

Jonathan Edwards

Seniors Thursday School class, July-August 2021

Week 1

Goal of the class

- To understand Edward's life and beliefs;
- To review the Great Awakenings that occurred during Edward's ministry;
- To read a few of his sermons to appreciate the depth of his thinking.

Week #1

- Geographical, Historical, Political, Cultural, Theological of the day, then sit JE's life within that.

Quiz Questions (T/F)

- The Puritans were teetotalers;
- The Puritans did not wear wedding rings.
- The Puritans did not celebrate Easter or Christmas holidays;
- The Puritans in America had African American slaves;
- JE had 10 sisters, no brothers.
- Because they were persecuted in England the Puritans were tolerant of other religions and set the stage for American pluralism.
- Edwards hated capitalism. He thought that the magistrates should control prices.
- Like other Colonialists the Puritans allowed courting couples to spend the night together talking in the same bed fully clothed as a way of getting to know each other.

Geographical:

Historical:

What is meant by the term "Puritan"? Not so easy to define...

A 'Puritan' was one who, politically, reacted against the via media (middle course) of the Elizabethan Settlement in favor of a more thorough reformation in England; who, socially, promoted evangelism, catechism, and spiritual nourishment through the preaching and teaching of the Bible; who, theologically, held the views of Luther's doctrine of faith (sola fide), Calvin's doctrine of grace (sola gratia), and the Reformers' doctrine of Scripture (sola scriptura); and who, devotionally, strove for personal holiness, a practical faith, communion with God, and the glory of God in all things.

1620: The Pilgrims landed at Plymouth

1628: An advance party of Puritans began to prepare Massachusetts Bay for settlement. In England the Archbishop persecutes Puritans

1630: The Great Migration began; an estimated 3,000 persons migrated to Massachusetts Bay.

1630-40: An estimated 20,000 immigrants sailed for Massachusetts Bay

1631: Citizenship was limited to membership in the churches. This meant that about one in five adult males could vote.

1636: Harvard was founded, primarily to produce an educated ministry. Founding of Providence, R. I. by Roger Williams who establishes Rhode Island as a place of religious toleration.

1636-1637. Pequot War.

1640-1660 Cromwell, Parliament, Puritan heyday in England; WCF 1646

1646 Robert Child and others protest the intolerance of Massachusetts Puritans toward those of other faiths; in response, Governor John Winthrop and others justify their policies and banish Child.

1647: The law required every town of 100 families or more to provide free elementary instruction, whether through private or public school.

1656: Massachusetts Bay Colony Puritans whip, imprison, and banish the first Quakers to arrive in the colony. Legislation in 1658 bars the Quakers from holding their services, called "meetings."

1660-1685: Charles II ascends to the throne after the death of Cromwell

1675-78 King Philip's War, devastating to the early colonialists.

1684: Massachusetts Bay Colony Charter revoked, reinstated in 1688.

1692: Plymouth Colony was absorbed into Massachusetts Bay, by royal charter.

1692 Salem Witchcraft trials.

1702-Queen Anne's War.

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Week 2

Life in the Towns

The Puritan Faith and Doctrine

The Real “Heretics”, Catholics, Arminians, Deists, and Anglicans

Edwards Ancestors

Solomon Stoddard (1643-1729), JE's maternal grandfather

Timothy Edwards, JE's father

The “Half Way” Covenant

Jonathan Edwards Week 3

1703 October 5: born at East Windsor, Connecticut

1704 Deerfield Massacre. JE's aunt (Solomon's daughter in law) and two cousins taken captive and killed.

1710 January 9: Sarah Pierpont (future wife) born at New Haven, Connecticut

1711 August-September: Father Timothy serves as chaplain in Queen Anne's War; returns home early due to illness

1712 March-May: Awakening at East Windsor; JE builds prayer booth in swamp during a time of revival.

1715: another revival and time of awakening of the 12 year boy but he could not make the profession.

