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Notes and Documents

Jonathan Edwards on Slavery and the Slave Trade

Kenneth P. Minkema

AMONG the unpublished manuscripts of Jonathan Edwards is a newly discovered letter draft that treats the issue of slavery and, more specifically, the importation of African slaves into the American colonies.¹ The letter draft is remarkable for several reasons. It is the only known instance of Edwards's writing, however abstrusely, about slavery. Also, it discloses differing views on slavery at the local level (apparently in the vicinity of Northampton, Massachusetts), divided along lay-clerical lines. Dating from 1738 to 1742, the draft reveals an undercurrent of popular antislavery sentiment existing considerably earlier than scholars have depicted.²

The draft is typical of Edwards's habits of letter writing. In preparing many of his letters, particularly those of an important nature, Edwards first sketched out major points and transitions in an elliptical, stream-of-consciousness manner on scrap paper and then wrote the letter in full on good foolscap. Often his full meaning is obscured by this method of composition. In addition, he struck some passages through with vertical lines. These marks can be taken either as deletions or as "use lines," indicators that Edwards customarily employed in letter drafts and notebook entries to show that he had already utilized certain passages in writing out a fuller version. Unfortunately, no record of a sent copy of the draft presented here has been found, nor, for that matter, has any reference to the incident that prompted its composition.

Dr. Minkema is executive editor of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Yale University. He would like to express his appreciation to Patricia Bonomi, David Brion Davis, Stephen J. Stein, Harry S. Stout, and Douglas A. Sweeney for their advice in preparing the following document for publication.

¹ Edwards Papers, folder ND2.13, Franklin Trask Library, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts. The manuscript was found by the author while assisting in the preparation of Edwards's collected correspondence for Harry S. Stout et al., eds., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16: *Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn (New Haven, forthcoming), which will contain an edited version of the letter draft. The cooperation of the volume's general editor, Mr. Claghorn, in allowing a separate publication is appreciated, as is that of the Franklin Trask Library, in permitting the text of the letter to be printed.

² On early American antislavery see Dwight Lowell Dumond, *Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States* (Ann Arbor, 1961), 16–25; Duncan J. MacLeod, *Slavery, Race, and the American Revolution* (London, 1974), 14–61; and David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, 1975), 255–342.

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The letter draft is composed on two salvaged letter covers, each addressed to Edwards at Northampton. The verso of the first letter cover is part of yet another letter draft relating to a controversy between his father, the Reverend Timothy Edwards, and his father's congregation in East Windsor, Connecticut. Edwards struck out the entirety of this extraneous page with rapidly drawn vertical deletions before turning the leaf over and starting the new letter draft. Each of the three manuscript pages is divided into three columns, with horizontal lines separating sentences and paragraphs.³ Most of the second column and the top of the third column on page two and most of the second and the entirety of the third column on the last page are marked with use lines. Throughout, Edwards employed symbols to identify passages he wished to relocate. Following his order is simply a matter of locating similar symbols—for example, a star—on the same page. For shifts between pages, Edwards usually gave directions, such as “other paper,” after the symbol. In the second column of the third page he refers to a “2^d sheet,” which is missing. Edwards's above-the-line interpolations are in angled brackets.

Edwards did not indicate the intended recipient or provide a date. Internal evidence and ink and handwriting comparisons point to the period between 1738 and 1742. The controversy between Timothy Edwards and his congregation began in 1738, which provides a *terminus a quo* for the letter draft on slavery.⁴ The dark gray ink in which the draft is written is that which Edwards commonly used from 1739 to 1742, and the chirography has the angular appearance and numerous abbreviations characteristic of the period.⁵

The sketchy manner in which Edwards composed the letter makes his arguments difficult, but not impossible, to discern, particularly if we bear in mind that he was addressing arguments and objections against slavery that are not explicitly stated but can be inferred. Here we can provide only a preliminary and conjectural, though nonetheless probable, reading of Edwards's text that awaits further refinement and amplification. Edwards was responding, on behalf of an unnamed minister, to church members who opposed owning slaves. For his part, he condoned slaveownership but, like earlier commentators such as Samuel Sewall, opposed continuation of the slave trade.⁶ His position therefore represents a transitional stage in the develop-

³ In the interest of presenting a readable text, original line length has not been maintained in the transcript printed below, but page and column markings have been provided to facilitate passage shifts.

