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PROSELYTISATION AND APOCALYPTICISM IN THE BRITISH
ATLANTIC WORLD: THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN FLAVEL

NATHAN THOMAS PARKER

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN TOTAL FULFILLMENT OF
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ABSTRACT

Nathan Parker

Proselytisation and Apocalypticism in the British Atlantic World: the Theology of John Flavel

This thesis examines the theology of the prominent Puritan minister John Flavel (1627-91). In addition to investigating his methods of proselytising and his beliefs about the apocalypse it argues that his evangelistic approach had a significant transatlantic impact in the eighteenth century.

Chapter one argues that Flavel's approach to proselytising can be understood as an interplay between three grids. First, he argued that there were two realisations at which his hearers must arrive in order to be converted. Second, he argued that, from the vantage point of the preacher, there were three faculties within the human soul where he must direct his evangelistic efforts. Third, Flavel maintained that there were (roughly) ten theological events which must transpire within the soul for a person to experience conversion. Whilst the subject was conscious of some of these states, others were imperceptible. Chapter two demonstrates that Flavel posited two distinct levels upon which these theological states operated: common and saving. Chapter three explores the practical ways in which Flavel led people to experience Christian salvation. Chapter four contends that Flavel's beliefs about the return of Christ changed over time. In the early part of his ministry, he did not speak of the return of Christ as being imminent, but by 1689 he was convinced that it was at hand. This had implications for his evangelism. Chapter five argues that Flavel's approach to proselytising had a significant impact on individuals in the eighteenth century, especially around the time of the Great Awakening. This case is constructed through the presentation of several pieces of evidence: numerous people who were converted through reading his sermons, an evaluation of Flavel in print, and marginalia located in copies of his books printed between 1664 and 1799.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND GRAPHS	8
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	9
DECLARATION AND COPYRIGHT	10
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	11
CONVENTIONS	14
INTRODUCTION	16
A. Flavel’s influence	18
B. Scope of the current study	26
C. Literature review	29
a. Influential studies on Puritanism	29
b. Studies concerning Puritan evangelism	33
D. Research on John Flavel	36
a. A methodological weakness in the preceding studies on Flavel	46
b. Areas for further research	50
E. Defining Puritanism	50
CHAPTER	
1. THE SPIRIT’S WORK AS A PATTERN FOR PROSELYTISATION: “THE SAME ORDER MUST BE OBSERVED IN GOSPEL OFFERS”	54
A. Two spiritual recognitions: sinfulness and the saving value of Christ	57

B. Three human faculties	60
A. Mind	62
B. Affections	65
C. Will	67
C. The pathway to conversion	71
i. Several kinds of knowledge	75
ii. The <i>ordo salutis</i>	78
iii. Awakening	82
iv. Enlightening	83
v. Illumination	85
vi. Conviction	87
vii. Regeneration	92
viii. Faith and repentance	98
ix. Union with Christ	100
x. Justification	102
xi. Sanctification	103
xii. Assurance of salvation	104
2. TWO LEVELS OF EFFECTUALITY: “HOW MANY THOUSANDS MISCARRY”	108
A. Not quite saved	109
B. Two levels along the pathway to conversion	112
i. Awakening	112
ii. Enlightening and illumination	116
iii. Conviction	120

iv. Faith	125
v. Assurance	129
C. The three grids interaction with the two levels	135
3. AN APPLICATION OF FLAVEL’S METHOD: “PLEADING AND WOOING FOR CHRIST”	139
A. Expounding upon Christ	144
i. Presenting Christ as the soul’s only durable good	149
ii. The ardency of his love for sinners	150
iii. The lowliness of his humiliation	152
iv. The value of his proffered salvation	153
v. The wicked affront of rejecting him	155
B. Appealing to the affections	160
i. Threats	162
ii. Promises of comfort	165
iii. Cautions about the brevity of time	168
C. Christian Hedonism	177
i. Best accords with human design	179
ii. Was the best conceivable life to be lived	182
iii. Swapped the inferior for the superior	184
iv. Prepared soul for the best enjoyment in heaven	186
4. FLAVEL’S APOCALYPTICISM: “THE DAY IS NOW AT HAND”	191
A. Signs of judgment	194
i. Removal of gospel ministers	195

ii.	Removal of ordinances from the church	196
iii.	Increasing national sinfulness	199
iv.	Schism and division amongst Nonconformists	199
B.	Flavel's early writings (1664-71)	201
C.	Flavel's middle writings (1671-80)	203
D.	Flavel's later writings (1680-91)	205
5.	FLAVEL AS A TRANSATLANTIC BRIDGE BETWEEN PURITANISM AND THE GREAT AWAKENING	213
A.	Accounts of people who read and were influenced by Flavel in the eighteenth century	213
B.	Flavel's influence upon Jonathan Edwards	228
C.	Flavel's influence on George Whitefield	247
D.	An analysis of Flavel in print	254
E.	Marginalia evidence	267
F.	Drawing the chapter together	286

APPENDIX A: EXHAUSTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FLAVEL'S

PRINTED WRITINGS	296
Section One: Print	296
Section Two: Electronic media	320
Section Three: Works speciously attributed to Flavel	320

APPENDIX B: LIST OF MARGINAL SOURCES CITED	322
APPENDIX C: AN EXTRACT FROM FLAVEL'S DIARY	324
BIBLIOGRAPHY	327
Manuscripts	327
Primary sources	328
Secondary sources	337
Dissertations	363
Electronic sources	365

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND GRAPHS

Bishop Tanner's 1721 copy of <i>Athenae Oxonienses</i>	20
Visual depiction of the three grids and their interaction with the two levels	138
1698 <i>Pneumatologia</i> BOD	273-4
1733 <i>Navigation Spiritualized</i> BL	283
Edmund Elys' letter to John Walker	287
Salt-stone at low tide	292
Salt-stone in Kingsbridge Estuary	293

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
BOD	Bodleian Library, Oxford
DWL	Dr. Williams Library, London
EEBO	<i>Early English Books Online</i>
ESTC	<i>English Short Title Catalogue</i>
MS/MSS	manuscript/manuscripts
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
WCF	<i>Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms</i>

DECLARATION

“No part of this thesis has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or in any other University. Material from the work of others has been acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases suitably indicated.”

“The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published in any format, including electric and the Internet, without the author’s prior written consent. All information derived from this thesis must be acknowledged appropriately.”

Nathan Parker

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Lastly, I want to thank the unnamed attendant at the Flavel Arts Centre in Dartmouth who helped solve, what is perhaps the greatest enigma surrounding Flavel's life: the proper pronunciation of his name. In August 2012 I approached the welcome desk at this venue and asked the attendant how to pronounce the name of "the facility" (which is named after John Flavel). With crystal-clear ambiguity she replied: "It's pronounced Flavel" [rhyming with "gravel"]...(long pause)... "or", she continued,

“Flavel” [the first syllable sounding like the ‘a’ in flavour]. The debate is finally settled.

Pronounce it however you wish.

Conventions

The referencing of this thesis follows the Chicago style of formatting (short notes), outlined in The University of Chicago Press, ed., *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers*, 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. Original spellings and italics have been preserved and all dates prior to 1752 are Old Style. All Bible references are from the English Standard Version. For sheer simplicity all pronouns are in the masculine form.

“It is not imaginable to such as have not tried, what labour an historian (that would be exact) is condemned to. He must read all, good and bad, and remove a world of rubbish before he can lay the foundation.”

– Samuel Pepys

Introduction

“[Puritanism] has left a vast literature of homiletics and casuistry, which is wholly dead save for an occasional excursion of the curious. Nothing could be more wearisome to the modern reader than its voluminous controversy...The Calvinistic theology, which was the intellectual form of Puritanism, is dead beyond recall.”¹ These words were penned in 1912 by a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, who was also a Canon and Subdean of Westminster and the Bishop of Durham. Had he known what the next 100 years held in store in the field of Puritan studies, H. Hensley Henson would have most likely tempered this precipitous judgment. Today, in the second decade of a new millennium, research into the works of the “wholly dead” is stronger than ever.

The history of the study of the Puritans is perhaps more a validation of the familiar aphorism ‘out of sight out of mind,’ than a reflection of their true worth as a movement which deserves trenchant analysis. From the time the movement ran out of steam at the turn of the eighteenth century until the late 1930s, English Nonconformity was seldom studied with much care. For generations it was not only ignored but disdained. To be sure this is still true in some quarters, but on the scholarly front, this began to change in the years 1938-9 with the publication of works by four scholars which demanded that the movement be taken seriously. As a result of that wake up call, the last 70 years have seen the revival, if not the renaissance, of close, thoughtful study of the Puritans. This renewal of interest, which began in academia, has gradually wormed its way into the minds of thousands of non-professionals. As tends to happen when there is a rediscovery of a hitherto overlooked subject, the brighter lights in the sky can obscure the beams of the lesser, even if they are only slightly lesser. Such is the

¹ Henson, *Puritanism in England*, 75-7.

case with the study of the Puritans. It is fair to say that the three Puritans who have received the most attention since the revivification of interest into sixteenth and seventeenth century English Nonconformity are Richard Baxter, John Owen, and John Bunyan. To be sure, these men certainly merit attention, but they are not the only luminaries in the sky.

One such man who is well worth study is the influential Puritan John Flavel (c. 1627-91).² Flavel was a minister, author, poet, and evangelist who for the better part of his ministry labored in the coastal town of Dartmouth, in Devon.³ After taking a degree from University College, Oxford, he worked as a Presbyterian minister in Diptford from 1650-6. Six years into his ministry he removed to Dartmouth, and due to the

² The evidence for the year of Flavel's birth is ambiguous. The earliest reference to Flavel's age appears in John Quick's unpublished manuscript *Icones Sacrae Anglicanae*. This source states that "Mr. Flavell departed this life in ye 64. year of his age, & of our Lord 1691. The 26. Day of June". Quick, *Icones Sacrae Anglicanae*, 973. This would place the year of his birth in 1627 or 1628, depending on whether his birthday fell before or after 26 June. All subsequent biographical information derives from this manuscript, yet much of it deviates from the year 1627, most likely because he was baptized on 30 September 1630. The three dates most often printed are 1627, 1628, and 1630. Cf. Kelly, "Flavell," *ODNB*. I should like to point out that the entry for Flavel in the *ODNB* errs at one significant point regarding the facts of his life, namely, the number of children he had. It mentions that Flavel was married four times (which is correct) and that those marriages produced two sons, John and Thomas. Flavel's will suggests that this is incorrect. In his will, he wrote that he intended to give an item, "unto my two sonnes Thomas and Benjamin Flavel..." Howard and Crisp, *Visitation of England*, 59. Evidence from the Townstal registers indicates that John died at 14 years of age (1657-71) but there was clearly a third son. Cf. Windeatt, "A Notable Dartmouth Puritan," 177. According to his will, Flavel also had a daughter who was married to John Ball: "I give to my son in law M^r William Ball five pounds and to my daughter his wife five pounds in money..." Howard, *Visitation*, 58. Accordingly, Flavel had at least five children (if one includes his first child, whose birth took the life of both mother and child).

