

## Regeneration, Revival, and Creation

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On January 15-16, 2019, Jonathan Edwards Center at Gateway Seminary, otherwise known as JEC (West) held its inaugural conference at my institution. Edwards has won admirers across denominational lines. The selection of plenary speakers for the conference was a reflection of that reality. Douglas Sweeney came from the Lutheran tradition, Michael Haykin is a Baptist and Oliver Crisp, a Presbyterian. Diversity among separate ecclesiastical traditions, however, does not mean there is not a shared interest and appreciation for Edwards. Among the contributors to the conference proceedings are Evangelical Free and Congregational scholars, Baptists of different stripes: Southern, American, and Independent. Various Reformed traditions, such as the Presbyterian Church of America, the Presbyterian Church USA, Heritage Reformed Churches, as well as others who identify themselves as broadly reformed. Yet these diverse representatives gathered together to explore their common interest in the thinking of Edwards. If Edwards's works were simply admired among only a small group of like-minded scholars, it would be less impressive. The fact that we have so many from such diverse traditions as contributors is a testament to Edwards's stature as a thinker of the highest order.

The conference theme *Regeneration, Revival, and Creation: Religious Experience and the Purposes of God in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* was chosen 1) to appeal to a wide audience, 2) to delve into Edwards's theological and philosophical rationale for the revivals, and 3) to invite reflection from theologians and philosophers as well as historians. The effort to attract a wider audience was a striking success! In spite of the bad weather on the day of the conference (rare for sunny Southern California), and also the Government Shutdown of 2019 (also abnormal), it drew people not only from the West Coast but all over the country. The conference attendees turned out in numbers that more than doubled the expectations. Scholars in the areas of Church History, Historical Theology, Systematic and Constructive Theology, as well as Analytic Theology, and even Psychology and Biology gathered together to wrestle with America's premier theologian.

At the conference, Jonathan Edwards Center at Gateway Seminary officially opened its "Reading Room" inside the Gateway library. The room is appointed with leather chairs, mahogany bookshelves, oriental carpets, a conference table, period Chippendale furniture and Sculptural busts of Edwards, William Carey, Isaac Backus and Andrew Fuller. Hung on the wall is a commissioned portrait of Edwards by Oliver Crisp (see below), which also can be seen on the cover of the conference proceeding volume.



On another wall is a photograph of Edwards's personal desk blown up to life size. All of this is designed to honor, encourage, facilitate and inspire researchers. Extensive primary and secondary holdings related to Edwards studies are housed there. The Jonathan Edwards Society and Rob Boss have graciously provided an offline installation of The Miscellanies Project which is a beautiful computerized visualization of Edwards' "Miscellanies." The Center has a new computer with a touchscreen that will give access to Yale's digital Works of Jonathan Edwards Online as well as Jonathan Edwards Online Journal. Many see the JEC Reading Room as the warmest space in the new Gateway facility and an inviting place for study and research. In addition to the physical center, the center's dedicated website with its unique logo (see below) and other resources can be found at <https://www.gs.edu/academics/jonathan-edwards-center/>



People are encouraged to apply for the Visiting Scholar Program at Gateway in order to avail themselves of the resources of the Center. Visiting scholars will have the opportunity to engage in conversations with scholars such as Oliver Crisp, Kyle Strobel, Mark Rogers, and myself. Visiting scholars might also be invited to give a JEC lecture, or perhaps even teach a seminar in Edwards, with compensation for their service. Visiting scholars will have access to

student/faculty housing significantly discounted from the market rate as well as access to all research facilities, which could include a carrel in the library or office space elsewhere on campus.

### Inaugural Conference Volume Essays

The proceedings of the inaugural conference will be published by Wipf & Stock<sup>1</sup> sometime before the 2020 Jonathan Edwards Congress to be held in Leuven, Belgium. Here is a synopsis of the introduction to that volume. Not every essay in this book is a paper that was presented at the conference, but most contributors were either presenters or conference attendees.

Adriaan Neele commences this volume with a broad survey of the theme Creation, Regeneration, Revival before the time of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). With respect to the doctrine of creation, Edwards's "favorite" theology handbooks by Francis Turretin (1623-1687) and Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706) were highlighted. Neele observes that the writings of early modern thinkers such as John Locke (1632-1704) and Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) resembled Edwards's understanding of the "sense of the heart" more prominently than can be seen in earlier reformed orthodoxy. In that sense Neele sees Edwards as a "transitional figure in defining the essence of the doctrine of regeneration." However, in other ways, Edwards was "firmly rooted" in reformed Christianity. Edwards understanding of revival had roots in seventh-century predecessors such as August Herman Franke (1663-1727) as well as Edwards's contemporaries like Theodore Frelinghuysen (1691-1747), John Wesley (1703-1791), and George Whitefield (1714-1770).

Douglas Sweeney opens Part I on Regeneration with the paper he presented as the first plenary address at JEC's inaugural conference. As such, it was intended for a broad audience. While for the sake of communication it may read in a colloquial tone, Sweeney's footnotes demonstrate that his informal presentation is grounded in a meticulous depth of scholarly research. In referring to Edwards's understanding of new birth and its implication for Christians, Sweeney maintains that the most important thing in the world for Edwards is the beauty of holiness. In that sense, Sweeney asserts "Edwards often sounded more Catholic than many Protestants do," even though Edwards "hated Catholics" in a typical "Old-Protestant way."

