

**AN UNPUBLISHED ESSAY OF  
EDWARDS ON THE TRINITY:  
WITH REMARKS ON EDWARDS  
AND HIS THEOLOGY**

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by George P. Fisher

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*Jonathan Edwards.*

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DEDICATION

I VENTURE TO DEDICATE THIS BOOK  
TO THE LARGE NUMBER OF CULTIVATED READERS  
WHO FROM DISINCLINATION  
OR THE WANT OF LEISURE FOR THE TASK  
HAVE NOT ACQUAINTED THEMSELVES WITH THE  
CHARACTER AND WRITINGS  
OF EDWARDS





## PREFACE

THE major part of the manuscripts of Jonathan Edwards was for a good while in the hands of the late Professor Edwards A. Park, for him to use in composing a biography of Edwards which he had projected—a task for which that eminent theological teacher was in many respects admirably qualified. This undertaking, however, owing to his advanced age and his high ideal of what the proposed biography should be, was not carried by him beyond its early preparatory stages. On his decease, in accordance with an arrangement made a number of years before with the representative of the Edwards family, by whom the papers had been lent to Professor Park, they were transferred permanently to Yale University.

One of the manuscripts thus received, printed from a careful transcription, forms the concluding Part of the present volume. The sketch of the principal events in the life of the Author, and the characteristics of his theology, which forms the Introduction, I have thought would not be unwelcome, especially as the Fifth of October, 1903, is the two-hundredth anniversary of his birth. Prior to the more general Introduction, some statements pertaining to the literary history of the treatise which follows it will not be out of place.

Most of the persons who are interested in theological inquiries can hardly fail to be desirous to ascertain what were the thoughts of so great a theologian as Jonathan Edwards on the subject of the Trinity. A half-century ago, rumors were afloat concerning an Essay on this subject which was represented to exist in manuscript among his unpublished papers. As early as 1851 Dr. Bushnell called for the publication of a manuscript "treatise" from the pen of Edwards, which had been described to him as an "*a priori* argument for the Trinity," that would occasion surprise were it suffered to appear in print.<sup>1</sup> In 1880, Dr. O. W. Holmes also complained that the custodians of the Edwards manuscripts chose to withhold from the public an Essay which, he had been assured on "unquestionable authority," was in "the direction of Arianism or Sabellianism."<sup>2</sup> A few years later (about 1885), in an article in Herzog's Real-Encyclopädie,<sup>3</sup> Professor Calvin E. Stowe referred to an unpublished manuscript of Edwards on the Trinity in a manner to indicate that he had examined it, since he declares it to be a very able and carefully composed dissertation manifesting boldness and independence.

The same year new light was thrown on this topic by Professor Egbert C. Smyth's publication from a copy, which had been made long before, of a manuscript of

<sup>1</sup> Bushnell, *Christ in Theology*, p. vi.

<sup>2</sup> *International Review* (1880), also *Pages from an Old Volume of Life*, p. 397.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Professor A. G. Allen, *Jonathan Edwards* (1889), p. 341.