³ The first biography of Flavel's life, written five weeks after his death, abundantly attests to the importance of proselytising to his ministry, the chief focus of this thesis. John Galpine, minister at "Tauerton" [Taunton?], Devon, was a close friend of Flavel's and wrote a 29-page tribute to his life on 3 August 1691. Gordon, *Freedom After Ejection*, 31. Galpine wrote this about the importance of evangelism for Flavel: "And indeed God was pleased to crown his labours with great success this way: Many Souls have been given in as the Seal of his Ministry, who have owned him to be their Spiritual Father in Christ." After noting Flavel's indefatigable labour as his virtue worthy of first mention, Galpine wrote, "A second thing I observed in this worthy minister, was a longing desire after the conversion of souls... That he might win souls to Christ, and build them up in their most holy faith, was next to the glorifying of God and our Redeemer, the mark that he had in his eye; it was for this that he studied, and labored in the Gospel." Galpine, "Life of Flavell," A7^v-A8^r. The biographical sketch attached to Flavel's *Works* (1701) wrote, "He was a mighty wrestler with God in secret prayer; and particularly begg'd of him to crown his sermons, printed books, and private discourses, with the conversion of poor sinners, a work which his heart was much set upon". Anon., "Life of Reverend Flavel," in Flavel's *Works 1* (1701), a5.

intermittent legality of Nonconformist ministerial activities he was permitted to labour only sporadically, sometimes clandestinely, and on one occasion in a disguise – as a woman. So strongly did he sense a divine calling to remain in Dartmouth that twice in his career he refused offers of more lucrative livings so that he might continue his work amongst “his poor people at Dartmouth”.⁴ Perhaps it was his admirable devotion to his humble flock that caused his influence to have a ripple effect in ever-widening circles for more than 320 years.

Flavel’s influence

In his lifetime, John Flavel became extremely popular and influential within diverse strata of people across two continents. Flavel had a local impact on his parishioners, an indirect and later impact on American intellectualism and the Evangelical revivals, and a literary impact which continues to the present day.

Flavel’s parishioners who regularly heard him preach and teach attest to his facility, power, and impact on their souls whilst he taught. We can do no better than to hear the testimony of one who said: “I could say much, though not enough, of the excellency of his preaching; of his seasonable, suitable and spiritual matter; of his plain expositions of scripture, his taking method, his genuine and natural deductions, his convincing arguments, his clear and powerful demonstrations, his heart-searching applications, and his comfortable supports to those that were afflicted in conscience...In

⁴ Flavel, *Works 1* (1820), ix. I shall only utilise the 1820 edition when necessary. The reasons for this choice shall be stated below. The records indicate that Flavel’s Dartmouth congregations (St. Clement and St. Saviour) possessed a particular strength in the region in the mid-1660s. Timmons wrote that after the diocese of Exeter’s 1665 survey of the impact of the Clarendon Code, “The report listed only seven firmly established conventicles – illegal congregations – scattered throughout the West Country, including two at Dartmouth.” Timmons, “From Persecution to Toleration,” 463. As Flavel preached in these churches (the only two in Dartmouth) in these days his involvement is assured. Flavel’s colleague Allein Geare died in autumn 1662 and the care of both churches fell to Flavel. Anon., “Life of Reverend Flavel,” in Flavel’s *Works 1* (1701), 4. In the aftermath of this survey Flavel was expelled from both churches in Dartmouth under the provisions of the Oxford Act.

short that person must have a very soft head, or a very hard heart, or both, that could sit under his ministry unaffected.”⁵ After the accession of William and Mary to the throne, he preached a series of sermons which evidently converted many people. Increase Mather, an influential leader in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, president of Harvard College, and a friend of Flavel wrote this:

I am informed by unquestionable hands, that there was a remarkable pouring out of the Spirit when these sermons were *viva voce* delivered, a great number of souls having been brought home to Christ thereby. The Lord grant that the second preaching of them to far greater multitudes by this way of the press, may, by the same Spirit, be made abundantly successful for the conversion and salvation of God's elect.⁶

The effect of his faithfulness in southwest England was evidently a great benefit to many people.

Although the impact of his 41-year ministry was substantial for the locals of Devon, his influence showed itself in the intellectual arena as well. In the next generation, arguably the greatest theologian to come from America was deeply affected by “holy Mr. Flavel”.⁷ In *The Religious Affections*, which was Jonathan Edwards’ mature evaluation and criticism of the Great Awakening, he quoted Flavel more than Richard Baxter, John Owen, Richard Sibbes, John Calvin, Francis Turretin, William Ames and William Perkins combined.⁸ In addition to the great admiration that George Whitefield⁹ and the nineteenth-century Scottish preacher Robert Murray M’Cheyne¹⁰ professed to have for Flavel, Archibald Alexander, the first professor of Princeton Seminary said, “To

⁵ Quick, *Icones*, 931-2.

⁶ Mather, Preface to the Reader, in Flavel, *Englands Duty*, c7^{r-v}.

⁷ Edwards, *Works 2*, 137n.

⁸ Flavel’s impact on Edwards shall be expatiated upon in chapter five, pages 228-47.

⁹ For more on Flavel’s influence on Whitefield, see chapter five of this thesis, pages 247-53.

¹⁰ M’Cheyne, *Additional Remains*, 77-8; *Ibid.*, *Works of M’Cheyne 2*, 221-2.

John Flavel I certainly owe more than to any uninspired writer.”¹¹ The Victorian preacher Charles Spurgeon, upon whom posterity would bestow the moniker ‘The Prince of Preachers’, once wrote of Flavel: “He was a man worth making a pilgrimage to hear.”¹² This is an odd quote, coming from a man who never met Flavel. The best guess is that in this extemporaneous lecture delivered to seminary students, Spurgeon’s lively mind was grasping for ways to memorably convey what a powerful writer Flavel was and what an effective preacher he must have been.¹³ Lastly, the well-known saying of the twentieth-century Christian martyr Jim Elliott, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose,”¹⁴ bears striking resemblance to a statement found in Flavel’s *Appendix to England’s Duty*, published in 1689: “He [the Christian] shall gain that which he cannot lose, by parting with that which he cannot keep.”¹⁵

It was not only the friends of Nonconformists and John Calvin that attest to his influence on them. Reluctant Anglicans and Arminian revivalists were also influenced by Flavel. The Oxford antiquary Anthony à Wood (1632-95), who was a decided opponent of English Nonconformity,¹⁶ provides us with further evidence for why this man

¹¹ Alexander, *Life of Archibald Alexander*, 47. Cf. Old, *Reading and Preaching* 6, 230, 233.

¹² Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 418.

¹³ Further explaining Flavel’s influence on Spurgeon, Hughes Oliphant Old, specialist on Reformed worship practice, said that the classics which fed Spurgeon’s mind were primarily: “the classics of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism such as Richard Baxter, Matthew Henry, Jonathan Edwards, John Flavel, and Thomas Shepard. These classics made him conversant with the spirituality of English-speaking people in a way nothing else could have done.” Old, *Reading and Preaching* 6, 424.

¹⁴ Elliott, *Journals of Jim Elliott*, 174; from a journal entry dated 28 Oct 1949. It is also possible that the original source of this statement was Philip Henry, father of the prolific Biblical commentator Matthew Henry. In Matthew’s *Account* of his father’s life he wrote: “To encourage himself and others to Works of Charity, he would say, *He is no Fool who parts with that which he cannot keep, when he is sure to be Recompensed with that which he cannot loose.*” Henry, *Life of Philip Henry*, 59.

¹⁵ Flavel, *Englands*, An Appendix, 35.

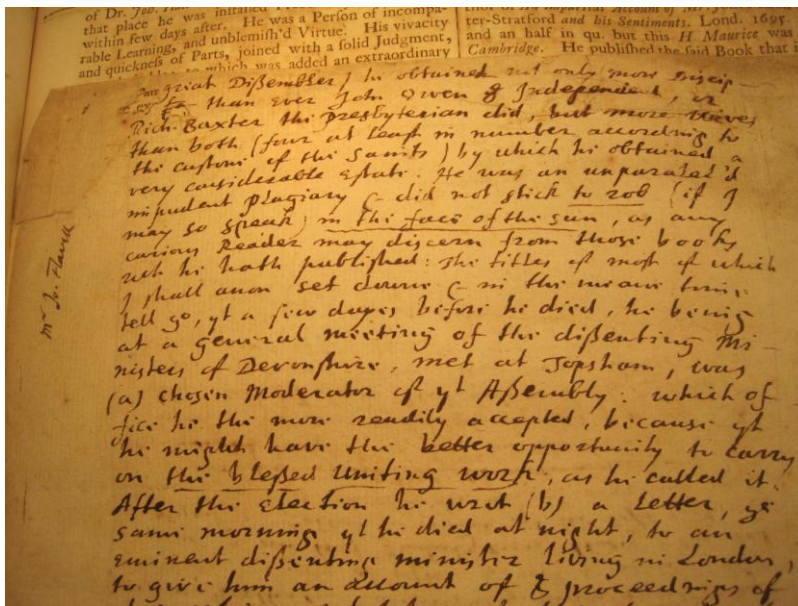
¹⁶ Isabel Rivers noted Wood’s anti-Dissent posture, specifically mentioning Flavel: “In his account of writers since 1641, Wood’s sympathies are openly expressed: they are with the executed Archbishop Laud...and with nonjurors...while his treatment of latitudinarians...and Puritans and nonconformists such as William Prynne, Samuel Annesley, Joseph and Richard Allein and John Flavel, is deliberately insulting.” Rivers, “Biographical Dictionaries,” 145. We also find evidence for this in Rose where he wrote: “Nonconformist attempts to broaden ‘the toleration’ reinforced the prejudices of those Churchmen who

deserves careful study. In his massive research tome which catalogues all the writers and bishops who graduated from Oxford between 1500-1690, Wood quoted a contemporary of Flavel's who, albeit opposed to Nonconformity, gave him this backhanded compliment: "He [Flavel] obtained not only more disciples than ever John Owen the Independent, or Rich. Baxter the Presbyterian did, but more wives than both (four at least in number according to the custom of the saints) by which he obtained a very considerable estate."¹⁷ Striking back with ample justification, the author of the first doctoral dissertation written on Flavel defended his integrity: "If he grew rich from his wives, as Wood callously asserts, he certainly did not live on or for his riches."¹⁸ Despite the jab, the compliment stands. According to one contemporary, Flavel's influence superseded that of Owen and Baxter in the arena of discipleship.

believed that the dissenters were bent upon the destruction of the Church of England. In December 1693 Anthony Wood, the Oxford antiquary, wrote scathingly of the 'effect of toleration – instead of enjoying their religion in peace without disturbance, they endeavour to pull downe the Church by their writings and preachings.'" Rose, *England in the 1690s*, 175. Cf. Wood and Clark, *Life of Anthony Wood* 3, 439.

