Obbie Tyler Todd

Southern Edwardseans

The Southern Baptist Legacy of Jonathan Edwards

V&R

The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University

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New Directions in Jonathan Edwards Studies

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Harry S. Stout, Kenneth P. Minkema
and Adriaan C. Neele

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The theological questions and conversations of nineteenth-century American Evangelicalism were largely shaped by the remarkable thought of one man, namely, Jonathan Edwards, who has been rightly described as "America's Augustine." Past scholarship has focused upon the impress of his thought in the Northern United States, particularly as it relates to what has come to be called the New Divinity. In this ground-breaking work, Dr Obbie Todd convincingly argues that Edwardsean thought was equally determinative for the development of Baptist life and thought in the South. Is there not a sense, then, that most American Evangelicals in the nineteenth century were Edwardseans? A scholarly *tour de force*.
– Michael A.G. Haykin (Chair & professor of church history, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary)

Is a prophet loved in his own country? Following his death, the renowned 18th-century New England theologian Jonathan Edwards was widely criticized by northern liberal Congregationalists and Unitarians, and his writings were expunged from the College of New Jersey's curriculum. It is also assumed that his thought was not well received in the American south, largely because of the growing divide over abolitionism in the antebellum period. However, there were indeed Edwardseans in Dixieland–and not merely a scattered few, but a multi-generational cadre of figures, concentrated among Southern Baptists. This study reveals for the first time the extent and variety of Edwards' reach among southern theologians, which laid a foundation for modern-day appropriation of the Sage of Stockbridge among adherents of the Southern Baptist Convention and beyond.
– Kenneth P. Minkema (Jonathan Edwards Center & Online Archive at Yale University, Research Faculty at Yale Divinity School and as Research Associate at the University of the Free State, South Africa)

This book is long overdue. It is a cutting-edge work that I have been waiting for someone to chronicle. Obbie Todd makes a bold and insightful case that Southern Baptists have engineered the moderate Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards and later Edwardsean theology in order to fine-tune their own evangelistic identity. Albeit this investigation challenges traditional baptist historiography, I find his evidence and argumentation compelling. The monograph of the series, *New Directions in Jonathan Edwards Studies*, is an appropriate title for this creative work. This book presents groundbreaking research that will be consulted, debated, and referenced for many decades to come.
– Chris Chun (Director of Jonathan Edwards Center and Professor of Church History at Gateway Seminary)

It is not often that a scholar can plow new ground, especially when it comes to the life and legacy of Jonathan Edwards. Yet that is exactly what Obbie Todd has done in *Southern Edwardseans*. With an eye especially to Southern Baptist reception of the theology of the

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great New England divine, Todd demonstrates how the Edwardsean intellectual circle included those in a region and a communion with which he had little obvious connection. In so doing, Todd expertly demonstrates the truly national impact of the Edwardsean theology and charts the way forward for future historians to understand the development of Christianity in the American South.
– Sean Michael Lucas (PhD, Chancellor's Professor of Church History, Reformed Theological Seminary, USA)

Obbie Todd has spent several years digging deep into primary sources of Southern preachers and theologians sorting out the influence of Jonathan Edwards's thought on the culture-makers of the South. This is no easy task for it calls for a deep grasp of Edwards and an accurate analysis of the places that his thought settled in a variety of creative thinkers. He has done this. The book offers a deeper understanding of the roots of southern evangelicalism and will see pivotal ideas in the dynamic theology of Edwards in a new light. He who reads will have a pleasant adventure in the living process of theological influence and interaction.
– Tom J. Nettles (Senior Professor of Historical Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary)

This book traces the enduring influence of Jonathan Edwards, especially within the Southern Baptist Convention, America's largest Protestant denomination. *Southern Edwardseans* is a major contribution to both Baptist studies and the reception history of America's most consequential theologian. A historiographical *tour de force*!
– Timothy George (Distinguished Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University and the general editor of the 28-volume *Reformation Commentary on Scripture)*

I've been waiting for someone to write *Southern Edwardseans* since 2000, when I first became passingly aware of the influence on Edwards and his successors on Baptists in the South. I'm thankful that Obbie Tyler Todd has taken on this challenge. He offers a compelling narrative, highlights the key figures and movements, and ably demonstrates that Edwardsean thought has a rich (and continuing) legacy among Southern Baptists. *Southern Edwardseans* makes a signal contribution to both Edwards Studies and Baptist Studies that will open up new avenues for more focused studies that dig deeply into the thought of particular individuals or the legacy of key ideas. Highly recommended.
– Nathan A. Finn (Provost and Dean of the University Faculty, North Greenville University)

ISBN Print: 9783525560518 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560519

Table of Contents

ISBN Print: 9783525560518 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560519

ISBN Print: 9783525560518 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560519

To Grant,
My favorite Yale alumnus

ISBN Print: 9783525560518 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560519

ISBN Print: 9783525560518 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560519

Foreward

Not long ago, the Edwardsean tradition was not well-known among American historical theologians and Baptist historians. Jonathan Edwards, of course, was revered, but his "Edwardsean" descendants—known variously as the New Divinity, Hopkinsians, Consistent Calvinists, and the New England theologians in the century after Edwards's death—had unfortunately been relegated to the sidelines of history. There were numerous reasons for this. In the nineteenth century, great debates between Edwardsean Calvinists and their more-traditional Reformed colleagues at institutions like Princeton Seminary drove a sizable wedge between the two American Calvinist traditions, so much so that once the Edwardseans passed from the scene, the traditionalists were able to shape much of the historical narrative. In the twentieth century, writers like Joseph Haroutunian set the tone for decades by portraying the Edwardseans as overly preoccupied with the metaphysical subtleties related to human willing rather than devoting attention to the robust, gospel-oriented faith that Edwards had proclaimed. By the middle of the twentieth century the Edwardseans were largely forgotten, relegated to footnote-status in American historical theology.

