it was as the humble and devoted pastor that Christianity was made, or Christianity was multiplied in his hands.”

Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847, Scottish pastor/theologian/mathematician/philosopher; tutor of Robert Candlish and Andrew Bonar; “Chief Scottish Man of His Time”)

“Jonathan Edwards changed what I may call the centre of thought in American theological thinking... More than any other man, to Edwards is due the importance which, in American Christianity, is attributed the conscious experience of the penitent sinner, as he passes into the membership of the Invisible Church.

...The man we so often call our greatest American Divine... was indeed inexpressibly great in his intellectual endowment, in his theological achievement, in his continuing influence. He was greatest in his attribute of regnant, permeating, irradiating spirituality. It is at once a present beatitude and an omen of future good that, in these days of pride in wealth and all that wealth means, of pride in the fashion of this world which passeth away, we still in our heart of hearts reserve the highest honor for the great American who lived and moved and had his being in the Universe which is unseen and eternal.”

John DeWitt (1842-1923, Professor of Church History at Princeton Seminary, 1888-1912; “Jonathan Edwards: A Study” in Biblical and Theological Studies: A Commemoration of 100 Years of Princeton Seminary, 130-31.)
The Rise of Interest in JE

From 1949...

Perry Miller (1905-63)
to today.

“...The reasons for this compelling attraction vary widely over time and individual persuasion: some have approached Edwards for religious inspiration, others to exorcize the ghosts of their Puritan forebears; some have come to appreciate true virtue, others to understand the reality of total evil; some have discovered a great anachronism, others a prophet of modernity.”


Why are you taking a course on Edwards?

You need a traveling companion!

Let’s listen to John Piper and Tim Keller on the impact of Edwards on life and ministry...
“His leaf did not whither, for his roots were in the waters. It was here, too, that he began to study so closely the works of Jonathan Edwards, reckoning them a mine to be wrought, and if wrought, sure to repay the toil.”

(Andrew Bonar, The Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M’Cheyne, 35)

“The necessity of constant study for the work of the ministry remained one of Dr. Lloyd-Jones’ deepest convictions and was one of the main features of his own daily living. Next to his Bible it was probably Jonathan Edwards’ Works which provided the greatest stimulus to him at this date. While still in London he had asked a Welsh Presbyterian Minister for the name of books which would help him prepare for the ministry. One recommendation he received was Protestant Thought Before Kant, written by A.C. McGiffert. Although the book did not live up to his expectation, while reading it he came across the name of Jonathan Edwards for the first time. His interest aroused, Dr. Lloyd-Jones relates: ‘I then questioned my ministerial adviser on Edwards, but he knew nothing about him. After much searching I at length called at John Evans’ bookshop in Cardiff in 1929, having time available as I waited for a train. There, down on my knees in my overcoat in a corner of the shop, I found the two-volume 1834 edition of Edwards which I bought for five shillings. I devoured these volumes and literally just read and read them. It is certainly true that they helped me more than anything else.’”

(D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years 1899-1939, 253-54)

Class Hours

Mon. Jan 24th, 1:00-4:30pm
Tues-Thurs, Jan 25th-27th, 9:00am-4:30pm
Fri, Jan 28th, 9:00am-12:00pm

Office Hours

Instructor will gladly meet with students during breaks, lunch periods, and after classes. Please see me if you would like to set up a meeting time. I look forward to interacting with and getting to know you.

Connect!

E-mail: davidlovesdiane@mac.com
www.teachinglikera.in.wordpress.com
http://twitter.com/davidowenfilson
http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1193050120
Phone: 615-828-1517 (cell)
Course Description

*The Life and Theology of Jonathan Edwards* 3HT728/01 is a survey of the life and thought of “America’s Augustine,” as he has been called, with special focus upon Edwards’ context and writings.

Course Objectives

- To familiarize students with the life and context of JE
- To introduce students to the history of Edwards study and historiography
- To introduce students to the contours of JE’s theology
- To engage in rigorous historical theological reading, reflection, and analysis
- To discuss Edwards’ vision of the beauty of God and sweetness and excellencies of Jesus Christ along with the Church’s ways of contemporary multi-cultural engagement in the era of Starbucks’, i-Phones, and Facebook.
- To find our own hearts enamored with the “sweet inward sense” the Holy Spirit brings

Requirements and Grading

1. **Faithful Attendance** – As this is only a one-week course, our sessions together are vital to catching the trajectory and intention of the material. If you must miss a class period, please let me know your reasons ahead of time, if possible. To miss a day of class is to miss as many as seven lectures. While I will not take attendance at each session, missing a lecture will directly affect your ability to perform well on the final exam, as good answers will depend upon good note-taking in class. You are welcome to record my lectures.

