

## American Conceptualization of Time and Jonathan Edwards' Post-Millennialism Reconsidered

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### INTRODUCTION

On the summer's day of August 19th, 1989, in a town called Sopron, close to the border between Austria and Hungary, roughly a thousand East Germans were getting together to enjoy what they were calling a Pan-European Picnic. When they moved toward the border, the Hungarian guards, whether expecting them or not, did not interfere with their crossing. With excitement suppressed in their minds, they crossed the border one by one. On that particular day, roughly nine hundred East Germans were able to make a "border run" into Austria and then to West Germany. This is the often-retold first event in the history of the Fall of the Wall, which finally led, on November 9th, to the opening of the border between West and East Germany, and which, two years later, brought forth the end of the Cold War with the final collapse of the Soviet Union on December 26th, 1991. Meanwhile, the symbolic global clock, the so-called Doomsday Clock, which had been measuring out the remainder of time before nuclear Armageddon, seemed to have lost its task. With this series of dramatic historical events, the turn of the century, which was not so far off at that time, was certainly projected with auspicious expectations. As it was also the turn of the millennium, a festive mode seemed to be

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developing among many of the peoples in various corners of the world. Indeed, the synchronization of the endings of these two historical sequences stimulated vague expectations and good hopes for the new millennium and the new century, but at the same time vague eschatological worries were also latent, especially with the fears of the Y2K problems, or global collapse of computer systems.

In the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century, Francis Fukuyama's book entitled *The End of History and the Last Man*<sup>1</sup> was published. In spite of the title's apocalyptic connotations, Fukuyama's argument was more to do with the self-assertion of American democratic principles. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the clear tendency of the world-wide shrinking and declension of Communism, world history did not seem to be going any further along the path of the contention between Democracy and Communism. Without the *aufheben* of the contending ideologies, history had seemed to lose its momentum. Liberal Democracy seemed to represent the final form of ideological evolution and the final form of human government. The vehement controversies concerning this thesis set aside, it was clear evidence and a good instance of the fact that the end of the millennium was certainly the time when the significance of the ending was felt rather strongly in our daily life.

Now, a few years having passed since the turn of the millennium, sufficient time seems to have passed to make us thoroughly accustomed to call the year, for instance, "O four." At the turn of the millennium, there was a slight confusion about whether the new year should be called two thousand, or "O O" or "Zero Zero." The frequently used term around that time, "Y2K," is now only rarely heard in our daily conversation. Thus, the unusual feelings and sensations, the mixture of anxiety and hope, associated with the turn of century and that of the millennium have now found their places only in our memory. Similarly almost forgotten is the special auspicious expectation related to the idea of *beginnings*, which were clearly devastated by the events of 9/11 2001 and the succeeding wars. If the terrorists' attack had happened at the end of 2000, what more gloomy and ominous sensations it must have caused is a matter of mere speculation but nonetheless easily imaginable.

## AMERICAN APOCALYPSE

Putting this kind of conceptualization of time into the historical context of the American psyche, we find a long process of transformation or development in the way that the American mind has conceptualized time at any given moment of its history. For instance, almost two and a half centuries before these historical events mentioned above, another revolutionary change had taken place in America. Living through that period, the American prototypical folkloric figure of Rip Van Winkle sat, perhaps, in front of his familiar tavern on an autumn day in 1776, where, in fact, he used to sit twenty years before. In the tavern, a familiar portrait of King George III was hanging, a painting whose title, whether or not Rip may have realized it, had been changed to George Washington. The central event of the story, needless to say, the American War of Independence, did not seem to have had any impact on his way of life, because during that time he had been sleeping somewhere deep in the Kaatskill mountains. The story reads, "It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject of his Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him. . . ." He first did not know about and then was totally at a loss how to understand the political change. To him nothing had changed or was changing after the War of Independence in his vicinity. Certainly, the title of the new state, and that of the familiar portrait were changed, but the way of life of the first generation after the Independence was little changed. As a matter of fact, Rip saw that he had been replaced literally by his identical heirs. In such ways, Washington Irving depicted a representative figure who did not know how to adjust his own being to the drastic change of political system. In short, Irving's hero is a figure who has "Fallen From Time."<sup>2</sup> He was not even able to hear the sound of "the shot heard round the world."