1716 September: begins undergraduate studies at Connecticut Collegiate School, Wethersfield, at age 13.

1718 October: moves to New Haven to continue studies in newly built Yale College, but shortly returns to Wethersfield upon dissatisfaction with tutor Samuel Johnson

1719 June 24: returns to New Haven from East Windsor after Johnson's departure. Timothy Cutler appointed tutor. Edwards Writes "Of Insects". Suffers a serious bout of pleurisy during last year of college

1720 May: completes baccalaureate degree: September; delivers Valedictory Oration: October; begins graduate studies at New Haven

1721 Summer: Struggling spiritually; conversion experience at East Windsor; Writes "Of the Rainbow," "Of Light Rays", Begins "Natural Philosophy," "Of Atoms," "Of Being," "Prejudices of the Imagination"

1722 completes graduate studies; JE goes to NYC at age 19 to be a supply pastor to an English Presbyterian church. There for 8 months. Good experience in a small church, treated him like family.

1723 JE delivers commencement speech in September with a robust defense of Reformed theology. Writes a poem to Sarah Pierrpoint; Begins " "Resolutions," "Diary," "Catalogue of Books," and "Miscellanies"

1723 October-November: his father seems to be pushing JE to take the opening at the new church in Bolton, near home. JE not happy about it. 20 years old. He accepted the position.

1724: In May he leaves Bolton to accept a position as a tutor at Yale.

1725: Spring, relationship with Sarah blossomed into a suit for her hand. Sarah was still only fifteen but by May or June they were engaged to be married.

1726: Goes to Northampton to become assistant pastor to his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard.

1726: Ordained in February 1727. Married on July 28th.

Sept 1727, big EQ, 9 days of aftershocks. Churches experiencing awakenings. 20 in Northampton.

1728: Has first child in August, Sarah.

1729: February, Solomon Stoddard dies

Jonathan Edwards-

Week 4

After Solomon Stoddard's death in 1729 JE is senior pastor of a 1,300 member church at age 26.

"The people of Northampton are not the most happy in their natural temper. They have, ever since I can remember, been famed for a high-spirited people, and close, and of a difficult, turbulent temper."

13 hour days. In the spring of 1729 his health collapses and he takes a break. In the fall his younger sister dies; Jerusha, age 19.

1731 he delivers a sermon to Boston clergy, *God Glorified in Man's Dependence*. Establishes Edwards as a leading voice for Calvinism against Arminianism.

"It had been their (the young people's) manner of a long time, and for aught I know, always, to make Sabbath-day nights and lecture days to be especially times of diversion and company-keeping."

1733-34, sensing perhaps that he might win this battle, he preached once again against "company-keeping" and urged parents to bring it to an end.

Then the first flame of revival appeared in the tiny hamlet of Pascommuck, about three miles from the main part of Northampton but part of Edwards' congregational domain. The several families of Pascommuck were swept by "a remarkable religious concern," and "a number of persons seemed to be savingly wrought upon." In April 1734 came a dramatic turning point. "There happened," Edwards reported, "a very sudden and awful death of a young man in the bloom of his youth; who being violently seized with a pleurisy and taken immediately very delirious, died in about two days; which (together with what was preached publicly on that occasion) much affected many young people."

Toward the end of December the awakening took a dramatic upturn. A young woman, notorious as "one of the greatest company-keepers in the whole town," came to him for counsel. Previously he had not heard that she had become "in any wise serious," but as he listened to her story and carefully questioned her she convinced him "that what she gave an account of was a glorious work of God's infinite power and sovereign grace." So unlikely a convert that Edwards worried that it would raise skepticism but the opposite happened. This woman became an evangelist and many more people started showing up for pastoral counseling.

1735: By spring the spiritual rains had turned into a stream and into a flood.

Jonathan Edwards

Week 5

"a great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world became universal in all parts of the town, and among persons of all degrees and all ages. All other talk," Edwards reported, but that "about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown by; all the conversation in all companies and upon all occasions, was upon these things only, unless so much as was necessary for people, carrying on their ordinary secular business. Other discourse than of the things of religion would scarcely be tolerated in any company."

Word gets out. Many people are skeptical. "A radical religious fringe" according to the Reformed clergy

A tricky problem for Edwards-Why?

Visitors to the town notice a change in the people. The revival spreads beyond Northampton. Theodore Frelinghuysen and a Presbyterian evangelist, Gilbert Tennent, spark revivals in New Jersey.

Mid 1735, the revival at its peak. However not everyone is being converted and those unconverted are in despair as they hear the love of God mixed in with a good dose of the terror of hell.