⁴ Patricia J. Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor: Religion and Society in Eighteenth-Century Northampton* (New York, 1980), 168; Roger Wolcott, “A Narrative of the Troubles in Second Church in Windsor, 1741,” 28, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

⁵ The dating methodology for the letter draft follows that developed by Thomas A. Schafer in establishing a chronology for Edwards's early undated manuscripts, as summarized in Stout et al., eds. *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13: *The “Miscellanies,” a-500*, ed. Schafer (New Haven, 1994), 59–75.

⁶ Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph* (Boston, 1700), and *The Athenian Oracle* (Boston, 1705), the latter responding in the affirmative to the question, “*Whether trading for Negroes i.e. carrying*

ment of antislavery thought among elites between complete advocacy of slavery and the immediatism of his first-generation, New Divinity disciples. Though he himself owned slaves, he did not wholeheartedly defend slavery; rather, his letter acknowledged its inequities and disturbing implications. At the same time, however, Edwards felt that slavery was a necessary evil that served some positive good in the natural order that God had decreed.

Edwards's letter defends a "Pastor" who was verbally attacked by a member or members of his congregation either for possessing a slave or for condoning the ownership of "lawfully" purchased slaves. We cannot rule out that Edwards and this pastor were one and the same. Edwards's relationship with his Northampton congregation was a contested one. An argument over slavery would only have been another in a long string of conflicts over ministerial salary and prerogatives, covenant renewal, immoral behavior among young people, paternity cases, and qualifications for admission to communion. From the very start of his ministry, Edwards complained about a "party spirit" that divided the town into two rival factions. His public criticism of his town's contentiousness reached a height in the period between local awakenings, 1736 and 1740, that closely coincides with the likely date of his letter on slavery.⁷

Whatever questions Edwards had about the institution of slavery, he accepted it. In fact, he owned several slaves: Joseph and Lee, a woman named Venus, purchased in 1731, and, listed in the inventory of his estate in 1758, a "negro boy" named Titus.⁸ Edwards's willingness to participate in the practice of slavery is readily evident in the letter. After complaining about the injustice being done to the minister, he pointed out that many things, such as "Eating & drinking," led to sin, "but," as we cannot stop taking nourishment, "we are not theref[ore] to abstain." His responses to opponents of slaveowning suggest that he espoused the conventional view that holding slaves was permissible as long as they were treated humanely (as Massachusetts law required) and encouraged to become Christians. Defending slaveholding by pointing to its cultural and religious benefits for the slaves had been commonplace in New England since at least 1680. Acculturation and Christianization of slaves were among the traditional duties to which ministers exhorted slaveowners.⁹ Edwards acknowledged that

them out of their own Country into perpetual Slavery, be in itself Unlawful, and especially contrary to the great Law of CHRISTIANITY?"

⁷ On Edwards's conflicts with his congregation see Tracy, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor*, 147–70; Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Culture Versus Economics: A Case of Fornication in Northampton in the 1740's," *University of Michigan Papers in Women's Studies*, special issue (May 1978), 35–56; Mark Valeri, "The Economic Thought of Jonathan Edwards," *Church History*, 60 (1991), 37–54; and David D. Hall, "Editor's Introduction," *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Stout et al., vol. 12: *Ecclesiastical Writings* (New Haven, 1994), 1–86.

⁸ The receipt for Venus is in John E. Smith, Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven, 1995), 296–97. See also William Edward Park, "Edwardean," p. 29, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, and "Jonathan Edwards's Will and Inventory of His Estate," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 33 (1876), 438–46.

⁹ Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens,

slavery could be a cruel and sinful thing, as when Europeans encouraged Africans to seize fellow Africans and sell them into slavery, yet slaveowning was justified if the slave was purchased legally and treated decently.