¹⁷ Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* 4, 323. As powerful as this quotation is, I must highlight an important textual issue. This comment was printed in *Athenae* for the first time in the 1813-20 edition. It was not printed in the final edition to appear during Wood's life (1691-2), nor did it appear in the next edition (1721). Rather, it first appears in a handwritten note in the margins of Bishop Tanner's 1721 copy of the work, held in the Bodleian Library (Bodleian Rawl. J. fol. 4, 873-4). The 1813-20 edition drew these handwritten insertions into the main body of the text, yet there is no indication whatever as to the source of the statement. Lastly, the editor of the 1813-20 edition, Philip Bliss, could be careless as to what he included and what he excluded. One commentator, obviously annoyed by Bliss' exclusion of particular material, wrote: "Although Philip Bliss in his edition of *Athenae Oxonienses* (London, 1813) incorporated many of the marginalia inserted by Tanner in his copy of Wood, Bliss evidently overlooked this particular note..." Warton, *History of English Poetry*, 14. See illustrations on the next page.

¹⁸ Chang, *John Flavel Of Dartmouth*, 36. Whether Wood is liable to the charge of bigotry or not, Flavel's estate was, in fact, quite large by the time he died. His will states that he left behind more than £1000 in assets. Cf. Kelly, "Flavell," *ODNB*. This was a huge sum of money when one considers that the average Puritan minister's salary at the time averaged £20 – £40 per annum. Cf. Gordon, *Freedom*, 27-34.



Anthony Wood's purported remarks about the nature of Flavel's influence in *Athenae Oxonienses*. © Bodleian Library, Oxford. Shelf mark, Rawl. J fol. 5.871-2

Flavel's impact was not restricted to the upper echelons of society or to famous and noteworthy people. His influence was felt on both sides of the Atlantic among all classes of people. Writing in 1688 in the preface to the eleven *Englands Duty* sermons previously cited, Increase Mather wrote of Flavel: "The worthy author...is one whose

praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches. His other books have made his name precious and famous in both *Englands*.”¹⁹ If this is not gross exaggeration on Mather’s part, and when one considers that Flavel’s writings were not printed in the American colonies until 1708,²⁰ then it is fascinating to imagine copies of Flavel’s books tucked under the arms of the harried and bedraggled Puritans as they boarded boats for the Colonies.²¹ Hall substantiated this likelihood when he wrote: “Most of the books that Americans bought and read throughout the early period were imported from London.”²² Flavel’s influence clearly transcended the narrow confines of Devon.²³

¹⁹ Mather, in Flavel, *Englands, To the Reader*, c6. In writing the preface to another of Flavel’s writings (*An Exposition of the Assembly’s Catechism*), Increase recorded in his diurnal that in early March 1692 (after Flavel’s death) he departed London for Southampton, and then sailed west. They stopped at Dartmouth, at which time he wrote this preface, before sailing away from Plymouth on 29 March 1692. Mather, *Memoirs of Increase Mather*, 57. Cf. Mather, *Memoirs of Reverend Increase*, 88. See also Mather, *Soul-Saving Gospel Truths*, 164-5, where he described a woman who came under deep conviction of sin whilst reading Flavel’s *Fountain of Life*. For a full account of the lives of Increase, Cotton, and Richard Mather, see Middlekauff, *Three Generations*. Another noteworthy person who came under Flavel’s influence was Lemuel Haynes (1753-1833), an influential black pastor and leader who fought in the American Revolution and, eventually, against slavery. He was born into indentured servitude and later became a leading Calvinist minister in Vermont. After citing a passage from Flavel, Haynes wrote that the accounts of Flavel’s sufferings remain “precious to us”. Cooley, *Life of Lemuel Haynes*, 180. See also pages 157-8, 185.

²⁰ The first American edition of Flavel’s writings I have been able to locate is *Sacramental Meditations* (Boston, 1708).

²¹ For direct evidence of this, see Hayes, *Colonial Woman’s Bookshelf*, 56; Mott, *Golden Multitudes*, 15.

²² Hall, “Uses of Literacy,” 8.

²³ Several of the founders of America also held Flavel in high regard. These include John Adams, Samuel Sewall, and Benjamin Franklin. Adams, the second President of the United States, was particularly interested in how well Flavel blended erudition together with an earthy way of expressing spiritual truths. Impressed by his use of Latin, Adams wrote in his papers: “There is not a page in Flavel’s works without several sentences of Latin; yet the common people admire him. They admire his Latin as much as his English and understand it as well.” Adams, *Works* 2, 60. At this point it is fitting to mention that Flavel was an accomplished linguist. Flavel knew the following eight languages: English, Latin, French, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriack, and Arabic. The 1701 biography of his life affixed to his *Works* stated: “He was singularly well vers’d and exact in the Oriental Languages,” Anon., “Life of John Flavel,” (1701), a2. Samuel Sewall, the Massachusetts judge complicit in the Salem witch trials (yet later publicly penitent for his involvement), seems not only to have routinely corresponded with Flavel, but his diary noted that within five days of reading Flavel’s writings for the first time, he began giving copies of them to his friends. In a delicious morsel (which is unfortunately beyond the scope of the current project), Sewall recorded giving the Indian missionary John Eliot a copy of Flavel’s *Englands Duty*. On 1 March 1690, Sewall wrote: “I visit Mr. Eliot, who embraces me heartily, and calls me Brother: I present him with Mr. Flavell’s Book; England’s Duty.” Sewall, *Diary of Samuel Sewall I*, 252. See also *Ibid.*, 194, 217, 227, 228, 237, 271, 471, 517; *The Diary of Samuel Sewall II*: 681. Lastly, it seems that Benjamin Franklin read Flavel’s works as a young man. The evidence for this comes from a speech delivered at a ceremony which

Flavel left not only a local and intellectual footprint, but also an impact through print which began with the publishing of his first book in 1664 and continues to the present day. The last 348 years have seen at least 721 printings of his 35 treatises and sermons.²⁴ Nine of his writings are even available on the Kindle Book Reader.²⁵ As an example, consider his best selling work, *A Saint Indeed*, which was first published in 1668. Between that date and 1800, it went through 41 printings. The popularity of that book would persist from the start of the nineteenth century to the present and be printed another 67 times.²⁶ In chapter five these figures shall be elaborated upon in greater depth. To summarise, my introductory claim is that Flavel is worthy of attention on at least three levels: locally, intellectually, and perpetually through the print medium. Yet given these realities, the scholarly attention given to him has in no way been in equal proportion to his far-reaching impact. Given Flavel's enduring influence, the testimony of both friend and foe, and that his oft-reprinted *Works* are sizeable (the most frequently reprinted 1820 edition amounts to approximately 3600 pages), it is peculiar that such a man has scarcely been the object of scholarly study. Since the middle of the twentieth century, articles, books, and theses have saturated the ground with studies on

dedicated a new wing to the Boston Public Library on 1 January 1858. The speaker described Franklin as "holding converse in his childhood with the grave old non-conformists of Puritanism, Howe and Owen and Flavel and Baxter, – communing with the austerest lords of thought; the demigods of Puritanism." Everett, *Orations and speeches* 3, 608.

²⁴ The vast quantity of editions and reprints is a fact that has heretofore escaped notice in any study of Flavel.

²⁵ A search performed on 15 August 2012 at Amazon.co.uk turned up nine writings available for purchase. *The Essential Works of John Flavel* was the 87th most popular Kindle purchase within the category Christianity – Theology, five spaces ahead of Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ!*

²⁶ One example of this book's usefulness can be found in the life of Martha Laurens Ramsey (1759-1811, born in Charlestown, South Carolina). As a means of distracting herself from horrible depression, she abridged her own version of *A Saint Indeed*. She meticulously outlined Flavel's recommendations and was greatly helped. Gillespie, "Ramsey Dark Night," 87-90. Cf. Ramsey, *Memoirs of Ramsay*, 27-32. The footnotes contain the text of this abridgment and run for the next six pages. In a similar vein, see Lacey, "World of Hannah Heaton," 288.

the ‘top Puritans’. It is time for academia to open its arms a little bit wider to receive one more Puritan.

What makes Flavel worth careful study and attractive as a subject of investigation is that he combined the best features of all of the ‘great’ Puritans, in a sense distinguishing himself as a most balanced minister. This may be the reason he aroused the world’s greatest minds with his intellectual precision and at the same time brought uneducated, sea-hardened sailors to their knees. Pity the poor person who finds himself in spiritual need and being tossed anything written by John Owen to assuage his wounded conscience. He may finish reading and find his condition exacerbated rather than ameliorated. Is Owen a towering intellect who exhausts his subject? Certainly. But his torturously convoluted sentences tend just as easily to exhaust his reader.²⁷ Situated at the other extreme, Bunyan is not the first person enquiring minds should turn to if they are looking for comprehensive treatment of a theological subject. Based on these considerations, I would argue that Flavel strikes a healthy balance and may be the best all-around English Puritan.