This all changed toward the end of the twentieth century with the reemergence of interest in Jonathan Edwards both in the academy and in many churches across North America and beyond. Suddenly, Edwards was fashionable again. With much attention turned to the Northampton sage it was only a matter of time before some would begin to reexamine the relationship between Edwards and the forgotten Edwardseans. Scholars like Joseph Conforti, Mark Valeri, David Kling, and Douglas Sweeney have reassessed a host of Edwardsean luminaries like Samuel Hopkins, Joseph Bellamy, and others, concluding that there was more continuity shared between Edwards and the Edwardseans than previously acknowledged. Indeed, when we examine the many leaders of the Second Great Awakening in the northeast we find a host of ministers, professors, and writers who were devoted followers of the Edwardsean tradition. From this ongoing scholarship, American historical theologians have safely concluded that in the decades between the American Revolution and the Civil War there was a coherent, sizable, and vibrant Edwardsean Calvinist tradition in the northeast, touching much of New England Congregationalism as well as significant segments of Presbyterianism.

But what about the Baptists? Do we find the influence of Edwards and the Edwardseans among their tribe in antebellum period? This has been a difficult question to answer because, as noted above, the Edwardseans have not been on the radars of many historical theologians until recently. Furthermore, Baptist historians are not

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generally that familiar with the Edwardsean tradition, and if they are, their work has usually focused upon the connections between the Edwardseans and *English* Baptists like William Carey and Andrew Fuller (the outstanding work of Michael A. G. Haykin and Chris Chun comes to mind here). By contrast, the presence of Edwardsean Calvinism among American antebellum Baptists has not been extensively examined.

This is why Obbie Tyler Todd's work is so important. *Southern Edwardseans* speaks directly to this lacuna in the scholarship by admirably drawing together three academic sub-specialties necessary to explore the topic: Jonathan Edwards studies, the history and theology of the Edwardseans, and Baptist history in the early American Republic. Todd ably demonstrates that Edwardsean influence was indeed extensive among Baptists in the South. Many familiar Baptist leaders from the period—Richard Furman, William B. Johnson, William Staughton, R. B. C. Howell, Basil Manly Sr., and others—imbibed significant doses of Edwardsean theology either directly from Edwards himself or intermediately through the writings of his Edwardsean disciples. Todd does not just identify Edwardsean themes among Baptists, he goes further and suggests that there were multiple ways Baptists appropriated the Edwardsean tradition, yielding at least four different schools of Southern Edwardseanism.

This book significantly expands our knowledge of both Baptists and Edwardseans in the first half of the nineteenth century. It will be of great interest to American historical theologians, Baptist historians, as well as Edwardsean scholars. Many thanks to Obbie Tyler Todd for his outstanding study!

Robert W. Caldwell III
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Introduction: What is an Edwardsean?

What is an Edwardsean? So much ink has been spilled answering this question that Jonathan Edwards's legacy now seems to garner as much interest as his theology. The question has really existed since 1932, when Joseph Haroutunian dismissed the New Divinity movement in his *Piety versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology*.[1] Since Haroutunian's scathing critique, a range of scholars have attempted to vindicate Edwards's New England successors as bona fide Edwardseans, theologians with the spirit, principles, and even the imprimatur of Edwards.[2] Douglas Sweeney alone has authored, contributed to, or co-edited enough works on this subject to fill a small library.[3] The question of Edwardseanism has been so thoroughly explored that Charles W. Phillips has recently published a work entitled *Edwards Amasa Park: The Last Edwardsean*.[4] Edwards scholars tend to agree with Phillips. Sweeney and Allen Guelzo have equated the Edwardsean tradition with the so-called New England theology, "the tradition beginning with Edwards, running through the New Divinity from Samuel Hopkins and Joseph Bellamy to Nathanael Emmons, and extending to more ambiguous figures who nevertheless claimed a linkage to Edwards, from Nathaniel W. Taylor, Lyman Beecher, and Charles G.

1 Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932).

2 For an excellent historiography, see Douglas A. Sweeney and Allen C. Guelzo, "Introduction," in *The New England Theology*, ed. Douglas A. Sweeney and Allen C. Guelzo (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 20–21.

