



The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia

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Weathersfield, Connecticut

Located in north-central Connecticut, along the Connecticut River, Weathersfield is arguably the oldest English settlement in Connecticut, founded in 1634. It was named after a village in the English county of Essex, known for its burial grounds, cabinetmaking, and shipbuilding.

From a small farming community, Weathersfield developed through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century as an important commercial center along the "Great River," with its cove lined by a row of warehouses that contained goods of all sorts. The town was connected to trade not only in North America but also in the Caribbean and beyond.

During Edwards's lifetime, the town's church was pastored by his uncle, Rev. Stephen Mix, who married one of Solomon Stoddard's daughters. It is likely that as a boy Edwards visited the town with his family, but he came for a stay of longer duration when, in 1716, he moved to Weathersfield to attend the local branch of the Connecticut Collegiate School, under the leadership of his cousin Elisha Williams (who would later be rector of Yale College). During the next two years, Edwards boarded at a house in town and attended classes under the guidance of Williams, who would most likely have used the curriculum he went through at Harvard College. When Edwards and his classmates moved to the newly constructed college building in New Haven in 1719, he boarded with Elisha Mix, Stephen Mix's son. Elisha proved to be an uncooperative roommate for Edwards, who, as an upper-classman, expected a certain amount of deference from the freshman, and was also rather exacting. After he left Weathersfield, Edwards barely mentions the name of the town again, except in relation to Elisha Williams, who lived there, and was one of the Indian commissioners with whom Edwards had to deal at Stockbridge.

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Wesley, John (1703-1791)

John Wesley was a Church of England clergyman, leader in the evangelical revival, and a founder of Methodism. Jonathan Edwards never met John Wesley, and there is no known correspondence between them. Nonetheless, Edwards played a significant role in Wesley's life through his writings. A few months after Wesley's evangelical conversion of May 1738, he read Edwards's *Faithful Narrative*, which led him into a period of deep self-examination and provided both a lens through which to interpret his evangelical experience and a model for revival. Wesley later published an abridged version titled *A Narrative of the Late Work of God* (1744), along with extracts from four other works of Edwards, which he entitled *The Distinguishing*

Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God (1744), *Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England* (1745), *An Extract of the Life of the Late Rev. Mr. David Brainerd* (1768), and *An Extract from a Treatise concerning Religious Affections* (1773). Edwards influenced Wesley and the Wesleyan revival with his writings much more than Wesley influenced Edwards and the Great Awakening.

In *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival*, Edwards made his only printed reference to John (and Charles) Wesley, wrongly accusing them of teaching antinomian sinless perfection. His view may have been derived in part from his reading of the Wesleys' first edition of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), which makes reference to Christian perfection in both the preface and hymns.

Through their related British cultural contexts and leadership in the interconnected transatlantic revival, both men had much in common. They engaged with the empiricism of John Locke, though scholars have differed on the extent of individual and shared Lockean influence on them. Although they held divergent views of sin, they both wrote against John Taylor's rejection of original sin in his *Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin* (1740).

While divided by their Calvinist and Arminian theologies, Edwards and Wesley emphasized "experiential theology," with the aim of holding together Christian doctrine, practice, and experience for the formation of Christian character. They share a common legacy as founders of evangelicalism.

GEORDAN HAMMOND

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Westminster Standards

The Westminster Assembly (1643–1652) was convened by Parliament to advise on church reform in the midst of the English Civil War. It was charged with the task, not of revising doctrine or rearranging church government, but of demonstrating theological agreement between the Church of England and the Reformed churches of Scotland and the Continent. The assembly comprised 151 laymen and divines, the majority of whom were Presbyterian, with minorities of Independents, Anglicans, and Erastians. Initially tasked with drafting a revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles, the assembly ultimately produced three original and influential documents of its own: the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), the Shorter Catechism (WSC), and the Larger Catechism (WLC), collectively known as the Westminster Standards. Though the assembly failed to achieve church unity in England, the standards have been subscribed to more than any other confessional documents among English-speaking Reformed Protestants.