Edwards Uncle Joseph Hawley is having trouble sleeping, being driven by anxieties over the state of his soul.

How did Edwards explain this tragedy?

But the people were impacted, and the thoughts of suicide spread.

But things have already taken off... *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* published in 1737.
But by then...

Jonathan Edwards Second Great Awakening Parts 1 and 2

Weeks 6 and 7

Late 1730's: Revival in Northampton done, congregation turning to secular pursuits, and Edwards wondering if this was the real deal. He does an extended preaching series on three topics; Wise and Foolish Virgins, Love, and the congregation's role in redemptive history.

1738-39: George Whitfield, Anglican priest, preaches revival in tent meetings in England. Comes to Georgia in 1738 and Philadelphia and New Jersey in 1739. Edwards was excited and wrote to Whitfield to come to New England on his next trip in 1740. He does, and Whitfield is a rock star. Whitfield had sparked revival in godless England and Edwards believed that this might be the ushering in of the millennium.

Whitfield preached in Northampton on Friday afternoon, October 17th, Saturday afternoon, and twice on Sunday. "good Mr. Edwards wept during the whole time of exercises. The people were equally affected; and, in the afternoon, the power increased yet more." He stayed with the Edwards' family and was impressed with their piety and family life. Edwards would write later that Whitfield's visit brought their youngest child to salvation.

Whitfield's impact: anti-authoritarian, unconverted ministers, ecstatic responses

1741: The revival is spreading throughout New England. Teams of ministers fan out across the state. Edwards and a team go to Enfield, Conn to a particularly difficult congregation. Preaches "Sinners in the hands of an Angry God".

Late Summer, 1741: The revival was spreading and so were its "enthusiasms". 'So was Edwards reputation as a revival preacher and author, and with it jealousies and controversies. Death of William Williams, Edwards Uncle, a part of the Stoddard clan and very influential minister in the area.

The week after the funeral he was slated to deliver the Yale commencement address. New Haven was becoming a center for some of the hottest agitation over the revival, and some of the students were nearing a state of rebellion.

A sensational young itinerant, James Davenport, carried the subversive side of the awakening to an extreme. Davenport arrived in Connecticut as a missionary determined to reclaim his apostate native land. He fired up the people with the problem of unconverted ministers. He got to Yale a week before Edward's commencement address

The Yale trustees were hoping that Edwards would condemn this "insurrection", which had many strange and unusual phenomena and even excesses; instead...

This address fired up the clergy. Some supported the awakening, some opposed it. Edwards himself suggested that opposing the awakening might be the "unpardonable sin" or the "sin against the Holy Spirit." Edwards condemned those who opposed it and did not strongly support it. He has some strong allies in Boston. All has to do with Edwards vision of the millennial kingdom.

Late 1741 and into 1742 Edwards is in great demand as a preacher and goes on several preaching tours throughout New England. A younger student of his, Samuel Buell, was converted earlier in the summer and is filling Edward's pulpit. He is a powerful revival preacher. Sarah Edwards has an experience.

Under Buell's preaching the town was nearly out of control. Parishioners were attempting to outdo each other in enthusiasm spreading the false impression that the more violent the emotions and the more vehement the expressions of zeal the greater the true piety.

Edwards began to develop his ideas about the revivals leading to the millennium, a society led by ministers with a Puritan ethic. Much of New England has the revival spirit, and he sees God at work in his family and church. The Covenant was what life in the millennium would be like. How could anyone else not see it? Criticizes those who are missing it, including civil authorities and other churchmen. Criticizes colleges for their lack of piety, and they are training the clergy!

Winter/Spring of 1742: Edwards travels frequently and is in much demand as a speaker. Awakening is “nearly universal” in New England. Parishioners line up to talk to him.

A House Divided: Clergy split over the revival but most support it. Clergy dismissed for not being pro-revival. Charles Chauncy emerges as the leading “old Light”, against the revival.

Enter James Davenport. Connecticut passes a law that says no itinerancy unless invited. Davenport is not invited but comes anyway and they arrest him while he is in the middle of separating a church in New Haven. They declare him insane and send him back to Long Island. He leaves there to go to Boston.

Spring 1743 Edwards publishes a defense of the revival “Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England- And the Way in Which It Ought to Be Acknowledged and Promoted” Chauncy writes a rebuttal in September. By this time the excesses are starting to cause more defections.