The author of the first doctoral thesis on Flavel brought out this point: “Flavel’s spiritual character shines forth. He had not the logic of Owen, the comprehensiveness of Baxter, the imagination of Bunyan, nor the sublimity of Milton. But his love and devotion, his earnestness and enthusiasm burned just as brightly as in any of

²⁷ Concerning Owen’s austere style of writing, Packer says: “He has a lordly disdain for broad introductions which ease the mind gently into a subject, and for comprehensive summaries which gather up scattered points into a small space. He obviously carries the whole of his design in his head, and expects his readers to do the same. Nor are his chapter divisions reliable pointers to the structure of his discourse, for though a change of subject is usually marked by a chapter division, Owen often starts a new chapter where there is no break in the thought at all. Nor is he concerned about literary proportions; the space given to a topic is determined by its intrinsic complexity rather than its relative importance, and the reader is left to work out what is basic and what is secondary by noting how things link together.” Packer, *Among God’s Giants*, 192.

those...puritan giants.”²⁸ Another historian went further, “Flavel is entitled to occupy a niche, not far from that which is filled by John Bunyan; not that he possessed the inventiveness of the Great Dreamer, yet, like him he delighted to use similitudes, and did it successfully.”²⁹ And, “Others, like Flavel surpassed [Baxter] in piquancy and pith of idea, and homely expressiveness of language, acting on the hearer like a series of unexpected surprises, always stimulating and rewarding attention.”³⁰

On a hopeful note, of the little research that has been done on Flavel, most of those studies were completed in recent years. In fact, out of the six theses which focus on Flavel, half have been completed in the last five years. Like a massive ship slowly wheeling around because it forgot an important passenger, Flavel is starting to receive due recognition. As the current study will endeavour to contribute to this growing body of research, how exactly will it fit into the field?

Scope of the current study

In 1689, the Act of Toleration granted a degree of religious liberty to Protestant nonconformists. For these Protestants, the act provided a God-given window of opportunity to convert people before the return of Christ, which some people thought was imminent. This thesis shall research the methods Flavel employed to that end. Through the spoken word and in print, how did he go about “pleading and wooing for Christ”³¹ so that people might experience the evangelical rebirth? How did he conceive

²⁸ Chang, *John Flavel*, 163-4.

²⁹ Stoughton, *History of Religion 4*, 404.

³⁰ Tulloch, *English Puritanism*, 342.

³¹ Flavel, *Englands*, 1.

of this epochal change as taking place? This is the first issue warranting study and research.

Connected with the issue of proselytising is the concern of apocalypticism. I shall argue that several of the aforementioned questions concerning proselytism are linked together with an eschatological expectation in Flavel's writings. Late in his life Flavel believed that the end of the age was at hand. For him, one proof of this was the suffering and persecution the Puritans endured during the Restoration era. He interpreted the religious freedom finally attained under William and Mary as both a blessing and a warning. The relaxation of persecution was an obvious blessing from God; the warning was that this was England's last call for change. The nexus between these two issues prompts fruitful inquiries into Flavel's moment in history. How did his zealous proselytising relate to his eschatology? What caused him to link the two as he did?

The national upheaval which took place during Flavel's ministry was mind-boggling. In the 28-year period between 1659 and 1687, English Nonconformists endured the following trials: the failure of the Protectorate, the Restoration, and the variegated demands of the Clarendon Code (namely the Corporation Act, the Act of Uniformity, the Conventicle Act, and the Five Mile Act).³² Londoners had to endure the Great Plague and Great Fire, both of which raged through the city in 1665-6. To top it off, in 1685 an outspoken Roman Catholic ascended the English throne whose desire was for rapprochement with Rome.³³ It is precisely at this point where these challenges met Flavel's emphasis on evangelism and his apocalyptic persuasions. What I shall

³² Keeble, *The Restoration*, 162-4. Hutton described the label Clarendon Code as being "preposterously inaccurate". Instead, he posited the expression "Cavalier Commons Code". Hutton, *The Restoration*, 235.

³³ Miller, *James II*, 125-7.

argue is that the upheaval between these years was taken by Flavel as a sign that the end of time was at hand. Because he believed that the Master was standing just outside the door, there appeared an attendant urgency in his efforts to evangelise people. Furthermore, the relief bestowed by William and Mary and the Toleration Act did not abate his fervor. For Flavel, national upheaval proved the impending apocalypse; the impending apocalypse fueled his urgency in evangelisation.

Although Flavel and his contemporaries were clearly mistaken about the forthcoming return of Christ and its concomitant, the end of the age, he was convinced that the Christian inhabitants of England had to walk through a door of opportunity. In an introductory letter to his *England's Duty* sermons, preached in 1689, he ardently pled with his congregation, other ministers, and the inhabitants of the country:

England hath now a day of special mercy: there is a wide door of opportunity opened to it; O that it might prove an effectual...door! It is transporting and astonishing that...this sweet voice is still heard in England, '*Behold, I stand at the door and knock*'... If we bear fruit, well; if not, the axe lieth at the root of the tree...and this must be the inscription on the tombstone, '*O England, thou hast destroyed thyself*'.³⁴

After arguing for the nuanced way in which Flavel approached the task of proselytising and how his eschatological views changed throughout his career, we shall turn to the way in which his theology of Christian conversion served as a Transatlantic bridge between seventeenth-century Puritanism and the Great Awakening. We shall arrive at this conclusion through listening to those whose lives were influenced by Flavel, the role that his writings played in the kindling of the Great Awakening, evidence

³⁴ Flavel, *Works 4* (1820), 4.

for his impact through print, and an analysis of marginalia located within 295 copies of his writings printed between 1664 and 1799. In order to anticipate the final chapter of the thesis, I shall periodically note points of Flavel's theology upon which eighteenth-century authors picked up. How will these aims mesh with the current state of research and fill in a lacuna? We turn first to the state of Puritan studies today.

Literature review

To undertake a survey of the current state of Puritan research is indeed a daunting task. Peter Lake went so far as to write: "To review the historiography of Puritanism is to review the history of early modern England." He continued,

The historiography of Puritanism from Bancroft or Hacket to Collinson, from Edwardes to Hill or Hughes, from Heylin to Tyacke is, therefore, the story of how various versions of the Church of England and its others have been used to define the discourse (and indeed to shape the practice and patronage networks) of the national church over the five hundred years since the Reformation. To tell that story is an enormous task...³⁵

It is indeed. Rather than attempt the impractical, I shall first focus on works which have had enduring value in Puritan study and then move into works which have a direct bearing on my thesis.

Influential studies on Puritanism

After the publication of titles on Puritanism written by the four scholars alluded to at the outset of this thesis, abiding interest in that subject was kindled. These works were Perry Miller's *The New England Mind*, William Haller's *The Rise of Puritanism*, Marshall Knappen's *Tudor Puritanism*, and *Puritanism and Liberty* by Arthur

³⁵ Lake, "The Historiography of Puritanism," 346.

Woodhouse.³⁶ Though all of these books contributed to a scholarly renewal in this field, the one which stands above the others is that written by Perry Miller. *The New England Mind* is an intellectual *tour de force* that remains one of the classic texts of Puritan study. Scholars of the movement today still find themselves defining their own positions as either assenting to or departing from the Millerian interpretation.³⁷ To demonstrate the impact Miller's thought has had on English and New England Puritanism, one scholar bemoaned the fact that Scotland's history has not received proper historical due by lamenting, "Scotland has never had its Perry Miller."³⁸ Evidently gifted with some measure of prescience, an early reviewer of Miller's work called it a "towering edifice of contemporary scholarship."³⁹ The last 70 years of scholarship vindicate this remark. Perry Miller's work casts a long shadow into present Puritan studies.

Miller argued that it is impossible to understand the England or New England mind without understanding the Puritan mind. After wading through neglected Nonconformist tomes, Miller presented three analyses: the Puritan attitude to the relation between science and faith, the fundamental difference between the style of the metaphysical preacher versus the Puritan plain style, and the insight that the blueprint of the Puritan mind was the harbinger which ushered in the modern age.⁴⁰ Even though

³⁶ I must add that prior to the work of these four professional historians there was one work which attempted to salvage the Puritan reputation. In 1934 the historian of music who single-handedly wrote the first edition of *The Oxford Companion of Music* sought to rescue the Puritans from the slander, among several others, that they were inimical to music. At the end of his well-researched and quick-witted vindication of them he summed up the matter by saying: "I was a detective trying to find the criminals who are alleged to have murdered music and I could not find one." Scholes, *Puritans and Music*, 363.

³⁷ For just one of many instances of this, see Boone, *Puritan Evangelism*, 126n138.

³⁸ Phillipson, "Review of Sher," 433. Quoted in Coffey, *Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 25.

³⁹ Larrabee, "Review of *New England Mind*," 80.

⁴⁰ This insight was not necessarily unique to Miller, though Miller develops it most fully. Knappen wrote: "Puritanism was a transitional movement, linking the Medieval with the modern." Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, v. Many of Miller's theses have undergone significant challenge. As one example, Knight subdivided New England Puritans into two camps of orthodoxy which contested with each other, comprised of 'Intellectual Fathers' and 'Spiritual Brethren.' Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*.

this thesis shall not interact with Miller's ideas, I would be remiss to neglect such an important work.

Academic momentum in the field continued to build closer to the middle of the twentieth century with the publication of studies in the 1940s by Geoffrey Nuttall⁴¹ and in the 1950s by G. R. Cragg.⁴² Nuttall argued that Quakerism was the Puritan movement's logical, though not inevitable, outcome.⁴³ Cragg wrote much on the failure of Puritanism in light of the sporadic persecutions they endured after the Restoration. Published in 1967, Patrick Collinson's *The Elizabethan Puritanism Movement* was another landmark study which argued that Puritanism was fundamentally conservative in its aims. He claimed that it can hardly be regarded as a revolutionary movement due to the strong ties between itself and the establishment, whether political or religious. Lake called this volume "one of the masterpieces of modern historical scholarship".⁴⁴ More recently, one scholar of Puritanism argued the thesis that the central goals of the Puritans were neither political power nor "literary monuments", but the kingdom of heaven.⁴⁵ In the last thirty years, key figures within British Puritanism have either had political or intellectual biographies written about them. Notable examples include those written on Richard Baxter,⁴⁶ John Bunyan,⁴⁷ John Owen,⁴⁸ John Howe,⁴⁹ and the

⁴¹ Nuttall, *Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith*.

⁴² Cragg, *Puritanism to Age of Reason* and *Puritanism in Great Persecution*.

⁴³ Nuttall especially argued this with respect to radical Puritanism. He also claimed that there was a basic solidarity between the various groups called Puritan: "One of the insights which we have gained is that our minds, being individual and finite, cannot at the same time see all the varying aspects of 'the truth as it is in Jesus'. We perceive also that our experience must be allowed to be influenced considerably by differences of temperament and education... What was fundamental was the personal reception, both individually and communally, of the Spirit." Nuttall, *Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith*, 169, 177.

