

Anglo-America in the Transatlantic World

Jack P. Greene, General Editor

The Creation of the British Atlantic World

Edited by Elizabeth Mancke
and Carole Shammas

The Johns Hopkins University Press
Baltimore and London

Jonathan Edwards, the Enlightenment, and the Formation of Protestant Tradition in America

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Much has been written on the adaptability and replication of English norms of thought and behavior in colonial societies and the strong mimetic impulse found among colonial elites, as well as on the anglicization of colonial America and the rise of Anglo-American commercialism and consumer society.¹ Less attention, however, has been given to colonial *opposition* to intellectual developments and ideological transformations taking place in the centers of learning and scholarship in Europe during the eighteenth century. Yet voices of resistance to and rejection of British and European modes of thought had been raised in colonial British America prior to the era of the American Revolution, 1763–89, and these reveal the complexities involved in the development of the transatlantic intellectual world. In this chapter I want to focus on the dialectic implied in the ideological and intellectual negotiation and exchange between periphery and center by showing, first, that not only adaptation and replication but also opposition to European intellectual traditions played an important part in the creation of the Atlantic world; and second, how the rejection of certain European strains of thought influenced the formation of Protestant culture in America.

In what follows I shall explore the complex process of intellectual exchange through an examination of Jonathan Edwards's response to the Enlightenment fashioning of new modes of thought. I will to do so, more specifically, by focusing on Edwards's reaction to the emergence of new theories of ethics and morals and the shaping of new modes of historical thought in Britain and Europe during the eighteenth century. Given that Edwards's life of the mind reveals a lifelong involvement with contemporary European modes of thought, analysis of his reaction to Enlightenment theories of ethics and history may provide a good illustration of the process of ideological communication across the Atlantic. Indeed, many themes in Edwards's philosophical and theological enterprise provide evidence of the crucial transatlantic connection.² But Edward's work in the fields of ethics and history express more than anything else the complex process of transatlantic intellectual exchange. Edwards's philosophical and theological enterprise may be best understood, I will argue, within this broad intellectual context of early modern history. Edwards's works were primarily directed at and read mostly by Protestant theologians all over Europe—in England, Scotland, Wales, Germany, Switzerland, and Eastern Europe³—and very rarely if at all by any philosophers of note during the Age of Reason. His reaction against the emergence of new concepts of ethics and history played a key role in the creation of transatlantic evangelical culture and left an indelible mark on Protestant culture in America.

Edwards, the Enlightenment, and Protestant Evangelical Awakening

Much of Edwards's philosophical and theological work can be characterized as a struggle to rescue traditional Christian faith and belief from the menace of the new scientific exposition of the nature of reality and from Enlightenment theories of ethics and history. His philosophical theology was a reaction, in part, to new modes of thought that were gradually bringing about the exclusion of religious thinking and belief from history, from the physical world, and from the realm of morals.⁴ Thus, in his "Scientific and Philosophical Writings,"⁵ or his works on natural philosophy, Edwards reacted against the accompanying metaphysical and theological principles that implied a growing detachment of God from his creation and contributed to the disenchantment of the world. The same purpose characterized his philosophical and theological endeavor in the fields of ethics and history. In his "Ethical Writings"⁶

Edwards argued against the new theories in ethics and morals that rejected the traditional view that morality is based on the will of God and maintained rather that morality depends on human nature, or that virtue should be considered natural to human beings and hence that morals come naturally to man. Similarly, Edwards developed his philosophy of history in response to the Enlightenment narratives of history that rejected the Christian view of time and thus posed a threat to the traditional theological teleology of history.

Edwards was no stranger to the European republic of letters and was among those best qualified in colonial British America to criticize its ideas and values. From an early age, he passionately immersed himself in the theological and philosophical debates taking place in England and Europe. With the modernization of the Yale curriculum during 1717–18,⁷ Edwards first encountered the new and revolutionary ideas of the scientific revolution and the early Enlightenment. For the rest of his life, dialogue with these early modern intellectual movements was part of his philosophical and theological enterprise. During the early eighteenth century strong negative reactions to the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment were expressed in many religious circles. This is not hard to understand given that the premises of these two intellectual movements seriously undermined the traditional Christian conception of the personal God who operates through history and concerns himself indefatigably with the affairs of intelligent creatures upon the earth. Evidently, the impersonal God of mechanical philosophy and the deists, the Lord of the physical world and the cosmic lawgiver, was radically different from the living God of the Bible whom Christians had worshipped for many centuries—God the Savior and Redeemer, the triune God of special as well as of general providence, Jesus the personal Savior, and the Holy Spirit, the mediating power between God and human beings. In medieval theology, “God had no purpose; he was the ultimate object of purpose” in a universe structured according to a grand theological teleology of order whose harmony reflects and symbolizes God’s redemptive presence. In contrast, mechanical philosophy and deism held that “the cosmic order of masses in motion is itself the final good. Man exists to know and applaud it; God exists to tend and preserve it.”⁸

Many Protestant revival movements of the early eighteenth century embraced the tremendous task of redefining the relationship between God and the world, of formulating a whole new set of religious convictions and persuasions that would express God’s direct and immediate involvement in creation, and, consequently, of constructing new modes of religious faith and

experience that would exhibit the living God’s redemptive and saving presence within believers’ lives.⁹ Since “the search for the essence of true religion, as an objective ‘presence of things outside myself’ appeared to have bankrupted itself” in view of the flourishing of the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment, Protestant revival movements developed a new “theology of the heart” which emphasized rather “the illumination of the Holy Spirit in the individual heart.”¹⁰ Theirs was the attempt to combat mechanical philosophy and the Enlightenment, which placed divine redemptive activity mainly in the physical world of nature. Hence, “religious experience” was “the name Protestants gave to that which survived the attacks of the Enlightenment.”¹¹ Evangelists therefore elevated the heart as the locus of God’s redemptive activity and conceived the drama of salvation and redemption as taking place ultimately within the inner spiritual sphere of the soul through the immediate presence and vivid influence of the Holy Spirit. The soul, and not the external world of nature, is again the proper and main domain expressing divine redemptive activity within the world, and the heart is the sacred dwelling place within which the Holy Spirit directly operates and affects and transforms the human existential condition by its divine influence. To a large extent, then, the revolt against the predominant rational culture of the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment constituted an ideological and theological context for the emergence of Protestant evangelical movements during the first half of the eighteenth century.