3 Douglas A. Sweeney, *Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology, and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney, ed., *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003); Douglas A. Sweeney and Allen C. Guelzo, ed., *The New England Theology* (Eugene; Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006); Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney, ed., *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Daniel W. Cooley and Douglas A. Sweeney, "The Edwardseans and the Atonement," in *A New Divinity: Transatlantic Reformed Evangelical Debates during the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Mark Jones and Michael A. G. Haykin (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 109–25; Douglas A. Sweeney, "Taylorites, Tylerites, and the Dissolution of the New England Theology," in *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. D.G. Hart, Sean Michael Lucas, and Stephen J. Nichols (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 181–99; Douglas A. Sweeney, "Evangelical Tradition in America," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stephen J. Stein [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 217–238.

4 Charles W. Phillips, *Edwards Amasa Park: The Last Edwardsean* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018).

ISBN Print: 9783525560518 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560519

Finney to the last of the school's stalwarts, Andover's Edwards Amasa Park."[5] Edwardseanism was indeed a protean theology, adapting with American culture.[6] It crossed denominational lines, traversed geographical boundaries, and even transcended the volatile issue of slavery. In some sense, Park was an Edwardsean in the same way Jonathan Edwards was a Puritan. Neither theologian embodied the original meaning of the term, but they identified themselves as members in long, ever-changing traditions which had kept many of their most distinguishable traits.

However, the mind of Jonathan Edwards was an ocean, and this is why the question of Edwardseanism is such a vexing one. Few if any American theologians after Edwards's death have since compared with the sheer scope of his thinking. Perry Miller, the historian largely responsible for resurrecting Edwards studies, once quipped that Edwards was "so much ahead of his time that our own can hardly be said to have caught up with him."[7] From his Trinitarian framework to his doctrine of self-love to his ability to balance seemingly contradictory ideas, there was much that Edwardseans did not share with Edwards. Therefore, in some sense, there were many Edwardseans and yet none at all.

But this book is not an attempt to settle the Edwardsean question. Instead these pages only broaden the question. How vast was Jonathan Edwards's legacy? How pliable was his theology? After decades of Jonathan Edwards studies, Edwardseanism is still deeper and wider than many have ever imagined. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney admit, "We know a great deal, in other words, about this otherworldly man. But we still know precious little about his roles in shaping this world."[8] Remarkably, we know even less about how Jonathan Edwards molded the American South. For instance, scholars today know more about Edwards's influence upon the United Kingdom than about his legacy in the state of Georgia.[9] Thanks in large part to the labors of Michael A. G. Haykin, Edwards's impact upon Andrew Fuller and his English Baptist associates has been dissected and researched

5 Douglas A. Sweeney and Allen C. Guelzo, "Introduction," 15n5.

6 Joseph Conforti posits that "from the Second Great Awakening to the turn of the twentieth century, Edwards's religious figure and thought were a continual, if changing part of American cultural discourse." (Joseph A. Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 3.

7 Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1949), xvii.

8 David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney, "Introduction," in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), xii.

9 David W. Bebbington, "Remembered Around the World: The International Scope of Edwards's Legacy," in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 177–200; D. Bruce Hindmarsh, "The Reception of Jonathan Edwards by Early Evangelicals in England," 201–221; Christopher W. Mitchell, "Jonathan Edwards's Scottish Connection," 222–247.

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in a number of ways.[10] Haykin has even explored Southern Edwardseanism in small measure, but not with any significant treatment.[11] If not for the work of Tom Nettles in the Baptist realm and Sean Michael Lucas in Presbyterianism, the story of Edwards's Southern legacy would remain largely untold.[12] In many ways, this book builds on the work of Nettles and Haykin and engages in conversation with Lucas.

Still, Jonathan Edwards did not merely leave behind a Southern disciple or two. The geographical and cultural barriers in the South could not seal off Southerners from the theology of "America's theologian."[13] There were indeed a group of Southern evangelicals who laid claim to the Edwardsean tradition with nearly as much warrant as Edwards Amasa Park. Their theology, piety, and mission were fundamentally shaped by Jonathan Edwards and his successors. But they were not who many, including Edwards, would have expected. They were Southern Baptists and collectively they were the only Edwardseans in the American South.[14] Greg Wills rightly observes, "Historians have noticed the influence of New England Theology on Presbyterians and Congregationalists, but have not attended to its influence on Baptists."[15] While Baptists in the South boasted a different theological pedigree

10 Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *The Armies of the Lamb: The Spirituality of Andrew Fuller* (Dundas: Joshua Press, 2001); Michael A. G. Haykin, ed. *Joy unspeakable and full of glory* (Dunas: Joshua Press, 2012); Michael A. G. Haykin, "A Great Thirst for Reading": Andrew Fuller the Theological Reader," in *Eusebeia* Issue 9, Spring 2008; Michael A. G. Haykin, "'The Lord is Doing Great Things, and Answering Prayer Everywhere': The Revival of the Calvinistic Baptists in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *Pentecostal Outpourings: Revival and the Reformed Tradition*, ed. Robert Davis Smart, Michael A. G. Haykin, and Ian Hugh Clary (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), 77–99; Chris Chun, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publishing, 2012).

11 Michael A. G. Haykin, "Great Admirers of the Transatlantic Divinity: Some Chapters in the Story of Baptist Edwardsianism," in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of the New England Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); 197–207.