2. **Reading Reports & Class Participation (30% of grade)** – I have carefully selected reading assignments from the oceanic store of primary and secondary sources on JE. Because of the intentionality behind my selections, it is paramount that you read all of the material. Read as a good theological student: humbly, critically, analytically, and with a view toward ST, BT, and PT implications. I will be able to tell if you are keeping up with your reading assigned for completion during our week together, as I ask questions of you in class. Also, I will ask you to sign off on what percentage you will have read on the final exam. You will also be expected to provide the following:

   **Jonathan and Java** – We will participate and dialog over some important JE sermons. On days 2, 3, and 4 we will discuss our reading of these sermons in light of our call to minister in the post-Christian, postmodern, post-evangelical “Starbucks’ culture” around us. On these class days (Jan 25th, 26th, & 27th), please bring a typed, one-page, double-spaced discussion starter paper, which evidences your reading of the assigned sermon via a brief synopsis of the sermon, along with thoughtful comments and questions for analysis and application to the Christian life and ministry situations.

   **Due Feb 18th: Book Report** – One of your assigned texts is *Heaven on Earth: Capturing Jonathan Edwards’ Vision of Living in Between* by Stephen Nichols. It is a delightful read, and one that will benefit greatly your present and future ministries. Write a five-page, double-spaced reflection paper on this book, and e-mail it to me at davidlovesdiane@mac.com, by Friday, Feb 18th. I am not looking for mere restatement of the content. I want to read a personal, pastoral, ministry-centered reflection on the content of the book. At the header of the paper, indicate the percentage of the book you read (hint: you will need to read the whole book, in order to compose a legitimate reflection paper).
3. **Research Paper (40% of grade, due March 11th)** – Students will research and write a scholarly term paper on one of the following:

   a. one of JE’s major treatises  
   OR  
   b. a major interpretive/doctrinal topic in JE’s thought.

Your paper should be 12-15 pages of solid research and analysis. Less than 12 pages will not be acceptable. Papers are to represent humble, scholarly interaction with primary and secondary sources, arguing and sustaining a thesis, and having a definite, well-conceived conclusion. If you would like help with the format of research paper writing, feel free to peruse some of my essays at [www.teachinglikerain.wordpress.com](http://www.teachinglikerain.wordpress.com), as examples of what a research paper can look like. Don’t hesitate to call or e-mail me with your questions. You could also read John Frame’s Appendices E&F on the writing of theological papers in *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*.

**Possible topics:**

Jonathan Edwards as Redemptive-Historical Theologian (Produce a paper centered on JE’s *History of the Work of Redemption*, summarizing and analyzing the text of that work in light of various secondary sources pertaining to his proto-Biblical-theological method, tri-world historical, and eschatological views.)

Jonathan Edwards’ Doctrine of the Covenant (Explore JE’s approach to Covenant Theology, via treaties and sermons. How does he incorporate the *pactum salutis*?)

Jonathan Edwards’ Doctrine of the Trinity (Examine particularly vol. 21 of the Yale Edition, JE’s *Treatise on Grace & Other Posthumously Published Writings*, ed. by Paul Helm, interact with secondary material, and assess JE’s Trinitarian theology in light of catholic doctrine and the way in which this impacts his epistemology.

Jonathan Edwards the Preacher (This would focus on representative sermons, as well as related secondary works and articles that give insight into JE’s homiletic.)

Jonathan Edwards as Calvinistic Theologian (The student would focus upon either *Freedom of the Will* or *Original Sin* and other secondary sources, in effort to discuss Edwards’ essential commitment and contribution to the theology of the Reformed tradition.)

Jonathan Edwards’ Ecclesiology (A paper on this topic would consider JE’s various sermons and treatises related to sacramental practice and other matters of polity practice.)

Jonathan Edwards and Revival Spirituality (An essay on this topic would examine JE’s revival writings, especially *Religious Affections*.)