⁴⁴ Lake, "Historiography of Puritanism," 351.

⁴⁵ Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 203.

⁴⁶ Keeble, *Richard Baxter*.

⁴⁷ Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory* and Hill, *Turbulent, Seditious, Factious*.

⁴⁸ Trueman, *John Owen*.

⁴⁹ Field, *Rigide Calvinisme*.

Scottish Puritan Samuel Rutherford.⁵⁰ Lastly, it is significant to note that in 2008 Cambridge published a *Companion to Puritanism*, which contains valuable essays on matters Puritan.

The frequency with which academic theses on the subject continue to appear may irk Christopher Haigh, who remarked in 1981 that he was “heartily sick of the godly.”⁵¹ A search of the Proquest dissertation archives reveals 32 studies on the life of John Owen, 38 studies on Richard Baxter, and 109 dealing with John Bunyan. On average, approximately half of these have been written in the last 20 years. The upward trend of scholarly interest in “the godly” is indeed gaining momentum.

It is not just in scholarly circles that interest in Puritanism has increased. It is also revealed in titles reprinted for popular consumption. Much of the credit for this is due to the work of the Anglican theologian James Packer. Protégé of Dr. Nuttall and a life-long student of Puritanism, Packer has done much to pull the Puritans back into the mainstream of Christian literature.⁵² The Banner of Truth publishing house located in Edinburgh and in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, has churned out hundreds of thousands of copies of various Puritan reprints since its founding in the 1950s.

Studies concerning Puritan evangelism

⁵⁰ Coffey, *Mind of Samuel Rutherford*.

⁵¹ Collinson, *Godly People*, xii.

⁵² Referring to the breed of Puritan academics dubbed “confessional scholars”, Coffey and Lim called Packer the “grand old man of this school”. Furthermore, they described his 1954 Oxford D.Phil. thesis on the theology of Richard Baxter as “one of the finest works on a Puritan theologian.” Coffey and Lim, “Introduction,” 9. In that thesis, recently republished as *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter*, Packer focused on the themes of Baxter’s understanding of Puritan history, disciplinarian ideals, and the redemption of humanity through Christ.

Within the field, two analyses which grapple with various aspects of Puritan evangelism must be accounted for because of their substantial impact: Norman Pettit's *The Heart Prepared* and Charles Cohen's *God's Caress*. Pettit's account of the issue of "preparationism" concerns the question of whether it was possible for a person to do anything to prepare himself to receive God's grace. He argued that whereas English Elizabethan Puritans faithfully appropriated Reformed insights, Calvinistic orthodoxy decayed under the later Puritans (especially those in New England). This resultant preparationism, he claimed, culminated in the Antinomian Controversy (1636-8). Preparationists insisted that people take certain steps in order to prepare themselves for the reception of the Holy Spirit. Such elements might be a minister prompting his hearers to "feel the curse of sin," or imploring them to "reach out for Christ". Some believed that counseling such a strategy lead to Arminianism. Others thought the failure of ministers to give such advice verged on Antinomianism. Pettit claimed, "To strict predestinarians preparation was a veritable doctrine of works, elevating natural abilities and cheapening grace."⁵³ Although many of Pettit's claims have been tempered and adjusted by historians over the last 45 years, it remains worthy of mention. With respect to the current thesis, Flavel's writings alluded to this issue of whether a person could do anything to prepare for grace and I shall highlight those points when appropriate.

Charles Cohen's book also explored key issues which this study shall address.

Cohen essentially provided a psychological and social account of what happened when a

⁵³ Pettit, *Heart Prepared*, 19. Beeke and Jones argue that the Puritans, in the main, were not preparationists as Pettit describes the term. In fact, they use Flavel as their case study to disprove the assertion that the Puritans were preparationists. Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 425-42. They claim: "Calvin and the Puritans taught that man is dead in sin, God regenerates by grace alone, and that conversion ordinarily involves a process of conviction of sin and thoughtful listening to the preaching of the Word. The real preparationists were not the Puritans, but the Roman Catholics and Arminians." *Ibid.*, 426

person was converted in New England (leading up to the 1640s), calling his tome “an essay in psychological history”.⁵⁴ His paradigm of conversion chiefly highlighted the Puritan’s juxtaposition of a glorious God overcoming depraved human helplessness. He described conversion as essentially being a shift from impotence to power. Faith equaled power; sin equaled impotence.⁵⁵

Part one of his book concerns that which Puritan ministers taught. It contains chapters which deal with various aspects of conversion: the complete debility of one’s faculties, the Biblical covenants, faith and the *ordo salutis*, and the active labour of the converted. Part two grapples with the laity’s response to that message. These chapters deal with spiritual narratives, the impact of the sermon, the correspondence between the ideal and the actual in the converted person, and a case study involving John Winthrop. His presentation has much in common with the account which this thesis shall present. However, in at least two areas his approach and conclusions differ from this study. First, Cohen’s interests primarily lay in the emotional and psychological aspects of conversion. He used expressions such as: “the psychology of religious experience,” the Puritan’s “characteristic emotional patterns,” and “the Saints’ spiritual psychology”.⁵⁶ He also alluded to “the underlying psychological mechanisms” which undergirded conversion, “psychoanalysis of Puritan religious experience,” and he claimed that conversion served a “regularized function” for the Puritans.⁵⁷ Thus, having more of a psychological focus, Cohen’s arguments do not directly address the areas of Flavel’s *theology* of conversion which is the focus of the present thesis.

⁵⁴ Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 22.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 103, 105.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 9, 12, 14.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17, 18, 21.

Second, Cohen made several claims I would argue are foreign to the Puritan understanding of conversion. First, he seemed rather imprecise on the distinction between conversion and regeneration when he stated: “The new birth ‘took place’ within individuals, but conversion was nonetheless a communal process, stimulated, nurtured, and directed by the extended network of Puritan society stretching from the regenerated individual to the wider public and ultimately to heaven.”⁵⁸ Conversion certainly had some bearing on the community in which a person found himself; regeneration, however, was dependent upon God’s prerogative and timing alone. Secondly, Cohen confused covenant renewals with the concept of “reconversion”.⁵⁹ Although Puritans at times spoke of first conversion this did not imply that, after a period of slippage, a person was periodically reconverted in the same way as at the first experience of regeneration. The final criticism I might mention is that he claimed that conversion was not a one-time event, but rather “stretches out through the lifetime of a faithful disciple”.⁶⁰ Having listed these qualifications, his work has much more to commend than to criticise. In fact, I shall lean on Cohen’s insights repeatedly throughout this thesis. I shall periodically reference the above two works, noting areas of agreement as well as places where their claims need to be challenged.

Joel Beeke has written on many topics having to do with Puritanism in recent years, and one of them concerns evangelism.⁶¹ *Puritan Evangelism* provides a helpful starting point on the subject. However, the book tried to tackle the themes of defining evangelism, as well as the characteristics, methods, and inward disposition of the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 105, 242, 268-70, 287.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁶¹ Beeke, *Puritan Evangelism*.

Puritan evangelist in a mere 52 pages. While something is better than nothing, this is not much more than an extended pamphlet. Having noted the absence of a sturdy treatment on Puritan evangelism, we turn next to works which concern Puritan apocalyptic belief and expectations.

The 1970s saw a cache of studies published that dealt with Puritan apocalyptic beliefs in both the Tudor and Stuart periods. These will certainly help to inform this study of the state of apocalyptic belief leading up to the dissolution of the Commonwealth. However, I shall need to take the subject beyond that to decipher exactly what Englishmen and women believed about the return of Christ between 1660-1690. To do so I shall rely on numerous tomes which address seventeenth-century apocalyptic beliefs.⁶² To date, no researcher has addressed Flavel's apocalyptic beliefs. Having now completed a brief survey of the field of Puritan literature, we shall now turn to the academic theses which use Flavel as an integral part of their research.

Research on John Flavel

In 1949 at Duke University, a brave undergraduate student undertook the first study of John Flavel to satisfy the requirements for a Bachelor of Divinity degree. The work, though admirable and not without some use, is quite rudimentary and contains some fairly basic factual errors, such as an incorrect date given for the Act of Uniformity.⁶³ In *The Doctrine of Man and Grace as Held by the Reverend John Flavel*, Mr. Earl Farrell laid out a brief sketch of Flavel's life, and some of the basics of what he

⁶² See Ball, *Great Expectation*; Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*; Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*; Gilpin, *Millenarian Piety of Roger Williams*; and Toon, *Puritans, Millennium, Future of Israel*; Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*.

⁶³ Farrell, *The Doctrine of Man*, 2.

taught about these theological points. Due to the inchoate nature of this thesis, we shall not interact with his research, other than to tip our hats in gratitude to this first known research student of Flavel.

Three years after the above thesis was completed, a student at the University of Edinburgh completed the first Ph.D. on Flavel. Chang completed a carefully researched overview of the background, life, preaching, theology, controversies, and practical teaching of Flavel. As with the Duke thesis, this dissertation is also somewhat introductory to the life and significance of Flavel, but on a deeper level than anything written up to that point. The Chang thesis, commendably the first of its kind as a full length doctoral thesis, is unexceptional in that it tends to be descriptive rather than innovative, and summative, rather than yielding insightful conclusions. In a more recent project, Howard conducted an insightful study on Flavel's views of the atonement and doctrine of Scripture. In this 1975 Masters thesis, Howard examined Flavel's view of the way in which the atonement catalysed people into a life of practical holiness. Howard's thesis also contains an extensive, though not exhaustive, listing of the writers that Flavel quoted.⁶⁴ At several points I shall make use of this thesis. Moving beyond these early studies, Flavel's doctrines of the sealing of the Holy Spirit and his doctrine of union with Christ have been the focus of two recent studies. It is to these that we now turn.

In Embry's Master of Theology thesis, he grappled with Flavel's teaching on the sealing of the Holy Spirit. He argued that the sealing of the Spirit is a second experience whereby a Christian had an overpowering encounter with the third person of the

⁶⁴ Howard, *Clear Waters*, 81-6.

godhead, thus assuring the person that he was in good standing with God.⁶⁵ This was an issue that Flavel addressed in his writings and purportedly experienced. Embry capably argued that Flavel reversed his position on this issue twice in his lifetime. At first Flavel disbelieved in this sealing experience,⁶⁶ but later came to affirm its veridicality.⁶⁷ Embry argued that Flavel later repudiated this belief due to theological issues in the Antinomian controversy he was involved in near the end of his life. This thesis provides Flavel studies with a solid gain in the area of pneumatology and Christian assurance. However, there is a criticism which should be mentioned.