12 Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 24, 43, 129; Tom Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity, Part Two: Beginnings in America* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 107, 169–171, 191, 274–6, 331; Sean Michael Lucas, "'He Cuts Up Edwardsism by the Roots': Robert Lewis Dabney and the Edwardsian Legacy in the Nineteenth-Century South," in *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. D.G. Hart, Sean Michael Lucas, and Stephen J. Nichols (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 200–216.

13 Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

14 In this work, "Southern Baptists" will simply refer to those Baptists who lived in or ministered in the American South, not necessarily those who constituted the Southern Baptist Convention.

15 Greg Wills, "The *SBJT* Forum: The Overlooked Shapers of Evangelicalism," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 87.

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than Presbyterians or Congregationalists, and while they inhabited a Southern landscape unfamiliar to the bustling cities and tall forests of New England, they believed their similarities with Edwards far outweighed their differences.

Like Edwards, these Baptists were revivalistic, Calvinistic, loosely confessional, and committed to practical divinity. In these four things, Southern Edwardseanism lived, moved, and had its being. In the nineteenth-century, when so many Presbyterians scoffed at Edwards's "innovation" and Methodists scorned his Calvinism, Baptists found in Edwards a man after their own heart. Directly or indirectly, Jonathan Edwards captured the Southern Baptist denomination. By 1845, at the first Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Edwardseans had laid the groundwork for a convention marked by Edwardsean theology.

The Development of Southern Baptist Theology

Jonathan Edwards's theology was critical in the development of Southern Baptist theology. Although "Baptists have been unified on very little throughout their history," Baptists in the South were tied by several beliefs and ideas and Jonathan Edwards spoke into almost all of them, most especially evangelism and the salvation experience.[16] Edwardseanism was the magnetic force that brought together Baptists of all kinds. For example, ideas like religious affections and moral and natural ability united many Regular and Separate Baptists in a common conversionism.[17] The concept of true virtue and love to being in general united anti-creedal and confessional Baptists.[18] Moral government tethered those who upheld penal substitution and those who rejected it.[19] The freedom of the will was an almost ubiquitous concept

16 Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists in America: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 248. The authors later say, "In all of this, Baptists are notorious for two things – evangelism and schism." (251)

17 Tom Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity, Volume Two: Beginnings in America* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 127; Nettles, "Richard Furman," in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George, David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1990),140.

18 William B. Johnson, "Love Characteristic of the Deity," in *Southern Baptist Sermons on Sovereignty and Responsibility* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 2003), 46; John L. Dagg, *A Manual of Theology* (Harrisonburg: Gano Books, 1982), 46.

19 Richard Furman, "On the Analogy Between the Dispensations of Grace by the Gospel, and a Royal Marriage Feast" in *Life and Works of Dr. Richard Furman, D.D.* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 2004), 470–71; William B. Johnson, "Reminiscences," South Carolina Library, University of South Carolina, 39.

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in Southern Baptist life, largely through Edwards's famous defense.[20] From the top of the denomination to the bottom, from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi River, Southern Baptists were melded by the influence of Jonathan Edwards. Moreover, Southern Baptists were even *produced* by the Northampton Sage. The drafter of the *Abstract of Principles* at Southern Seminary was converted by reading Edwards's *Personal Narrative* (1740).[21] The architect of the first Baptist state convention in the South even recommended Edwards's works as a means of salvation.[22]

However, Southern Edwardseans weren't just reading Edwards. These Baptists also consumed a steady dose of the Edwardseans. From confessional Calvinists in Charleston to Landmarkists in Tennessee, Baptists throughout the South gladly adopted Andrew Fuller's moral governmental view.[23] Altar-call revivalists in Georgia and teachers in Missouri were drawn to his evangelical brand of Calvinism, even pointing others to Fuller.[24] The second president of the Southern Baptist Convention believed that Timothy Dwight's systematic text was one of the best ever written.[25] Southern Edwardseans were indeed an eclectic blend of Edwardsean influences. The president of South Carolina College (1804–1820) was a thoroughgoing Hopkinsian, but the presidents at the University of Alabama (1837–1855) and the University of Georgia (1878–1888) preferred reading Jonathan Edwards instead of his New England successors.

Traditionally, Southern Baptist historiography has neglected to account for the subtle evolution that took place within the life of Edwardsean doctrines. As a whole, Southern Baptists resisted the style and scheme of the New Divinity, but not entirely. Much as the New Divinity refashioned Jonathan Edwards's theology, Southern Baptists modified New England Theology. Baptists could not seem to get enough of Edwardsean thought, and they sought it in all forms, but always on their own terms. For instance, Richard Fuller, the third president of the Southern Baptist Convention, preached a moral governmental atonement as one of his central

20 Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 1: The Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

21 Michael A. G. Haykin, "'Soldiers of Christ, in Truth Arrayed': The Ministry and Piety of Basil Manly Jr. (1825–1892)," *SBJT* 13.1 (2009): 31.

22 Richard Furman, "Conversion Essential to Salvation," in *The Life and Works of Dr. Richard Furman, D. D.*, ed. G. William Foster (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 2004), 438.

23 James Madison Pendleton, *The Atonement of Christ* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1885), 88–89.

24 *History of the Baptist Denomination of Georgia* (Atlanta: Jas. P. Harrison & Co. 1881), 316–17; Jarrett Burch, *Adiel Sherwood: Baptist Antebellum Pioneer in Georgia* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 51; Robert Samuel Duncan, *A History of the Baptists in Missouri* (St. Louis: Scammell & Company Publishers, 1883), 361.

