

PIETY VERSUS MORALISM

PIETY VERSUS MORALISM

THE PASSING OF NEW ENGLAND THEOLOGY
FROM EDWARDS TO TAYLOR

BY

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To

MY PARENTS

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It must be added that for deficiencies contained in this volume the author is solely responsible.

J. H.

New York, N. Y.

February, 1932.

FOREWORD

Nearly twenty years ago I wrote “Joseph Haroutunian: Neglected Theocentrist.”¹ There I observed that by the 1980s, Haroutunian (1904–1968), a productive and provocative Christian thinker, had largely disappeared as a conversation partner in theological discussions. More particularly, he was noticeably absent from the debates generated by James M. Gustafson’s controversial *Ethics from a Theocentrist Perspective*—a post-Christian theological ethic that echoed many of the themes of Haroutunian’s early work.² My contention then was that Gustafson and those interested in his work would do well to bring Haroutunian back into the discussions and pay attention to a voice that was theocentric, Edwardsean, and, unlike Gustafson, clearly Trinitarian. The reference to Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) goes back to Haroutunian’s first publications, “Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Godliness” (1931) and his Columbia University PhD dissertation, published as *Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (1932).³

Piety Versus Moralism is a classic in American religious

1. Stephen D. Crocco, “Neglected Theocentrist.” *The Journal of Religion*. 68.3 (July 1988): 411–425.

2. James M. Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, 2 vols., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 1984.

3. Joseph Haroutunian, “Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Godliness.” *Journal of Religion*. 11 (July, 1931): 400–419. *Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1932.

history. When it appeared, it challenged long-standing accounts of Edwards' legacy and offered a summary judgment that Edwards' "disciples and later champions lacked either his profound piety, or his intellectual vigor, or both."⁴ For many decades, scholars publishing on Edwards' legacy needed to take some account of Haroutunian's argument in order to advance their own.⁵ His counter-narrative has itself been challenged only recently, usually on the grounds that judgments are too sweeping and too dismissive of Edwards' followers. Seventy-five years after its initial publication, the argument of *Piety Versus Moralism* is well known, the book is still on graduate student bibliographies, and, like many classics, it is rarely read in toto! The Wipf and Stock edition of *Piety Versus Moralism* gives a new generation of scholars and students easy access to this influential and hard-to-find work.⁶ There are at least three ways to read *Piety Versus Moralism*. It is a book that gave Jonathan Edwards a fresh hearing. It provided a counter-narrative to prevailing accounts of Edwards' legacy. And it functioned as the historical spade work for Haroutunian's early constructive work. Behind all three readings is an implicit argument that, once again, Joseph Haroutunian should not remain neglected.

A first and most common reading of *Piety Versus Moralism*

4. "Prelude" *Piety Versus Moralism*, xxii.

5. See, for example, the following works on the Edwardsean tradition: Mark Valeri, *Law and Providence in Joseph Bellamy's New England*. New York: Oxford, 1994; Joseph A. Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, & American Culture*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995; John R. Fitzmier, *New England's Moral Legislator: Timothy Dwight, 1752–1817*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998; and Douglas A. Sweeney, *Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology, and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* New York: Oxford, 2003.

6. *Piety Versus Moralism* was also published in a Harper Torchbook edition in the 1960s and 1970s with an introduction by Yale historian Sydney E. Ahlstrom.