Chris Wozincki's essay focuses on the metaphysical underpinning of regeneration by examining Edwards's Personal Narrative. In using tools from analytic philosophy, Wozincki makes a case that although Edwards's doctrine of continuous creation appears to be in tension with the "one-subject criterion" principle, that said, if one reads Edwards as an anti-criterialist this tension could dissolve.

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Chun and Kyle Strobel eds. *Regeneration, Revival, and Creation: Religious Experience and the Purposes of God in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2020).

By reading Edwards's doctrine of regeneration as part of the work of Christ, Obbie Todd disagrees with Ross Hasting's description of Edwards's "Spirit Christology" or "overly pneumatological Christology." Rather, Todd argues, Edwards's view is "more aptly described as Christological pneumatology." This would be the case in Edwards thinking because he believes Christ must be given "soteriological priority before" the Spirit. Edwards's Christological pneumatology is particularly evident in conversions understood within a postmillennial framework.

Peter Jung took the New Perspective on Paul's Justification to task by contrasting Edwards's view on justification from that of N.T. Wright, even comparing Wright to Richard Baxter's (1616-1691) historical position. In Wright's estimation, "justification is an ecumenical and ecclesiological issue, not a soteriological one." Unlike Wright, Edwards interprets Paul as one who "excludes both the ceremonial and moral law in justification." Jung admits, however, that Edwards's doctrine of justification is not a "typical Calvinist or Reformed position but a reinforced" version.

Michael Haykin starts Part II on Revival with the conference's second plenary address. Haykin views Edwards as an "innovator in corporate prayer." Edwards's theology of prayer and revival found in *Humble Attempt* is carefully examined and even illustrated with a photo. Haykin argues that Edwards's thoughts on revival left a significant influence on evangelicals who ministered in the long Eighteenth Century. He gives special attention to Edwards's legacy on English Particular Baptists such as John Sutcliff (1752-1814) and Andrew Fuller (1754-1815).

Ryan J. Martin provides detailed textual analysis and synthesis on key revivalistic writings by tracing Edwards's intellectual developments of the concept of affection in his theology of revival. For Edwards, Martin asserts, "human affections differ importantly from modern ideas about emotions" instead Edwards understood "affections as spiritual movements of the will." On this point, Martin challenges readers to read Edwards more "carefully."

John Shouse concurs with Ryan Martin that Edwards's development of "affections" cannot be equated with contemporary discussions of "emotions." On the other hand, that is not reason to neglect them either. Shouse finds value in exploring comparisons and contrasts between contemporary cognitivist theories of emotions, in particular, with the work of the "affectional theologies" of both Edwards and Søren Kierkegaard. He concludes that both Edwards and Kierkegaard anticipate and reinforce ways in which "emotions" have come to be seen as intertwined with concepts, judgments and perceptions that are facilitated and even formed by religious beliefs and practices.

The traditional historiography that contrasts the first and second Great Awakenings was challenged by Mark Rogers. Contrary to popular misconceptions, the first awakening, of which Edwards was a part, did not wait for revival passively. Instead, Rogers states, "Edwards labored to see revival come using means." The "use of means" Edwards employed to expedite the coming of Christ's millennial kingdom were threefold: 1) spreading the news of revival, 2) preaching, and 3) uniting in prayer.

As great a theologian and philosopher as Edward was, Missiologist Allen Yeh underscores Edwards's underappreciated contribution as a missionary. For example, Edwards's relation to David Brainerd (1718-1747) and its impact on mission history, as well as his ministry to Stockbridge Native Americans, are highlighted. Edwards's missiological legacy in William Carey (1761-1834) and through him for the entire development of modern missions, his importance for the second great awakening, his influence on Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) and his wife Ann Hasseltine Judson (1789-1826) and Edwards's impact on evangelicalism are all brought to attention.

Oliver Crip's contribution was also the conference's third plenary address. Crisp has written on Edwards and Creation in the past, but he opens up Part III with a fresh new insight on this subject as it relates to divine conceptualism and the Augustinian concept of divine ideas. At one point he makes a provocative suggestion, inviting historians to "cringe" as he proposes an account that is "not actually the position of the Jonathan of history." Crisp's essay points out what he thinks to be a previously unnoticed aporia in Edwards's thought.

"Must God Create?" is the question Walter Schultz endeavors to answer by analyzing Edwards's argument in *End of Creation*. Schulz contrasts pseudo-Dionysian's answer with the Edwardsean one. While the former asserts that "God is good is fundamental and entails God must create, in the Edwards argument, God is holy is fundamental, and what follows from it is only that God is disposed to emanate." Because Edwards held creation is ex nihilo, no achievement ad extra could have added to God. "The choice to create" Schultz argues, "lies not in some sort of Dionysian goodness." Ultimately, he concludes, the argumentation in *End of Creation* "does not entail that God must create." Edwards is well known for seeing God's excellences in all creation and did not hesitate to use his scientific knowledge to explain his world view.