**Term Paper Grading Guidelines:**

*If possible, your research papers should reference the *Yale Edition of the Works of Jonathan Edwards*! You may utilize other editions as well, but, if you have access, the majority of references should be *Yale*. In fact, you may wish to purchase the volume that most applies to your particular paper topic. With that said, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride. These volumes are pricey in hardcover. There are a few volumes in this series available in affordable paperback. If you would like, my wife can tell you some of the most effective ways I have talked her into letting me buy books over the years. Perhaps, this would help your cause. Otherwise, work out something with your fellow Edwardsian students here at RTS, regarding
sharing the *Yale Edition* the library holds. You can also access these volumes digitally at: http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse.

QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.

*Your paper will conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th - 15th editions, especially in footnotes and bibliography. Pay attention to your instructor’s in-class comments about the content of footnotes.

*You must reference some combination of ten secondary works (books and journal articles, my online essays, etc.). Don’t hesitate to ask me for bibliographical ideas. I am excited to get you excited about the texts and resources.

*No less than 12 pages, no more than 15 pages.

*65% of paper grade will rest on content, analysis, thesis, and quality research. 35% of paper grade will be based on style, coherence, clarity, and form.

4. **Exam (30% of grade, due March 11th)** – You will need to arrange with the front administrative desk to take your exam by March 11th. You will be given your exam to be taken in the library. If you live more than two hours away from campus, you will need to make arrangements with the Registrar for a proctor, who will receive your exam in the mail, oversee your taking of the exam, and mail it back to RTS with a signed statement. You will be asked to answer nine out of sixteen possible exam questions from which you may choose. The questions on the exam will be selected from or based upon the “Whys for the Wise” review questions at the end of each lecture handout. I encourage you to divide the study questions up among groups, combine answers and information, and study together for the exam in study groups. The questions should be answered with reference to readings (primary and secondary), lecture material, and personal reflection and analysis. Each question will be worth 10% of the exam. To reward your faithful reading of assigned texts, 10% of the grade will be credited to your good-faith statement of the percentage of reading you completed (again, see my statements above about good reading by a theological student).

**Review of Due Dates and Items:**

*Days 2, 3, & 4 of this week* – one-page, double-spaced *Jonathan & Java* discussion starter papers.

*Feb 18th* – five-page, double-spaced reflection paper on Nichols’ book.

*March 11th* – research paper and final exam due at RTS office.

**REMEMBER:** You will be asked what percentage of reading you completed on the final exam.
Course Texts

Ad fontes

*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2vol. Hickman Edition. This set is some of the best money you can spend. Recall Lloyd-Jones down on his knees in that Cardiff bookshop, as though he were a prospector finding gold in his pan. This can also be had in the Banner of Truth reprint. The Hendrickson set is a bit less expensive and also has an introductory essay on the life of JE.

OR

You can download a PDF file of these two volumes at:

http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.html

http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works2.html

Even if you want to buy the hardcopy, it is a great idea to go ahead and download these volumes to your hard drive for ready reference.

OR

If the cost of the 2vol. set is prohibitive for you right now, you could consider Yale University Press’ *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, eds. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema. In a small package, this will give you selections from many of the texts we will discuss this week. You could then supplement as needed from other sources for JE original source material.

Secondary Sources


*Jonathan Edwards: A Life* by George M. Marsden
Online Helps:

www.edwards.yale.edu

This is the official site of the Yale edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. It is a treasure trove, and is intended to serve the scholarly community of Edwards students.

www.teachinglikerain.wordpress.com

*Essays, etc., by your instructor:

~*The Cream of All Their Pleasures: The New Sense Spirituality of Jonathan Edwards*

~*Habitus Applied: An Overview of the Moral Theory of Robert Lewis Dabney with Special Reference to the Theological Ethic of Jonathan Edwards*

~*A Method Most Beautiful and Entertaining: An Approach to the Biblical-Theological Trajectory of Jonathan Edwards*

~*Fit Preaching: Toward a Theology of Jonathan Edwards’ Homiletic*

~*Exalted Above ‘Em: The Theological Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards*

~*Analytical Outlines of the 2 vol. Hickman Edition (i.e., Banner of Truth or Hendrickson Pub.) Sermons of Jonathan Edwards, with Links to Major Treatises and Miscellanes*