is as one of the early modern works to cast Jonathan Edwards in a positive light. *Piety Versus Moralism* is often cited with Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr.'s, *Jonathan Edwards* (1932), and H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Kingdom of God in America* (1937), as opening salvos in the neo-orthodox struggle to recover Edwards from years of neglect or scorn. For decades, Edwards was largely associated with his infamous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" and dismissed as an anachronism or sadist. Or he was ignored along with the arcane and lifeless theological debates of nineteenth-century New England theologians. These neo-orthodox thinkers marveled at Edwards' God-centered vision and interpreted his hellfire sermons as statements about the precariousness of life—something about which people in the 1930s knew all too well. By translating Edwards into a modern idiom and downplaying the contributions of his followers, Haroutunian, McGiffert, and Niebuhr effectively separated the teacher from generations of well meaning but misguided students. *Piety Versus Moralism* argued that Edwards' followers absorbed the moralism and humanitarianism of their ages at the expense of the glory of God. By extricating Edwards from Edwardseanism, Haroutunian helped to clear the way for other scholars, chief among them Perry Miller, to admire Edwards' solitary genius. Miller, of course, was so impressed by "the greatest philosopher-theologian yet to grace the American scene," that he called for a massive reevaluation of Edwards, including the preparation of a comprehensive and critical edition of his works.⁷ In that sense, there is a direct line from *Piety Versus Moralism* to the Edwards revival of the 1950s, culminating in the Yale University Press edition of his works, which is now nearly complete, fifty years after the publication of the inaugural volume of *Freedom of the Will* in 1957.

7. The reference is from Perry Miller's "General Editor's Note" in *Freedom of the Will*, Paul Ramsey, ed. The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 1, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957, viii.

A second way to read *Piety Versus Moralism* is more in line with the intellectual debates that preceded its publication rather than with those that followed it. The original dust jacket describes the book as “a fresh evaluation of the struggle between Calvinistic orthodoxy and liberal humanitarianism in New England.” Here, it needs to be said that *Piety Versus Moralism* is not about Edwards as much as it is the modification of New England Calvinism in the period from Edwards to Nathaniel W. Taylor, or roughly from 1760 to 1830. Edwards’ legacy was the subject of frequent debates in the nineteenth century and it had been most notably and recently described in Frank Hugh Foster’s *A Genetic History of New England Theology* (1907). There, Foster gave Edwards his due but his sympathies lay with the efforts by his followers to improve upon the inspiring contributions of their teacher. Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Hopkins, William N. Taylor, Horace Bushnell, Lyman Beecher, Charles G. Finney, and Edwards A. Park all took significant cues from Edwards and tried to improve his positions in light of cultural developments in the new nation while trying to remain faithful to his best insights. Foster was particularly impressed with those who tried to burn off the dross of Edwards’ rigid Calvinism and leave the gold of a more humanitarian spirit. Yet in spite of all their “improvements,” by the early twentieth century, Foster conceded that the New England theological tradition had collapsed. Haroutunian accepted Foster’s conclusion but not his argument. Flipping Foster’s position on its head, Haroutunian argued that the humanizing tendencies of Edwards’ followers *undermined* rather than *improved* the New England theology. In chapter after chapter, Haroutunian argued that Edwards’ well-meaning followers gradually dismantled rather than bolstered the imposing theological vision Edwards had so carefully constructed. The result was a humanized New England theology that had less and less that was distinctive to say to an already confident and optimistic generation. And by the early 1930s,

when people needed a word of realism, this humanized theology, with its nerve to the sovereignty of God long since severed, had nothing to offer.

A third way to read *Piety Versus Moralism* is as the historical spade work for Haroutunian's constructive theological proposals. Haroutunian began his career at a time when liberalism was faced with fresh voices calling for a return to the sources of Protestant theology. Just as Karl Barth and others looked back to the Reformers to recover the distinctive truths of Protestantism, Haroutunian, a recent Armenian immigrant, looked to Edwards. He believed Edwards' undiluted Calvinist theology, understood critically, could launch the reconstruction of Protestant theology in twentieth-century America. To rehabilitate Edwards for this task, Haroutunian needed to overturn the prevailing accounts of Edwards' legacy and provide a new account. Edwards needed to be the touchstone for theological work rather than a museum piece, however beloved.