Lisanne Winslow uses her expertise in Biology and Biochemistry to shed light on Edwards's thought. Having explained Type (shadow) and Antitype (real) in Edwards's theology, Winslow engages in "typological analysis of complex higher order biological mechanisms" by looking at rod cells found in the retina of the human eye. She concludes "Edwards was far ahead of his time in conveying the ideas of the vastness of God's external expression all the way down to the far reaches of the created order."

Rob Boss first originated "The Visual Edwards" in 2006 because he wanted to "visualize the intricate typological and theological connections" in Edwards's thought. Boss used his "JEViewer" - a Visual Edwards platform in desktop software that he developed - to showcase the "complex and aesthetically profound nature of Edwards's typology" found in creation. In reading this essay, the readers will, more likely than not, agree with Boss's assessment that "These maps of Edwards's writings are beautiful confluences of theology, technology, and art."

With an eyebrow raising title, "Jonathan Edwards and the Aliens," Robb Torseth follows Edwards's speculative thinking in Miscellanies about extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI) in the context of Reformed Theology and creation. Torseth asserts, contrary to theologians like

Aquinas “who attempt to argue against the existence of ETI,” Edwards developed another argument that “stems from his Calvinistic heritage.” While Edwards neither confirms nor denies ETI exist, Edwards offers a “model” for why ETI “probably” does exist. If Aliens were to be discovered, this, for Edwards, “would not present a direct problem to Christian belief.”

Rob Caldwell bookends Neele’s opening by surveying the role of the doctrines of Creation, Regeneration, and Revival after the time of Jonathan Edwards. Edwardsean voluntarism, Caldwell argues, had an impressive effect on various Edwardseans throughout the nineteenth century. This included Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790), Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), Nathaniel Taylor (1786-1858), Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), Edward Dorr Griffin (1770-1837), and Ann Hasseltine Judson. Subsequent to Edwards, as Caldwell explained, some Edwardseans “drew out the implications” of Edwards’s original thinking by advancing it further, which “led to criticism and controversy.” The Edwardsean voluntarism, much to the dismay of Princetonian Charles Hodge (1797-1878), has transformed “traditional Calvinism into Edwardsean Calvinism.”

This book’s co-editor, Kyle Strobel concludes the volume by discussing the God of Regeneration, Revival, and Creation, that makes more “explicit” what has been said, throughout this volume. In addition to engaging essays of all the contributors, Strobel also suggests several underdeveloped areas in Edwards scholarship for further research.

### **A Brief history and vision for the Jonathan Edwards Center at Gateway Seminary**

The dream of the Jonathan Edwards Center (West) started when Adriaan Neele approached me in October of 2016 about the possibility of hosting an affiliated center of Yale’s JEC at Gateway. In addition to the existence of some notable Edwards scholars on the West Coast, Neele informed me that Yale’s JEC website attracts a high amount of internet traffic from California. In other words, there is a sizable interest in Edwards from this sector and that indicated a critical need for a JEC on the west coast. After this initial encounter, I worked closely with Yale colleagues Adriaan Neele and Ken Minkema, as well as Gateway colleagues Michael Martin and John Shouse, to turn this dream into a reality. The JEC (West) is deeply indebted to Doug Sweeney who helped me hammer out what the Center should look like before proposing it to Gateway’s President Jeff Iorg. Sweeney’s helpful advice in March, 2017 gave concrete shape and stimulated innovative ideas for the Gateway Center. The founding advisory board included, Ken Minkema (Yale University), Rob Caldwell (Southwestern Seminary), Mark Rogers (Pastor, of Fellowship in the Pass Church), Oliver Crisp (University of St Andrews), Kyle Strobel (Talbot School of Theology), and John Shouse (Gateway Seminary).

The goal of JEC (West) is to serve as a research, education, and publication hub for Edwards studies on the West Coast. However, Gateway Center also has its own distinctive emphasis - namely to foster research on Edwards’s influence on the Baptist tradition. For instance, I have been working on Edwardsean Baptist figure Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) by

editing *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller. Volume 6, Apologetic Works*.<sup>2</sup> Modeled after Yale University Press's critical edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, the Andrew Fuller project, being published by De Gruyter Press, has a projected sixteen volumes. Publication of volume six with its critical introduction is poised to be one of the most significant research outputs for JEC (West). These new volumes, when finally released, will pave the way for other historians and theologians to mine the writings of Fuller, who is an underappreciated but extremely important figure in Baptist heritage as well as Edwards studies. In addition to Fuller, I have a personal research interest in Edwards's influence on other Baptist figures such as William Carey, Isaac Backus, Richard Furman, Charles Spurgeon, Adoniram and Ann Judson and others.

This Edwards Center on the West Coast of the United States will seek to strengthen existing doctoral and visiting scholar programs, facilitate Edwards' scholars in the American West and elsewhere, and build a network with scholarly communities internationally as well as with local churches in the Inland Empire and Los Angeles basin of California.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, Michael Haykin (ed.) (Berlin and Boston: Walter De Gruyter, 2016-), 16 vols.