Against the scientific and Enlightenment interpretation of the relationship between God and the world, Protestant evangelical movements attempted to construct an alternative culture of time and space. The evangelists formulated a new type of spirituality based on “experimental religion,” that is, experienced religion, and developed the “theology of the heart,” which stressed the Holy Spirit’s direct influence on the soul and its ability to transform the human condition. So, according to John Wesley (1703–91), the Holy Spirit brings about a New Birth allowing a human being to feel “the love of God shed abroad in his heart.” The essence of the New Birth is a profound existential change “wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God,” whereby human beings are “created anew in Christ Jesus.”¹² By stressing to the utmost the “sense of the heart” as the locus of all religious life and experience, the evangelists declared the New Birth dependent on the experience of conversion. Instead of the mechanical God of nature of mechanistic philosophy, evangelists proclaimed with great enthusiasm that the revelation of God is manifested not only in the

structure and harmony of the external, physical world of nature but, most important, in the inner sphere of the soul or the heart. It demanded, as with John Wesley, "the joy of surrender to Christ."¹³ Likewise, for Jonathan Edwards, religion "consists in holy affections" or "the inner working of the Spirit" in the believer's heart;¹⁴ hence it was essentially a kind of private experience evident in "the sense of the heart" and "religious affections" that are produced by the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the depths of the soul.¹⁵ Thus, against "the British Moral philosophers' movement toward a secularized understanding of the affections grounded in an innate "moral sense," Edwards grounded what he deemed to be specifically religious, that is, God-given "gracious" affections, in a new "spiritual sense."¹⁶ Like other evangelists of his time, Edwards emphasized the personal, unmediated experience of New Birth and claimed that the regenerative process of "conversion by grace" is "immediate" and dependent upon God's Word and Spirit.¹⁷

Edwards was a leader in this Protestant evangelical awakening. During the revivals of the 1730s and 1740s, he not only rapidly emerged as a leader in New England but his various writings pertaining to the revivals were soon printed in Europe, and found an enthusiastic reception among Protestant theologians there. An English edition of his *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737) appeared in London in 1737 and was soon reprinted in Edinburgh in 1737 and 1738. Its influence was felt also in the Welsh revival. A Scottish edition of *The Distinguishing Marks of the Work of the Spirit of God* (1741) appeared in 1743, and the sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, delivered on July 1741, was circulated in Glasgow in 1742. A Scottish edition of this sermon was published in 1745.¹⁸ In England, Wesley eagerly read *The Faithful Narrative* in October 1738, and this work, as well as other writings, such as *Distinguishing Marks* and *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746), exercised an enormous influence on the English Methodist movement, the "Wesleyan Revival."¹⁹ Likewise, Edwards's *The Nature of True Virtue* (written in 1755, published in 1765) was regarded by orthodox Christians in England who opposed Enlightenment theories of morals and strove to emphasize the superiority of Christian ethics as "the most elaborate, acute, and rational account of this interesting subject."²⁰ Two of Edwards's works appeared in German in this period: *A Faithful Narrative* (1738) and *The Life of David Brainerd* (1749). Apparently, "the relevance of Edwards's kingdom of God was more sharply perceived in Eastern Europe than in his own congregation."²¹ Edwards's interpretation of salvation history, where revival constituted the heart of divine activity in the order of

time, was developed after the "Little Revival" (1734–35) and appeared in his series of sermons on the *History of the Work of Redemption* (preached 1739, published in 1774). It too greatly influenced transatlantic evangelicalism: "Assessments of the significance of the revivals subsequent to the Great Awakening would ensconce in American and British evangelical culture Edwards's vision of the pivotal role of revivals in God's grand scheme for mankind."²²

Edwards's republic of letters, therefore, was related above all to the transatlantic Protestant evangelical world, where his works were in great demand and made a great impact. Thus, although he lived on the periphery of the eighteenth-century British Empire, Edwards's thought and actions were an integral part of the Atlantic world. The Great Awakening, in which he enlisted all his power and zeal, was inextricable, as he always maintained, from the long series of revivals and awakenings in the Old and the New Worlds, constituting an important dimension of the transatlantic evangelical movement. Edwards was, of course, fully aware of the international dimension and his role in it. Writing in 1745 to a friend in Scotland, he declared that the "Church of God, in all parts of the world, is but one; the distant members are closely united in one glorious head."²³

Viewed in this ideological and theological context, Edwards's thought shows clearly that the development of an American culture during the eighteenth century did not depend on a simple and linear transference of ideas from the core culture in Britain nor on an easy accommodation of them in America; it was not, as Perry Miller puts it, simply a "movement of European culture into the vacant wilderness of America."²⁴ Rather, in some matters, the rejection of certain well-established European intellectual traditions helped the formation of a well-defined Protestant cultural space in America. Edwards's opposition to the Enlightenment concept of ethics and history is evidence not only of the growing readiness of people in the colonies to distance themselves from cherished European intellectual traditions but also of their growing confidence in their ability to forge new foundations for an American culture and identity, a process that climaxed during the era of the American Revolution, when Americans rejected British authority. Yet its origins can be traced many years before the struggle for independence. When well before 1763 Edwards was convincing colonists to criticize certain modes of thought predominant in the British intellectual world and not to accept them automatically, the center had already begun to lose some of its power and attraction over the periphery. "We have our books, and our learning from" England, wrote Edwards, "and are upon

many accounts exceedingly liable to be corrupted by them. This country is but a member of the body of which they are the head, and when the head is so sick, the members it is to be feared, will not long be in health."²⁵ Together with social, political, and economic changes in British America during the eighteenth century, a significant ideological process was also under way, whereby ideas coming out of the center in the Old World were met with strong opposition in the colonial periphery.

By denouncing modes of thought and belief that had developed at the heart of the British Empire, Edwards asserted that the center was no longer a model to be emulated: "England, the principal kingdom of the Reformation," he observed, is overcome by "licentiousness in principles and opinions" such as "Arianism and Socinianism and Arminianism and deism." Nowhere in the world is there "so great apostasy of those that had been brought up under the light of the gospel to infidelity, never such a casting off the Christian religion and all revealed religion."²⁶ Indeed, much of Edwards's intellectual development can be characterized, in his own words, as a struggle "against most of the prevailing errors of the present day," which tended to "the utter subverting of the gospel of Christ."²⁷ This did not apply exclusively to religious thought and experience, for Edwards also fought against the British "School of Moral Sense," as well as against the new modes of historical thought, and it was in these spheres especially that he greatly influenced the creation of the transatlantic evangelical movement and the formation of Protestant culture in America.

Indeed, this New England divine and philosopher was "the most powerful enemy" of the "rational English Enlightenment."²⁸ His brilliance as a theologian and philosopher endowed Edwards's negative response to the new theories of ethics and philosophy of history with an enormous influence on, for example, the first and second Great Awakening. More specifically, his attack on the British school of "moral sense" was incorporated, adopted, and diffused by the New Divinity School and in fact was its hallmark during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: "The advocacy" of Edwards's "theory of moral agency" was undoubtedly the most important mark of the New Divinity,²⁹ and Edwards's followers, such as Joseph Bellamy (1719–90), Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803), and Jonathan Edwards, Jr. (1745–1801), "sought to defend Calvinism from rationalist attack and to focus it upon experience of grace as the definitive religious event."³⁰ More specifically, the "innovations of the New Divinity reveal Edwards's most creative and important contributions to New England theology." In their continuation of Edwards's "intellectual efforts to

balance piety and moralism,"³¹ the New Divinity men were his most important direct heirs, and part of the "most sustained, systematic, and creative intellectual tradition produced in this country—the New England theology."³²