After completing graduate work at Columbia and Union Theological Seminary, Haroutunian took a teaching position at Wellesley College. In 1940, he moved to the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Chicago (later renamed McCormick Theological Seminary) where he spent most of his career. Haroutunian's second book, *Wisdom and Folly in Religion: A Study in Chastened Protestantism*, published in 1940, was a bare-knuckled pummeling of the anthropocentric character of liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. Like *Piety Versus Moralism*, *Wisdom and Folly* was not about Edwards per se. Rather, Edwards appears with Luther and Calvin as representatives of a Protestant theology with something distinctive to say to modern men and women. In 1949, Haroutunian published *Lust for Power*; a departure from his previous historical and theological work into the field of cultural criticism. Haroutunian returned to historical theology with his translation of and introduction to *Calvin: Commentaries* (1958). His mature theological statement,

God With Us: A Theology of Transpersonal Life (1965), is a theology of personhood.⁸ Although Haroutunian never rejected Edwards, he found himself increasingly interested in modern theological developments. Haroutunian ended his career at the University of Chicago Divinity School, where he was appointed in 1962. At the time of his sudden and premature death, in 1968, Haroutunian was working on a major systematic statement on theology and ethics in an American context. Perhaps Edwards would have again figured prominently in that work and brought his interest in Edwards and his legacy full circle.

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January 2007

8. "Preface" and "Calvin as Biblical Commentator" Joseph Haroutunian, editor, and Louise Pettibone Smith, collaborator. 9–50, *Calvin: Commentaries* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958. Joseph Haroutunian, *God With Us: A Theology of Transpersonal Life* Philadelphia, 1965. See the second edition, enlarged, of *God With Us*, Stephen D. Crocco, ed. Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1991.

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PRELUDE

THE decline of Calvinism is the belated rendering of the great cultural transformations which separate the modern world from the ancient and medieval. With the passing of the medieval culture passed the medieval mind, though its thought-patterns persisted long enough to annoy another culture. The ideas of a culture often survive their historic occasions, and become components of new structures; but they thereby change their minds.

In medieval society Christianity was a living religion. Of course, the Christianity of Christ has never been too much at home in this world. The kingdom of heaven is as yet in heaven, and mankind remains true to its Adamic origins. However, the outline of the Christian scheme of salvation, the attitudes and mentality which it represents, was accepted in the premodern periods of European history as a true and plausible account of things ultimate. There was a certain congruity between the medieval mind and the inherited Christian faith, a congruity which disappeared with the rise of modern culture.

The idea of the transcendent excellence and power of God, His government of the world and control of the destinies of men, which was essential to the Christian scheme of salvation, was congenial to the minds of men who lived in a society wherein distinctions of power and dignity, of authority and privilege, were well accepted facts. The longing of the medieval mind was for order and peace, and not for equality and progress. When the organic

conception of society was basic to political theory and ideal, and the good of the community, often confused with the good of those on top, was primary in considerations of justice, no serious objection could be raised to the ways of a deity who disposed of the fate of men according to the scrutable and inscrutable dictates of His wisdom, towards ends which transcended the present or future bliss of any given individual. The dependence of man on God, for his life, preservation, and salvation, was an idea acceptable to men who preferred well-being to independence, social regulation to self-love, security to prosperity. In ages when men were not quite so conscious of their excellences and happy moral state as the modern regard for self-respect has taught the wise and the foolish to be, men found it not hard to accept their need of salvation, and to depend upon the grace of God for it; nor did they conceive it improbable that their moral, as well as physical, state should lead them to the gates of hell. Therefore, the Christian scheme of salvation met the intellectual and moral approval of the times, and the institution which protected it against contamination and neglect became a power in the world.

When one considers the stratification of medieval society into levels of privilege and dignity, the primacy of the group as the object of rational benevolence, the principle of mutual obligation as definitive of economic organization, and the phenomena of undisciplined warfare, it is not hard to see how the spiritual fruits of such a social pattern in the affections of the people appear as humility, gratitude, homage and reverence, the feelings of dependence and grace, of privilege and duty.