25 R.B.C. Howell, The Terms of Communion at the Lord's Table (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1846), 192.

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themes.[26] He emphasized the "whole economy of Justice" under the "moral governor of the universe" and "the prerogative and attributes of a Moral Ruler."[27] However, unlike William B. Johnson, the first president of the SBC, Fuller never forfeited the traditional doctrine of imputation. In a sermon on law and gospel, after recalling the example of David Brainerd, Fuller then praised the "innocent and august substitute" who became "the most memorable assertion of the divine holiness and justice which had ever been presented to the contemplation of the moral universe."[28] Fuller's view was not a pristine, classic understanding of moral governmental theory like that of Johnson, but was rather a hybrid, emphasizing both distributive justice (i.e. imputation of personal righteousness) and general justice (i.e. God's right governance). Between the moral governmental view of Jonathan Maxcy and the penal substitutionary view of James P. Boyce, the quintessential forms of their respective systems, Southern Baptist theories of the atonement often fell along a spectrum which included distributive, general/public, and commutative justice (i.e. the exchange of goods). Which of these a Southern Baptist affirmed or emphasized in the work of Christ determined his exact view of the atonement.[29]

John L. Dagg also held to a synthesis of Edwardsean ideas. The author of the first Southern Baptist systematic theology text was fond of the New Divinity concept of public justice. However, since God always works for the "greatest good of the universe," he believed that the "character" of God's moral government should be ascribed to His goodness rather than to His justice. In other words, public justice was really just another name for goodness.[30] While Dagg rejected the New England version of the atonement in classroom lectures and in theological manuals, moral government was nevertheless a prominent theme in his thinking. Dagg removed the Hopkinsian husk in order to extract what he believed to be the most vital Edwardsean kernel: that the Moral Governor always works for His own glory and the good of His moral universe.[31] Moral government and its symbiotic axioms, honor and

26 Fuller declared, "Religion, my brethren, is sympathy with the government of God." (Richard Fuller, "The Insane Rich Man," in *Sermons by Richard Fuller, D. D.* [New York: Sheldon & Company, 1860], 222.)

27 Richard Fuller, *Sermons by Richard Fuller* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1877), 316, 91.

28 Ibid., 102–103.

29 For an excellent description of these three kinds of justice as viewed by the Edwardseans, see Daniel W. Cooley and Douglas A. Sweeney, "The Edwardseans and the Atonement," in *A New Divinity: Transatlantic Reformed Evangelical Debates during the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Mark Jones and Michael A. G. Haykin (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 121–22.

30 Dagg claims that public justice "may be considered a modification of his goodness." (John L. Dagg, *A Manual of Theology* [Harrisonburg: Gano Books, 1982], 85.)

31 In Greg Wills, "The *SBJT* Forum: The Overlooked Shapers of Evangelicalism," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 89.

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happiness, were signature Edwardsean principles which men like Joseph Bellamy and Timothy Dwight had drawn from republicanism and the Real Whig discourse of American public life.[32] In the South, celebrating their Jeffersonian government, Baptists gladly welcomed a doctrine that seemed to clothe the principles of Scripture in the best ideals of their fledgling nation. In the early republic, moral government also served as a suitable alternative to the traditional Puritanical idea of a national covenant. Rather than God favoring America on the basis of covenant theology, Southern Baptists believed that covenants were made with individuals believers and that moral law is applied impartially to all nations.[33] As a result, Baptist patriotism was more prone to invoke the standards of divine government than the privileges of divine election. Dagg represents perhaps the last stage in the evolution of moral governmental theory in Southern Baptist life, when moral government became more of a doctrine of providence than a robust doctrine of atonement. Despite its changing form, its two central principles – glory and goodness - remained the same.[34]

Around every turn, Southern Baptists were co-opting Edwardsean ideas to help determine the course of their own theological tradition. To suggest that Southern Baptists either received New Divinity ideas wholesale or rejected them altogether is an oversimplification of something as complex as Southern Baptist theology. Baptists in the South were as diverse as Jonathan Edwards's theology was malleable. Therefore, Edwardsean concepts were usually drawn out piecemeal rather than formulated in a Hopkinsian, systematic way. As a bricolage of doctrines and ideas, Southern Edwardseanism was yet another chapter in the ever-changing legacy of Jonathan Edwards.

E. Brooks Holifield suggests, "it would be no exaggeration to say that Baptist theology in America was, for the most part, an extended discussion – and usually a defense – of Calvinist doctrine." He continues, "the Baptists gravitated after the mid-eighteenth century toward the Calvinism of the Westminster and Philadelphia confessions or toward Edwardsean variations of it."[35] In the South, they often gravitated toward both. Among early Southern Baptists, the question was not

32 According to Mark Noll, the theme of moral government "began with Bellamy, was developed further by Dwight, and came to prevail everywhere among New Englanders in the generation of Beecher and Taylor." (Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2002], 290–91.)

33 Mark Valeri, "The New Divinity and the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 46, no. 4 (Oct. 1989): 744–45.