It seems the thesis makes overstatements in the interest of justifying the need for this particular research. Embry made statements such as, “The drive to find assurance permeated his [Flavel’s] life...”,⁶⁸ and, “The longing of Flavel’s Christian life was to be sealed by the Spirit”⁶⁹ and that he “consistently exhorted his congregation to be sealed by the Spirit.”⁷⁰ This is an overstatement of what Flavel did. Throughout his writings we do not find Flavel recommending such a course of action. A clear example where Embry got carried away is found on the first page of the thesis where he stated, “He recorded his sealing experience and consistently exhorted his congregation and readers to be sealed by the Spirit.”⁷¹ When one locates the footnote for this point, we find Flavel providing his readers with six ‘directions’ for how they can know they have an “interest in Christ”.⁷² In the first of the five directions, Flavel cited three other Puritan writers who gave instructions on how to go about this. The only mention of the sealing of the

⁶⁵ Embry, *Keeper*, 104.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, 82

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷² Flavel, *Works 4* (1820), 552.

Spirit was when Flavel wrote: “it is the work of the Spirit to seal and assure thee.”⁷³ There is no mention here of Flavel exhorting his people to be sealed. Flavel knew that it was the Spirit’s job to seal believers. At this point, Flavel did not encourage people to strive for something that he knew was out of their power. There is some flab in the thesis, but writing as he was for a Master’s thesis, Embry does the field of the study of Flavel a good service. In any case, much of this thesis falls outside my own area of focus. Along with the next study to which we turn, it contributes much to expatiating Flavel’s beliefs concerning the Christian’s relationship with two of the three members of the godhead.

In 2007 Reformation Heritage Books published a study on John Flavel’s doctrine of mystical union with Christ by J. Stephen Yuille. Albeit Yuille completed a Ph.D. on the Puritan George Swinnock, he decided to publish this brief study on Flavel to help churchmen and laypeople understand this subject. Yuille argued that according to Flavel, the doctrine of union with Christ was the quintessence of living out every aspect of the Christian life.⁷⁴ As if he is rotating a diamond to show off its various facets, Yuille evaluated Flavel’s teaching on union with Christ from various angles. In this brief work Yuille was interested to show what Flavel taught on the issue rather than arguing for a distinct conclusion.⁷⁵ The areas of overlap between Yuille’s book and this thesis are minimal. For now I simply note my awareness of this study on Flavel.

Two doctoral dissertations grapple with Flavel’s writings in a small but noteworthy measure. Thomas Holbrook completed a thesis titled *The Elaborated*

⁷³ Ibid., 557.

⁷⁴ Yuille, *Inner Sanctum of Puritan Piety*, 26-7.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 4.

*Labyrinth*⁷⁶ which investigated how “Puritan religious typology influenced American literary symbolism.”⁷⁷ Citing several examples in a few pages in the thesis, Holbrook quoted Flavel for the purpose of demonstrating that when Jonathan Edwards utilised the literary device of typology, he was in good company because Flavel did so as well. Here again, though my interaction with it will be minimal, it is worth placing this thesis on the map of Flavel studies.

A recent Durham thesis on the life of Isaac Ambrose is also worth noting because of its connection with Flavel. This doctoral thesis argued that Ambrose falls within the bounds of a Protestant mystical-contemplative tradition. Tom Schwanda argued that certain key features of a classic mystical strand are present within a group that is not often associated with this practice: the Puritans. Schwanda recruited John Flavel for his purposes and made reference to his sermons numerous times. Schwanda utilised Flavel’s *Method of Grace* most frequently, along with *Pneumatologia* and *England’s Duty*. Despite drawing quotations from these sermons which support his case, there is not a systematic treatment of any part of Flavel’s theology. Understandably, this was not his purpose for this dissertation. Again, I wish to show my familiarity with this study. Having cleared the underbrush of shorter studies on Flavel, or those which merely use him to defend other arguments, we come to two recent doctoral theses which deal with Flavel as the primary object of their studies. In the past five years, John Thomas and Clifford Boone both completed doctorates which grapple with the way Flavel preached. It is to these two theses we now direct our attention.

⁷⁶ Holbrook, *Elaborated Labrinth*.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, i.

John Thomas's 2007 doctoral thesis focused on preaching but limited itself to an analysis of Flavel's use of application in his 99 extant sermons. Methodologically, this study restricted itself in that it only dealt with Flavel's sermons. Beyond that, it narrowed the focus further by only evaluating Flavel's use of *application* in those sermons. This approach, while not without some practical usefulness, is hard-pressed to advance study into Flavel given its limited scope. Thomas wrote that his research goal was to, "analyze the use of application in the sermons of John Flavel in order to determine the level of specificity in his use of application."⁷⁸ Using a recent publication⁷⁹ on the use of preaching application as his lens, Thomas applied this to Flavel's sermons. Thomas' strategy was to count up the number of times Flavel used specific applications in his sermons⁸⁰ and then divide that by the number of sermons he analyzed. In the fourth and final chapter of the thesis, he blandly noted that his hypothesis that "Flavel's preaching would demonstrate extensive use of specific application"⁸¹ was confirmed. The conclusion of his study, the body of which was an alarmingly brief 107 pages, concluded with four points. The first was that preachers today should base their use of sermon application on strong theological foundations. They should, second, use a great variety of applications so as to affect the greatest number of hearers. Third, he claimed that variety and balance in sermon applications add weight to the usefulness of sermon delivery. Last, his study suggested that applications should build upon one another, again, so as to promote increased effectiveness.⁸² The study, which has a practical bent,

⁷⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁹ Shaddix, *Passion-Driven Sermon*.

⁸⁰ He reported that there are 750 applications in the 99 sermons.

⁸¹ Thomas, *Analysis*, 88.

⁸² Ibid., 98-105.

seems to be closer to a summary, rather than argumentation toward a decisive conclusion.

Another weakness with this dissertation concerns his use of sources. Although Thomas indicated his awareness of several quality volumes on homiletical research, even taking time to uncover several theses on Flavel, he did not utilise them very well. As one minor example, when he discussed Flavel's influence outside of England he wrote, "[Jonathan] Edwards refers to Flavel's work and influence in his *Religious Affections* more than twenty times."⁸³ Saying this reveals the fact that he did not look up these references. Although the index at the back of the Yale edition does indeed list more than twenty references to Flavel, several of these come from the editor's introduction at the beginning of the volume. Edwards cited Flavel 17 times in that work. This sort of carelessness troubled Thomas' thesis throughout. I conclude that this study does not progress deeper into Flavellian territory but lingers on the outskirts of solid gains. Productive homiletical research should aim to comprehend vast amounts of material, and then do more than summarize, but also discover new patterns and trajectories which arise out of that material. Given the blinkered approach to research in this thesis, it does not do that very well. The end result is well-meaning and may be practical, but it does not advance the field of study on Flavel. Happily, we now turn to the most thoroughly researched project heretofore completed on Flavel.

In late 2009, Clifford Boone completed a Ph.D. through the University of Wales, Lampeter, titled *Puritan Evangelism: Preaching for conversion in late-seventeenth century English Puritanism as seen in the works of John Flavel*. Without question, this

⁸³ Ibid., 12.

thesis is the most significant for my topic, and also the most carefully researched of the investigations into Flavel's preaching and evangelistic method. In this full-length dissertation, Boone argued that the Puritan understanding of the effectual call was the determinative factor which guided how pastors structured their evangelistic sermons. In addition to investigating Flavel's understanding of the effectual call, Boone elaborated on Flavel's beliefs about sin, the human constitution, and the various faculties of the soul. Boone also undertook the tedious task of cataloguing over 550 different authors Flavel quoted, many of whom Flavel cited repeatedly. In so listing people from Socrates to Flavel's own contemporaries, Boone demonstrated what a well-read man he was.

Whilst Boone's study will be valuable for me to interact with at certain points, his dissertation and my research differ. Whereas his central contention is "Flavel's example and writings show that the Puritan view of the effectual call is the key to explaining why the Puritans preached as they did," my thesis may be best summarized as: "Flavel possessed an elaborate theology of conversion, partially emphasized later in his career due to his morphing apocalyptic beliefs, and this approach to proselytism influenced embryonic Evangelicalism in the eighteenth century." Through the course of the present study, I shall return to Boone's thesis when necessary, agreeing and disagreeing at numerous points. For now I shall enumerate three points of disagreement I have with Boone's research.

The first shortcoming in Boone's study is that he did not mention repentance. This feature should not be absent in a treatment of a Calvinistic writer's beliefs about conversion. The only two times the word appeared in this thesis were when he

commented on the contents of Bickel's book on preaching⁸⁴. That repentance is an integral component in Flavel's teaching is quite clear, yet it received no mention in the thesis. The necessity of repentance and its indissoluble link with faith is a perennial doctrine in Reformed theology. The Reformed position is that repentance is the seminal salvific event, and only after its exercise may a person be assured that he had experienced conversion. This has been true of Reformed theology from the time Martin Luther nailed his theses on the church door at Wittenberg. The first of the 95 theses spoke of the importance of ongoing repentance which obviously implies a first act of repentance. Later, during the English Reformation, repentance takes its place in William Perkins' 'ocular Catechisme,'⁸⁵ as well as occupying the whole of chapter 15 in the *WCF*, titled "Of Repentance Unto Life."⁸⁶ In due course I shall prove that in the theology of Flavel repentance was integral to salvation. In a scholarly treatment of Flavel's soteriological beliefs, this should not have been absent.

The second criticism of this thesis concerns an insight which lies at the heart of his argument. His main contention is that, "Within the generally accepted homiletic framework of the Puritan tradition it was the preacher's view of the effectual call that most influenced his preaching for conversion."⁸⁷ Whilst this insight is certainly true enough, it seems to be a fairly obvious one. It is unlikely that a Reformed Puritan would suggest that the preacher ought to aim for anything but the effectual call in his preaching for conversion.⁸⁸ It is without argument that although God must do the

⁸⁴ Bickel, *Light and Heat*.

⁸⁵ Also known as: *The Golden Chaine, A Survey or Table Declaring the Order of the Causes of Salvation and Damnation According to God's Word*.

⁸⁶ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 50-3.

⁸⁷ Boone, *Evangelism*, 285.