In such a cultural setting, the orthodox "scheme of

salvation" appears as a heavenly counterpart of daily experience, embodying the variations which reflection and imagination weave into the relatively colorless matrix of social relations. God, who created and owned and governed the whole world, was great and high as no earthly ruler could be, more powerful than any lord, more benevolent than any giver of gifts, more glorious than any king. If the vassal is a humbler being than his lord, how much more is man a being humbler than God! If the serf is ever indebted to his lord, how much more is man under an obligation to serve the Lord of heaven and earth, to rejoice and be grateful for the gracious mercies of God! A vassal can repay his lord, but how can he ever repay the Giver of life? It were impossible for man to be justified in the sight of God, were it not that the Son of God, in a way "very God," has offered Himself as the payment for man's debt to God. He redeemed men through the payment of their debt, He saved them by becoming their ransom price. He appeased the righteous wrath of the Deity, and procured forgiveness. As the lords saved their captive subordinates, so the Lord saved men from the bondage of the devil.

Theological imagination, when occupied in significant thinking, is the unfolding of genuine relationships. Reflection upon the wisdom, the power, the goodness, and the glory of God; upon God's relation to the events of life, and the manner of His government and influence; attempts at comprehensiveness and consistency,—produced theologies which were often formidable, and sometimes repellent. And yet they were normal to the life of the age, and as such they shared the general structure of the culture from which they emerged. To the medieval mind,

theology was philosophy: an attempt at a consistent and intelligible statement of experience. It was organic with the facts of life, a religious interpretation of normal human relations. However, such a statement is almost a perversion of the truth. It is the secularized modern who must speak of the "religious interpretation of life." The religious world of the medieval man was the world in which he lived. It was one piece with his social and natural life. Wherefore, medieval religion is stamped with a mark of sincerity which may inspire the sympathetic modern to a certain approbation; while, nevertheless, it defies imitation and appropriation.

In the religion of Calvin, the Christian "scheme of salvation" was restated in its most rigorous form, that of St. Augustine. Calvin's theology was a reclamation of Christian truths which had become obscured by the Church's worldly politics and patronage of the pagan Renaissance. When regarded as a protest against Rome, and not as representing the spirit of the modern age then in the making, its true import and character become clear. The union of Calvinism with the commercial forces of the time was a wedlock of incompatibles, effected by their common enmity to the established order. When the crises of the struggles of medieval and modern forces had passed, Calvinism started a long process of decline.

But in its early years, Calvinism gave men a significant practical theology. It supplied the new society with a church. It comforted men in their sufferings under persecution. It gave them freedom to work out their earthly salvation, while God was left to take care of election to either heaven or hell. It made room for the new morality

of an acquisitive society, and allowed men to worship God on Sabbath and to serve Him by helping themselves. Thus it was that although the Calvinistic theology was not built upon the pattern of the new society, the use or misuse to which it was put by Calvinist moderns made it a social power.

The looseness of the union between the theology of Calvinism and the principles regulating the life of the new society led to its disruption and the emergence of a religion more in line with the spirit of the age. The troubles of Calvinism began in Geneva, and reappeared wherever commercialism had already molded the form of the life of a city or a people. The explanation of the decline of Calvinism is seen in the divorce of the modern everyday life of the middle classes from their ancient, Augustinian philosophy.

With the coming of science, the Renaissance humanism, the discovery of new lands and the growth of commercial enterprise, the middle-class Calvinists emerged into modern society. Independent merchants or farmers replaced the lord and his underlings. The riches of the world became the private property of individuals, who indulged in profitable exchange and erected vast machineries of credit and banking. Such men began to demand the protection of their *rights* as owners, freedom to accumulate wealth and to keep their rightful earnings. The end of government, in peace and in war, became to insure the rights and the "lawful liberties" of aggregates of free individuals, to enact laws and enforce them, so as to further the happiness and the prosperity of the people, especially the owners of things.

The quality of mind which grew out of such a social

pattern had for its dominant traits the principles of the freedom of individuals, their right to happiness, their right to seek their own ends, for their own success and prosperity, in so far as they did not impede others from being similarly occupied. The greatest happiness of the greatest number became a basic principle of social and economic theory, and the autonomy and intrinsic value of individuals, the foundation of social justice and public law.

The new society's conscience dictated its own commands. Prosperous merchants have to be thrifty, industrious, dogged, sober, dependable, and decently selfish. They have to recognize their own responsibility for their success and their failures, their own powers to earn and to control wealth, their innate endowments waiting for use and expansion. They have to realize that other men are similarly, perchance identically, constituted, wherefore they have a right to exercise their own powers and virtues, for their own success and prosperity. They have to respect others, to treat them as persons, or as ends unto themselves. In a word, they must be *moral*.