~*Topical Index to the 2 vol. Hickman Edition Sermons of Jonathan Edwards*

*Chronology of Life, Sermons, and Treaties*

*Annotated Bibliography*

*Annotated Audiography*

*JE Links*

**Highly Recommended Texts**


*America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* by Mark A. Noll


*Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word: A Model of Faith and Thought* by Douglas A. Sweeney
Course Plan

Monday, Jan 24th, 1:00-4:30pm

1:00-1:50pm  Introduction to Course & Syllabus
2:00-2:50pm  Lecture 1: Resolute for His Excellencies – A Life-sketch
3:00-3:40pm  Lecture 2: Sketching JE Philosophically & Theologically, Pt. 1
3:50-4:30pm  Lecture 3: Sketching JE Philosophically & Theologically, Pt. 2

Readings for Tuesday’s Lectures:

Jonathan & Java Sermon – Either Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God or The Most High a Prayer-hearing God (Write a one-page, double-spaced discussion starter paper on one of these two sermons for class tomorrow.)

Fit Preaching: Toward a Theology of Edwards’ Homiletic by David Owen Filson

Familiarize yourself with the layout and flow of Religious Affections, paying careful attention to Pts. I & II and the various false and true signs of gracious affections.

Tuesday, Jan 25th, 9:00am-4:30pm

9:00-9:50am  Lecture 4: JE as Preacher: Hermeneutic & Homiletic, Pt. 1
10:00-10:50am Lecture 5: JE as Preacher: Hermeneutic & Homiletic, Pt. 2
11:00-11:50am Lecture 6: JE as Preacher: Hermeneutic & Homiletic, Pt. 3
11:50am-1:00pm Lunch Break
1:00-1:50pm  Jonathan & Java: Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God/The Most High a Prayer-hearing God
2:00-2:50pm  Lecture 7: JE as Revival Minister, Pt. 1: Importance of Religious Affections - Pretension
3:00-3:50pm  Lecture 8: JE as Revival Minister, Pt. 2: Importance of Religious Affections - Possession
3:50-4:30pm  Lecture 9: JE as Revival Minister, Pt. 3: Importance of Religious Affections – Possession, cont’d.

Readings for Wednesday’s Lectures:

Jonathan & Java Discussion Prep – Reflect on Tuesday’s lectures on JE as a revival minister, as well as some of the pertinent primary sources we considered in class, and write a one-page discussion starter paper on one of the following questions, with an eye toward practical ministry application:

*Larry, the late-forties husband of a faithful member of your church, schedules a meeting with you to discuss recent spiritual events in his life. While pleasantly surprised, you are,
nonetheless, a bit surprised. Larry’s wife, Donna, has tried for years to get her husband to come to your church, “New Sense of the Heart Presbyterian Church.” Yet, he prefers going to “Pillow Presbyterian” (i.e., sleeping in on Sunday mornings, and later tail-gating down at the Panthers game). Occasionally, he will also attend “Bed Springs Baptist Chapel” or “St. Mattress Methodist Church.” You get the picture.

As it turns out, Larry is certain that he heard the Lord’s voice, right after Carolina scored a touchdown in the last quarter to win the game one Sunday, telling him to get things right with God. What makes this even more impacting is that he is certain he saw Jesus’ face form in the clouds above the stadium that day. So, Larry went to a mid-week revival at a local church with a well-intentioned and sincere Christian co-worker. While there, he saw people praising the Lord, even shouting at times. At one point, however, he saw several people began laughing uncontrollably; some even barked like dogs. The preacher claimed this was all the power of the Holy Spirit falling upon the congregation. Larry says he didn’t bark, but he may have felt a growl coming on during the service. The people there seemed so “fired up for the Lord.” He wants to know how he can have this kind of revival in his own life.

With that said, you do recall his wife mentioning how, for the last few weeks, Larry has been reading his Bible, talking about doctrinal matters, spending time with the family, treating her much better, praying, and genuinely trying to repent of some habitual sins in his life. He is even picking his dirty socks up off of the floor and has nixed telling dirty jokes. She really believes he may have been converted. What worries her, however, is Larry’s insistence that their family experience some of these astounding signs of the Spirit’s work in their lives, such as uncontrolled laughing, making animal sounds, etc. She fears what becoming involved in this movement may mean for her family’s spiritual health. Larry tells you that he truly wants to understand the Bible and follow Jesus for the rest of his life. At the same time, he knows you have a fair amount of Bible “learnin’”, and he genuinely wants your godly pastoral counsel at this wonderful, yet unfamiliar time of transition in his life.