As a clergyman and a member of the social elite, Edwards was representative of the slaveowning class in New England. In a time when resentment and suspicion of the clergy and other members of the upper class were on the rise, slaveowning, an elite practice, was yet another charge a resentful laity could level against ministers. Many of Edwards's relatives and friends owned slaves, as, for example, his closest political ally in Northampton, Colonel John Stoddard.¹⁰ A significant number of ministers owned slaves as a symbol of social status. Alternatively, they used slaves to augment their often tardy salaries by hiring them out as day laborers. Jonathan's father, Timothy, owned a slave named Ansars. His wife, Sarah Pierpont Edwards, sought to purchase slaves of her own.¹¹ The Reverend Timothy Woodbridge of Hartford, Connecticut, owned an Indian boy and an African slave; Elisha Williams of Wethersfield, Connecticut, rector of Yale College from 1726 to 1739, owned an Indian woman. Both of these men were relatives of Edwards. In Massachusetts, such prominent ministers as Edward Holyoke, president of Harvard College, and Nathan Webb of Uxbridge were slaveowners.¹²

The structure of the draft reflects Edwards's usual method of arguing first from reason and experience and then from Scripture. He began by condemning what he perceived to be the hypocrisy of the "Pastor's" opponents. While they denounced any who actually owned slaves, Edwards submitted, they continued to profit from slave labor and to consume products of the transatlantic slave system. Apparently referring to reported atrocities of slave trading, he accused the critics of being "partakers of a far more cruel slavery . . . than that which they object against in those that have slaves here." Even though these people may not be "immediate partakers" because they do not own a slave, "they may," Edwards pointed out, "have their slaves at next step." He took the position to its logical conclusion: "their argument if it carries any thing implies that we ought not to be partakers neither immediately nor remotely." Otherwise, crying out "against those who Keep negro slaves" while continuing "to be partakers of their slavery" was unconscionable and disruptive. Even more, calling for the cessation of slaveholding

Ga., 1987), 19–20; Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620–1776* (New York, 1942), 263.

¹⁰ Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 1949), 217.

¹¹ Increase N. Tarbox, "Rev. Timothy Edwards and His Parishioners," *Congregational Quarterly*, 13 (1871), 261–62. In his letter to daughter Esther Edwards Burr of Nov. 20, 1757, in Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., *Jonathan Edwards: Representative Selections* (New York, 1962), 414–15, Edwards mentions that Sarah Edwards is interested in buying the Burr family's slave, but there is no information to confirm that Edwards's wife actually made the purchase.

¹² Greene, *Negro in Colonial New England*, 350, 354, 356; Mary H. Mitchell, "Slavery in Connecticut and Especially New Haven," *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society*, 10 (1951), 287–88.

while continuing to participate indirectly in the slave trade implied a never-ending increase of enslaved people.

Edwards's comments suggest that the critics appropriated contemporary discussions of "liberty," both political and religious, that were part of an emerging provincial political identity. However much the critics purported to speak for the slaves' liberty, their position, according to Edwards, nonetheless condoned further enslavement of free Africans. He used the word "disfranchise" to describe the practice, by which he meant depriving individuals of the freedom, rights, and privileges they enjoyed in their native country. Thus he presented the question "whether or no other nations have any Power or Business to disfranchise all the nations of Africa," which to his mind represented "a Greater incroachm[en]t on their Liberties than even the opposers of this trade thems[elves] do suppose this trade." For Edwards, the only way to talk seriously about doing away with slavery was to effect a complete break, perhaps a boycott much like the one Quakers such as John Woolman were soon to advocate and practice—though he himself was not prepared to take such a step, nor, what is more, did he see a need for it.

To support his argument against the slave trade, Edwards turned to considering the nature of biblical precepts. Defending and condemning slavery by using passages from the Bible was commonplace. Exegetes on both sides pointed to numerous passages in both the Old and New Testaments. Foremost among these passages were those in which the people of Israel were permitted to take and own slaves from among the Canaanites or those in which slavery was tacitly accepted by early Christian writers, especially the apostle Paul.¹³

A creative exegete to whom generations of commentators would look for guidance, Edwards lent his own interpretation to several key passages. He posed the question whether Scripture warranted the enslavement of non-Christians and answered negatively. He queried "if Gods observing & Giving Leave for a thing prove that it is not unreasonable in its own nature." Again, the implied response was "No." One cannot, he held, make a "special" injunction to God's people (whether Israel of old or Christians under the New Testament) into an "Established Rule." "A special precept for a particular act is not a Rule," he enjoined. Interpreting Scripture correctly depended on strictly observing "circumstances." For example, in Deuteronomy 15:6, God allowed Israel to plunder the Egyptians before the Exodus, but this, Edwards stated, "is quite a different thing from Establishing it as a rule that his People might borrow & not pay in all ages."