March 1743. Davenport in New London, Connecticut. Leads a separatist group called the Shepherd’s Tent on a book burning.

By spring 1743 it was too late to restrain the New Light movement by counseling proper deference. With Wheelocks and Kingsleys appearing all over the countryside, there were too many fires to be put out one by one. Too many chain reactions had been set in motion.

May 1743, Annual meeting of Congregational pastors in Boston. The Old Lights have a slight majority and pass a resolution condemning a number of the practices associated with the awakening. New Lights hold their own convention in July.

Core issue between the Lights: Reason vs Affections. Chauncy said that emotions were of man’s lower nature, animal passions that need to be restrained by reason. Edwards said that affections and the will are two faculties of the soul and must be brought together to God.

By the fall of 1743 the general revival had diminished and created irreconcilable separatism. New Lights seen as dangerous. Edwards blamed Satan working through the radical New Lights.

Religious Affections 1746

Week 8

Part One —Concerning the Nature of the Affections and Their Importance to Religion

- “True religion, in great part, consists in Holy Affections.” Faith acceptable to God is not lifeless or indifferent. God insists that we should be earnest, fervent in spirit, Romans 12:11.
- God made emotions the source of our actions, and the expression of emotion is a very large part of faith. Emotions move us forward in our worldly life. Emotions motivate and inspire. Religion becomes a force in our life to the extent it takes effect in our heart. Without emotion, the Word of God does not change our behavior or create anything of substance in our life.
- The Bible associates sin with hardness of heart, not being moved by emotion. Being delivered from the power of sin takes away a heart of stone. However, being more emotional does not make a person more spiritual.

Part Two —Showing That There Are No Certain Signs That Religious Affections Are Truly Gracious, or That They Are Not: 12 signs that do not prove (or disprove) that affections are gracious:

- 1) intense emotion;
- 2) a physical reaction to emotion — although Scripture does note at times that spiritual feelings affect the body
- 3) talking with fluency and eagerness,
- 4) emotions not excited by self-effort
- 5) emotions accompanied by bible verses — Scripture can be abused, and even used by Satan
- 6) emotions with the appearance of a fullness of love; which actually can be counterfeited;
- 7) experiencing many different kinds of emotion, any of which can be counterfeited, especially when Satan inspires someone of great self-importance;
- 8) the joy and comfort of a religious experience, which can occur without the Holy Spirit;
- 9) time and effort spent on religion — hypocrites have great energy;
- 10) verbal expressions of praise — words alone do not prove the condition of the heart;
- 11) self-confidence — people who have a high opinion of themselves usually are self-confident;
- 12) being able to please and inspire others through the demonstration of religious feeling,

Part Three — Showing What Are Distinguishing Signs of Truly Gracious and Holy Affections

The following 12 ways to distinguish true religious affections from false ones are guidelines only, not proof of the nature of a person's heart. They do not indicate the status of grace a person has with God. They will serve little good to those not right with God. They are not a method of assurance of salvation. They will not by themselves convince hypocrites of their own errors, but they may help true believers become more pure in their religion. (The below italicized headings are Edwards' own words introducing each section, followed by a restatement in modern language)

1. ***Affections that are truly spiritual and gracious do arise from those influences and operations on the heart which are spiritual, supernatural and divine.*** (True religious emotion has a divine source).
2. ***The primary ground of gracious affections is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things as they are in themselves; and not any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest.*** (Religious emotion is caused by the nature of God alone, not what a personal understanding of a relation to divine things means to self-interest or a sense of self-worth).
3. ***Those affections that are truly holy, are primarily founded on the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things.*** (Religious emotion based on holiness focuses on the beauty of God's righteousness).
4. ***Gracious affections arise from the mind being enlightened, rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.*** (Spiritually gifted emotion is based on a proper intellectual understanding of what is godly).
5. ***Truly gracious affections are attended with a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things.*** (Religious emotions have a reasonable basis for a belief in the reality of what is divine).
6. ***Gracious affections are attended with evangelical humiliation.*** (Spiritually gifted emotion is not proud but humble).
7. ***Another thing, wherein gracious affections are distinguished from others, is, that they are attended with a change of nature.*** (Spiritually gifted emotion changes our inner-being).
8. ***Truly gifted affections differ from those affections that are false and delusive, in that they tend to, and are attended with, the lamb-like, dove-like spirit and temper of Jesus Christ.*** (Spiritually gifted emotion differs from false and delusional emotions, in that they express the gentle temperament of Jesus Christ).
9. ***Gracious affections soften the heart and are attended and followed with a Christian tenderness of spirit.*** (Spirit gifted emotion causes us to be tender).
10. ***Another thing wherein those affections that are truly gracious and holy differ from those that are false, is beautiful symmetry and proportion.*** (Spirit gifted emotions are expressed with a balanced harmony).
11. ***Another great and very distinguishing difference between gracious affections and others is, that the higher gracious affections are raised, the more is a spiritual appetite and longing of the soul after spiritual attainments increased. On the contrary, false affections rest satisfied in themselves.*** (Spirit gifted emotion moves a person to become more godly, as distinguished from being satisfied with an emotional experience itself).
12. ***Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice.*** (Spirit gifted and holy emotions cause a person to be Christ-like in character and action).

