“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

-II Cor. 3:17-18
Edwards, the Enlightenment, and the Issue of Moral Agency

1. JE as “Enlightened”

2. Major figures of movement, particularly in relation to debate about liberty and necessity

3. Local background
JE versus the Enlightenment
or
JE in the Enlightenment?

Enlightenment as source of all modern ills?
(secularism, anti-religion, socialist ideologies, etc.)

JE traditionally viewed as great opponent of the Enlightenment:
either as bigoted Calvinist opposing progress (Progressive Era), or
-as champion of Christian truths against evil (evangelical apologists)

But--two reassessments in progress:
1. Nature of Enlightenment itself
2. Nature of JE’s relation to it
1. Nature of The Enlightenment

-first phases were strongly informed by Christianity and led by religious thinkers -only later phases more radical

Thus: “Early,” “Moderate” (May) or “Christian Enlightenment”

-may be more proper to speak of “Enlightenments”

And don’t forget: The Great Awakening, and the many spiritual movements that grew alongside and out of it (Pietism, Moravianism, Methodism, Shakerism, Mesmerism, Spiritualism, Mormonism, etc.) occurred during the Enlightenment

-Long 18th-century: an enlightenment of the spirit as well as of the mind
2. JE’s Relation to Enlightenment

a. He adopted the spirit and techniques of the period in defense of what he viewed as orthodox religion:
   - depend on one’s own reason and experience (subjectivity)
     - taught his congregations the dictum, “Know thyself”
     - stressed the “reasonableness” of religion
   - science and religion are in accord
   - rejection of Aristotelianism (nature of matter & being)
   - naturalism (typology)
   - possibility of human progress (redemptive history)

b. But also resisted key trends
   - opposed deism, atheism, free thought
   - defended original sin
   - critiqued materialism (both philosophical & economic)
   - remained largely Neoplatonic and Augustinian
Sydney Ahlstrom: JE as “Dortian philosophe”

- adopted basic and seminal ideas of Enlightenment, but also adapted these ideas to principles of Reformed Christianity as affirmed by Synod of Dort

Four “salient emphases”:
- deliver the “full Christian message” as transmitted by Reformed & Puritan forebears
- “great argumentative treatises” (polemics)
- speculative theology (ancient metaphysical issues)
- ultimate mode of expressing meaning of Christian faith through salvation or sacred history
JE’s Intellectual World

Romantic version:
-Stephen: JE as German professor mistakenly dropped in American wilderness
-Miller: JE as lone “aboriginal monolith”

Structuralist version:
-JE as highly connected to transatlantic world of ideas and books (“republic of letters”—London is “downtown”)
-highly eclectic in his reading and influences
-used Roman Catholic scholastics as well as Protestant biblicists (“catholicity” of post-Reformation sources)
-blended British empiricism and Continental scholasticism
Twin Pillars of Enlightenment

John Locke (1632-1704)  Isaac Newton (1642-1727)

Exercise: Name some texts or concepts in which JE revealed their influences on him.
Moral Philosophy & the Issue of Agency: 
Two Scholarly Assessments

“Moral philosophers had begun the process of converting into secular and naturalistic terms crucial parts of the Christian heritage. Edwards in a sense reversed the ongoing process by assimilating the moral philosophy of his time and converting it back into the language of religious thought and experience. . . . His purpose, contrary to that of the philosophe, was to turn the best thought of his time to the advantage of God.”

-Norman Fiering

“Edwards used philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment in defense and support of Reformed theology and evangelical Calvinism; in so doing, he engaged in the perennial task of reconciling faith and reason.”

–Richard A.S. Hall
Figures with whom Edwards was Familiar

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

Deterministic, necessitarian

Leviathan, 1651

(JE claimed never to have read him, nor Spinoza, yet he denounces them at every turn)
William King (1650-1729), Archbishop of Dublin

Author of *De Origine Mali* (1702)

-espoused liberty of indifference
Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), philosopher & Anglican clergyman

-Newtonian, heterodox
-compatibilist
-Boyle lectures: used categories of physical & moral necessity
David Hume (1711-76)

*Treatise of Human Nature* (1739)
-problem of induction—belief in causality depends on custom/habit
-tried to reconcile libertarian & necessitarian approaches
Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696-1782)

*Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (1751)

- argues for philosophical necessity
A figure who read Edwards

Thomas Reid (1710-96)
-founder of Common Sense
-philosophical libertarian

First page of Reid’s reading notes on JE’s FOW (U. of Aberdeen)
Religious Prefigurations of Enlightenment in New England

John Winthrop the Younger (1606-1676)
Interlocutors of Enlightenment in New England

Cotton Mather (1663-1728)

No, not that one . . .  This one
John Leverett (1616-1679, Harvard tutor (student of Samuel Willard) - conveyed the “new learning” - latitudinarian

Benjamin Colman (1673-1747), Pastor of Brattle Street Church, Boston - correspondence network
Views on Agency in Colonial New England: Texts & Influences

William Partridge (d. 1690), Harvard student logic notebook
Review of Thomistic “Intellectualist” position
17th-Century Advocates of Intellectualist Approach

Adriaan Heereboord  
University of Leyden

Francis Burgersdijk  
University of Franeker

Johann Maccovius  
University of Franeker

Solomon Stoddard  
Harvard College
Voluntarism

William Ames (1576-1633)

“Will is intellect as external, for the purpose of possessing and making what it knows. Intellect is will as immanent, for the purpose of understanding.”
Title page of Ames, Medulla (1634)

JE’s personal copy, used as a student
Student Timothy Edwards (Jonathan’s father) on the indifference of the will, Harvard 1694

“An indifferentia sit de essentia liberi arbitrii? Negat Respondens”
Voluntarist Tradition:
Augustine, Anselm, Bernard

A “fundamental disposition of the heart”

Ames

Peter van Mastricht

-whole person involved in act

-“spiritual propensity of the will”

Edwards

Unitive psychology (*Affections*)
- affections are the “will in exercise”
From 17th-Century Voluntarism to 18th-Century Revivalism

Fiering: there has been “an illogical severance of 18th-century evangelicalism from 17th-century Puritan thought.”

-divisions in American thought during the Great Awakening between evangelicals, “old Calvinists,” and “Arminians” were in part a carry-over from 17th-century debates

Chauncy Edwards
Intellectualist
-sanctified understanding

Edwards
Voluntarist
-role of “motives”