¹³ On pro- and antislavery use of the Bible see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, "The Divine Sanction of Social Order: Religious Foundations of the Southern Slaveholders' World View," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 55 (1987), 211–33; Mark A. Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776–1865," in Nathan O. Hatch and Noll, eds., *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History* (New York, 1982), 39–58, and Noll, "The Bible and Slavery," in Stout, Charles Regan Wilson, and Randall Miller, eds., *Religion and the Civil War* (New York, forthcoming); Tise, *Proslavery*, 116–20; and Laura L. Mitchell, "Fugitive Slaves, Northern Protestant Clergymen, and the Bible in the Decade before the Civil War" (Ph. D. diss., Yale University, 1996).

Edwards took particular exception to a narrow definition of "Neighbour" as identifying only fellow believers. If neighbors were limited to Christians, then any sort of immoral behavior toward others was permissible. "This," Edwards commented, "makes the SS. [Scriptures] Contradict it self." Such a circumscribed definition of neighbor negated the moral law, which Christians were obliged to follow regardless of where they lived. Alluding to Acts 17:30, Edwards wrote that God had overlooked the prejudicial practices of people hitherto, but God "don't wink at such things now under the Gosp[el]." Dismissing identification of America with Israel of old as a "chosen" nation, Edwards argued here, as elsewhere, that Israel's distinction was at an end and all humankind was now subject to the same moral law.¹⁴

The revivalistic context of Edwards's letter is reflected by his intention to respond to a point regarding the "Glo[rrious] times," which described the establishment of an extended period of peace for believers that would precede the end of the world. Both critics and proponents of slavery could draw inspiration for their views from the series of awakenings at midcentury that fueled concern for the spiritual lives of slaves.¹⁵ An important factor in Edwards's position against unlimited slave making and trading was his millennial vision. He anticipated the contribution of non-European peoples to the spread of the gospel during the millennium. Swept up by the revivalistic fervor he had played no small part in instigating and perpetuating, he began to think of how peoples in other nations would come to accept the Christian message. When the "glorious times" came, Edwards declared in one of his private notebooks, we could expect to see "books of devotion, the most divine and angelic strains from among the Hottentots, and the press shall groan in wild Tartary."¹⁶ In a series of sermons from 1739, later published as *A History of the Work of Redemption*, Edwards hoped that "then many of the Negroes and Indians will be divines, and that excellent books will be published in Africa, in Ethiopia, in Turkey—and not only very learned men, but others that are more ordinary men, shall then be very knowing in religion."¹⁷

For Edwards, the millennium had not arrived because "things" were not yet "settled in peace." Thus slavery, which came as a result of sin, was still a part of the fallen world's order. Nonetheless, he remained optimistic in part because of the growing numbers of Africans and Indians admitted into churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut during the 1730s.¹⁸ In his own

¹⁴ On Edwards's denial that America would be the source of the millennium see Gerald R. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park, Pa., 1992), 60–63, 82–87.

¹⁵ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, 1966), 388; Mary Stoughton Locke, *Anti-Slavery in America From the Introduction of African Slaves to the Prohibition of the Slave Trade, 1619–1808* (Boston, 1901), 20.

¹⁶ "Miscellanies," no. 26, in "Miscellanies," a-500, ed. Schafer, 212.

¹⁷ Stout et al., eds., *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 9: *A History of the Work of Redemption*, ed. John F. Wilson (New Haven, 1989), 480.