Likewise, Edwards's reaction to the new modes of historical thought, which were bringing about the secularization of the Christian theological teleology of history by according human beings a decisive role in shaping the course of history, led him to develop a singular evangelical historiography according to which revivals and awakenings, being the direct manifestation of the effusion of the Spirit of God, constitute the heart of the historical process. By placing revival at the center of salvation history, Edwards conditioned many generations of Protestants in America to see religious awakening as the essence of sacred, providential history. The publication of the *History of the Work of Redemption* in the 1770s, which is the best exposition of Edwards's philosophy of history, "helped to fuel the transference of religious convictions into the political realm," a transference that was important during the American Revolution and later crucial to the "revival of interest in eschatology" and the millennium "that occurred in the 1790s."³³ This book went through a "process of canonization during the Second Great Awakening, 1800–30, and added to [Edwards's] stature as the preeminent authority on revivalism." During the Second Great Awakening the work "proved to be popular both with lay readers and revivalistic preachers." Edwards's philosophy of history thus helped to create the revival tradition in America. "Indeed, the *History of the Work of Redemption* served to 'universalize' the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, situating them in a cosmic scheme of redemption and exciting interest in such evangelical causes as missionary work at home and abroad."³⁴

Edwards and the Enlightenment Debate on Moral Philosophy

Edwards's long involvement with the issue of ethics and morals should be understood in the wider ideological context of early modern history and the "Enlightenment project," or its "new science of morals." The first half of the eighteenth century witnessed a growing and continuous attempt on the part of moderate, or rational, Enlightenment British thinkers to establish new concepts of moral theory.³⁵ Chief among them is the theory of a "moral sense," the *sensus communis* of classical thought. In claiming that the moral sense is the faculty by which we distinguish between moral right and wrong, the theory formulates a distinctive conception of moral judgement. The emerging theories

of morals stood in contrast to traditional Christian teaching. Enlightenment writers, such as the Scottish philosopher Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) and the Scottish philosopher and historian David Hume (1711–76), argued that it is possible to have knowledge of good and evil without, and prior to, knowledge of God. The main assumption behind this conception of ethics was the belief that human beings can know from within themselves, without reliance on traditional sources of religious authority, what God intends and expects of them as moral creatures. Edwards owned and read many works by Enlightenment moral theorists,³⁶ including Hutcheson's *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) and *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections with Illustration on the Moral Sense* (1728)³⁷ and Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739), and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751). In these works he could see that the new theories of morals were leading to the detachment of the moral system from God. Accordingly, in his "Ethical Writings," such as *Charity and Its Fruits* (1738), *Concerning the End for which God Created the World* (1755), *The Nature of True Virtue* (1755), as well as in *Original Sin* (1758), Edwards directed a strong attack against the Enlightenment view of ethics and morals, claiming it was "evident that true virtue must chiefly consist in love to God,"³⁸ or that "all true *virtue*" is based on "love of Being, and the qualities and acts which arise from it."³⁹

The moral sense theory arose within a larger intellectual development in the early modern period. John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), led to a new theory of knowledge, which rejected external authority as the guarantor of truths. The scientific revolution paved the way for the belief that speculations about the will of God were no longer prerequisites for doing physics. Likewise, the moralizing tendency in British thought of the eighteenth century can be attributed in part to the gradual decay of theology and the reduced authority of religious sanctions. With the increasing insufficiency of theological ethics, where sanctions were the chief interest, moral philosophers attempted to find a substitute for religion as the basis of society and human conduct, thus emancipating ethics from the theological tradition of their time.

The term "moral sense" was first suggested by Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, in *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue* (1699), and in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711). In these works he appeals to psychological experience as a foundation for morals. He thus attributes to a moral sense our ability "to be capable of Virtue, and to have a Sense of Right

and Wrong,"⁴⁰ or to distinguish between good and evil, virtue and vice, claiming that this sense, along with our common affection for virtue, accounts for the possibility of morality. In contrast to Thomas Hobbes, who offers a radically egoistic view of human nature, Shaftesbury argues that we have social impulses that are expressed in our sense of benevolence, beauty, and justice, and these are not reducible to self-interest. It was his conviction that "morality must be deduced from the nature of man as it is," and that "the human system or constitution is a complex compound of natural affection and a self-conscious faculty of reason and reflection, in which moral judgment and action have their origin."⁴¹ Shaftesbury thus developed a system of nonintellectualist ethics based on the contention that there is "a form of moral appreciation and judgement that is affectional and sensory in its nature rather than intellectual."⁴²

It was Francis Hutcheson, Shaftesbury's principal follower and a professor of moral theology at Glasgow, who first constructed an explicit theory of a moral sense, or a new moral philosophy in his *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725). Hutcheson's primary aim was to refute the egoistic interpretation of ethics, recently revived by Bernard Mandeville in *The Fable of the Bees; Or Private Vices, Public Benefits* (1705–29), where Shaftesbury's claim concerning the innate goodness of human beings is rejected. In defending the ancient view of man as an essentially social being, Hutcheson attacked "the notorious self-love theorists old and new, Epicurus, Hobbes, and Mandeville."⁴³ He first fits the moral sense into Locke's theory of knowledge, maintaining that it accounts for our knowledge of moral right and wrong as Lockean reflexive perception. Second, to refute Mandeville's interpretation of ethics as cynical egoism, Hutcheson claims that human beings have disinterested motives, namely, they can act for the sake of the good of others and not merely for their own self advantage, since "no love to rational Agents can proceed from Self Interest, every action must be disinterested, as far as it flows from Love to rational Agents."⁴⁴ This disinterested motive, which he terms "Benevolence, or Love"—the quality of being concerned about others for their own sake—constitutes "the universal Foundation" of the "Moral Sense."⁴⁵ Here lies the innate, God-given "moral sense" in human beings. Being divinely implanted at all times and places, this sense is universal and constitutes the natural (that is, God-given) goodness of mankind. The "Author of Nature," he thus declares, "has given us a Moral Sense, to direct our Actions, and to give us still nobler Pleasure."⁴⁶ Accordingly, the "frame of our nature" endows us with

moral sense "by which we perceive virtue or vice, in ourselves or others,"⁴⁷ and this sense is the source of moral obligation. Hutcheson asserted the existence of several "internal" senses, among them honor, sympathy, morality, and beauty, but discussed only the latter two at length.

The same endeavor to ground morality exclusively in the benevolence of human nature appears also in David Hume's moral philosophy. For him, as with Hutcheson, morality is an entirely human affair based on human nature and not on a divine will. Yet there are considerable differences between them. The English and Scottish moralists who belonged to the Shaftesburian tradition believed that although morality may be deduced from human nature, it is God who constituted that nature and hence the moral faculty is a divine implementation. Hutcheson's moral sense depended on the existence of a superior being. While Hume agreed that "Mr. Hutcheson has taught us, by the most convincing arguments, that morality is nothing in the abstract nature of things, but is entirely relative to the sentiment of mental taste of each particular being,"⁴⁸ he himself "was the only eighteenth-century moralist" who argued for "an experimental theory of morals based solely on experience and observation of human behavior, society, and history, divorced from any attempt at religious explanation."⁴⁹ Believing that ethics and religion were separate subjects of inquiry, he attempted to provide an analysis of moral principles without connection to religion. Thus, while Hume saw himself as Hutcheson's follower in the ethics of sentiment, he did not adhere to Hutcheson's belief that moral sense depended on the existence of a superior being, or God. Instead, he defined "virtue as personal merit, or what is useful and agreeable to ourselves and to others."⁵⁰ Despite these differences, Hume, like Hutcheson, emphasized that the source of morals is feeling, not reason.