It is hard for the modern moral philosopher to appreciate that his "first principles" are not essential to the "nature of things." The categories of moral theory, as the modern understands them, the free-contracts of autonomous persons, conscious and dutiful reciprocity, and the like, have a quality or flavor peculiar to the moral consciousness of an individualistic and enterprising society.

The temper of modern religion, as disclosed in the writings of the English Deists and the champions of "liberal Christianity," is that of modern secular morality. That God is the "moral Governor" of the world, that the relationship between God and man should be of the nature of

“personal relationship,” that God has given man a “free-will,” and thus made him a “moral agent,” thereby restricting His private power; that He purposes nothing that is not conducive to the happiness of man; that men have an innate capacity for the good, that they have infinite possibilities for moral perfection, that they can and must cooperate with God to bring about the actualization of God’s intended “moral kingdom”; that Jesus made human salvation possible through His revelation of the good life, that men ought to try to imitate Him; that sin consists in moral delinquency; and salvation, in the progressive achievement of a good life and the building up of moral personality, which is to be followed by the reward of the blessings of heaven, the abode of all good dead men;—the spirit of such religion is the spirit of modern morality, and not less secular for being a theory of things ultimate. It was a new Christianity which the modern world created, fundamentally alien to medieval Christianity, both Roman Catholic and Protestant. The Protestant Reformation, compared with the “rise of modern religious ideas,” was a negligible theological performance.

When placed in such a setting, the judgment of Calvinism pronounced by William Ellery Channing rings with significance and persuasive power.

“Calvinism, we are persuaded, is giving place to better views. It has passed its meridian, and is sinking to rise no more. It has to contend with foes more powerful than theologians; with foes from whom it cannot shield itself in mystery and metaphysical subtleties,—we mean the progress of the human mind, and the progress of the spirit of the gospel. Society is going forward in intelligence and charity, and of course is leaving the theology of the

sixteenth century behind it. We hail this revolution of opinions as a most auspicious event to the Christian cause."

Whatever the merits of this statement in regard to Calvinism in general, Channing was right in regarding the New England Calvinism of his day as a cultural anachronism. And there is much justice in making the social value of a theology the measure of its adequacy. The sociological approach to the problems of the intellect is plausible in so far as society determines the minds of its members almost completely. Reflection proceeds along lines of valuation growing out of social experience and uses conceptual instruments which fit the facts and the practices of a social group. A good citizen is one who has identified his spirit with the spirit of his city; and most men are good citizens. Most men achieve happiness by limiting their minds to the pattern of their social environment. "Philosophical" problems, matters dealing with permanent relations belonging to the texture of man's primeval experience, which lie hidden under the flux of cultures, are derided as theoretical and put aside as worthless for practical living, which they often are. What is meant by practical life is social life, and practice follows reasons other than "pure reason." Such is the power of social fact that it is common to men to consider their practical life as the measure of theoretical truth, and to construe the mind of their society as indicative of the more permanent natures of things.

It is harder for theologians than for philosophers to transcend social fact. A church which aims to serve multitudes follows the dictates of practical reason. It "reinterprets" its message continuously and proclaims a gospel which is of immediate social significance. It clothes things

temporal with the garb of eternity and transforms relatives into absolutes. It assumes the function of inspiring people to be useful men and helps the perpetuation of group forces by appropriating their ends and enhancing their progress. No church is free from such responsibility, and few dare shirk it. There always are more priests than prophets.