What makes this whole situation even more interesting and imperative that you respond is that other members of your church are starting to express outward signs of emotion and bodily manifestations during worship at your church. Last Sunday, during a worship song, one lady became so enraptured that she fainted. Another man, while listening to you preach a few Sundays ago in your current series on the doctrine of justification began shaking and weeping aloud. The “Greasy Grace Prayer Group” that meets at church every Wednesday night to pray for revival is glad that, finally, New Sense of the Heart Presbyterian no longer feels like the “frozen chosen.” However, members of the “Properly Predestined Proud Presbyterian Proponents of Paul” Sunday school class are fearful that the church may start losing its sense of Reformed propriety and biblical integrity.

So, putting on your Edwardsian spectacles, as it were, how would you counsel Larry and Donna? How would you lead your congregation in evaluating true revival? How would you help reassure your congregation that the church will keep biblical principles of revival at the fore, while also being open to the Spirit’s work of revival in your midst? How does JE help you through this important pastoral situation?

Have a little fun with your answers, but be sure to show reverence for Spirit-wrought revival, a desire to foster affectionate experience, as well as the kind of diligent biblical analysis of which JE would approve. Remember, the purpose of your one-page paper is not a thorough study of revival and spiritual experience but rather a discussion-starter (that evidences you are wrestling with JE’s thought) for a class discussion tomorrow.
Wednesday, Jan 26th, 9:00am-4:30pm

9:00-9:50am Lecture 10: Theological Contours: Theology Proper, Pt. 1
10:00-11:00am Lecture 11: Theological Contours: Theology Proper, Pt. 2
11:00-11:50am Lecture 12: Theological Contours: Trinity, Pt. 1 – “The Highest and Deepest of All Divine Mysteries”
11:50am-1:00pm Lunch Break
1:00-1:50pm Jonathan & Java: Revival & New Sense of the Heart Presbyterian Church
2:00-2:50pm Lecture 13: Theological Contours: Trinity, Pt. 2 – “The Highest and Deepest of All Mysteries”
3:00-3:50pm Lecture 14: Theological Contours: Covenant
3:50-4:30pm Lecture 15: Theological Contours: Creation

Readings for Thursday’s Lectures:

Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever
Safety, Rest, and Sweet Refreshment to Be Found in Christ

Your discussion paper for Thursday, based on one of these two sermons, should be along the lines of a 10-15 minute devotional you might give at a prayer breakfast for your church’s WIC or men’s group. Use JE’s sermon as a base, then bring in your own thoughts and application. Tomorrow, I will call upon two students to come to the front of the class and lead us in a time of devotion.

Thursday, Jan 27th, 9:00am-4:30pm

9:00-9:50am Lecture 16: Theological Contours: Man, Sin, & the Will, Pt. 1
10:00-10:50am Lecture 17: Theological Contours: Man, Sin, & the Will, Pt. 2
11:00-11:50am Lecture 18: Theological Contours: Christology, Pt. 1
11:50am-1:00pm Lunch Break
1:00-1:50pm Lecture 19: Theological Contours: Christology, Pt. 2
2:00-2:50pm Lecture 20: Theological Contours: Soteriology
3:00-3:50pm Lecture 21: Theological Contours: Ecclesiology
3:50-4:30pm Jonathan & Java: Devotionals based on Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever or Safety, Rest, and Sweet Refreshment to Be Found in Christ

Readings for Friday’s Lectures:

Either The True Excellency of a Gospel Minister or Christ the Example of Ministers
No discussion starter paper is required. Simply read one of these sermons, and we will conclude our week considering our need for Jonathan Edwards and more
importantly, the Savior Edwards preached, followed by a season of prayer for our present and future ministries.

**Friday, Jan 28th, 9:00am-12:00pm**

9:00-9:50am  Lecture 22: *Theological Contours: Eschatological Vision of History*

10:00-10:50am  Lecture 23: *Theological Contours: Hell & Heaven*

11:00-12:00am  *Jonathan & Java: Postscript – Why We Need Edwards in Our Ministries Today*