⁸⁸ As with the phrase "renewal of the will," Flavel rarely used the term "effectual call".

illuminating, the minister has his role and he must do everything within his power to encourage this event. I must hasten to add, on a positive note, that his thesis richly detailed the intricacies and inner workings of people's hearts and how ministers planned their messages accordingly. This is a valuable insight which I have built upon in the current study.

The last criticism of Boone which I shall mention concerns the care with which he carried out peripheral aspects of his thesis. The fifth appendix to this thesis is quite helpful and comprises a 38-page chronological annotation for each of Flavel's 34 writings. To my knowledge this has never been produced, and it provides a helpful overview to each of Flavel's publications. However, Boone seemed unable to locate the earliest extant editions for many items. The dates attached to Flavel's publications are plagued with frightful question marks and his chronology is disorderly. A quick glance through the *ESTC* would have remedied this. Aside from these concerns, his research has much to commend. Completed over the course of a decade, he clearly spent much time visiting libraries throughout the United Kingdom as well as the United States, where he resides. Boone's thesis is, without question, the best step forward in the study of Flavel.

One feature common to Farrell, Chang, Embry, Thomas and Boone's theses is that each included biographical introductions to Flavel's life.⁸⁹ The task of writing a biography on Flavel can be a frustrating endeavour as relatively little is known about his

⁸⁹ Chang, *John Flavel*, 18-37; Boone, *Evangelism*, 47-51; Embry, *Keeper*, 14-41. For my own account of Flavel's life which primarily focuses on new information about his influence, see Parker, 'Life and Influence of Flavel'.

personal life. A fragment of his diary is preserved⁹⁰ and only a few MSS of his correspondence have survived in the Bodleian Library.⁹¹ Though brief, the best source for the life and ministry of Flavel remains the unpublished John Quick MS, held in the Dr. Williams Library. Quick was a personal friend of Flavel's and ministered in a church about seven miles from Dartmouth.⁹² Every subsequent biographer of Flavel has either copied portions of this manuscript verbatim, or derived his information secondarily from that source. Unfortunately, barring a fresh manuscript discovery, much of Flavel's personal life shall remain shrouded in mystery. Because the above named researchers on Flavel have each written about his life, aside from my basic introductory remarks about who he was, I shall exclude a separate treatment of his life. Throughout the thesis, in those places where new information has come to light, I shall reserve the right to build on what others have already written.

A methodological weakness in the preceding studies on Flavel

One comment is in order apropos of the studies just mentioned. An issue which needs to be addressed concerns that which I believe to be a methodological flaw in these studies on Flavel. In all of these theses, an inferior edition of Flavel's writings was the primary basis of evaluation. At every point in the above mentioned theses, the 1820 edition of Flavel's *Works*⁹³ was consulted. Each of the above writers seemed to assume that this was a methodologically neutral judgment. Only Boone made any attempt to explain the rationale behind that decision. The first reason he gave was the justification

⁹⁰ We know that Flavel kept a diary as John Quick quoted from it at length in *Icones Sacrae Anglicanae*, pages 923-4. A selection of this was reprinted in the standard biography of his life which appeared in the 1701 and 1820 editions of his writings. That an 800-word portion of Flavel's diary has been preserved has not been noted by Flavel researchers. For the text, see Appendix C of this thesis.

⁹¹ Boone, *Evangelism*, 73.

⁹² Quick, *Icones*, 926.

⁹³ In 1968, 1982, and 1997 The Banner of Truth produced a facsimile of this work.

that this is the edition most widely available to the public. Second, he wrote that a comparison of the 1968 Banner of Truth edition and the first edition of Flavel's *Works* (in 1701) revealed very little difference between the two.⁹⁴ Although it is true that most of the differences are minimal, there are some that are not. Further, by the time the 1701 edition came out, Flavel's various writings had been in print and circulating for 37 years, ample time for authorized and unauthorized changes to creep into texts. As we shall see, this is in fact what happened. The 1820 edition, though a good entry point for non-professionals, is not a critical edition, and as such contains ambiguities and inaccuracies that would be expected to reside in such a work. Even though there is not at present a critical edition of Flavel's works, this is not the preferable source for academic research. Of course, the utilisation of an inferior edition does not necessarily undermine the research that has been produced, but it is not ideal. In several respects it contains inaccuracies which tend to diminish its usefulness as the primary source to evaluate Flavel's thought.

At times this edition confuses words through a misunderstanding of seventeenth-century letter forms. When it appears at the beginning or in the middle of a word, the letter 's' in the early modern era looked much like the lowercase 'f'. The publishers of the 1820 edition at times inverted the two. In one example, they printed the word 'fitting', when the word ought to have been 'sitting': "Be sure of it, that for every sand of mercy, every drop of love that runs down in vain in this world, a drop of wrath runs into the vial

⁹⁴ Boone, *Evangelism*, 73.

of wrath which is fitting in heaven.”⁹⁵ At this point the expression “sitting in heaven” is clearly what Flavel intended and is how the word appears in the 1689 edition.

Collating several early editions of Flavel’s writings also revealed differences between the earliest texts and the 1820 edition. Although *Navigation Spiritualized* (1677) reprinted Flavel’s words in *A New Compass for Seamen* (1664) essentially the same, in 26 places it, bafflingly, changed correct Scripture references to incorrect ones. In seven of these instances, the 1677 edition changed the numbers to references which do not exist. In only two places did the 1677 correct mistaken references printed within the 1664 edition.⁹⁶ The 1820 edition perpetuated the errors of the 1677 edition.

In several other ways the 1820 edition is not to be preferred over the earliest editions. A few examples shall suffice. In some cases, words were misprinted in the 1820 edition. For example, whereas the 1673 edition of *Fountain* reads: “accounting all other Doctrines, but arid things, compared with this...”⁹⁷, the 1820 edition printed the nonsense phrase “airy things”.⁹⁸ At times, the 1820 edition depersonalized Flavel’s words, thus lessening their effect. The 1680 edition of *Method* reads: “The Lord open *our* eyes, and duly affect *our* hearts with spiritual death and soul miseries.”⁹⁹ The later edition changed his words to: “The Lord open *your* eyes, and duly affect *your* hearts...”¹⁰⁰ At certain places, the 1820 edition of Flavel’s *Works* shifted Flavel’s language in a more prosaic direction. Whereas the 1673 edition of *Fountain* stated the

⁹⁵ Flavel, *Englands*, 110.

⁹⁶ Furthermore, on the following pages, the 1820 edition perpetuated the errors of the 1677 text: 207 (in two places), 221, 228, 239, 240, 249, 250, 251 (two places), 253, 259, 264, 267, 278, 279, 282, 288, 291 (two places).

⁹⁷ Flavel, *Fountain*, 2.

⁹⁸ Flavel, *Works 1* (1820), 33.

⁹⁹ Flavel, *Method*, 538 [*Emphasis mine*].

¹⁰⁰ Flavel, *Works 2* (1820), 431 [*Emphasis mine*].

following about praising Christ: “when we have worn our tongues to the stumps,”¹⁰¹ the 1820 reads: “when we have even worn out our tongues”.¹⁰² Lastly, when writing about the hard labours of the pastorate, Flavel wrote: “Yea, why the labours of the same man prosper exceedingly at one time, and not at another [is known only to God]”¹⁰³ However, in the 1820 edition, “the labours of the same man” becomes, “the labours of the same poor man”.¹⁰⁴ The soul was already a minister – was it really necessary for the editors of the later edition to make him impecunious as well? In each of these examples we see changes in words which affect Flavel’s original intention. This is neither a service to his readers, nor is it honoring to the original author.

In the absence of a critical edition, best practices demand researchers reference the earliest extant editions. I have, therefore, utilised the first editions of Flavel’s books through the websites *EEBO*¹⁰⁵ and *ECCO*.¹⁰⁶ Through these sites I have utilised copies of all of Flavel’s treatises, with the exception of two minor writings.¹⁰⁷ These two tracts appeared for the first time in the 1701 first edition of his *oeuvre*, which I located and utilised.

Areas for further research

¹⁰¹ Flavel, *Fountain*, A2^v.

¹⁰² Flavel, *Works 1* (1820), xviii.

¹⁰³ Flavel, *Method*, 396.

¹⁰⁴ Flavel, *Works 2* (1820), 323.

¹⁰⁵ <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>

¹⁰⁶ <http://gale.cengage.co.uk/>

¹⁰⁷ These two writings appear in the first edition of Flavel’s *Works 2* (1701): *A Familiar Conference*, 1067-1071 and *A Double Scheme*, 1339-1340.

Every doctoral thesis comes to a point where the student must say, “Thus far, and no farther.” Accordingly, there are at least two lines of inquiry which might profitably be pursued which build on and extend this thesis. First, a potentially fascinating area of study would be exploring the link between the Act of Toleration of 1689 and the languishing of Nonconformity in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. Did the cessation of active persecution after 1689 contribute to laxity on the part of the Puritans, which in turn hastened their demise? Given that Flavel clearly stated that the most dangerous place in a Christian’s life was when life got comfortable, it would be profitable to connect Flavel’s message to foundering Dissent. Second, there has never been an adequate biography written about the life of Flavel. Albeit biographical data is scarce, there is some which could be combined with his thought, out of which a fascinating intellectual biography could be written.

Defining Puritanism

I shall now define a key term of which I have already made plentiful use: Puritan. To say that defining the term is not a straightforward task is a wild exaggeration. Cohen stated the matter well when he wrote: “Like the proverbial carrot on a stick, so palpably close but so frustratingly inaccessible, Puritanism seems easy to categorize until one actually takes a step to qualify it; then, it bounces tantalizingly out of reach”.¹⁰⁸ Although Boone listed 20 sources published between 1954 and 1999 which address this issue, others could be cited.¹⁰⁹ Another valuable contribution to this debate is to be found in

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, *God's Caress*, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Boone, *Puritan Evangelism*, 5n1. For various other definitions, see Beeke and Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, xv-xix; Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 29n36; De Krey, *Restoration and Revolution in Britain*, 4-5, 8; George and George, *The Protestant Mind*, 398-411; Hall, ‘Puritanism: The Problem of Definition’ 293-4; Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, 80, 164-5; Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, 3, 5; Spurr, *The Post-Reformation*, 9-10. It must be remembered that when this term came into use it had a very negative

an article by Cosby which examined the proposals of 16 scholars as to how one should define the term.¹¹⁰ Despite all the ink spilled over this vexed question, theses, monographs, and journal articles continually revisit this tired debate. Although the literature on the subject states (and I believe it to be the case) that almost every definition is insufficiently nuanced in certain respects, we find a very succinct one within *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*. Coffey and Lim described the early movement as follows:

Puritanism was a distinctive and particularly intense variety of early modern Reformed Protestantism which originated within the Church of England, and was a product of that unique environment and its tensions. Under Elizabeth I, the Church of England was widely regarded as a Reformed church, but it was anomalous in retaining certain features of late medieval Catholicism, including cathedrals (and their choirs), a formal liturgy, traditional clerical vestments and an elaborate hierarchy headed by bishops and archbishops. For Puritans, this Protestant church still contained too much of the old popery.