However, Rip's case is not the typical American response to changes. Different from his stance of having "Fallen from Time," the sense of time and that of ending shared by the American populace in general have had a unique quality ever since the initial stage of the Puritan colonial

age. It is not too much to say that, totally different from Rip's unchanging figure and his mental stance, the American psyche has been preoccupied with the idea of time. The dire image of the end of the world, catastrophic and universal, is vividly depicted in numerous Puritan sermons. For instance, Michael Wigglesworth's sermons and his lengthy poem *Day of Doom* are filled with dismal images of the end of the world caused by God's ire. A similar idea of time with its imminent moment of ending repeatedly found expression in the writings of representative Puritan leaders such as John Cotton, William Aspinwall, John Eliot, as well as their opponent such as Anne Hutchinson. Ever since, not to mention the obvious recent examples from Hollywood movies in the late 90's, such as "Independence Day" (1996), "Armageddon" (1998), and "Deep Impact" (1999), the American imagination has been constantly filled with horrifying, violent images of the end of America and that of the world. Thus viewed, the American insistence on apocalyptic visions can be called an obsession or a preoccupation.

In literature, too, such a well-known author as Edgar Allan Poe can be considered to be preoccupied with the same concept, as can be seen in his all-too-well-known ending of the "Fall of the House of Usher." To many readers of the story, the final catastrophic ending was instantaneously brought to mind at the time of September 11th almost as a déjà vu scene. The image of the fall of the towers had been imbedded somewhere deep in the American psyche. Let me just quote the last few lines of the novel:

The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken, as extending from the roof of the building, in a zig-zag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "Fall of the House of Usher."

Or, another famous ending, that of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* has a similar shocking effect which also touches our imbedded sense of apocalyptic ending. Betraying the reader's expectation of a dramatic ending for Captain Ahab, which in fact happens instantaneously without any word from him, the final scene following his disappearance is pregnant

in its symbolism. The emblematic figures of the Indian harpooner, Tashtego, and the unfortunate sea-hawk which was shrouded by the American flag and nailed by Tashtego's hammer to the mast, conjure up a final scene strongly loaded with the image of the end of America. That Melville intentionally gave the main role in the closing scene not to Ishmael the narrator, nor to Queequeg but to the Indian Tashtego connotes the idea that the fate of America is deeply connected with that of native Americans. As a matter of fact, the name of the sinking whaler, *The Pequod*, is that of a native tribe made extinct at the time of the genocidal Pequot War in 1637.

And now, concentric circles seized the lone boat itself, and all its crew, and each floating oar, and every lance pole, and spinning, animate and inanimate, all round and round in one vortex, carried the smallest chip of the *Pequod* out of sight. . . . Now small fowls flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides; then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled *five thousand years ago*. (Chapter 135, "The Chase—The Third Day," Emphasis mine)

The sinking of the *Pequod* is not the end of the story, however. The reference to "five thousand years ago" is apparently intended to send the reader's imagination back to the pristine time before the Flood. After this reference, in order to emphasize the idea of a return to the beginning, the final scene includes the following episode.

Buoyed up by that coffin, for almost one whole day and night, I floated on a soft and dirge-like main. The *unharming* sharks, they glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths; the savage sea-hawks sailed with *sheathed* beaks. On the second day, a sail drew near, nearer, and picked me up at last. It was the devious-cruising *Rachel*, that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan. ("Epilogue," Emphasis mine)

This episode was in one sense indispensable in the novel, simply because, anyhow, Ishmael had to survive this catastrophe in order to tell his story to others and to the readers as a narrator. But, more importantly, the final episodic scene recovered out of the catastrophe also hints at a pristine prelapsarian peaceful seascape. Together with the evocative reference to pre-Flood time mentioned above, this final scene, with its images of "unharming" sharks and "sheathed" sea-hawks, symbolizes the peaceful life of creatures before the Fall. After the catastrophic ending, the recovered peaceful scene is thus intimated, and brings the reader back to the pristine beginning.

A similar return to the pristine origin after a catastrophic ending can be found in other novels, too. The well-known last lines of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* can be read as another instance. After the final scene of Gatsby's funeral and its aftermath, the episodic lines at the very end read, "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eludes us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further. . . . And one fine morning—So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." Indeed, although Fitzgerald did not finish the sentence, it is intimated that "one fine morning" what was believed by Gatsby, "the orgiastic future," will be reached.