This Enlightenment debate on moral philosophy, especially its theory of innate moral sense, contained serious implications for Christian ethics. When Hutcheson expressed his views in public, the Presbytery of Glasgow condemned him for expressing dangerous ideas opposed to Christian teaching, namely, that the standard of moral goodness is the promotion of the happiness of others, and, most important, that a knowledge of good and evil does not depend on a knowledge of God. From the point of view of traditional Christian ethics, therefore, Hutcheson denied first that "post-lapsarian is inherently sinful and that all apparent morality can be reduced to a more or less complicated function of this sinfulness." Second, he denied that "man's moral institutions can be understood to arise from the prescriptions of an avenging God,

whom his creatures follow in terror and hope."⁵¹ Instead, his philosophy was based on a deep confidence in human nature. A still more serious challenge to orthodox Christianity was the absence of any theological foundations in Hume's moral philosophy, his refusal to search outside human nature for the origins of moral principles, and his tendency to follow the ancient classical moralists. "Hume made explicit his hostility to Christian ethics and allied himself with the classical moralists, especially Cicero."⁵²

Hutcheson and Hume's theories of moral sense thus gradually freed ethics from its traditional subservience to theology: "The *emancipation of ethics* at the beginnings of the modern age went hand in hand with optimism, progress, and undeniable advancement of life. The loss of religious tradition may be painful—yet the moral foundations were still preserved."⁵³ But not for Edwards. Arguing against the secular moralists, or sentimentalists, he said that moral sense is "merely a variety of natural conscience," and thus cannot be the source of ethics and morals. In fact, much of what was claimed for the moral sense "was reducible to self-love . . . rather than virtue." Hence, "one cannot attribute to the natural man the pure inclinations of heart that constitute true virtue."⁵⁴ The source of true virtue is necessarily founded, as we are about to see, upon "spiritual and divine sense."⁵⁵

Edwards would not accept a theory of morals or virtue based exclusively on human nature and therefore independent of God, who exercises "absolute and universal dominion" over the created order. The Deity determines that "the whole universe, including all creatures animate and inanimate, in all its actings, proceedings, revolutions, and entire series of events, should proceed from a regard and with a view to God, as the supreme and last end of all."⁵⁶ In reaction to the school of "moral sense," Edwards's purpose was "to reconstruct for religious authority a moral role that was not already expropriated by the new moral philosophy."⁵⁷ In his "Scientific Writings,"⁵⁸ composed during the early 1720s, Edwards had denounced the detachment of the order of grace from the order of nature, striving rather for the reenchantment of the world in the hope of demonstrating the infinite power of God's absolute sovereignty in both the "order of nature" and the "order of time."⁵⁹ In the realm of ethics he had argued that the will of God is the sole source of morality and virtue. Against Hutcheson and others, Edwards assessed moral matters by their "worth in the sight of God" and claimed that without "love to God there can be no true honor,"⁶⁰ or, conversely, that "nothing is of the nature of true virtue, in which God is not the *first* and the *last*."⁶¹

Edwards devoted much time and energy to the refutation of the moral sense theory. After the "Little Revival" of 1734–35, he preached a series of sermons in 1738, posthumously published in 1852 under the title *Charity and Its Fruits; Or, Christian Love as Manifested in Heart and Life*. Well acquainted with Hutcheson's writings,⁶² he attempted to present in these sermons "a finely woven systematic treatise on the Christian moral life."⁶³ Accordingly, against the Enlightenment's concept of moral theory, he asserted that from "love to God springs love to man;" hence without "love to God there can be no true honor," or virtue.⁶⁴ In opposition to the attempts by Enlightenment writers to base ethics and morals on secular and naturalistic foundations, Edwards declared that the gracious affections stand above and beyond the natural affections of which all are capable, and true virtue stands above and beyond the disinterested benevolence that marks the ultimate achievement of natural man.

In his own day Edwards's theological standing rested significantly on his *Freedom of the Will* (1754), which is both a defense of Calvinism and an assertion of God's absolute sovereignty. In this work he attacks the Arminians' and deists' "grand article concerning the freedom of the will requisite to moral agency," the belief that absolute self-determination of will is necessary for human liberty and moral virtue. If the Arminian view is correct, he believed, God's providential and redemptive economy is contingent on the unpredictable actions of moral agents. God is not really almighty because the doctrine of free-will places human actions and their results beyond his control. Such a condition contradicts the doctrine of divine foreknowledge and the premise that God, as absolute governor of the universe, orders events according to his sovereign wisdom and will. Edwards argues that since "every event" in the physical as well as the moral world "must be ordered by God," the "liberty of moral agents does not consist in self-determining power." In this work he wished to demonstrate that "God's moral government over mankind, his treating them as moral agents . . . is not inconsistent with a determining disposal of all events." Human beings must do as they will, in accordance with their fallen nature, and they have liberty only in the sense that nothing prevents them from doing what they will in accordance with their nature. Because "nothing in the state or acts of the will of man is contingent" but "every event of this kind is necessary," God's foreknowledge eliminates the possibility of contingency in the world, for contingency is the antithesis of God's unlimited prescience. Given that "the power of volition" belongs only to "the man or the soul," there is no such thing as "freedom of the will." That freedom is incompatible with the

individual's necessary willing of what he or she can will in accordance with a nature of self already determined.⁶⁵ In the end, Edwards saw the whole spectrum of moral endeavor solely in terms of his notion of the visible saints, whose character was "already determined."

The same effort to assert God's absolute sovereignty characterizes *Original Sin* (1758). This work played a part in the larger debates between the Enlightenment belief in the innate goodness of human beings and the emphasis placed by the Reformation on human depravity. Against the Enlightenment notion of human beings as fundamentally rational and benevolent, Edwards provided "a general defense of that great important doctrine"—of original sin. This doctrine proclaims both the depravity of the human heart and the imputation of Adam's first sin to his posterity: all Adam's posterity are "exposed, and justly so, to the sorrow of this life, to temporal death, and eternal ruin, unless saved by grace." The corruption of humankind, however, cannot be accounted for by considering the sin of each individual separately. It is essential to the human condition based on "the arbitrary constitution of the Creator" in creation.⁶⁶