¹⁸ Greene, *Negro in Colonial New England*, 268.

effort to convert slaves, Edwards in his regular preaching did not draw metaphysical differences between races. He exhorted both “black and white” to “hearken to the call of Christ.” Christ, he declared, “Condescends to take notice of serv[an]ts & people of all nations[;] he Condescends to poor negroes.”¹⁹ When reporting the results of revivals, Edwards took particular care time and again to include “poor Negroes” among those who were “truly born again.”²⁰

Edwards went on in his letter to distinguish between what he considered to be the legitimate purchase of a slave and selling a free person into slavery. He wrote of a “right owner” buying “in a way of valuable Consideration” and “Commutative Justice” that “supposes that Person [possessed].” This phraseology is based on Leviticus 25:44–46, which gave license to the people of Israel to purchase but not to steal the “children of the strangers that do sojourn among you.” Edwards limited purchasable slaves to war captives, debtors, and children of slaves; he defined slavery procreatively as well as legally, in accord with a Massachusetts law of 1670 that established that a child’s condition was determined by that of its mother. To give liberty to a people to enslave anyone at all, Edwards claimed, “is [to] put em into a state of war with all nations.” Furthermore, it reflected poorly on God’s wisdom to suppose that he gave such a law for a “standing Rule” to his people. Continuing excursions into Africa (or anywhere else) for slaves created resentment against Christian Europeans that could ultimately thwart evangelization. Quite opposite from providing an opportunity to Christianize, as its defenders claimed, the slave trade actually decreased the chance to spread the gospel elsewhere.

This brief discussion of selected key passages from Edwards’s letter highlights just a few of the interesting questions the document poses. The letter also presents challenges regarding the evolution of antislavery thought in New England and Edwards’s influence on it. The first challenge is to account for this local, previously undetected, opposition to slaveowning. How broad was this vein of opposition, and what were the religious, ideological, social, and economic motives behind it? Was the incident that Edwards’s letter describes an isolated one, or had he been drawn into a long-standing, subterranean debate? In addition, the letter forces us to rethink the traditional timeline for the development of antislavery thought in New England, which usually locates the earliest efforts of any significance in the 1770s or after the Revolution. Edwards’s view, permitting domestic slavery but ruling out slave trading, further nuances the model by presenting an intermediary stage between unquestioning acceptance of slavery in all its aspects and the revolutionary shift in moral perception that resulted in imme-

¹⁹ Miller, “Jonathan Edwards’s Sociology of the Great Awakening,” *New England Quarterly*, 21 (1948), 72, 77; McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, 65, 163–64; Edwards, ms. sermon on Rev. 5:5–6, Aug. 1736, L. 4r., which Edwards published as *The Excellency of Christ in Discourses on Various Important Subjects* (Boston, 1738) but left out the passage quoted.

²⁰ *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737), in Stout et al., *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 4: *The Great Awakening*, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven, 1972), 159, 330.

diatism. Finally, how does this document help us assess Edwards's legacy for the abolitionist movement? Until now, scholars have only been able to suggest connections between Edwards's ethical thought and antislavery.²¹ The letter draft should help us to draw more distinct lines of influence between Edwards and early New Divinity immediatists, such as Jonathan Edwards, Jr., and Samuel Hopkins,²² and later, more conservative Edwardseans such as Moses Stuart of Andover Theological Seminary, who evoked Edwards in an 1850 work defending the Fugitive Slave Law.²³ Such are the worthy challenges that this intriguing document invites scholars to pursue.

²¹ Particularly Edwards's treatise *The Nature of True Virtue* (written 1755, published 1765), which defined true virtue as love to being in general. See David S. Lovejoy, *Samuel Hopkins: Religion, Slavery, and the Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1976), 6, and Joseph A. Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregational Ministry, and Reform in New England between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1981), 121.

²² See, for example, Jonathan Edwards, Jr., "Some Observations upon the Slavery of Negroes," published Oct. 8, 15, 22, 29, Nov. 5, 12, Dec. 17, 24, 31, 1773, in *The Connecticut Journal and Post Boy*, and *The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade, and of Slavery* (New Haven, 1791); and Samuel Hopkins, "The Slave Trade and Slavery," *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Oct. 13, 1787, *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of Africans* (Norwich, 1776), and *A Discourse upon the Slave Trade and the Slavery of the Africans* (Providence, 1793). On these and other New Divinity figures involved in antislavery see Lovejoy, *Samuel Hopkins*, 4–12; Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement*, 125–58; Robert L. Ferm, *Jonathan Edwards the Younger, 1745–1801, A Colonial Pastor* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1976), 93–96; David E. Swift, "Samuel Hopkins: Calvinist Social Concern in Eighteenth Century New England," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 47 (1969), 31–54; and John Saillant, "Lemuel Haynes and the Revolutionary Origins of Black Theology, 1776–1801," *Religion and American Culture*, 2 (1992), 79–102, and "Slavery and Divine Providence in New England Calvinism: The New Divinity and a Black Protest, 1775–1805," *NEQ*, 68 (1995), 584–608.

