



Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History: The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of Enlightenment

Avihu Zakai

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Avihu Zakai analyzes Jonathan Edwards's redemptive mode of historical thought in the context of the Enlightenment. As theologian and philosopher, Edwards has long been a towering figure in American intellectual history. Nevertheless, and despite Edwards's intense engagement with the nature of time and the meaning of history, there has been no serious attempt to explore his philosophy of history. Offering the first such exploration, Zakai considers Edwards's historical thought as a reaction, in part, to the varieties of Enlightenment historical narratives and their growing disregard for theistic considerations.

Zakai analyzes the ideological origins of Edwards's insistence that the process of history depends solely on God's redemptive activity in time as manifested in a series of revivals throughout history, reading this doctrine as an answer to the threat posed to the Christian theological teleology of history by the early modern emergence of a secular conception of history and the modern legitimation of historical time. In response to the Enlightenment refashioning of secular, historical time and its growing emphasis on human agency, Edwards strove to re-establish God's preeminence within the order of time. Against the de-Christianization of history and removal of divine power from the historical process, he sought to re-enthroned God as the author and lord of history--and thus to re-enchant the historical world.

Placing Edwards's historical thought in its broadest context, this book will be welcomed by those who study early modern history, American history, or religious culture and experience in America.

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