JONATHAN EDWARDS & SACRED LANDSCAPES

NATURAL WORLD
• Creation - The Early Modern Era & Edwards

- 17th century Reformed doctrine of creation
- Primarily discussed in systematic theology (theology proper)
- Before or after the discussion of the divine decrees
  - Exegesis
  - Doctrine
  - Polemic
  - Practical

Petrus van Mastricht, Theoretico-practica theologia (1699)
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NATURAL WORLD

• Creation - *The Early Modern Era & Edwards*

  - Some key issues in 17th century Reformed doctrine of creation
  - Creation *ex nihilo*
  - Creation in 6 literal (24 hour) days or single instantly event
  - Creation: when?
    - From eternity (*actualiter* or *possibile*)
    - Age of the earth
    - Season of the year
  - Is Adam the first created person?

Francis Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticæ* (1679)
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NATURAL WORLD

Landscape Illustrations Genesis Creation account
Creation is "the entrance of the night preceding the 23rd day of October... the year before Christ 4004... that is, around 6 pm on 22 October 4004 BC according to the proleptic Julian calendar."
• Creation - *The Early Modern Era & Edwards*
  • Edwards: continuity and discontinuity
    • No systematic theological discussion on the doctrine of creation
    • If Edwards *A Rational Account of the Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion Attempted* outlines a systematic theology, than the heading or the locus of “Creation,” states, “the ends of it.” *WJE* 6:396.
    • No specific treatment of key issue of the doctrine of creation as found in 17th century Reformed *systema*
    • Concentrates on the “Concerning the End for which God Created the World.” vs. Reformed orthodoxy attention to the beginning of creation
      • Creation is a communication of God’s goodness, the emanation of God’s glory, for humanities’ happiness
• Creation - *The Early Modern Era & Edwards*

*Discuss*


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NATURAL WORLD

• Nature in Northampton & Stockbridge Surroundings & Sermons

  • Rivers
  • Trees
  • Water
  • Flowers

Connecticut river, Wethersfield, CT

Stockbridge, MA
JONATHAN EDWARDS & SACRED LANDSCAPES

NATURAL WORLD

• Nature in Northampton & Stockbridge Surroundings & Sermons

  • Insects  \textit{WJE} 6:154-163 “Of Insects”
  • Spider  \textit{WJE} 6:163-172 “Spider letter”
  • Rainbow  \textit{WJE} 6:298-302 “On the Rainbow”
  • Sun
  • Moon
  • Stars

  “[B]ut in his diary he never mentioned an attractive landscape or sunset.” M. M. Knappen, \textit{Tudor Puritanism} (Chicago, 1939), 436 vs Edwards’s Diary
  - Saturday, Dec. 29, 1722 “About sunset this day, dull and lifeless.”
  - Sabath day, Feb. 17,1723 “near sunset…”
  - Wednesday, Mar. 6, “near sunset. Felt the doctrines of election, free grace…”

  “Sunset” 7x in total mentioned in Diary
Brainerd in this regard was deeply ingrained in the Puritan mold, while Edwards was not. Influenced by the so-called “nature enthusiasts” of the Enlightenment, Edwards gave to nature a mystical quality that is not characteristic of the Puritan. Where Edwards saw mountains and waste places as the setting for divine disclosure, Brainerd saw only a “howling desert.” Where Edwards could take spiritual delight in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees,” Brainerd never mentioned natural beauty. In contrast to Edwards’ joy in summer is Brainerd’s fear of winter. But while Brainerd’s situation was unusual (having to survive under harsh circumstances), his attitude toward nature was not; for the Puritan, in general, failed to respond to natural beauty. ”He did not attack the desire for beauty as such,” writes M. M. Knappen of the traditional Puritan divine, “but in his diary he never mentioned an attractive landscape or sunset.” Nor did Brainerd in his. WJE 7:23.
• Nature in Northampton & Stockbridge Surroundings & Sermons

• Rivers
  
  Sometimes they are as a river ready to overflow its banks, men cannot but be pouring them out on all occasions; and sometimes as waters that fail, no drop comes from them. WJE 2:372.

• Trees
  
  Man’s life is like the blossoms on the trees that appear fair and fine a few days, and then wither and fall off and rot on the ground, WJE 25:593, Hebrews 9:27, Mohawks Jan. 1750/51.

• Water
  
  They shall partake with Christ of the same “river of pleasure”; shall drink of the same water of life, WJE 25:235, 2 Corinthians 5:8, Prepared for Mr. Brainerd’s funeral, appointed October 12, 1747.

• Flowers
  
  Christ by his light and spiritual comforts enlighten the spiritual world, as the light of [the] sun causes flowers to send forth a fragrancy, WJE 19:732, 2 Peter 1:19, November 1737.
• Nature in Northampton & Stockbridge Surroundings & Sermons

**Edwards on the seasons:** God by his mighty power orders the various seasons... ‘Tis by his power that the bands of the winter are loosed in the spring, and the snow and ice are dissolved. And the earth, which before was as a stone, is opened and mollified, and the sweet influences of Pleiades are shed abroad, and the earth brings forth; the pastures are clothed with green grass, and the trees bud forth and put on their beautiful garments, and all nature is renewed and revived. *WJE* 14:476, November 1729 on Ps. 65:9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

**Edwards on leaves & flowers:** Remember this Leaves fruits & flower & fruit not branches but the substance of the trunks to shew that there is a threefold substance in the trunk, the leaves the Extremity of the first the flowers of the 2’d the fruit of the third and the seeds only a Continuation of the branches of the tree to Prove About fruit, tis Only the substance of the trunk swoln by the seed how I have seen a Green twig swoln Just like an apple Only by the space of [ ] *WJE* 40 “Leaves & Flowers.”
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NATURAL WORLD

• Nature in Northampton & Stockbridge Surroundings & Sermons

  Insects  
  Spider  
  Rainbow  
  Sun
  •  As when the sun returns in the spring, the frozen earth is opened, mollified and softened, so by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness the stony, rocky, adamantine hearts of men are thawed, mellowed, and softened, and made fit to receive the seeds of grace, WJE 10:249.

  Moon
  •  All the world smiles upon such a soul as loves Christ: the sun, moon and stars, fields and trees, do seem to salute him. WJE 10:617.

  Stars
  •  Christ, as the morning star is the brightest of all the stars, WJE 19:275
• Nature in Northampton & Stockbridge Surroundings & Sermons
  • Imagery of nature has spiritual dimension
  • Only those with a “new sense of the heart” truly see nature
  • Nature allusions and references are most prominent in the Stockbridge sermons
    • God’s good-ness is like a river that overflows all of its bounds...
    • As the waters of a river run easily and freely so [does] the love of Christ...
    • We invite you to come and enjoy the light of the Word of God, which is ten thousand times better than [the] light of the sun...
    • “Preaching at Stockbridge displays a decisive move away from meta-physical reasoning and towards a reliance on metaphor, images, and narrative” (Rachel Wheeler)
• Nature in Northampton & Stockbridge Surroundings & Sermons
  • There is a harmony between the light of nature and the light of Scripture, and a harmony between the God in his being and the world God made.
    • “Images of Divine Things” (1728), speaks of “the great and remarkable analogy in God’s works,” an analogy that is “apparent.”
  • Concept of beauty - Edwards’s aesthetic apologetics when he writes, “It is out of God’s own beauty that creation proceeds; it is by his beauty that creation is ordered; it is according to his beauty that God governs the world, both natural and moral; it is by beauty that God redeems” (Delattre)
  • Nature as the theater of God’s glory.
  • Typology