Having lost its social basis, Christianity tried to manufacture a modern equivalent. It absorbed the moralism of the new age, and drenched its theology with humanism. The consequence was a theology which succeeded merely in becoming a "legalistic" and "dialectical" superstructure in a practically alien world. Medieval theology could have been saved only through a metaphorical and poetical translation of its doctrines. The truths contained in it, in so far as they transcended the peculiarities of medieval culture and sank deep into the nature of things, could have been saved through their assumption of an allegorical significance. For mystical language is relevant to those depths of personal experience which defy expression through the institutions of any given culture. The Calvinist moderns, through their appeal to "reason and common sense," failed to conserve and preach verities concerning man's place in nature which were not congenial to the spirit of modern culture. For the reason of the new age was in the service of its own peculiar passions, making the reason of another age appear unreasonable. What was rational to medieval society became "mystery" and "mysticism" to modern minds. Therefore, in repudiating "mysticism" the Calvinists repudiated the only chance they had of giving meaning to their theology. They in-

sisted on taking it literally. They thought they could make "science" out of it.

The consequences of the application of the categories of modern science and morality to Calvinistic theology were invariably disastrous. Metaphysical and unimaginative rationalism was in no position to vindicate the theology of a socially dead religion. Salvation became a good life to be followed by the happiness of heaven. Sin against God became metaphysical responsibility. Belief in human depravity came to rest upon a consummate (though empirically unverifiable) cynicism concerning the moral state of men, and regeneration became invisible. Predestination became *predestination*, and election was no longer eternal but in time. The atonement of Christ was now a performance in high magic. The Holy Trinity, divine agency, the divine origin of the scriptures,—became standing *metaphysical* puzzles. When believed as "facts," they were either meaningless or irrational. To render them intelligible was impossible. No matter how dialectical Calvinism became, it could not be made reasonable. Metaphysics breeds upon the remains of dead religion.

In the year 1729, when Jonathan Edwards became full pastor of the church at Northampton, Mass., New England religion had already undergone a long process of decline. The theocratic ideal of the first settlers was disappearing, Calvinistic theology had become largely a matter of formality, and worldliness had been growing among the people. Calvinistic Christianity was being buried under a heavy coating of political and economic facts which had little relevance to its theology. It was not being effectively disputed, nor was it being openly discarded. It was

simply being ignored as a matter of little consequence for practical living, by men who said one thing and did another. New England was becoming involved in the ways of the Old World, striving for commercial success, competing for profits, tasting power and assuming rights, ready to defend them legally or otherwise. The spirit of European nationalism, capitalism, and rationalism, with its apparatus of political and legal theory, was already growing strong. The theocentric piety of Calvinism seemed doomed.

Edwards revitalized religion for at least a part of New England. For him religion was independent of the problems of social morality and civil government. He ignored the social principles in the Calvinistic idea of theocracy, and made Calvinistic piety a matter which concerned primarily the relation of the individual soul to God. Edwards put the theology of Calvinism upon the basis of an empirical piety, and defended its doctrines philosophically and rationally. He reinterpreted Calvinism as a religious philosophy of nature, and reasserted its doctrines in view of the facts of life as well as on scriptural foundations. Calvinistic theology was thus separated from its temporary social and political aspects, and restated as a religion of permanent human significance.

The Edwardean Theology is a chapter in man's quest for truth and the good life. It was a fresh attempt to come into right relations with the world, to understand experience, and to govern life accordingly. It was inspired by a piety induced by the course of events, and derived its rational justification from insights into the logic of experience. It had a wisdom peculiar to its piety, which never-

theless is of permanent human appeal, because it typifies truths which belong to enduring structures of reality.

Thus Edwards gave New England Christianity a new and powerful impulse, which continued to be felt for almost a century. But the weakening of this impulse began immediately after he had done his work. His disciples and later champions lacked either his profound piety, or his intellectual vigor, or both. They reverted to governmental and legalistic conceptions of Calvinism, and under the influence of new political and humanitarian principles, modified Edwards' theology, subtly, variously, and greatly. This process culminated in the work of Nathaniel W. Taylor of Yale College, based upon a morality and philosophy profoundly other than those which motivated the theology of Edwards. After Taylor, the New England Theology adopted the style set by him, and became progressively "liberal."

As seen from the perspective of the theology of Edwards, the history of the New England Theology is the history of a degradation. It declined because its theocentric character, its supreme regard for the glory of God and His sovereignty over man, made it ill-fitted to give expression to the ideals of the eighteenth century New England and to meet its immediate social needs. The social and political forces of the time gave rise to principles which were either inimical or irrelevant to the spirit of the Edwardean theology.