34 See Obbie Tyler Todd, "An Edwardsean Evolution: The Rise and Decline of Moral Governmental Theory in the Southern Baptist Convention," *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62.4 (2019): 789–802.

35 E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 278.

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whether someone did in fact adopt Edwardsean ideas, but rather how many. For example, none held more firmly to the historic Baptist confessions than Richard Furman, John L. Dagg, and Patrick Hues Mell. Yet all three of these Baptist leaders adhered to Jonathan Edwards's theology in some way, but each to a different degree and each with his own opinion of the New Divinity, ranging from friendly to hostile. Confessional and Edwardsean Calvinism were by no means mutually exclusive in the Baptist South.

But how could such a significant influence go unnoticed in Baptist scholarship? Why has Southern Edwardseanism not been identified as a legitimate factor in the development of Southern Baptist theology? To be fair, Baptists like Richard Furman and John L. Dagg have long been recognized as theologians impacted by Edwardsean thought.[36] The similarities of Baptist theology with Edwardsean theology have been recorded by several historians. For instance, Greg Wills has uncovered the influence of New England Theology on early Southern Baptists.[37] Tom Nettles noted the "Edwardsian Calvinistic orientation" of Richard Furman's soteriology.[38] Nettles even went so far as to observe "the beginnings of Southern Baptists so deeply connected with this Edwardsean understanding of grace in its relation to man's will and the foundation of all actions being to live to the glory of God."[39] However, Edwardsean*ism* as a formative movement in Southern Baptist theology has never been identified or outlined. The debates between Regulars and Separates, Particulars and Generals, missionary and anti-missionary have rightly called for our attention. Baptist history is indeed a kaleidoscope of different beliefs and styles. All of these played a role in molding the Southern Baptist Convention. Even still, perhaps the reason Southern Edwardseanism has remained hidden from our view is the fact that so little study has been dedicated to the way personal relationships defined the contours of the Southern Baptist world – a relatively small world. Many of these relationships were along Edwardsean lines.

At the center of the Southern Baptist world in the nineteenth-century was Richard Furman, the first president of the Triennial Convention. In some sense, Richard Furman is the central figure of this book, not Jonathan Edwards. In the early 1800s, Southern Baptists were shaped more by Furman than by any other Baptist. Just as the New Divinity grew out of the home of Jonathan Edwards, Edwardsean theology in the South seemed to spring from the ministry of the one referred to in this book

36 Tom Nettles, "Edwards and His Impact on Baptists," *Founders Journal* Summer 2003, 1–18.

37 Greg Wills, "The *SBJT* Forum: The Overlooked Shapers of Evangelicalism," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 87–91.

38 Nettles writes, "Furman shows clearly his Edwardsian Calvinistic orientation both in the distinction between natural and moral abilities and in the *ordo salutis*." (Thomas J. Nettles, "Richard Furman," in *Baptist Theologians* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990], 154.)

39 Nettles, "Edwards and His Impact on Baptists," 10.

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as "The Charleston Sage." In fact, Furman did even more to promote Edwardsean thought in the South by his politics than he did with his pen or his pulpit. While it is too narrow to suggest that credobaptism and Edwardseanism were the two lowest common denominators amongst Southern Baptist leadership in the early nineteenth-century, a discernible Edwardsean strain of thought nonetheless appears wherever Richard Furman begins to spin his web of pastors and presidents. By Furman's own recommendation, Jonathan Maxcy, the most Hopkinsian Baptist ever to walk the earth, was brought from Union College in New York to become the first president of South Carolina College. Under Maxcy's leadership, a host of Edwardseans who shaped the Southern Baptist Convention emerged, including Basil Manly Sr. and W. T. Brantly. These men were virtually groomed by Furman. Manly was hand-picked by Furman to succeed him at FBC Charleston and Brantly revered Furman so much that he named his second son Furman Brantly. Both men, along with Baptist leaders like Jesse Mercer, were also products of Furman's fund for educating Baptist ministers.

From a birds-eye view, the greatest preachers and statesmen in the early years of the Southern Baptist Convention were all products of the great Furmanian network of Edwardsean Baptists. Its first president, William B. Johnson, was a Furman disciple. Its second president, R.B.C. Howell, was a student at Columbian College under William Staughton, who ordained him and who also discipled William B. Johnson. Staughton had immigrated to America from England by Furman's personal request. Furman even married Staughton and his wife. Further still, the third president of the SBC, Richard Fuller, was pastored by W. T. Brantly. The inaugural president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and fifth president of the SBC, James P. Boyce, whose mother had been converted by Basil Manly Sr., was himself converted by Fuller and mentored by Manly. Generation after generation, Richard Furman exerted his vast influence upon the Southern Baptist world. Other than James P. Boyce, who began his teaching career at *Furman* Academy, all of these men were moderate Calvinists, a trademark of Edwardseanism.[40]

40 In this book, "moderate Calvinism" will denote any deviation or significant qualification of what is traditionally known as "5-point Calvinism" as codified in the Canons of Dort. These five points are total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. For a defense and outline of 5-point Calvinism from a Baptistic perspective, see David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004). For a critique of 5-point Calvinism from a Baptistic perspective, see David L. Allen and Steve Lemke, ed., *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010).