Behind these kinds of uniquely preoccupied feelings about the end of history, and also perhaps about another beginning after the end, there is a peculiar sense of time deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian concept of time. Concerning this point, Ruth H. Bloch writes, while analyzing the millennium expectation at the time of the American Revolution, "Time was conceived by the ancient Israelites as possessing a linear structure with a clear beginning and an end. History was expected to culminate in the glorious triumph of God's people across the world. The earth would then become a paradise for the righteous; sickness, deprivation, war, and oppression would cease to exist. . . . It has formed the core of a remarkably persistent millennial tradition that has deeply affected the historical consciousness of the modern world."<sup>3</sup> Certainly, it can be clearly said that the Judeo-Christian sense of time has a linear movement with a clear beginning and ending, but not a circular one. Nor can it repeat itself, making a cyclical pattern. What is interesting to note in this context is the formation of the New Testament. By putting John's Apocalypse at the end of the Bible, it makes a completion of the history initiated by the story of Creation in Genesis with the words, "In the beginning" and completed with the final vision. Frank Kermode wrote, "it cannot be denied that when the Christians took over the Jewish Bible they converted it into another book entirely, an extraordinary act of fictive imagination."<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, to return to the pristine origin and redo it from the beginning is one of the most basic impulses which propelled American history itself. Starting from the colonial endeavor, and throughout the following immigrants' experiences, America has been a country where a fresh start was always and repeatedly possible. "Zero start" is such a constant recurrent experience that the Biblical story of Adam and Eve has been a commanding preoccupation in the literary imagination from 17th century

Puritan writings through 19th and 20th century novels. These classic works of American Studies, such as *American Adam*, *Virgin Land*, and *The Machine in the Garden*, reiterated the point that this almost archetypal imaginative framework was rigidly structured in the American imagination. Not to mention such an obvious case as John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*, it is revealing to note that even such a work as Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, can be read within this context. The collected short stories which make up the novel are mainly based upon the central figure's stream of consciousness, and do not have any religious overtone as a whole. But, one group of short stories in the novel of modernism, namely, "Godliness—A Tale in Four Parts," takes its basic narrative structure from the Old Testament. In short, America has been taken as a location where the Old Testament stories were to be reiterated and would acquire different new meanings throughout its history.

#### AMERICAN MILLENNIUM

It has been saliently argued during the 70s and 80s that this Biblical basis was in fact structured within the traditional Biblical exegetical method, namely Typology. The prophecies told in the Old Testament (types) are fulfilled and realized in the New Testament (anti-type). And, with the analogical extension of that co-relationship between Old and New Testaments to Old and New Worlds, America has been considered as a special place where prophecy is to be fulfilled. Sacvan Bercovitch and others have convinced us that the Puritan writings in the seventeenth century were saturated with this Biblical framework of typology.<sup>5</sup> The repeated cliché, America is one's "dream come true," can be considered as a secular version of the typological thinking only deprived of its religious framework.

However, what is even more salient than the typological understanding of American history is the idea of Millennialism. This is because, whereas typology merely points out the fact of realization of prophecies brought forth in anti-type, Millennialism gives a temporal condition and factors in historical understanding. It prophesies the timing of the Second Coming, sometimes very ambiguously and at other times quite precisely. At any rate, it is really set within time, or is said to be very imminent. Thus, Millennialism could function as a cultural power to enhance certain social movements by a time-set program agenda, so much so, in fact, that it should be a significant subject when we consider the

American preoccupation with time. Except for the studies of Ira V. Brown<sup>6</sup> and David E. Smith<sup>7</sup> in the 1950's, mentioned above, however, Millennialism studies was not such a productive field until the late 60's. Probably, the close ties of Millennialism with fundamentalist denominations often baffled the religious historians of main line churches. Picking up Brown's interest and concern, in 1960's J.F. Maclear produced an informative article,<sup>8</sup> which stimulated the eschatological studies of American culture in early America.