The historians of the New England Theology have usually presented it as a minor chapter in the history of Christian theology. They have studied it from a strictly theological point of view, in the light of their own theological opinions, and have sought to criticize it by point-

ing out philosophical misconceptions and logical errors. The consequences of such treatments have been that the purport of the New England Theology has been misunderstood or overlooked, the causes of its passing have been misjudged, and its significance lost in doctrinal discussions and criticisms in terms of debatable philosophical issues. An important instance of this is Frank Hugh Foster's *A Genetic History of the New England Theology* (1907), the only comprehensive treatise written on the subject, and valuable as a guide to the major sources. It is an erudite and carefully prepared book. However, the author's own aggressive belief in a certain theory of the "freedom of the will," evidently suggested by N. W. Taylor and E. A. Park, has prevented him from doing justice to the Edwardean Theology. The Edwardean doctrines are presented in their relations to his psychology of the will, and criticized as inadequate or pernicious to the extent that they ignore or seem to vitiate this psychology. This is unfortunate, because the chief aim of the Edwardean Theology was not to formulate a theory of the will; it was inspired by a piety which sought to glorify God and His sovereignty over man. On the other hand, it asserted human responsibility, and sought to reconcile it with its theocentric piety. The task of holding fast to both divine sovereignty and the need of human effort was of course a delicate matter, and many Edwardeans were wrecked on the horns of the old dilemma. However, this difficulty was neither the only nor the chief cause of their ultimate failure to make their theology acceptable to their opponents. It was merely a symptom of profound and practically significant discrepancies between the Edwardean piety and social philosophy in the eighteenth century New Eng-

land. To understand the passing of Edwardeanism, one must keep in sight the connections between things and ideas. He must be aware of those powerful cultural forces which often lead men to discard ideas which they may not have properly disproved.

It is hoped that, presenting the subject in such a light, the present essay will help toward a new understanding of Edwardeanism; and that it also will serve as an illustration of that perennial conflict between theocentric piety and humanitarian morality which is a problem to-day as it was in the eighteenth century.

There are stable and elemental realities underlying the pattern of any culture which survive its process and recur in others. When the superficial enthusiasms of an age subside, the human mind returns to a just view of its traits, and forgotten truths reappear to strike a balance. A culture can create a spirit, but it cannot always destroy it. A spirit may abdicate, and return to heaven; therefore people say that it is dead. But spirits never really die. When the world gets tired of the tyranny of new favorites, and cries for help, old ones return to shed new light, and there is progress. There are some spirits whom no amount of neglect will ever induce to leave the world. They belong to the "nature of things," the people's good sense. They often go into hiding, but they continue to annoy. People seldom give them a full ear, and always refuse to allow them a full triumph. However, in the long run, Nature has its own way; it either makes people wise, or it kills them.

Whereas the language of Calvinism is in disrepute, the elements of good sense in Calvinism must always remain wherever there is good sense. Piety is not dead. So long

as men refuse to shut their eyes to the world, so long as they recognize their connection with and their dependence upon a world which supports them and often ignores their personal welfare, so long as they find happiness in self-denial and a love which grows out of wisdom, so long as their sense of the tragedy of life persists and can be transmuted into victory over the world,—there will be the essence of Calvinism. The optimism and the humanism of the nineteenth century have already lost their rational quality.

It is probable that a revival of the “tragic sense of life,” together with the wisdom and sobriety which grow out of it, should be forthcoming. It is necessary that men rediscover the truths once signified by the doctrines of divine sovereignty and divine grace, of predestination and election, of depravity and regeneration. Pure spirits harbor no loyalty to names. It is men who love to exchange old names for new, for that gives them a sense of progress and makes them happy.

If the humanitarianism of Channing is modern, a post-modern mind is already in the making. Its spirit is as yet skeptical and “naturalistic.” It believes itself to be in an alien world. In order to become religious, it must become reconciled with God.