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Southern Edwardseans

If the Edwardsean question is still being answered, Southern Baptists add another layer of complexity to the question: what exactly is a *Southern* Edwardsean? These Southern epigones were both spiritual imitators and theological imbibers of Edwards, drawing inspiration from his ministry and absorbing his ideas into their own. In their view, Edwards was a brilliant mind as well as a moral exemplar. "When I contrast the feeling of my heart with the exercises of that blessed man of God, Jon. Edwards," Basil Manly Jr. recorded in his diary, "I am astonished at the coldness of my own heart."[41] According to Georgia pastor Charles Dutton Mallary, "The world has seen the light and felt the power of but few men more remarkable than President Edwards. He was not less distinguished for piety than for gigantic intellect; and it was the meekness and gentleness of his piety that went far to make him, as a Christian, so prosperous and so great."[42] Southern Baptists often spoke of Edwards in such superlative terms. His sterling reputation among Baptists began with his own conversion narrative in *Personal Narrative* (1739). Former president of Wake Forest College, William Hooper, even placed Edwards's spiritual journey among the list of greats: "Never have I heard from the lips, never have I read in the secret diary of any penitent prodigal, such deep, heart-touching confessions of inward depravity and self-loathing, as appears in the journals of Edwards and Brainerd and Martyn and Payson, men who were preserved comparatively pure and free of vicious habits from their tender years."[43] With such a lofty view of Edwards and such familiarity with his theological, spiritual, and autobiographical writings, Southern Baptists are worthy of the eponym "Edwardsean," at least in the broad sense of the term.[44] Therefore, in this volume, I will define an Edwardsean in terms of ideas and inspiration. In short, an Edwardsean is someone whose theology and ministry were significantly shaped either by Jonathan Edwards's ideas or by his example, or by those who mediated his ideas and were themselves inspired by his example. In 1858, Presbyterian Lyman Atwater asked, "What is meant by 'Edwardsean theology'? Was

41 The younger Manly is quoted and described in Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800–1860* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1980), 15.

42 Charles Dutton Mallary, *Soul-Prosperity: Its Nature, Its Fruits, and Its Culture* (Charleston: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1860), 51–52.

43 William Hooper, "The Force of Habit," *The Baptist Preacher* 11 (November 1852), 202.

44 Conforti insists, "While the label 'Edwardsian' is restricted to Congregationalists and Presbyterians, Edwardsianism – that is, Edwards's authority and the use of his writings – extended to Methodists and Baptists." (Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, and American Culture*, 6) However, in this work, I will seek to challenge Conforti's thesis by contending that Baptists, particularly Southern Baptists, were indeed Edwardseans in their own right.

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it the theology of Jonathan Edwards, or Edwards the son and his confederates and successors?"[45] In the case of Southern Baptists, it was both.

While certainly not all were familiar with the theology of Jonathan Edwards, scores of Southern Baptists led their churches and their denomination with ideas drawn either directly from Edwards or derived from his thought. For instance, in his *Soul-Prosperity: Its Nature, Its Fruits, and Its Culture,* published a year before the outbreak of the Civil War, C. D. Mallary quoted from Edwards's *Personal Narrative*, *Religious Affections*, as well as from his Resolutions.[46] Mallary also ingested Edwards's theology secondhand, including as many citations from fellow Baptist Edwardsean Andrew Fuller.[47] Southern Baptists demonstrated time and again that Edwardseanism was a large house with many doors and with many rooms. Not all guests entered the same way, but they often dined at the same theological table. Mallary's Georgia Baptist contemporary Adiel Sherwood was also an admirer of Edwards and Fuller. Sherwood emphasized the distinction between natural and moral ability and appealed directly to Edwards's teachings on the church, conversion, and the history of redemption.[48] But Sherwood also passed through other halls in the great Edwardsean house. As a student at Andover Seminary in 1818, Sherwood was influenced significantly by Moses Stuart, a disciple of Timothy Dwight, Edwards's grandson.[49] Stuart was "widely recognized as the nation's most learned biblical scholar."[50] During his time at the New Divinity school, Sherwood was exposed to an entire gamut of Edwardsean thinking. While at Andover, Sherwood wrote to his sister Elizabeth and expressed his deep appreciation for the work of Andrew Fuller:

> Most of the causes for the sickness and darkness among Christians can be traced to omission of duty and corruption of crime, thus producing an alienation in the affections, (though I hope there is no need of the remark) let me advise you to read Fuller's "Backslider" – Could that book be more universally circulated and read, I have the fullest confidence, that we should not find so many meagre, despairing souls turning back, stopping, lingering along the road to heaven.[51]

45 Lyman Atwater, "Jonathan Edwards and the Successive Forms of New Divinity," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 30 (1858): 606.

46 Mallary, *Soul-Prosperity*, 68, 25, 52.

47 Ibid., 68, 106, 142, 33, 193.

48 Adiel Sherwood, *The Jewish and Christan Churches; or, The Hebrew Theocracy and Christian Church Distinct Organizations* (St. Louis: T. W. Ustick, 1850), 65, 76, 82.

49 Jarrett Burch, *Adiel Sherwood: Baptist Antebellum Pioneer in Georgia* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 12.