American Millennialism, which was initiated with the Puritan's dire image of the end of the world, can in fact be classified into two different categories; that is to say, Post- and Pre-millennialism. In Pre-Millennialism, the Calvinistic strict and imminent Second Coming was a selective and one-time event. And, after the Second Coming, which would bring forth a violent judgmental intervention, it was believed that the thousand years of glory would follow. Roughly speaking, the Puritans in the seventeenth century were preoccupied with this idea. Around the time of the Second Great Awakening in the late-nineteenth century, however, promoted mainly by New Divinity, that is, so-called Edwardseans, millennialism was transformed. C.C. Goen called this phenomenon a "new departure of eschatology." Differing from the pessimism and the horrifying image of the end of the world and of glory only for the selected, post-millennialism is based upon the idea of a gradual progress of the world, finally reaching a universal salvation after a thousand years of blissful time. During that process, human efforts for missionary work can provide a solid momentum toward reaching the final glorious goal. Then, the Second Coming happens. Thus, by pushing the timing of the divine judgmental moment far forward beyond a thousand years of future time, and changing the stance from pre- to post-millennialism, the American psyche acquired its unique future-oriented optimism. In other words, post-millennialism is the basis on which American optimism and utopianism has been standing. The formation of 19th century secular progressivism depends upon this concept.<sup>9</sup> Various technological developments of that period, such as the invention of the steam engine, the telephone and electricity, were taken as symptomatic of the gradual steps that would be made during the thousand years' progress. In America, therefore, the advancement of science and technology do not collide, or contradict with that of religion. Edward

Bellamy's futuristic utopian novel, *Looking Backward* (1888) has to be read within this context. By now the transformation of millennialism has been proved from various angles including non-main line churches. As a matter of fact, it can be said that post-millennialism stimulated the development of America-born religions such as the Latter Day Saints, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and others, and the research on each denominational development with post-millennialism has now been thoroughly conducted.

The points which concern us here in this respect are the facts that Jonathan Edwards was often alleged to be the key person for this transformation. C.C. Goen's article published in *Church History* in 1950 has been quite influential in disseminating this view: according to Goen, "He (Edwards) began to entertain the idea that God might have purposed to realize the biblical prophecies in America as a land destined to accomplish the renovation of the world." Thus, Goen focused our attention on Edwards' *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England* (1740) in which, Edwards "openly espouses the imminency of the golden age and attempts to show that many things make it probable that His work will begin in America." Then, he quotes from Edwards, "This new world is probably now discovered, that the new and most glorious state of God's church on earth might commence there, that God might in it begin a new world in a spiritual respect, when he creates the new heavens and new earth."<sup>10</sup> To Goen, it was a great contribution of Edwards to Christian thought to innovate the idea of millennialism by removing the fears of the impending end of the world. Therefore, he concludes, "Could one expect less from the theologian of the Great Awakening [Edwards]?" Here, what was referred to as a rumor by Ira V. Brown, "It was rumored that Edwards often said that the millennium had already begun, and that it began at Northampton,"<sup>11</sup> is consolidated as a fact.

It has been mentioned that the originators of post-millennialism in its modern form are such Biblical commentators on the Book of Revelation as Daniel Whitby (1638–1725), Charles Daubuz (1670–1740) and Moses Lowman (1680–1752). Under their strong influence, Edwards is considered to have applied the idea to America, particularly to the phenomena of the First Great Awakening. But, this is exactly the point on which we have to raise a question. Was it really so?

## JONATHAN EDWARDS' MILLENNIALISM RECONSIDERED

In order to see the matter properly, we have to stand back to get a wider view of the matter from a broad perspective. Among various factors necessary for a good understanding of Edwards' thought, what is most important is the research regarding accessibility to his works. For that purpose, first of all, we have to review the facts related to the fame of Jonathan Edwards soon after his unfortunate death. Considering the present fame and significance of Jonathan Edwards, it seems rather odd that Edwards' untimely death, which happened only a few weeks or so after his Presidential appointment at the College of New Jersey, was not treated prominently. Probably, the suddenness of his death might be one reason for the neglect, but there seems to have been no eulogy printed, nor any other memorial event held except the funeral. Even his funeral was conducted in the simplest manner, as his death bed wish had directed it to be conducted.<sup>12</sup> During his active life, in spite of his fame as a supporter of the "First Great Awakening," or precisely because of that, he had never been selected to read the election day sermon.<sup>13</sup> This can be understandable when we think of his position as the central figure of intense controversies such as that respecting the qualification for church membership, and that regarding the nature of the revival between the New and Old Lights. However, it is rather shocking to note that at the time of his death, there was only one notice in a local newspaper, that is, the *Boston Gazette*, of April 10, 1750:

On Wednesday, the 22nd of last month, died, by inoculation, at Nassau Hall, an eminent servant of God, the Rev. pious, Mr. Jonathan Edwards. President of the College of New Jersey: a gentleman of distinguished abilities, and an heavenly temper of mind: a most rational, generous, catholic and exemplary Christian, admired by all who knew him, for his uncommon candour and disinterested benevolence; a pattern of temperance, meekness, patience and charity; always steady, calm and serene; a very judicious and instructive preacher, and a most excellent divine. And, as he lived, cheerfully resigned to the will of Heaven, so he died, or rather, as the Scriptures emphatically express it with respect to good men, *he fell asleep in Jesus*, without the least appearance of pain.<sup>14</sup>

Only his close protégés and disciples such as Samuel Hopkins and Joseph Bellamy, took care of the aftermath of his death, and it was Hopkins who took Edwards' documents into his care. In other words, the voluminous writings which Edwards had been dealing with in his Stockbridge mission house (1751–1757) were brought to Hopkins' church at Burlington.