In *The Nature of True Virtue* (1755), Edwards responded more directly to the contemporary "controversies and variety of opinions" about "the nature of true virtue." His goal was to define the disposition that distinguished the godly, claiming that true "virtue most essentially consists in benevolence to Being in general." True virtue is a kind of beauty. In moral beings, virtuous beauty pertains to a disposition of heart and exercise of will, namely "that consent, propensity and union of heart to Being in general," or God, "which is immediately exercised in good will." True virtue in creatures, therefore, appears in the degree to which one's love coincides with God's love of his creation and agrees with the end that he intended for it. A true system of morals and ethics becomes inseparable from religion because the former is grounded on the latter; religion is the true foundation and only source of all virtue. And given that "true virtue must chiefly consist in love to God, the Being of beings," continues Edwards, "he that has true virtue, consisting in benevolence to Being in general [or God], and in that complacency in virtue, or moral beauty, and benevolence to virtuous being, must necessarily have a supreme love to God, both of benevolence and complacency." Against Hutcheson and Hume's disunion of morals and religion, Edwards claimed that virtue is by necessity grounded on God since the Deity "is the head of the universal system of existence."⁶⁷ For him regeneration was inextricable from true virtue and vice versa. No wonder orthodox Christians in England, who strove to emphasize the superiority of Christian

ethics, considered Edwards's *The Nature of True Virtue* as "the most elaborate, acute, and rational account of this interesting subject."⁶⁸

Clearly, Edwards was fully aware of the grave implications of the Enlightenment theories of ethics and morals for Christian faith and belief. He found great fault with "some writers on morality" who indeed "don't wholly exclude a regard to the *Deity* out of their schemes of morality, but yet mention it so slightly." He suspected, with reason, that these moral philosophers "esteem" God "less important" in the realm of morals and rather "insist on benevolence to the *created system* in such a manner as would naturally lead one to suppose they look upon that as by far the most important and essential thing in their scheme." He himself claimed that if "true virtue consists partly in a respect to God, then doubtless it consists *chiefly* in it," for the *Deity* should be "the supreme object of our benevolence." Hence, "unless we will be atheists, we must allow that true virtue does primarily and most essentially consist in a supreme love to God." Those who oppose this assertion deny that "God maintains a moral kingdom in the world." Morality, then, cannot be separated from God: "a virtuous love in *created* beings, *one to another*, is dependent on, and derived from love to *God*." Moreover, the foundation of morality can not be separated from the theological teleology of order inherent in the universe: "they are good moral agents whose temper of mind or propensity of heart is agreeable to the *end* for which God made moral agents." And since the "last end for which God has made moral agents must be the last end for which God has made all things: it being evident that the moral world is the end of the rest of the world; the inanimate and unintelligent world being made for the rational and moral world."⁶⁹

Edwards was almost alone in the eighteenth century in rejecting the ideas of the universal moral sense and the essential goodness of the common man, or "the psychological optimism of the Shaftesbury-Hutcheson gospel of the innate goodness of man," which only "the two great wars of the twentieth century and the Holocaust have been able to shake into ruins."⁷⁰ In the English Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, Edwards's views, strongly opposed to the then dominant philosophy of Locke and Hume, in fact illustrate the expiring power of Calvinism. But in terms of the formation of American culture, this New England divine's attack on the school of "moral sense" helped to create a well-defined American Protestant culture. Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College, called Edwards "that moral Newton, and that second Paul," and Lyman Beecher declared that in his youth "I had read Edwards's Sermons.

There's nothing comes within a thousand miles of them now."⁷¹ More specifically, Edwards's "theory of moral agency was undoubtedly the most important mark of the New Divinity."⁷² Striving to ground religion exclusively in the experience of saving grace and to define that experience as the ultimate religious event, New England theologians closely followed Edwards in his defense of Calvinism against rationalist attacks by Enlightenment writers. Chief among them was Joseph Bellamy, who, like Edwards, strove to see "connection between regeneration and moral virtue." In the attempt to refute "the Enlightenment's attack on orthodoxy," Hutchesonian "ethics, rationalist morality, and natural religion turn up at every corner of Bellamy's arguments," where he denounces them, among others, as "epicurean and atheistical."⁷³

At the end of the eighteenth century, over a hundred ministers in New England were preaching Edwards's version of Calvinism; "by 1790 self-proclaimed New Divinity pastors controlled New England churches in and west of the Connecticut River Valley . . . and were scattered throughout Vermont and Maine and even New York and New Jersey." Jonathan Edwards, Jr., was not far from the truth when he said in 1787 that "a majority of the ministers [in Connecticut] mean to embrace the system of my father and Dr. Bellamy."⁷⁴ Later on, during the nineteenth century, the legacy of the New Divinity continued to be spread by New England ministers, among others by Lyman Beecher (1775–1863), the father of Harriet Beecher Stow and leader of the New England Second Great Awakening.⁷⁵

Edwards's theology of morals and ethics and later his followers' great emphasis on the traditional values of Christian faith and belief did not hinder the rise of the spirit of capitalism in America. On the contrary, the theology of the New Divinity greatly facilitated the growth of the capitalist economy. One of the main reasons was that "Edwards and his followers paradoxically equated self-interest with human depravity and identified self-interest as the source of most beneficial social, political, and economic behavior." Given that virtue involves self-love, such a view indeed endorses self-interest. "Thus, the New Divinity of Edwards and his followers taught New Englanders (and perhaps their evangelical heirs to the present) that they needed both capitalism and salvation."⁷⁶

Edwards's influence on Protestant America was not confined to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His views about the corruption of human nature, and concomitantly about God as the true foundation of virtue and morals, were revived during the twentieth century by H. Richard Niebuhr, the

influential theologian of the New Orthodoxy. In his quest to understand contingent existence as the manifestation of divine glory as sheer grace, and in order to proclaim *solī Deo gloria*, Niebuhr “found Jonathan Edwards, more than any other precursor, to be his mentor.”⁷⁷ Against the Progressive Era scholars and critics such as Charles Beard and Vernon L. Parrington, who argued during the first decades of the twentieth century that Edwards “demeaned man in order to glorify God,” Niebuhr claimed that Edwards’s pessimistic view of human beings had been confirmed in view of the “extent to which human brutality can go, of the fury that can be unleashed when the human animal is attacked,” and the “shuddering of man’s inhumanity to man” during the horrors of the twentieth century.⁷⁸ Modern history rather confirms Edwards’s historical prognosis: “Edwards’ intense awareness of the precariousness of life’s poise, of the utter insecurity of men and of mankind which are at every moment as ready to plunge into the abyss of disintegration, barbarism, crime and the war of all against all, as to advance toward harmony and integration.”⁷⁹

Edwards and the Enlightenment Narratives of History

The same drive to uphold traditional religion informs Edwards’s contribution to historical thought. His philosophy of history arose, in part, in opposition to intellectual developments in the early modern European period, and specifically to new modes of historical thought that led increasingly to the exclusion of theistic considerations from the realm of history.⁸⁰ His *History of the Work of Redemption*, a series of thirty sermons preached at Northampton in 1739, was composed within a specific context that witnessed the gradual exclusion of religious thought and belief from history, from the physical world, and from morals. Edwards’s redemptive mode of historical thought, the view that the course of history is based exclusively on God’s redemptive activity, may be seen, in part, as a response to Enlightenment narratives that rejected the Christian sense of time and vision of history. Against increasing de-Christianization and de-divination of the historical process, Edwards sought the reenthronement of God as the sole author and lord of history.