50 Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 38.

51 Adiel Sherwood to Elizabeth [Fellows], Andover MA, 23 April 1818, Georgia Baptist History Depository, Jack Tarver Library, Mercer University, Macon GA.

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Sherwood would later become a co-founder of the Georgia Baptist Convention (1822) as well as a catalyst for the Great Georgia Revival of 1827. As shown in the writings of Mallary and the leadership of Sherwood, the Southern Baptist Convention was pioneered by Edwardseans and inaugurated on Edwardsean principles.

Even those Baptists with seemingly nothing in common with Edwards were affected by him in some way. James Robinson Graves, the chief architect of the Landmark movement, was raised by his widowed mother, Lois, a single parent. Lois Graves, who left a deep impression upon her son, was known to enjoy Edwards's "metaphysical speculations."[52] Even the less intellectual Separate Baptists celebrated "the great and pious Jonathan Edwards" who "labored to promote" the revival which spawned their churches.[53]

Southern Edwardseanism also took shape in the American wilderness, but it was much less diverse theologically. Frontier Baptists during the Second Great Awakening were more acquainted with Edwards's writings on revival than with any of his other works. As a result, they often looked upon the democratized, unorganized religion of the west with a degree of caution.[54] Adiel Sherwood, who pioneered sections of Missouri and Illinois, "promoted the same theological emphases as Fuller," as shown.[55] As the first full-time president of Shurtleff College, the school established by John Mason Peck, Sherwood was much more prone to administration and voluntary societies than uneducated, "enthusiastic" revivalism. After relaying an account of outdoor Presbyterian and Methodist preaching to both white and black assemblies at the Cain Ridge revivals in Bourbon County, Kentucky, the editor of the *Circular Letter* noted, "Oh, that these people had introduced among them PRESIDENT EDWARDS'S Narrative of the work of God in Northampton, N.E. and his After-thoughts on the Revival. The former of these may be had of Messrs. Burton, Paternoster Row, London."[56] In another letter which reported revivals near the Kentucky River that caused many "great bodily agitations," the editor examined the state of early nineteenth-century frontier revivalism:

> It would be a more easy than it is welcome task to make remarks on what has been so generally called *the great work of God in America*; suffice it at present to say, that if,

52 T. (J. Tovell), "Death of Mrs. Lois Graves," *Baptist*, November 2, 1867, 4.

53 J. H. Spencer, *A History of Kentucky Baptists* (Cincinnati: J. R. Baumes, 1885), 105.

54 Nathan O. Hatch has explored this democratization in detail. (Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991])

55 Burch, *Adiel Sherwood*, 12.

56 "Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman to his Sister in Philadelphia, dated Lexington, Kentucky, August 10, 1801," in William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783–1830* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 611; The Cain Ridge revivals of Bourbon County, Kentucky are believed by many to be the birthplace of the Second Great Awakening.

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> amidst the disorder and enthusiasm which have remarkably, of late, disgraced many of the Assemblies in Kentucky, the Lord has been really sowing the good seed, nothing is more to be feared than that it will too soon appear to the sorrow of the Church of God, that Satan has been very diligently sowing tares. O that the less informed among the Americans were in possession of President Edwards's excellent volume on the *Affections*, and would most seriously read it.[57]

Southern Edwardseans were applying Edwards's spiritual rubric for the First Great Awakening in order to evaluate the authenticity of the Second. Similar to what Arthur Thomas has identified as "reasonable revivalism" among Southern Presbyterians in Virginia between 1787 and 1837, many Southern Baptists demonstrated both order and ardor in their outdoor religion.[58]

Due to the paucity of Baptist literature in comparison with New England Congregationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is difficult to say just how many pastors, parishioners, professors, and presidents in the South held Edwardsean views. However, the evidence is more than sufficient to indicate that many forms of Edwardseanism flourished in the years between the Great Awakening and the Civil War. For such a fissiparous people as Baptists, Jonathan Edwards's theology was broad and flexible enough to comply with all kinds of Southern Baptist theology. Furman Academy, for example, was rocked in the 1840s and 50s by controversy over the doctrine of imputation. Amazingly, each side believed their theology to be perfectly consistent with that of Jonathan Edwards and Andrew Fuller.[59] Yet another Furman professor left to teach at Howard College in Alabama (1844–1847) where he encountered opposition to his "unfortunate views" on imputation and justification.[60] Tellingly, in neither case was disciplinary action ever taken. Southern Edwardseans were a diverse group, and they did not always agree on important doctrines.

Although some like Thomas Meredith and James M. Pendleton were staunch abolitionists, Southern Edwardseans in the antebellum period were mostly characterized by an allegiance to slavery.[61] Southern evangelicals underwent a transition

57 "To the Rev. Dr. Rippon, Bourbon County, Kentucky, January 7, 1802," in William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783–1830* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 616.

58 Arthur D. Thomas, "Reasonable Revivalism: Presbyterian Evangelization of Educated Virginians," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 61 (1983): 316–34.

59 J. L. Reynolds, "On Imputation," *Southern Baptist*, 14 March 1849, 2.

60 Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa: University Of Alabama Press, 1998), 59.

61 For a brief account of Pendleton's abolitionism, see Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 46–7.

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