Jonathan Edwards: from famous preacher to unemployed minister, Final Years

Week 9

Winter 1743: Revival fires had cooled but the lingering effects remained in Northampton. People were civil, charitable, and less divisive. Although "a considerable number" may "have woefully deceived themselves," that was outbalanced by "a great number" among whom "there are amiable appearances of eminent grace." Edwards credits the covenant the town made in 1742.

1744: The goodwill that Edwards built up over the past 15 years will start to become undone. Strike 1: The Bad Book case.

Strike 2: His salary. Edwards had a good salary but it did not keep up with inflation. Edwards was not a believer in capitalism. Also his wages were irregular at times because of tax collection. Sarah frequently had to chase it down.

1745: Whitefield returns to New England but by this time the Old Lights have ascendancy and spread rumors that Whitfield is coming with a bunch of preachers from England and Ireland to replace the Congregational ministers. He assures them no, and preaches to great crowds although there is not the same awakening fervor.

Northampton was receiving many warnings that God was unhappy with them. Beginning in the summer of 1745 the town was struck with "a sore sickness and mortality." And then there were the Indians...

July 1748; John Stoddard, son of Solomon Stoddard and a leading figure (and Edwards supporter) dies. Edwards relationship with the surviving Stoddard clan was precarious. Unfortunately Edwards picked this time to make some significant changes...

And then Communion...And then baptism

Edwards wrote a book about his views but few people in the town read it. They disliked him a lot. They didn't allow anyone to join and suspended the sacraments. By 1750 there was a groundswell against him. Revolution was in the air, both theologically and politically.

Dismissed June 1750, preaches a Farewell Sermon on July 1, 1750. He says that his conscious was clear. He did not act out temporal concerns but for their eternal destiny. We'll meet again at the judgment then we'll see who was right concerning membership, communion, etc.

After his dismissal he and his family had nowhere else to go, and so they remained awkwardly in Northampton for a year. Their relations with the town were filled with tensions. He filled the pulpit when the town couldn't get a visiting preacher. The townspeople didn't like that so after a few months they said "no more". Edwards visits Stockbridge, MA for an extended visit in Spring 1751.

Three major issues during Edwards' time in Stockbridge: Infighting over the running of the school, Indian relations, and Edwards' writings.

February 1757: A revival breaks out among the students at Princeton College. Aaron Burr (Edwards' son in law) is President but dies suddenly in September at age 41. His wife Esther has a very intensive experience following her husband's death.

September 29th, 1757. The Board calls Edwards to be the new President and wants him there within six weeks. He is not sure. He has a large family, poor health, and is deeply involved in writing. He says that he can be involved in much teaching, and the Board agrees. Edwards seeks counsel from other ministers and they say he should go.

February 1758, with smallpox in the area Edwards agrees to have he and his family inoculated. At first everything went fine. Some days after the inoculation Edwards was "quite easy and cheerful" about his decision to undergo the inconvenience. Then, while Esther and the children were recovering normally, Edwards contracted smallpox on the roof of his mouth and throat. It soon became impossible for him to swallow the liquids that were considered necessary to prevent a secondary fever. After weeks of fever and starvation ravishing his "feeble frame" he died peacefully on the afternoon of March 22.