The “Enlightenment project” posed grave implications for traditional Christian thought and belief, especially in the realm of time and history. The Enlightenment “was one of the greatest of all revolutions”; it was “the revolution of man’s autonomous potentialities over against heteronomous powers which were no longer convincing.”⁸¹ This is clear in the new attitude toward

history and the growing importance attached to human autonomy and freedom in determining its course and progress. The Enlightenment mind “refuses to recognize an absolutely supernatural or an absolutely super-historical sphere,” and attempts to free historical thought “from the bonds of scripture dogmatically interpreted and the orthodoxy of the preceding centuries.”⁸² Instead of ordering the structure of history on the dimension of “sacred time,”⁸³ or the operation of divine providence, Enlightenment historical narratives were based on secular, “historical time.”⁸⁴ Hume, Voltaire, Bolingbroke, and Gibbon, to name only a few among the Enlightenment historians, attempted to “liberate history writing from its subservience to theology” and to free it from the theological view that conceived “the course of human history as the realization of a divine plan.”⁸⁵ Instead of seeing the historical process as contingent on a metaphysical reality beyond and above it, Enlightenment historians attached the highest importance to human beings’ actions and deeds. This process of “de-divination of the world” meant that traditional Christian symbols were “no longer revelatory of the immersion of the finite world in the transcendent.”⁸⁶ No longer considered as the narrative of a God-given providential plan or as revealing the teleological scheme of time, the historical realm was more and more defined as a space of time intended for the realization of the possibilities and abilities inherent in the nature of human beings. “For the men of the Enlightenment the idea of world-history was particularly congenial. It fitted in with their notion of progress, their view of mankind, advancing steadily from primitive barbarism to reason and virtue and civilization.”⁸⁷ In place of the religious vision of history as the drama, or tragedy, of human salvation and redemption, which would be realized only *beyond* history, historical thought during the Enlightenment developed the concept of “progress,” or the notion of an immanent human advance based on the belief that utopian visions regarding human freedom and happiness could be fulfilled *within* history. *Historia Humana*,⁸⁸ or the annals of human history, gradually replaced salvation history in the European mind.

For traditional religious thought and belief, such a transformation regarding the historical realm carried profound consequences. “In much the same way that the world became the object of scientific inquiry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through a process of desacralisation, so too, religious practices” were “demystified by the imposition of *natural laws*. As the physical world ceased to be a theater in which the drama of creation was constantly re-directed by divine intervention, human expressions of religious faith came

increasingly to be seen as outcomes of natural processes rather than the work of God or of Satan and his legions."⁸⁹ Once considered the sole source and locus for human life, experience, and expectations, religious thought and belief were being pushed out of nature and history. The "history of religion since the seventeenth century can be seen as the driving-back of faith from history, from the physical world, and from the realm of morals." Thus, "religion, withdrawing from its claim to give objective truth about the nature of reality in all its aspects, ends by seeking to stimulate certain sorts of inner feeling in those who care for that sort of thing."⁹⁰ Having based their historical narratives on the "secular, historical" time-dimension, in contrast to Christian "sacred time," the time-dimension of grace, Enlightenment historians refused to assign divine agency an exclusive role in determining the passing of time. They thus arrived at the de-Christianization of history.

Edwards owned and read many works by Enlightenment historians,⁹¹ among them Pierre Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1702), Samuel Pufendorf's *An Introduction to the History of the Principal Kingdoms and States of Europe* (1702), Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke's *Remarks on the History of England* (1731), and *Letters on the Study and Use of History* (1752), and David Hume's *Essays Moral, Political and Literary* (1742), which included "Of the Study of History." In these works he discovered, to his great dismay, that the divine agency was no longer considered intrinsic to history. Rather, these writers found religion a great obstacle to the development of human institutions, the advance of civil society, and the fostering of reason and freedom, which became the hallmark of the "Enlightenment project." "The 'Enlightenment narrative'" was "both a historiography of state and a historiography of society;"⁹² its proponents were skeptical of the "chronology of Christian universal history." Instead they aimed "to modify or transform their readers' sense of national self-awareness through the writing of narrative history."⁹³

Acquaintance with the various Enlightenment historical narratives enabled Edwards to assess their threat to the Christian theory of history. For example, in the *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, Pierre Bayle, the French philosopher who was also a pioneer of disinterested, critical history, "carries out the 'Copernican Revolution' in the realm of historical science." Instead of assuming that all historical facts are based on the authority of the Bible, and that the validity of the Scriptures in turn rests on that of the Church, whose authority rests on tradition, Bayle "no longer bases history on some dogmatically given objective content which he finds in the Bible or in the doctrine of the Church." His influential

Dictionary was not a mere treasure of knowledge but directly challenged traditional religious historical interpretation. "His sharp and unsparing analytical mind freed history once and for all from the bonds of creed and placed it on an independent footing."⁹⁴ This is evident, for example, in the entry on "David," where Bayle declares: "It is perfectly permissible for a private person like myself to judge facts contained in Scripture when they are not expressly qualified by the Holy Ghost."⁹⁵

Likewise, Edwards owned Samuel Pufendorf's *An Introduction to the History of the Principal Kingdoms and States of Europe*, where the German historian and the founder of modern natural law praises the value of universal history—that is, of Europe—for the political education of the ruling elite. He emphasizes the need "to understand modern history," or the history of the modern "nations" of Europe, as well as their various forms of government.⁹⁶ The uses of studying history are thus primarily political and social and much less theological and religious. The same can be said about David Hume, who in his essay "Of the Study of History," claims that history's main use is to reveal the progress of "human society" from "its infancy . . . towards arts and sciences" and to present "all human race, from the beginning of time" in order to improve human "knowledge" and "wisdom."⁹⁷ *Historia Humana*, the annals of human institutions, laws, manners, nations, and so on, in contrast to the sacred, became the enterprise of the Enlightenment. Thus Hume wrote that the chief use of "history" is "to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by showing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations," enabling us to "become acquainted with the regular spring of human action and behaviour."⁹⁸

The writing of civil history about civil government and society, instead of the sacred history of God's providence and the annals of the church, was the focus of the Enlightenment historical narrative. This can be seen, for example, in *Remarks on the History of England* by Henry St. John, first Viscount Bolingbroke. In this work, published in weekly installments in 1730–31, Bolingbroke deals almost exclusively with human institutions, or "the spirit which created and has constantly preserved or retrieved, the original freedom of the British and Saxon constitutions."⁹⁹ Further, in Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia; or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1728), another book Edwards owned, the English forerunner of the French *Encyclopédie* makes the distinction between "History" in general and "Sacred history." The first deals with the "history of nature" as well as "the history of actions . . . either of a single person, a

nation, or several persons and nations," and the second "lays before us the mysteries and ceremonies of religion, visions or appearances of the Deity, etc. miracles, and other supernatural things, whereof God alone is the author." Chambers adds a third category, "*Civil history*," which deals with "peoples, states, republics, communities, cities, etc."¹⁰⁰ This division clearly displays the growing erosion in the Christian narrative of history.