²³ Moses Stuart, *Conscience and the Constitution with Remarks on the Recent Speech of the Hon. Daniel Webster in the Senate of the United States on the Subject of Slavery* (Boston, 1850), 33. Stuart wrote, "Who does not know that the immortal Edwards—immortal as much for his great piety as for his intellectual power—left behind him in manuscript an Essay on the Slave-trade (probably still extant), in which he defended the trade with all his ability, on the same ground that Moses required the fugitive heathen slave to be detained, viz., on the ground that it would bring the perishing heathen within reach of the Christian influence." If Stuart referred to a manuscript other than this letter draft, it is apparently no longer extant. On the conservative to moderate antislavery positions of later Edwardseans see J. Earl Thompson, "Abolitionism and Theological Education at Andover," *NEQ*, 47 (1974), 238–61; Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought* (Ithaca, 1973); Victor B. Howard, *Conscience and Slavery: The Evangelistic Calvinist Domestic Missions, 1837–1861* (Kent, Ohio, 1990), 11, 17, 97, 132–34; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War against Slavery* (Cleveland, 1969); and Douglas A. Sweeney, "Nathaniel William Taylor and the Edwardsian Tradition: Evolution and Continuity in the Culture of the New England Theology" (Ph. D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1995), 149–51.

Text of the Letter Draft

[page 1, column 1]
 if they bent partakers of
 the slaves they are of
 their slavery. wherein
~~their~~ the injustice if there
 be any Consists
~~& of the~~ their slavery
 mainly Consists in that
 slavish cruel Labour they
 are put to .
 They are partakers of a
 far more cruel slavery .
 than that which they
 object against in those
 that have slaves here

They are partakers of
 that which is undoubt-
 edly cruel

that which is mainly
 almost altogether by
 their slavery.

How ill does it suit for a
 man to cry out of
 another for taking
 money that is stollen &
 then taking it of him in
 that wherein the injustice
 Consists

if the slaves are unjustly
 theirs then their slavery
 is unjustly theirs & this
 they are partakers of

all the diff. there can be
 is that they are not so
 immediate partakers .
 that it is a step farther off
 no more are we ~~in~~ so
 immediate partakers
 their argument if it

[column 2]
 carries any thing implies
 that we ought not to be
 partakers neither imme-
 diately nor ~~such su~~
 remotely we ought ~~to~~ not
 to be partakers at all if
 they dont mean so but
 only mean by so many
 steps they would do
 well to fix the number of
 steps
 & besides they dont
 Know but that they are
 partakers as immediately
 as we they may have
 their slaves at next step

either Let them answer
 them or Let em own the
 matter is well proved &
 not Go on pretending ~~th~~
 that those arguments are
 of no force which they
~~either~~ cant or ~~wont~~ at
 Least dont see Cause to
 answer. only to make
 disturbances & raise
 uneasiness among People
 against their minister to
 the Great wounding of
 Religion if they do it
 & yet dont answer. ~~it~~
~~will be a~~
 Reproaching ~~him~~ their
 Pastor as tho he lived in
 <notorious> ~~an high~~
~~handed~~ iniquity &
 Indulgence of his Lusts
 a sin that ~~is as plainly~~
~~notorious injustice & wi~~
 that has no more to be
 said for it than Robbery

in the high way ~~* /~~ the
 Pastor of the Chh that
 has thus been Reproached
 may well insist upon it
 that his Reasons every
 one of them be answered

~~→ *~~ and that which he
 was not able to vindicate
 & had nothing to say for
 worth the mentioning

~~→ #~~ every one of them or
 otherwise that they be
 silent for the future &
 not only but confess that
 they were too sudden &
 Rash in casting such
 Reproaches on their
 Pastor to the Great
 wounding of Religion.

Let them also fully &
 thoroughly vindicate
 them. & their own
 practice in partaking of
 negroes slavery ~~#~~ next
 Col.