These writings were studied only by those disciples, and only those disciples cherished the impact of Edwards' achievement and theology among themselves. Thomas Johnson's bibliographical study<sup>15</sup> shows how Edwards' printed materials were limited in number and were received quite differently by his contemporary readers than we would today imagine. For instance, his most well-read and frequently-printed book was the biography of his son-in-law, David Brainard, entitled *The Life of Brainard* (1765). The painstaking missionary work among the native American people to which he devoted his short life were taken as a model case of missionary history, and the biography was reprinted thirty times before 1925. Edwards' popularity among general readers was heavily and almost solely dependent upon this publication during the late 19th century. In such ways, Edwards' fame and his achievements were accepted very differently at that time from our own appreciation.

Even the idea that Edwards was the main promoter of the First Great Awakening has to be reconsidered. Back in 1967, it was widely accepted that the period of the Great Awakening could be narrowly defined within a few years of the 18th century. Alan Heimert's comment, made in the introduction to his well-argued book, was the origin of this understanding and was quite influential. There he wrote, "The Great Awakening was the series of religious revivals which, foreshadowed in the 'refreshings' in New Jersey and New England in 1734-1735, rose to intercolonial crescendo in 1740."<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere, he mentioned, "The Great Awakening was a religious revival that swept through the American colonies between 1739 and 1742."<sup>17</sup> After that, it took more than a quarter of century for scholarly liberation from this solid conceptualization to be achieved with Jon Butler's iconoclastic research<sup>18</sup> which finally convinced us that the Great Awakening was not a clear-cut movement but a set of amorphous phenomena in terms of both period and area. Since then, including other influential demythologizing studies by Joseph Conforti,<sup>19</sup> researchers have focused keenly on the issues of the Revivals especially on their time range and scope. There is now an argument, for example, that defining the period is meaningless even to the extent to say that the period cannot be clear-cut. Referring to Stephen A. Marini's works, Gordon Wood summarizes the point at issue as follows; "Marini's works suggest that there were in fact no distinct First and Second Great Awakenings but instead one long period of evangelical revival from the mid-eighteenth century to the early decades of the nineteenth century."<sup>20</sup>

In other words, as Jon Butler has made clear, the Great Awakening is

“an interpretive fiction,”<sup>21</sup> conjured up by Edwards’ disciples for the promotion of their own revival movement. By calling the earlier revival, the First Great Awakening they tried to authorize their revival movement as the Second, deriving its authenticity from the first. Indeed, the Great Awakening promoted by his disciples (so-called, Hopkinsians), that is to say, Samuel Hopkins, “the closest friend and disciple,” Joseph Bellamy and others, should be understood as such in terms of their own expectations. Frank Lambert<sup>22</sup> has recently enforced this view quite thoroughly by researching the mechanism by which the Great Awakening was promoted and enhanced intentionally.

Another of the assertions that Edwards really did proclaim that Millennialism started from New England, or more precisely from Northampton has to be reconsidered, too. It is certain that Edwards himself clearly wrote with that intention in his report of the Revival of 1740:

And if we may suppose that this glorious work of god shall begin in any part of America, I think, if we consider the circumstances of the settlement of New England, it must needs appear the most likely of all American colonies, to be the place whence this work shall principally take its rise. And if these things are so, it gives us more abundant reasons to hope that what is now seen in America, and especially in New England, may prove the dawn of that glorious day. . . .<sup>23</sup>

Perry Miller, in his biography of Edwards published in 1959, touched upon this point and criticized Edwards’ indiscreet remarks by saying, “He committed the mistake for which he paid in full; he insinuated that history could and might culminate in Northampton. True, he did not openly claim it, but he let slip some injudicious sentences that sounded as though he did, and rumors spread through New England ‘that I have often said, that the millennium was already begun, and that it began at Northampton.’”<sup>24</sup> Edwards’ words, quoted by Perry Miller here, are taken from the biography of Edwards written by Sereno Edwards Dwight, but the context of the passage, or in fact, a few more lines following Miller’s quotation gives us a different impression. In order to get the context of the argument, let me quote the passage in full:

It has been slanderously reported and printed concerning me, that I have often said, that the Millennium was already begun, and that it began at Northampton. A doctor of divinity in New England, has ventured to publish this report to the world, for a single person, who is concealed and kept behind the curtain: but the report is very diverse from what I have ever said. Indeed I have often said, as I say now, that I looked upon the late wonderful revivals of

religion as forerunners of those glorious time so often prophesied of in the Scripture. . . , but there are many that know that I have from time to time added, that there would probably be many sore conflicts and terrible confusions, and many changes, revivings and intermissions, and returns of dark clouds, and threatening appearance, before this work shall have subdued the world, and Christ's kingdom shall be every where established and settled in peace, which will be the lengthening of the Millennium or day of the Church's peace, rejoicing and triumph on earth, so often spoken of.<sup>25</sup>

As is clear in this passage, Edwards admitted that he had said that Northampton was a starting point of the Millennium, as Perry Miller pointed out, but his true intention was not to specify the arrival of Millennium in terms of location or timing. He only asserted that the phenomena of the revival he observed could be considered as the "fore-runner" of the Millennium, but even so, it is under the condition of probability, as he emphasized. Recently, putting Edwards' position within the large context of New England geo-political situation, Frank Lambert has clarified Edwards' own understanding of the revival of 1740 as follows; "That the Northampton awakening could have been the beginning of a global revival did not seriously occur to Edwards, and if it had, he felt inadequate to take a leading role in promoting the idea. Indeed, left to Edwards's own initiative, the Northampton story might never have been published. He was a diffident young minister still in his twenties and wished to defer to the judgment of older evangelicals. He also begged off assuming a leadership role in publishing revival news by citing Northampton's remote location, especially its great distance from the press."<sup>26</sup> Thus, it can be said that Northampton as the starting point of the Millennium was an exaggerated interpretation or an over-emphasis put on a casual remark of Edwards.

Another reconsideration about Edwards' Millennialism has to be made concerning salvation after the Millennium. Upon the Second Coming, Christ is believed to make the final judgment on each human being;—choosing some for eternal bliss and assigning others to damnation. Joseph Bellamy, in this respect, has calculated the number of would-be converts during the process of Millennium, while observing the revival phenomena of the Second Great Awakening. He has reached the conclusion that at that time almost everybody on the earth will be saved. Samuel Hopkins, too, had a similar understanding. Upholding the same idea of post-millennialism and its optimistic rendering of a history opened up to the eternal blissful condition, Edwards' understanding, as

a matter of fact, is quite different from that of the disciples stated here. Whereas Hopkins maintained that millennial society would be developed out of the church membership which would be enlarging during the millennium, Edwards himself thought only a few would be finally saved. The limited nature of salvation is clearly expressed in his *Miscellanies*:

520. FEW SAVED. See Shepard's *Sincere Convert*, paragraph at the bottom of the 83rd page and the top of the 84th. The following seem to be some of the reasons why there are but few of fallen men chosen to eternal life: . . . That the difference is owing to divine election, is more apparent. If the generality were saved and but few perished, a designing of those many to salvation could hardly be called an election. "Election" seems to denote a choosing out one or a few out of many, a choosing a portion out of the common mass; but if the multitude or mass itself was taken, and only a few distinguished ones left, this could hardly be called an election. The divine sovereign will is more obviously the cause of the distinction in such an election, when a few are distinguished from the generality and are chosen to a supernatural state, than if the generality were designed to this state, and only a few left in their natural state. . . .<sup>27</sup>

That Edwards did not consider that after the thousand years of millennium virtually all the people would be saved can be easily understood when we think of his strict stance concerning church membership. At Northampton, he tried hard to bring the membership policy back to the original Puritan practice, in which only the people who confessed their faith in front of the congregation should be admitted as church members. And, this change of membership policy can be considered as one of the reasons for his dismissal from his own church in 1750. In this way, there is a discrepancy of understanding between Edwards and his disciples concerning the nature of saving at the time of the Second Coming. Or, to put it differently, Hopkins and others had interpreted the notion of millennium as originating in Edwards, but through the way they interpreted Edwards' writing the significance of the millennium was transformed. Concerning this difference, C. C. Goen mentioned, "It is one of the ironies of history that Edwards himself, by his doctrine of the millennium, supplied this escape mechanism. Perhaps he gave away his argument unintentionally—or was he ever the *philosophe*?"<sup>28</sup> But, to tell the truth, Edwards' idea was clearly different from his disciples' interpretation. Only Goen, who had an access to Edwards' writings, such as his "Miscellanies," had to consider the phenomenon as "one of the ironies of history."

