

In the face of such a prodigious and important work, bringing together as it does so much material from so many sources and much of it new, to criticize may seem to cavil. However, because Professor Pochmann's book is such a useful reference work and will be welcomed by all students of American culture who have already realized the great value of the same author's *Bibliography of German Culture in America to 1940*, it is unfortunate that there are so many typographical errors to mar an otherwise outstanding book.

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*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, under the general editorship of Perry Miller. Volume I, *Freedom of the Will*, edited by Paul Ramsey. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957. Pp. xii, 494. Frontispiece, index. \$6.50.)

The publication of this handsome volume, the first in an important series, should be applauded by all students of American history, literature, philosophy, and theology. The editors speak of a reviving interest in Edwards' work; at any rate, an objective and mature evaluation of this most spectacular of American intellectuals is in order. At present, Jonathan Edwards appears as a fascinating and in many ways a contradictory figure, about whom truly disinterested opinions are difficult to entertain. No one can fairly deny his piety, his intellectual energy and adroitness in disputation, the flowing elegance of his prose and the power of his mystical interpretations of natural beauty. These qualities awaken the enthusiasm of many students, who at the same time cannot but deplore his belief that Arminian doctrine is necessarily fatal to a religious life and that accordingly the people of Boston had during his own lifetime abandoned all genuine piety. The modern reader will be pained by Edwards' inability to comprehend the motives of those who questioned his theology in a spirit of moderation and humanity. Such a spirit might have withheld a more genuinely philosophical theologian from the desperate outbursts by which he undertook to subdue—we might almost say, to demoralize—a recalcitrant congregation. The lurid images of the spiders and the vipers go a long way toward justifying Thomas Paine's sincere belief that there is something profoundly corrupt about a theology that supports such utterances and that in

the name of common decency we should not expose our children to such indoctrination.

But these are now ancient quarrels, although the old scars are still visible and there are times when some of us feel the twinge of old wounds. Today the scholarly critic must do his best to avoid the intransigence of the older theologian. Certainly Edwards' treatise on *Freedom of the Will* has much to offer both the student of the history of ideas and the philosophical reader interested in a well-constructed and comprehensive argument. Most students of American philosophy would, I think, hesitate to place Edwards as a creative and original thinker along with James, Peirce, or Dewey, or, despite his learning and technical proficiency, along with Channing or Theodore Parker in philosophical theology. But it remains true that Edwards' anticipation of Berkeley, his reworking of Locke's psychology, and his exploitation of certain Newtonian concepts constitute a distinguished performance, judged by whatever standards. Edwards deserves a place in the general history of philosophy far more prominent than that which most of the handbooks assign to him.

Nonetheless, it is possible to overrate him and to misinterpret his true position in the history of thought. Perry Miller has insisted in his preface that "At the outset we hope it will be understood that while we approach this towering edifice with veneration, we do not expect to find among all students a unanimity of interpretation, or uncritical endorsement of Edwards' views. He is too majestic a figure to yield to every observer a single, simple meaning, and was too rigorous a critic himself to demand servile adherence."

But the editors are rather more uncritically enthusiastic than this statement might lead us to suppose. After all, terms like "majestic," quoted above, and "superdreadnaught," employed shortly thereafter, suggest a sentimental allegiance that may help to explain the curiously one-sided comparison, set forth by Mr. Ramsey in his introductory essay, of Edwards' determinism with twentieth century philosophical literature. This interpretation seems to consider Edwards as anticipating much of twentieth century thought. Mr. Ramsey mentions such writers as Bertrand Russell and C. D. Broad but he makes no reference to modern champions of indeterminism such as Boutroux, Bergson, Whitehead, and more

recently, the Existentialists. When viewed in comparison with the works of these writers, Edwards' theories of causation, of change and of time are obviously "dated" and it becomes clear that he transcends neither the theology of the Reformation nor the pre-Kantian philosophy of the eighteenth century. The efforts made by Miller in his recent book on Edwards and by Ramsey in the present work to present him as philosophically in advance of his period are certainly questionable. Ramsey's study of Edwards' relation to Locke and his theological contemporaries is cogent and enlightening but he quite fails to capture the significance of Edwards' thought for the present day.

After all, the main thrust of Edwards' argument was theological, and his thinking was overwhelmingly theocentric and reflected a theocratic orientation. Borrowing from Locke's psychology of motivation, Edwards found a way of describing human freedom as consistent with the absolute sovereignty of a Calvinistic deity. To be sure, man may sometimes be free to do as he wills or pleases. But such freedom belongs to the human being as a whole, never to the will itself. Thus there is nothing spontaneous about volition, although there may be a spontaneity of overt action. We may will to act but we do not, according to Edwards, "will to will": we do not initiate our own acts of volition or of decision. As opposed to this, we may argue that we do so often will, or "try our best," to reach a fair or a consistent decision, i.e., we may will to exist as centers of conscious and responsible agency rather than as vehicles of action, wholly propelled by the pressure of such motives as fear, anger, desire, ambition, or religious enthusiasm. Edwards, it seems to me, never made enough of this all-important aspect of our conscious self-control. This is perhaps because he was fascinated by eighteenth century mechanism; but this by itself would have led him into Deism. After all his chief concern was not scientific or philosophical but first and foremost an attempt to "glorify God in man's dependence." Edwards' piety would seem to have been a far stronger motive than his curiosity. This fact is obscured by the rigor and closely-woven pattern of Edwards' argument which has led some critics to think of him as essentially a rationalist. It is true that Edwards possessed extraordinary powers of disputation, but these he subordinated to his convictions, reducing philosophy once

more to the status of handmaiden. It was primarily in this spirit that he plundered the writings of Newton and Locke. Once we admit this, we may see in Edwards an apologist of rare ability and great eloquence. It is primarily in this light that he should be considered today.

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*Errand into the Wilderness.* By Perry Miller. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1956. Pp. x, 244. Index. \$4.75.)

"Religion like many other things is booming in America; it is a blue chip," writes D. W. Brogan, English observer of the American character, in a recent (February, 1957) issue of *Harper's Magazine*. This may help to account for the rash of new books and reprints on American Puritanism making appearance on the counters these days.

More likely it is the realization, as the author of this collection of essays insists, that the mind of man is the basic factor in human history and since the beginnings of American thought lie in the seventeenth century they are, necessarily, theological.

Together these "pieces", as Miller calls them, are broadly intended to spotlight aspects of the movement of European culture into the vacant wilderness of America; narrowly, to inquire further, as Miller has been doing in a brilliant series of books, into the "errand" that brought the first colonists to America and the meaning of the body of Protestant doctrine we call Puritanism, the first articulate body of expression from which we may begin to derive an understanding of the American mind.

The ideas of the Puritans, isolated and explained so capably by Perry Miller here and elsewhere cannot, of course, be summarized in a review. The rich intellectual feast spread before us in this slim volume, repetitious and intricate though it is, is added testimony that Miller is one of our best analyzers of thought as it was in a thoughtful age. It must suffice to indicate something of the subjects dealt with under the suggestive titles that make up this collection.

The first pieces cling closely to problems connected with the nature of Puritanism—why the Puritans went, or were sent, on their errand, and whether the lamentations of the