More serious, though, for traditional religious thought and belief were the Enlightenment historians' denunciations of the Christian interpretation, or the theological teleology, of history. Hume argued, for example, that religion "has contributed to render CHRISTENDOM the scene of religious wars and divisions. Religions," and this includes Christianity, "arise in ages totally ignorant and barbarous" and "consist mostly of traditional tales and fictions." Such negative views do not refer only to the past. On the contrary, in "modern times, parties of religion are more furious and enraged than the most cruel factions that ever arose from interest and ambition."¹⁰¹ Such unfavorable characterizations obviously left no room for accepting the traditional Christian interpretation of history. Instead, Enlightenment historians emphasized its destructive role in terms of the growth of civil society in Europe and the development of European civilization, in general.

Also grave for the traditional Christian narrative of history was the threat to the authority of the Bible itself as a historical source and its inability to portray adequately the "history" of the "first ages." This was the major assault levied by Lord Bolingbroke on sacred, ecclesiastical history in *Letters on the Study and Use of History*. The "historical part" of the "Old Testament," wrote Bolingbroke, "must be reputed insufficient" to the study of history "by every candid and impartial man" since the Jews had been "slaves to the Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, and Persians." Not only is the Bible an insufficient and unreliable source, but "history has been purposely and systematically falsified in all ages" by church historians. Moreover, "ecclesiastical authority has led the way in this corruption" of history "in all ages." In the pagan world, for example, how "monstrous were the absurdities that the priesthood imposed on the ignorance and superstition of mankind." Since "the foundations of Judaism and Christianity" were not built on truth but on "voluntary and involuntary errors," it is no wonder that "numberless fables have been invented [by ecclesiastical historians] to raise, to embellish, and to support" faith. Instead of providing historical truths, the Christian interpretation of history has led to the "abuse of history": "Deliberate, systematical lying has been practiced and encouraged

from age to age" by church historians, "and among all the pious frauds that have been employed to maintain a reverence and zeal for their religion in the minds of men, this abuse of history has been the principal and most successful." Sadly, noted Bolingbroke, this "lying spirit has gone from ecclesiastical to other historians."¹⁰²

Edwards was fully aware of these modes of European historical thought. Continually acquiring books from England, and always closely following intellectual developments in Europe, he was by no means a novice in the thinking of Enlightenment historians. Reacting against Enlightenment historical narrative, Edwards asked: "Shall we prize a history that gives us a clear account of some great earthly prince or mighty warrior, as of Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar; or the duke of Marlborough, and shall we not prize the history that God has given us of the glorious kingdom of his son, Jesus Christ, the prince and savior of the world."¹⁰³ In attempting to understand the nature and meaning of divine agency in the order of history, Edwards concluded that revivals, being "special seasons of mercy"¹⁰⁴ or grace, constitute a unique dimension of sacred time, or epochs of time, *kairos*, in history. Through the effusion of the Spirit, God orders major and decisive turning points in salvation history in terms of fulfilled or realized time. These constitute the main stages in sacred providential history, and only through these can history, its goal and destiny, be properly understood. Paul Tillich made a distinction between *chronos*—"quantitative time," or "clock time, time which is measured"—and *kairos*—"the qualitative time of the occasion, the right time," such as "the right time for the coming of Christ"—and made special use of it in his philosophy of history.¹⁰⁵ *Kairos* is a special time or epoch in salvation history in which the eternal judges and transforms the temporal.¹⁰⁶ Before Tillich, however, Edwards had already proposed this concept and made it the cornerstone of his philosophy of history. His historical narrative deals primarily with the "rise and continued progress of the dispensation of grace towards fallen mankind,"¹⁰⁷ or the outpouring of the Spirit of God as "dispensations of providence," and, correspondingly, with its immediate historical manifestations in the form of decisive periods, or epochs, of awakenings as they appear in "special seasons of mercy"¹⁰⁸ throughout history.

The fullest and most systematic exposition of this philosophy of salvation history is found in the thirty sermons on the *History of the Work of Redemption* (1739). Instead of conceiving history as the direct result of human action, and as a manifestation of immanent human progress, as Enlightenment historians

believed, Edwards constructed it exclusively from the perspective of God and the manifestations of his redemptive activity in creation. In such a theological and teleological context, history is designed by divine providence as a special dimension of time meant solely for the accomplishment of God's plan of redemption, and therefore it should be understood only from the perspective of its maker and author. History is a grand sacred span of time destined from eternity for God's self-glorification—the display of the Deity's excellence in creation—as evidenced in His work of redemption; hence human beings' existence, as well as their history, are totally dependent on God. In his theological teleology of history, therefore, Edwards's main goal was to define "God's end in making and governing the world,"¹⁰⁹ to decipher God's "great design" in the order of time, and to understand the Deity's ultimate aim in the "affairs of redemption."¹¹⁰ He attempted to assert God's redemptive activity and to show the power of the "wheels of providence,"¹¹¹ or "the chariots of his salvation,"¹¹² in history, continually demonstrating the "design that God is pursuing, and [the] scheme that he is carrying on, in the various changes and revolutions that from age to age happen in the world."¹¹³ Given that the "work of redemption" constitutes the "great end and drift of all God's works,"¹¹⁴ he attempted to explain it as part of the fabric of the entire creation, claiming it constituted the essential dynamism behind the grand teleology of sacred order inherent in the structure of the universe: "The work of redemption may be looked upon as the great end and drift of all Gods works & dispensations from the beginning & even the end of the work of creation it self."¹¹⁵ The "affairs of redemption," he came to think, dealt with the cause and destiny, nature and meaning, of the creation as a whole.

Edwards argued that the outpouring of the Spirit of God, as manifested in the form of revivals and awakenings, was the ultimate mark of the divine agency in history. Throughout history, God's "work of redemption" determines the existential condition of human beings and their life. "God advances his work of redemption" most of all "through successive effusions of his Spirit."¹¹⁶ Hence, the *History of the Work of Redemption* deals primarily with the "first rise and continued progress of the dispensation of grace towards fallen mankind,"¹¹⁷ it is based on the effusion of the Spirit in the form of "dispensations of providence," manifested in periods of revivals, or "special seasons of mercy."¹¹⁸ In sum, "from the fall of man to this day wherein we live the Work of Redemption in its effects has mainly been carried on by remarkable pourings out of the Spirit of God . . . [and] the way in which the greatest things have been done

toward carrying on this work has always been by remarkable pourings out of the Spirit at special seasons of mercy."¹¹⁹ History therefore is the grand "theater" of God, because His transcendent ends determine the drama of human history upon the earth. Yet history is not merely the "theater of God's judgments," for God continuously and progressively exhibits in history, through His word and work, the divine plan of redemption for fallen humanity.