[column 3]
 whether or no other
 nations have any Power
 or Business to disfran-
 chize all the nations of
 Africa
 & if they should whether
 or no this would not be
 a Greater incroachmt on
 their Liberties than even
 the opposers of this trade
 them. do suppose this
 trade ~~to be~~ making
 those slaves which they
 offer to sale

it would have a much Greater tendency to sin to have liberty to disfranchise whole nations.

Last Col. or confess that there is no hurt in partaking in it or Else Let em ~~have~~ Cease to partake in it for the future one of the three # other paper

& Let the Answers be in writing that Every body that is so disposed may see what they be & Know whether there be Just Cause for their boasts when they Go about & say the Pastor of the Chh. could not answer 'em Could say nothing that was worth a saying.

tis an Easy thing for a man thus to boast of his victory in a dispute that no body heard but him & so is not able to Contradict him.

If men are such notable disputants & have such Invincible Reasons to offer ~~Let it app~~ & are so able to Baffle their minister Let it appear that they are so by their Great arguments being written down to

be read by all [page 2, column 1]

dont Let some things only be answerd & others slip'd over in silence

<Last paper> for if they ~~persist in partie~~ still continue to cry out against those who Keep negro slaves as partakers of injustice in making them slaves & Continue still themselves not withstanding to be partakers of their slavery Let em own that their objections are not Conscientious but meerly to make difficulty & trouble for their Neighbours & ~~because they~~ & because they are unwilling they should Enjoy the priviledges whic

The Practice that Prevails in the \odot ²⁴ of Eating & drinking tends to sin ~~but we ought no~~ & a \odot of Iniq. is the Conseq. of it but we are not therof to abstain from sin²⁵

~~will any~~ & if he should Compell him to make a number to sell will any

say that he Came honestly by them or that they were honestly his

[column 2]
if Gods observing & Giving Leave for a thing prove that it is not unreasonable in its own nature #

wo pronounced against him that uses his neighbours work without wages²⁶ this makes the SS. contradict it self.

all mankind were their neighbours then. Especially all of the same Relig. X reproves the Corrupt Interpretation of the Pharisees who thought otherwise

G. might by a special Interpretation Execute punishmt on a People ~~b~~ & make men the Executioners but to make it an Established Rule in all Cases # so to treat all mankind & that after they were become his own People is a monstrous supposition ~~as tis to sup~~ if it be in it self unreasonable. all Gods R all Gods Rules that Respect treatmt of men & war & have moral

²⁴ Edwards's shorthand symbol for world.

²⁵ Edwards may have meant to write "but we are not therefore to abstain from eating and drinking."

²⁶ Jer. 22:13.

Equity in them otherwise ~~w~~ otherwise . why is it said all this Law which is so Righteous as I set before you.²⁷ a special precept for a particular act is not a Rule

to Give Leave for a special punishmt of the Injuriousness of the Egyptians to borrow is quite a different thing from Establishing it as a rule that his People might borrow & not pay in all ages ²⁸

[column 3]

~~no Action simply Considered &~~ nothing in it self unlawfull . tis unlawf for a man to speak ill of G. tis unlawfull for a man to ~~spea~~ sell those things they are in their own nature unlawf to be the subject of Commerce.

Neighbour by this there is no Rule that Respects the treatmt of any of mankind in the moral Law but only the Chil. of Israel ✕

with Respect to the Glo. times it does not follow because things shall be settled in peace

Here is another admirable

✕ Hence ~~the seventh Command di~~ it was not against any Command of the moral Law for the Jews to Commit adultery with the wives of ~~the Heathen or to~~ men of other nations or to steal from them or to bear false witness against ~~those other nations~~ them. tis said a thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.²⁹

[page 3, column 1]

Lay down this if it were once ~~unlawfull but~~ Lawfull but now unlawfull & not made unlawfull by any new <positive> Law that was not in force then when it was Lawfull. then it must be because tis unreasonable in its own nature but if it be unreasonable in its own nature

He says we must Know in order to any injury to a man. then we must Know ~~to~~ In order to Killing a man in war for there is a personal injury