PIETÝ VERSUS MORALISM

CHAPTER I

IMPIETY AND MORALS

“ALAS! Alas! Are there not many and great Impieties to be found in our Land? Is not God Himself too much neglected, and our Loyalty to Him forgotten, and a bare Formality, without the Power of Religion, the Guise of many High Professors? Is not His most Dreadful and Sacred Name greatly Dishonoured . . . ? Is not His Holy Day Prophaned? And does not His House too much lye waste, by Multitudes forgetting the Assembling of themselves together; by a Contempt cast upon the plain Ordinances and Institution of Christ, to Remember Him in a Serious and Worthy Approach to His Holy Table?”¹

This normal lament of every conscientious minister of the Gospel was uttered with unusual earnestness in New England during the eighteenth century. The zeal of the people to attend to the “religious duties” prescribed by the “instituted churches” was on the wane. The Puritan conception of the Church as the proper means of salvation was being forgotten by an increasing number of people. Many were successful in achieving respectability without the help of the churches and the ministry. The Rev. Solomon Stoddard, for example, sensed the increasing peril of such cultivated indifference to sin. He embraced the ecclesiastical expedients which his common sense dictated as necessary for an effective appeal to the respectable unregenerates. He had his heart set on the “pros-

perity of Zion.” Consequently, he invited all those who desired “moral improvement,” together with a certain interest in regeneration, to the Lord’s Table, which had been reserved by tradition for the elect of God. With the opening of the century, he set forth his notorious *Doctrine of Instituted Churches explained and proved from the Word of God*,² the burden of the said doctrine being that “all professors of the Christian Faith, as are of blameless conversation, and have knowledge to examine themselves and discern the Lord’s Body, are to be admitted to the Lord’s Supper.”³ All those who are good enough to be admitted into the churches as members, are also good enough to partake of the Lord’s Supper;⁴ and these are those who comply with the “general moral rules,” and are not “scandalous.”⁵ In answer to the criticism of the formidable Increase Mather, Stoddard had to write an *Appeal to the Learned, being a Vindication of the rights of Visible Saints to the Lord’s Supper, though they be destitute of a Saving Work of God’s Spirit on their Hearts*.⁶

The fact of the matter seems to have been that the problem confronting the churches of New England, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was the failure of the people to attend to “any duty of worship.” Stoddard admitted that the people failed to support the churches “under the pretence of being in an unconverted state.” But he also knew that this was little more than mere pretense. Church duties were becoming not privileges but burdens. Whereas before it had been advantageous to be a church member of “compleat standing” (for high social standing and the franchise in Massachusetts had been limited to such), this had now become a privilege of dubious value. Therefore, many people were turning away from the

churches to attend to their worldly concerns, pretending that they considered themselves unworthy of the privileges of real saints. Stoddard was determined to make such claims "inexcusable." "Sanctifying grace," he asserted, "is not necessary to the lawful attending" of any duty of worship.⁷ All good men, that is, all who are not of any scandalously immoral behaviour, may and should attend the "instituted churches," and this is the way to prevent "corruption."

Stoddard's way became popular, while the churches continued to profess their "Calvinism." Although the dangerous tendency of his views was sensed by the Mathers, it was ignored by the majority of the ministers.⁸ These were too busy lamenting religious indifference, and vainly exhorting people to declare the work of grace on their souls, according to the doctrines inherited from their fathers. The doctrines of divine sovereignty, original sin, and justification by faith, were maintained as revealed truths, and preached intermittently with sober and pedantic exhortations to the people to behave like saints and give God the glory. Calvinism was becoming merely a body of doctrines, to be believed chiefly because taught in the Holy Scriptures. Hence it became increasingly necessary to preach the Calvinistic "Faith," which all confessed but few took seriously. In the year 1723, *The Confession of Faith, together with the Larger Catechism . . . with a brief Summary of Christian Doctrine* was published in Boston.

Question. What is the Chief and highest End of Man?

Answer. Man's chief and highest End, is to glorify God *a*, and fully to enjoy him forever *b*.