

Course Outline

Lecture I

INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE AND WORK OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

- I. Edwards as the finest philosophical/theological mind ever to grace the American scene
- II. Key biographical sources on the life and thought of Edwards
 - a. Biographies by Edwards' contemporaries
 - b. Biographies by 20th Century scholars
 - c. Secondary source guides
 - d. Compilations of Edwards' primary works
 - e. Works on Edwards' theology
 - i. No comprehensive work has yet been written.
 - ii. The lack of published manuscripts makes a more comprehensive work difficult.
 - iii. Yale University Press Edition of the Works of Edwards is being compiled.
 - iv. The Hickman Edition of Edwards' works is the best bargain available today
- III. Edwards' early years
 - a. Edwards was born in 1703 in Connecticut, the son of a congregational minister.
 - b. Edwards was a child prodigy.
- IV. Academic training and education at Yale University
 - a. Edwards' conversion during his college years
 - i. Edwards' path to conversion

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Introduction to the Course

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- ii. Edwards' struggle and eventual acceptance of the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty
 - b. Edwards' intense Christian commitment
- V. Edwards' relationship and marriage to Sarah Pierrepont
 - a. Sarah's deep commitment to Christ
 - b. The singleness of Sarah's attention to spiritual matters
- VI. Edwards' Christian ministry
 - a. Pastor of the New Light Presbyterian Church in New York
 - b. Tutorship at Yale University
 - c. Northampton and later ministry (a striking analogy to the pattern of ministry of his Lord)
 - i. Years of obscurity (1726-1733)
 - 1. Living in the shadow of his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard
 - 2. Time of learning and quiet ministry
 - ii. Years of popularity (1734-1744)
 - 1. The First Great Awakening
 - 2. Edwards' powerful sermons
 - 3. The Second Great Awakening
 - iii. Years of opposition (1735-1758)
 - 1. Lord's Supper controversy
 - 2. Edwards' dismissal ("death") in 1750
 - iv. "Burial" at the Stockbridge settlement
 - 1. Edwards as a joint-pastor of an Indian congregation
 - 2. The production of his greatest works
 - v. Edwards' "resurrection" as President of the College of New Jersey (present-day Princeton University)
 - 1. Edwards' friends persuaded him to accept this position against his own inclination.

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2. Edwards died there of smallpox after taking an experimental inoculation.
- VII. Edwards: Calvinist or Neo-Calvinist theologian?
- a. Edwards' controversial doctrines that led some to mistakenly label him as a Neo-Calvinist
 - i. The doctrine of continuous creation
 1. The standard Calvinist doctrine of creation is preservation of creation.
 2. Richard Sibbs is an example of another orthodox Calvinist who embraced continuous creation.
 - ii. The doctrine of Post-Millennialism
 1. Amillennialism is the more common Calvinist eschatological position.
 2. Many contemporary Calvinists are strong Post- Millennialists.
 - iii. Edwards' (fallacious) attempt to explain the origin of sin
 1. Most Calvinists have let that issue lie.
 2. The main lines of Calvinism are maintained in his teaching on sin.
 - b. Edwards' rational defense of Calvinism
 - i. Edwards made fundamental contributions to Christian thinking.
 - ii. Edwards argued for the fundamental soundness, rational defensibility, and biblical support of Calvinism.
 - c. Augustine, Calvin, and Edwards as the three premiere Calvinist theologians
 - i. Augustine provided the most profound Reformed analysis of the goal of moral endeavor.
 - ii. Calvin provided the finest statement of the standard of moral endeavor.
 - iii. Edwards provided the deepest analysis of the motive of moral endeavor.

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- d. Edwards as the theologian of the Great Commandment

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