## CONCLUSION

Thus far, we have seen how Jonathan Edwards' idea of Millennialism was understood by the people succeeding him. Probably, due to the mishap of his death and his difficult and secluded position at the mission house in Stockbridge, his accumulated writings were not widely understood but were appreciated only by his followers. In other words, as the accessibility to his writings was limited after his death, his fame was totally forgotten. Through that process, the conception of post-Millennialism affiliated with Edwards has been interpreted not as he himself asserted it but as his followers wanted him to have asserted it. Hopkins and Bellamy a generation afterwards, and C. C. Goen and Alan Heimert almost two centuries later, constructed their own images of Edwards, each of which reflects the particular interest and position surrounding the interpreters. The kind of vacuum left by Jonathan Edwards after his death has been thus filled by the projected images harbored by his disciples and followers. An interesting fact is that through this process, we can detect the particular situation of the United States at each period, as it has taken its expression in their various interpretations of Jonathan Edwards. For instance, at the time of the Second Great Awakening, the Edwardsean idea of post-millennialism was understood to mean the universal saving at the end of the millennium. And, at the time of the post WWII period, in the 50's, Edwards was believed to have said that America, or more precisely, Northampton was the locale where the Millennium had started on the earth. In particular, stimulated by Perry Miller's biography of Jonathan Edwards, a new way of interpreting Edwards' thought was revived by C. C. Goen, who has reached the conclusion that Edwards' post-millennialism played a significant role in constructing the unique American future-oriented psyche; "this was exactly suited to the American nationalistic temper: the new world was to be the scene of dawning glory and no hand could stay its coming. Whatever the tragedy of the ultimate secularization of the millennial hope, it becomes an integral part of the optimistic activism which was destined to crown with success the 'errand into the wilderness.' This is Jonathan Edwards' contribution to the radical utopianism which is part of the American tradition."<sup>29</sup>

To put it differently, in each period Jonathan Edwards' idea of millennialism was interpreted or accommodated so that it could be used for the sake of and in relation to the needs of the particular American

situation at that time. James H. Moorhead, while analyzing the 19th-century response or adjustment to post-millennialism, argued that, “Post-millennialism resolved the problem by delaying the supernatural destruction of this age until after the millennium.” Continuing his argument, he points out how post-millennium was accommodated to the needs of the 19th-century mental atmosphere of America; “The final judgment was thus conveniently delayed, but apocalyptic terrors were by no means held in complete abeyance until the end of time.”<sup>30</sup> It can be maintained, therefore, that post-millennialism was invented and introduced so that it might suite American sentiments. Because, by “conveniently” delaying the Second Coming for a thousand years, post-millennialism could function as an “escape mechanism.”<sup>31</sup>

It is now said that the long-awaited completion of the Yale edition of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* is at hand. Since the first volume was published in 1957, nearly a half century has passed and the final volume, Volume 27, will be published within a year or so, just a few years after the tri-centennial of Edwards’ birth. Finally, the vacuum Edwards left at his untimely death will be completely filled, and we will reach for the first time the place from which Edwards’ understanding can be opened up into a new horizon. Certainly, historical understanding cannot escape from its own limitations, by its nature. A historian can only understand the past from his or her own standpoint, which is inevitably conditioned by the contemporary situations in which the historian is positioned. However, one nonetheless has to make a constant effort to liberate oneself from one’s limitations by trying to include various points-of-views, looking at the subject from different angles. As for Edwards, we have seen how the understanding of his ideas was limited at the same time that it was promoted by the small group of his followers and disciples. Soon after his death, it was Hopkins and Bellamy, and in the post-WW II era, it was C. C. Goen, who promoted particular understandings of Edwards, especially in relation to his Millennialism. While these kinds of efforts are indispensable in order to disseminate a proper understanding of Edwards, we now realize that Edwards has been utilized mainly for the sake of their understandings. If Jonathan Edwards, a British national who was already dead before the birth of the United States of America, is in fact imperative in understanding the significance of the United States of America, somehow this kind of narrow understanding of him fostered by his followers should be liberated from their close and closed circle. Concerning Edwards’ idea of Millennialism, it is not likely