For Edwards, earthly, mundane events are intelligible only by reference to the cosmic battle between Christ and Satan. Such an evangelical theodicy points beyond law and history to the eschatological moment, the judgment of individuals according to their standing in the order of grace, or their relationship to Christ. The heart of history, then, are revivals, whereby the Spirit of God constantly advances the work of redemption. These awakenings are the sole and exclusive domain of God's will and hence outside the reach of human agency. Edwards "made the phenomenon of the revival the key element in the drama of redemption. He conceived of revivals as the engine that drives redemption history."¹²⁰

The premises of such a philosophy of history constituted the main source of Edwards's apocalyptic and eschatological interpretation of the Great Awakening in 1740–43 and of his defense of this New England revival. On the basis of the redemptive mode of historical thought, he proclaimed the magnitude and significance of this event in the overall course and progress of salvation history, becoming its most ardent champion in New England and the British world as a whole. If Edwards was the leader of that moment of *kairos*, which inaugurated the revival tradition in America, not the least reason for this was his assigning it a vital role within providential history. The revival demanded its own historian, a person who could expound its meaning in the broadest sense and provide it with the fullest historical justification in addition to the theological one. This figure was found in Edwards. His interpretation of the revival placed it in the wider context of salvation history, thus infusing this specific New England historical moment with a glorious meaning in sacred history. By showing the continuity between this provincial event and similar awakenings in the Old World, Edwards made the Great Awakening an inseparable part of the universal history of God's work of redemption.

Without a knowledge of Edwards's historical thought, it would be difficult to understand some of his most important works pertaining to the Great Awakening, among them *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741), *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741), and *Some Thoughts Concerning*

the Revival (1742). The Great Awakening was not to be judged as a mere provincial event leading only to the conversion of some fallen American colonists. On the contrary, together with other revivals taking place at that time in the Protestant world, as in Scotland and Germany, it illuminated the general scheme of God's historical work of redemption. On the basis of this theological teleology of history Edwards interpreted the New England revival as an integral part of the general Protestant evangelical awakening in the early eighteenth century, claiming it heralded "the commencement of that last and greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God, that is to be in the latter ages of the world."¹²¹ Believing that the power of the Spirit is universal and thus not related to any particularistic center, he saw in the Great Awakening clear proof of that "glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture, which in the progress and issue of it, shall renew the *world of mankind*" (emphasis added).¹²² Accordingly, from the Deity's point of view, which it was Edwards's aim to expound, history is a grand theater in which God reveals his redemptive plan, and revivals, such as the Great Awakening, illustrate the historical necessity, or indeed inevitability, of the progress of God's historical scheme of redemption.

This philosophy of salvation exercised enormous influence in New England and Protestant America in general. Edwards, "who saw tantalizing signs of the approaching millennium in the Great Awakening," is considered "the putative father of American postmillennialism," or the belief that the coming of Jesus would occur only after the millennium.¹²³ During the early nineteenth century, one evangelist described Edwards's *History of the Work of Redemption* as "the most popular manual of Calvinist theology," partly because in his philosophy of history Edwards offered "an original contribution to evangelical historiography." For antebellum evangelists Edwards's philosophy of salvation history provided the main source for understanding history as a "grand narrative propelled by a divine 'design and covenant of redemption.'" He emerged "as an authority not only on personal piety and individual conversion, but also on the 'morphology' of revivals and their millennial significance." As "the father of the great colonial revival," or the Great Awakening of the 1740s, "Edwards had laid the groundwork for the Second Great Awakening."¹²⁴

Edward's influence, according to one nineteenth-century evangelical, is evident in the fact that he persuaded "a generation that feared more than they knew about revivals of their utility and benefit."¹²⁵ Likewise, H. Richard Niebuhr argues that Edwards's philosophy of history influenced nineteenth-century evangelists' understanding of "the coming of the kingdom," leading

them to believe that "the divine sovereignty was the fruition not only of divine goodness but of human badness in conflict with that unconquerable goodness."¹²⁶ Further, his theology of history, emphasizing that "effort to progress toward the coming of the kingdom by self-discipline," led not only to "the recognition of divine sovereignty" within the realm of history but "ushered in . . . a new awareness of the coming kingdom." Through his and others' efforts during the Awakening, "the coming of the kingdom" became "the dominant idea" in American Protestantism.¹²⁷ Niebuhr sees Edwards's theme of "God's redemption of the world as at once the core of the Christian movement in America and the central meaning and significance of the culture."¹²⁸ In this context, the effect of Edwards's philosophy of salvation history "was to legitimate and foster popular expressions" of Protestant religious thought and experience, which encompassed "the Shakers as they developed Ann Lee's visions, Joseph Smith, Jr., and the Latter-day Saints, John Humphrey Noys and his Perfectionists . . . and even the remarkable Mary Baker Eddy."¹²⁹

The theme of the formation of American culture and identity—or of "Becoming America," as in the title of a recent study¹³⁰—runs through the historiography of early America. As the term suggests, to be an American means to be significantly different from others. The formation of an American identity was not only the outcome of impersonal social, political, and economic conditions but also, and most significantly, of conscious convictions and persuasions developed by the colonists, through which they defined their self and place in time and space, in some cases in deliberate opposition to dominant ideas that characterized British and European thought during the eighteenth century. In this context, Edwards contributed much to forging the ideological foundations of a distinct Protestant culture in America.

As Edwards's thought shows, and his legacy in America reveals, the formation of the Atlantic world and the creation of an American culture was a very complex process. The great influence he exerted on American history throws light on the dialectic relationship between periphery and center and on the fact that the formation of the American self was based to a large extent on the rejection of certain British and European modes of thought. Well before the American Revolution, Edwards was among the first to raise serious objections against modes of thought coming to America from the center in Britain. Periphery, it might be noted, has its own advantages in terms of acquiring fame and prominence. In England, Edwards might count as only one among the many Protestant evangelists in the first half of the eighteenth century who

attempted to revitalize religious life and experience within a well-defined religious culture and tradition; in America, on the other hand, due to his brilliance as a theologian and philosopher and in the absence of a centralized religious establishment, he was able to inaugurate an American Protestant tradition. Yet, as I have attempted to show, the creation of such a religious tradition was not unrelated to the wider intellectual context of the early modern era. On the contrary, it was essentially a reaction to the Enlightenment “new science” of ethics and history. Edwards’s genius enabled him to forge, out of his criticism of the “Enlightenment project,” a novel tradition most adapted to the American mind. Its powerful influence on and its afterlife in American culture and history have not diminished over time; its manifestations are still evident in many spheres of American life and thought at the turn of the third millennium.

Order, Ordination, Subordination

German Lutheran Missionaries in Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania

Wolfgang Splitter

In November 1742, Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg (1711–87) arrived in Philadelphia as a Lutheran minister under the sponsorship of the Francke Foundations, located in Halle, Prussia, whose diverse interests ranged from charity and schooling, to printing and brewing, to medicine and mission work. Mühlenberg’s posting to Pennsylvania originated in the concern of Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen (1694–1776), the Lutheran chaplain in the Hanoverian court in London, that the United Brethren, commonly known as the Moravians, under the leadership of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–60), were winning the battle for control of Lutheran parishes in North America. While Ziegenhagen could convince Gotthilf August Francke (1696–1769), the director of the foundations, of the urgency to send a Lutheran pastor to Pennsylvania, he had less success persuading any colonial parish to give Mühlenberg a formal call and to pay for his keep. As the Lutheran church councilors at Philadelphia, New Hanover, and Providence told the court preacher in 1739, they had not issued “such a call for a pastor as you have wished us to send [because] . . . no one is willing to subscribe to the support