

Critiques of Jonathan Edwards

I. IN HIS OWN DAY

1. His personality and demeanor

- a. Conversation
- b. Austere, strict
- c. Did not visit parishioners regularly
- d. RESPONSE: JE was very aware of this and admitted it freely. See Resolutions, Diary, and Letter to Trustees of College of New Jersey

2. His constant requests for raises with the town of Northampton.

3. Resentments with the Williams family

- a. William Williams = Solid ally and friend of Stoddard
- b. Squire Ephraim Williams = Stockbridge real estate lawyer
- c. Abigail Williams Sargeant Dwight = Rival for control of Stockbridge

4. Pastoral decisions

- a. The Bad Book Case
- b. His request to reform an elders board (session)

5. His Positions on the First Great Awakening

- a. "Enthusiasm"
- b. Itinerant Preaching
- c. Minor controversy with Whitefield on "impressions"
- d. RESPONSE: JE was both an advocate for revival, but also a critic of its excesses. See *Some Thoughts and Religious Affections*.

6. His Position on Communion

- a. Stricter than Solomon Stoddard
- b. Requirement of a credible profession of faith (1748-49)
- c. Cause of his firing in 1750
- d. RESPONSE: JE responded to what he believed were many unfair criticisms of his position in his rebuttal treatises, *A Humble Inquiry and Misrepresentations Corrected*.

7. Calvinism

- a. By Enlightenment thinkers
- b. By Arminians
- c. By Deists
- d. Original Sin vs. John Taylor
- e. RESPONSE: JE was definitely a Calvinist and owned it explicitly in his *Freedom of the Will*, and his *Original Sin*, amongst many other writings.

8. New Light

- a. By Old Lights (Anti-Revivalists). Charles Chauncey.
- b. *Some Thoughts vs. Seasonable Thoughts*

II. IN OUR DAY

A. Social and Cultural Critiques

1. Slavery

- a. Slave Holder - Venus, Leah, Titus
- b. Defended fellow pastor Benjamin Doolittle at Hampshire Association
- c. Never preached against slavery
- d. Believed slavery to be part of post-fall social hierarchies; Kings, princes, magistrates, landowners, paupers, slaves etc.

RESPONSES

- e. Received blacks into church membership (9 blacks; 2 Native Americans)
- f. Allowed "Bathsheba" to testify in church disciplinary case
- g. Baptized and permitted blacks to the Lord's Supper
- h. Jonathan Edwards Jr, Samuel Hopkins, Joseph Bellamy oppose slavery

2. Elitism concerning English vs. Indian culture

- a. English > Iroquois, Mahican, Mohawk
 - b. "Savages" and demonically empowered culture.
 - c. Deerfield raid instilled great fear in many; French and Indian War; random violence
- RESPONSES
- d. Defended Indian rights at Stockbridge against aggressive real estate policies
 - e. Taught their children to read and write, esp. The Bible
 - f. Educated both boy and girl Indians

B. Theological Critiques

1. Justification (George Hunsinger, R. Scott Clark etc.)

- a. Changed Affections (JE) vs. Faith Alone
- b. Faith as Secondary Derivative Reason (JE) vs. Instrumental Cause
- c. Faith as a Pleasing Disposition vs. Faith as Recipient
- d. Faith as Inherent Righteousness (JE) vs. Alien Holiness (Luther)
- e. Faith as a Pleasing Disposition (JE) vs. WCF 11.1

RESPONSES

- f. Edwards defended by John Gerstner (R.C. Sproul's mentor) as orthodox
- g. JE did not commonly use Confessional Language
- h. Not charged as heterodox at his Queastio or by contemporaries

2. QIRE (Quest for Illegitimate Religious Experience) R. Scott Clark

- a. experience, euphoria, religious "affections," bodily effects etc.

RESPONSE:

- b. JE critiqued excesses of the revivals many times over, especially his Some Thoughts and Religious Affections.
- c. He rebuked Whitefield (impressions) and Davenport (supposed "unconverted ministers")

3. Continuous Creation

- a. Oliver Crisp

4. Anti-Catholicism = Pope is the Antichrist

RESPONSES

- a. Common view at the time held by most Protestants
- b. WCF affirms this
- c. Cf. KJV Preface; Spurgeon; other creeds and confessions

5. Freedom of the Will

- a. Too philosophical - John Newton
- b. Departs from Reformed Theology?

6. Association with YRR (New Calvinist) Movement. John Piper etc.

- a. Critique of R. Scott Clark
- b. Association with Pietism vs. Confessionalism

C. Philosophical Critiques

1. Creator/Creature Distinction

- a. Minds - God's mind and the minds that God makes
- b. Panentheism (Charles Hodge)
- c. Idealism
- d. Denial of Material reality - all matter is perception