that the hope and expectation that a glorious time would be waiting for human beings after a thousand years, as he allegedly stated, would be realized. Nor, can it be shared universally by the inhabitants on the globe. Contemporary political as well as environmental situations constantly remind us of the limited resources and future of the world. In short, the word, "progress," does not seem to project any optimistic overtones anymore as it used to do. Meanwhile, on the other hand, it is also unlikely that only pessimism could control us. Under such circumstances, what stance America will take is highly critical and important. Twenty years ago, William Q. McLoughlin wrote, "What astounds the historian of faith in America is the subtle shift from a postmillennial (Do-it-yourself) approach to saving the world to a premillennial (trust-in-God) approach"<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the fate of the world and its future should not entirely depend upon the unilateral effort of the United States, but upon the Transcendental, which should not be and cannot be monopolized by America.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, Toronto: The Free Press, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Philip Young, "Fallen from Time: The Mythic Rip Van Winkle," *Kenyon Review* 22 (1960), 547-73.

<sup>3</sup> Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), xi.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000; edition with a new epilogue, originally published in 1967), 192-93.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, *Typology and Early American Literature*, ed. by Sacvan Bercovitch (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1972).

<sup>6</sup> Ira V. Brown, "Watchers for the Second Coming: The Millenarian Tradition in America," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39 (1952), 441-458.

<sup>7</sup> David E. Smith, "Millenarian Scholarship in America," *American Quarterly* 17 (1965), 535-549.

<sup>8</sup> J.F. Maclear, "New England and the Fifth Monarchy: The Quest for the Millennium in Early American Puritanism," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 32 (1975), 223-260.

<sup>9</sup> Jean B. Quandt, "Religion and Social thought: Secularization of Postmillennialism," *American Quarterly* 25 (1973), 390-409.

<sup>10</sup> C.C. Goen, "Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology," *Church History* 28 (1950), 25-40. This study focused upon the idea of Edwards' post-millennialism has been quite influential to other significant works, which, according to Stephen J. Stein, includes Earnest Lee Tuveson's *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), and Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966).

<sup>11</sup> Ira. V. Brown, "Watchers for the Second Coming: The Millenarian Tradition in America," 448.

<sup>12</sup> Sereno Edwards Dwight, *Life of President Edwards* (New York: G. and C. and H. Carvill, 1830), 578, "And as to my funeral, I would have it to be like Mr. Burr's; and any additional sum of money, that might be expected to be laid out that way, I would have it disposed of to charitable uses."

<sup>13</sup> Thomas H. Johnson, *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758, A Bibliography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), viii, "Edwards was never invited to deliver an 'Election Sermon.'"

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Sereno Edwards Dwight, *Life of President Edwards*, 579.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas H. Johnson, *The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758, A Bibliography*, x.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Heimert, Perry Miller, eds., *Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967, 40).

<sup>18</sup> Jon Butler, "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction," *Journal of American History* 59 (1982), 305-325.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Conforti, "The Invention of the Great Awakening, 1795-1842," *Early American Literature* 26 (1991), 101-105.

<sup>20</sup> Gordon Wood, "Religion and the American Revolution," in *New Directions in American Religious History* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), ed. by Harry S. Stout and D.G. Hart, 186.

<sup>21</sup> Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 165.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Lambert, *Inventing "Great Awakening"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England (1742)," *Works of Jonathan Edwards: The Great Awakening*, Vol. 4, ed. by C. C. Goen, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 358.

<sup>24</sup> Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (William Sloan Associates, 1949), 318.

<sup>25</sup> Sereno Edwards Dwight, *The Life of President Edwards*, 213. This is in fact from the letter written by Edwards to William McCulloch on March 5, 1744. See Stephen J. Stein, "Editor's Introduction," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Apocalyptic Writings*, Vol. 5 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 29.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 69.

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The "Miscellanies"* (Entry Nos. 501-823), ed. by Ava Chamberlain, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 18 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 65.

<sup>28</sup> C. C. Goen, "Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology," 38.

<sup>29</sup> C. C. Goen, "Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology," 40.

<sup>30</sup> James H. Moorhead, "Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought, 1800-1880," *The Journal of American History* 71 (1984), 537.

<sup>31</sup> C. C. Goen, "Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology," 38.

<sup>32</sup> William Q. McLoughlin, "Faith," in "Special Issue: Contemporary America," *American Quarterly* 35, (1983), 102.