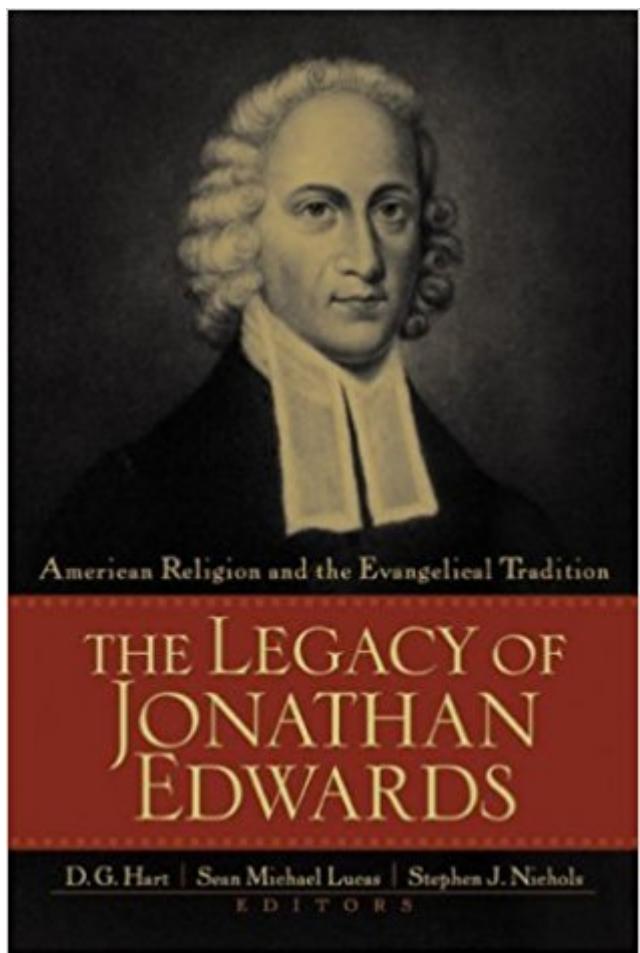


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# The Legacy Of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion And The Evangelical Tradition



## **Synopsis**

Three hundred years after Edwards' birth, experts on Edwards examine the vision, theology, and legacy of this theological giant. Scholars contributing essays include Harry S. Stout, George M. Marsden, Gerald McDermott, and Douglas Sweeney. The first part of the book focuses on the vision of Jonathan Edwards, discussing how Edwards understood Native American mission, preaching, and Christian spirituality. A second section looks at Edwards' theology and its relevance for contemporary church issues, including the crisis of character and open theism. The third section examines how Edwards' legacy was carried on by later church leaders. And the final section offers personal reflections by long-time Edwards scholar George S. Claghorn and a survey of the best literature on Edwards.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Baker Academic (August 1, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0801026229

ISBN-13: 978-0801026225

Product Dimensions: 9 x 6 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,229,472 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #78 in Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Protestantism > Theology #258 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Protestantism > Presbyterian #1371 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > History > Historical Theology

## **Customer Reviews**

D. G. Hart is academic dean and professor of church history at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. Sean Michael Lucas is archives and special collections librarian at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Stephen J. Nichols is associate professor of church history and philosophy at Lancaster Bible College.

This book is a welcome addition to many introductory books on the life, thought, and theology of Jonathan Edwards. Drs. D. G. Hart, Sean Michael Lucas (please correct his name- -it is Sean Michael Lucas, not 'Edwards'), and Stephen Nichols have done an outstanding job of writing clear

and informative essays that will be appreciated by both those who are new to Edwards' influence on American Religion, as well as those trained as scholars in this field. May Jonathan Edwards' life, thought, theology, and most of all his great devotion to God's glory and holiness recapture us all. This book will point those interested in the right direction and cause some to understand the evangelical tradition and theological stream in which we all live that flows from the influence of Dr. Edwards. Purchase this with the Marsden Volume on the life of Edwards, or Nichols' 'Guided Tour of Edwards' Life. PS Please correct Dr. Lucas' name!

Perhaps best known for his fiery sermons evoking images of fire and brimstone, Jonathan Edwards was actually one of the most influential thinkers America has ever produced. Even today, philosophy is forced to contend with his carefully crafted responses to the Enlightenment, the leading intellectual movement of his day. Historians must acknowledge the influence he wielded in eighteenth century New England. Protestant theologians still wrestle and debate his ideas on God's sovereignty, revival, joy in the Christian life, and Heaven and Hell. American society is particularly indebted for his contributions toward dealing with Native Americans and black slaves, which in his time, were nothing short of revolutionary. Indeed, Jonathan Edwards was a man who left an enduring and imposing legacy. The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards consists of chapters written by different scholars and professors from around the country, each examining one aspect of Edwards' thought and life. The book includes scrutiny of Edwards' theology, apologetics, and philosophy. Specifically, some of the chapters deal with the eighteenth century Puritan's thoughts on open theism and God's sovereignty, experimental Calvinism and spiritual conversion, his intellectual response to the Enlightenment, slavery and Native Americans, church missions, apologetics, God's covenant with America, and the art of preaching. The different authors involved in the book give each chapter a different flavor and make it difficult to accurately summarize and review the book in a concise manner. The idea for the book stemmed from a 2001 conference at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The conference, entitled "Jonathan Edwards and the Future of Evangelicalism," was so well received that each of the keynote speakers eventually translated their lectures into a chapter for this joint effort. Before reading this book I must confess of my general ignorance towards Edwardsian thought and theology beyond a general knowledge that he was one of the last Puritan preachers. This book served as an excellent introduction to his writings and thoughts. I was most impressed by Stephen Nichols' chapter, "Last of the Mohican Missionaries." I had never known that Edwards chose to serve as a missionary to Native Americans for almost a decade at the height of his popularity in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, a rural outpost

town, when he could have commanded a much larger congregational audience every Sunday. Edwards' dealings with the tribes in western Massachusetts set an early example for missionaries in North America concerning the preaching of the gospel to foreign cultures. Most interesting, Edwards adopted the Native Americans' ways of living, including their language and living accommodations. Other noteworthy chapters include Sam Storms "Open Theism in the Hands of an Angry Puritan." It was fascinating to read Edwards' thoughts on what is still a contemporary theological debate and, of course, he essentially destroyed the notion that open theism could be founded upon Biblically-based arguments. The two closing chapters also added a lot to the overall work. In "Transcribing a Difficult Hand" George Claghorn recounts his experiences while spending over three decades of studying Edwards and tirelessly working to collect and transcribe old letters and documents written by the Puritan pastor. As you might guess from the chapter's title, Edwards was infamous for bad handwriting. Reading about Claghorn's personal experiences sometimes makes it sound like deciphering Edwards hand-written material was something akin to translating hieroglyphics! In the last chapter, Sean Michael Lucas gives a guided tour of books about Edwards, making it easy for interested readers to know where to learn more on the eighteenth century Puritan preacher. As I stated above, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* is a great introduction to Edwardsian thought and theology. The only thing I would have liked to see added is a chapter or two dedicated to the life of Edwards. A couple of chapters more biographical in nature would have made it easier for those unfamiliar with Edwards' life to understand what influenced and shaped him. This was the only glaring omission in the book and made it difficult at times to understand what prompted Edwards to write about the subjects he did.

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