Whitefield, George (1714–1770)

among the Indians saw its start in 1743, when he accepted a young Mohican convert named Samson Occom into his home to study Latin. In 1754, he founded Moor's Indian Charity School in Lebanon to educate Native American youth with a view toward missionary labors among their own tribes. Various difficulties eventually forced Wheelock to look elsewhere to expand his "Grand Design," and in 1769 King George III granted him a charter to found a new school, which he named after Moor's School board member, William Legge, the second Earl of Dartmouth. Thus, in 1770 Wheelock moved to Hanover, New Hampshire, and spent his final decade as Dartmouth's first president.

R. A. LEO

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Whitefield, George (1714–1770)

George Whitefield was a Church of England clergyman, evangelist, and leader of Calvinistic Methodism. Following Edwards's request in a February 1740 letter, Whitefield visited Northampton October 17–20, 1740, in the midst of a successful, yet controversial, evangelistic tour through New England. Whitefield preached four times to Edwards's congregation, and exhorted Edwards's children and others in the family home. His preaching brought Edwards and most of his congregation to tears at the Sunday morning service. The accounts of Whitefield and Edwards agree that Whitefield was a catalyst for reviving the work of God in Northampton that had begun five years earlier. Edwards believed that the flame of revival continued amongst many for two years and was "more pure" than the earlier awakening.

Whitefield admired the Edwards family. He testified that Edwards was "a solid, excellent Christian," that his children were models of "Christian simplicity," and that Sarah Pierpont Edwards was an ideal "helpmeet for her husband" (Whitefield 1960, 45–49).

Whitefield's second visit to Northampton came in July 1745 at a time of intense controversy between Whitefield supporters and opponents. Edwards concluded that this had a role in hindering the outbreak of a new awakening. He defended Whitefield's ministry in print and praised him for becoming more humble and wise.

Edwards thought that Whitefield "never made so much of an intimate of me, as of some others" because he criticized the younger man's trust of "impulses" and warned him against "judging other persons to be unconverted" (*WJE* 16:157). While their theological differences and contrasting temperaments and talents are well known, both men were driven by a common burning zeal for their preaching to be providentially used by God for the salvation of souls.

GEORDAN HAMMOND

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Will

Jonathan Edwards has been called the “theologian of the heart.” This does not mean that he wore his emotions on his sleeve. It means that his theology involved the “whole soul” or heart of a human person. He was convinced that this was the emphasis of the Scriptures, and it colored his entire approach to conversion and the work of Christ and his Holy Spirit in redemption. To understand Edwards’s view of the human soul, including the will and the intellect, we must examine (1) his view of the human dispositional complex; (2) how that view compared or contrasted with the so-called faculty psychology; and (3) how he joined Puritan and Reformed teaching on the human soul with his own formulation, hammered out during the First Great Awakening.

The Dispositional Complex. Jonathan Edwards understood that the human heart was a “dispositional complex” that involved the will and the intellect. Edwards’s notions of faith and belief engaged the entire person and so has been called a “whole-soul” view of human nature. The intellect is the power of the human soul to perceive and understand things, and the will is the capacity of the soul to be attracted to or repulsed by whatever object is held in the mind. The Christian tradition has debated over many centuries the relation of the various powers or capacities (faculties) of the human soul. Some theologians privilege the intellect and follow the lead of Thomas Aquinas; these are called “intellectualists.” Others follow the lead of Duns Scotus in privileging the lead of the will; these are called “scholastic voluntarists.” A third category of theologians follows the lead of Augustine of Hippo in stressing the unified operations of the human soul and understand the will and intellect working convergently in sin or regeneration; these are called “Augustinian voluntarists.” For the Augustinian voluntarist, the human person is either oriented to self and sin or toward God and redemption. Edwards may be classified under this third category.

Faculty Psychology. Edwards’s understanding of the will working convergently or concurrently with the intellect in the dispositional complex stands in contrast to the views noted previously, in which the will or the intellect either takes the lead in the functioning of the powers of the soul, or one controls the other. Intellectualists and voluntarists schematize the powers or faculties of the human soul. Edwards, while properly distinguishing the intellectual and volitional powers of the human soul, was keenly aware of the Bible’s emphasis on the unified operations of the hu-