I say its not being forbidden ✕ under such

Circumstances . expressly allowed before . and so Great a Crime in it & so General in the ☉ is a Good argument . because tis not Concievable that no other sin Generally prevalent that is not expressly mentiond & strictly forbidden the Apostle speaks of ³⁰ †

[column 2]

~~Circumstan~~ C without Circumstance there is no action without Circumstance ~~ees~~. but Circumstances are included in the very word. Killing a man is not in it self unlawful but murder ~~in~~ is in it self unlawful. so ~~to~~ taking away from our neighbour is ~~in it self unlawfull~~ not in it self unlawfull in itself reasonable or unreasonable ~~so the thing allowed~~

~~supp~~ I answer no more of a Contradiction than it is that an inanimate Commodity may be Justly taken out of the hands of the Right owner & yet Justly Kept out of his hands

2. It supposes that G. Gave a Law that did ~~Greatl~~ tend Greatly to

²⁷ Deut. 4:8.

²⁸ Ex. 12:35; Deut. 15:6.

²⁹ Ex. 20:16.

³⁰ Here Edwards drew a goal-post-shaped cue mark and also drew a line to the passage at the bottom of the next column beginning "Gods winking at some." He apparently meant to go to that point and then to the top of col. 2.

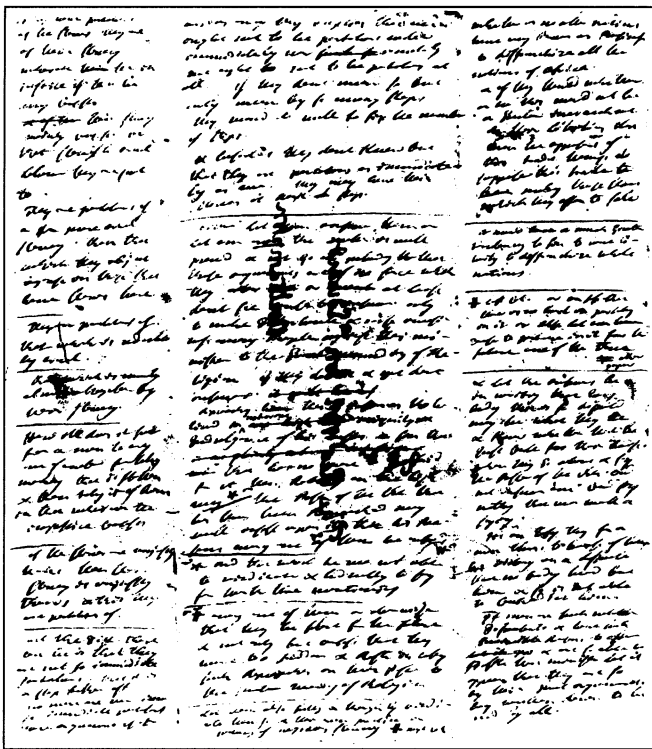


FIGURE I. Page 1 of Jonathan Edwards's draft letter on slavery. Photograph courtesy of Andover Newton Theological School.

Encourage iniquity in all the nations round about Canaan by his own pleasable plea. & Particular 1. P. 2^d sheet³¹ so that Instead of their being a light in the Earth a blessing in the midst it was dangerous for other nations to live near Gods people which would be a blasphemous way of talking Gods winking at some things that were early³² was of old. in those times of darkness which intimates that dont wink at such things now under the Gosp. but this would be to wink at it in the highest degree Conceivable

[column 3] the Law <supposes> shows that they were theirs of whom they bought them. by directing them to buy otherwise who were not under Laws peculiar to the Jews & which way came they by them. otherwise why did G. direct them buy. why did he not direct them to buy the service of the Persons themselves. it is Less supposable a a Great deal that if G. had Given em Leave to Go & take others at all times but to buy a thing is to Come by in a way of

valuable Consideration in a way of Justice & supposes that Person possessed to Give Liberty to take when those that were sui juris at what they pleased is to set em at war we in put em into a state of war with all nations This supposition ought that G. Gave such a Law for a standing Rule to his People for a Great many age is a Great Reflection on the wisdom, holiness & Goodness of G. & ought to be abominable to all the Xtians.

³¹ No longer extant.

³² That is, early in time, before the dissemination of the gospel; see Acts 17:30.