They continued by writing, “Complaining that it was but ‘halfly reformed’, many lobbied for ‘further reformation’, aiming to bring the Church of England into closer alignment with other Reformed churches.”¹¹¹ This definition, applicable up to the Restoration, succinctly gets at the heart of the broad goals for which the Puritans were fighting. After numerous advances and vicissitudes between Elizabeth’s accession and the Restoration of Charles, Puritans finally accepted that they would not be able to influence the Church of England in a more ‘pure’ and Reformed direction. After the ejection of 1662, the term ‘Puritan’ became less useful due to the impossibility of rapprochement with the Church of England. At that point ‘Nonconformist’ or ‘Dissenter’ became more appropriate.

connotation. Perkins lamented that those “who are so much branded with vile tearmes of Puritans and Presitians” are those “that most indeauour to get and keepe the purity of heart”. Perkins, *Learned Exposition*, 30. Clearly, it being a vile term, it was no compliment to be stuck with this label.

¹¹⁰ Cosby, “Toward a Definition of ‘Puritan’,” 297-310. One weakness with the definitions surveyed is the absence of the contributions of the notable Marxist historians of the movement, Christopher Hill and Charles and Katherine George.

¹¹¹ Coffey and Lim, “Introduction,” 3.

Conducting his ministry prior to the Restoration (and possessing the desire for a reformed Anglican church) as well as after the ejection (aligning himself with the Nonconformists/Dissenters) Flavel had a foot in both worlds. Given this fact I shall use these three terms interchangeably in referring to his life and ministry.

Having introduced the central aims of this thesis, a final, vital remark is in order concerning the writers who influenced Flavel: I could decipher no patterns in the ways in which he marshaled other writers to support his views. In laying out a point concerning evangelism, for example, Flavel was just as likely to cite Cartwright, Perkins, or Ames as Irenaeus, Luther, or Baxter. Whilst he quoted over 550 authors,¹¹² and many of these citations concern evangelistic themes, the way in which he cited them is impatient of clear analysis. What began as a frustration caused a shift in approach. As a result of Flavel's pervasive, though scattered, use of other thinkers, this thesis shall present the evangelistic approach of a mature Stuart Puritan, without making extensive reference to those writers who influenced him. Writing from within the milieu of late seventeenth-century British Nonconformity, Flavel laid out an extremely elaborate, though flexible, paradigm which described the way in which people came to experience Christian conversion. It is, therefore, the aim of this thesis to present Flavel's particular approach to this issue, rather than to trace the variegated ways in which his thinking was shaped. To borrow an apt expression from a book review of Perry Miller's biography of Jonathan Edwards, this thesis shall present Flavel's writings in such a way that, "The emphasis is upon its intrinsic force and penetrating character rather than upon its

¹¹² Boone, *Evangelism*, 73-4.

sources.”¹¹³ We shall now begin our discussion of the way in which Flavel conceived of, and laboured to bring about in his congregants, the conversion of the human soul.

¹¹³ Roberts, “Review of Miller’s *Jonathan Edwards*,” 267.

Chapter 1

The Spirit's Work as a Pattern for Proselytisation

“...this being the due order of the Spirits operation, the same order must be observed in Gospel offers and invitations.”¹¹⁴

If a Christian minister in the seventeenth century was to succeed in his efforts to proselytise (or *her* efforts, in the case of the Dissenting Quakers¹¹⁵), it was understood that he ought to have a mental framework through which to comprehend how his hearers were designed. The Puritan minister tried his best to grasp what God had revealed about the mental configuration of his people. In light of this understanding, he tried to mirror the internal work of the Holy Spirit in his preaching.¹¹⁶ This provides us with a key insight into the Puritan's homiletical method which was consequent upon that understanding. Defending why he ordered his evangelistic appeals as he did, Flavel wrote:

For none are convinced of righteousness, (i.e.) of the compleate and perfect righteousness, which is in Christ for their Justification, until first they be convinced of sin; and consequently, no man will or can come to Christ by faith, till convictions of sin have awakened and distressed them, *John* 16.8, 9. This being the due order of the Spirits operation, the same order must be observed in Gospel offers and invitations.¹¹⁷

The last sentence, which states that those who tender “Gospel offers and invitations” must follow the manner of the Spirit's operation, is critical for this chapter. We shall see how Flavel adhered to this principle in his approach to proselytising.

¹¹⁴ Flavel, *Method*, 199.

¹¹⁵ Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 37, 42-3; Gill, *Women in Quaker Community*, 42-9. The reality in early modern England was that males dominated church leadership. Therefore, I shall use the masculine pronoun when referring to Puritan preachers, unless I am specifically referring to a Dissenting group which allowed females in the pastorate.

¹¹⁶ Cohen, *God's Caress*, 25-6.

¹¹⁷ Flavel, *Method*, 199.

Flavel also maintained that people possess similar cognitive and affective faculties. Thus, if ministers could grasp truths which were common to all people, whether constitutional or existential realities, he could confidently apply those truths to all people from the pulpit. Flavel wrote:

Were it possible for the people of God to come out of all nations, kindreds and languages in the world, into one place, and there confer, and compare the desires and workings of their hearts, though they never saw each others face, nor heard of each others name; yet as face answers to face in a glass, so would their desires after Christ answer to each other: all hearts work after him in the same manner, what one saith, all saith...one and the same Spirit harmonically works in all Believers throughout the world, which could never be, if religion were but a fancie as some call it, or a combination or confederacy as others call it: fancies are as various as faces; and confederacies presuppose mutual acquaintance, and conference.¹¹⁸

In light of this the minister must labour to mirror the work of the Holy Spirit in his attempts to proselytise and bear in mind that, no matter the person, the operations of the Spirit upon them were the same. This chapter shall lay out Flavel's theology of conversion which we shall see, in the final chapter, impacted people in the eighteenth century, especially at the time of the Great Awakening.

Before enumerating the variegated steps of progression through which a person must pass on his way to Christian conversion, I shall situate the overarching conceptual framework which provides a structure to hold the discrete steps of Flavel's soteriology in place. This entails three distinct grids which overlap at various points.¹¹⁹ I shall introduce these grids, though enlarge upon them as we move through each step. First,

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 265.

¹¹⁹ Although I have elected to utilise the term "grids" to describe the various elements to follow, any number of other terms could have been used. One weakness is that "grids" seems to imply identity of species whereas each of the grids I present highlights different facets of the conversion process. Other terms which contended for primary use were: lenses, paradigms, facets, features, and filters. Grids, whilst somewhat simplified is less cumbersome than repeatedly speaking of "two recognitions, three targets, and ten theological phases".

we shall notice that Flavel saw the path from an unbelieving state to a believing state as requiring a spiritual recognition of two facts on the part of his hearer. (The qualification spiritual signifies *that which is genuinely produced by the Holy Spirit.*) Second, there are three primary faculties within the human soul which Flavel said must be spiritually affected and subdued for a person to convert. It was the minister's job to speak in such a way that his hearer be impacted and that his faculties might be stirred up and influenced. Third, there are numerous theological phases through which the hearer must pass to travel from a state of condemnation to conversion. These stages begin at the point of total ignorance of God on one side of the spectrum, to the state of assurance regarding election on the other. In terms of the subject's cognizance, and in distinction from the first two grids, we shall see that in the third grid these stages are mixed. That is to say that as the hearer passed through these steps, he would be consciously aware of some, whilst others were unknown, or secret. It is imperative to state that there is not one location in Flavel's writings where he laid out these three grids and showed how they interact as I shall do. Rather, this chapter shall argue for the composite picture which may be inferred from his writings. These three grids gradually surfaced after examining all of Flavel's extant writings.

This prompts an important question: would Flavel recognize his own beliefs in the framework I provide? This seems reasonable to assert because in various places he provided an orderly listing which exhibits the order of the steps. Flavel believed that these stages worked together in a logical and (usually) sequential manner. After listing

several of these steps he wrote, “all these acts lie in order to each other.”¹²⁰ When these components are linked together a clear and consistent sequence emerges. Furthermore we shall continually notice the fascinating way in which these three grids overlap and amiably impinge upon each other. We now turn to investigate the first branch of these grids, those elements with which the hearer must come to grips to be saved.

Two Spiritual Recognitions

At the most basic level, Flavel believed that there were two facts which people must recognize before they could be sure they had experienced Christian conversion. Flavel alluded to this in *Englands Duty* which consisted of eleven sermons he preached after King James II issued the first Declaration of Indulgence. Flavel said this about people who imagined they were in a good standing with God, when they were merely deceiving themselves: “alas, to this day they never saw sin in its vileness, much less their own special sin, nor Christ in his suitableness and necessity.”¹²¹ In 1688 Flavel pressed his hearers to see first, the vile offense of sin, and second, that only Christ was the fitting Saviour. Eight years earlier, when he preached 35 sermons in the *Method of Grace* series, he provided more detail on these points: “where ever faith is, there is so much light as is sufficient to discover to the soul, its own sins, dangers, and wants; and the all-sufficiency, suitableness, and necessity of Christ for the supply and remedy of all; and without this Christ cannot be received.”¹²² In a later sermon in that series he added, “you cannot believe till God hath opened your eyes to see your sin, your misery by sin, and

¹²⁰ Ibid., 361. Cf. 73, 88. Cohen noted this same idea when he wrote, “The imputation that grace comes irrespective of time and place fails to consider that God, having subjected His power to His will, works in an orderly and regulated manner.” Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 91.

¹²¹ Flavel, *Englands*, 336.

¹²² Flavel, *Method*, 117.

your remedy in Jesus Christ alone.”¹²³ Again, he stressed two points: one must recognize the problem of sin and the solution provided in Christ.

Moving even earlier in his career, the last instance which proves the two-fold recognition comes from the years 1670-1. It was at that time Flavel preached his lengthiest (extant) sermon series in a 42 sermon collection titled *The Fountain of Life Opened, a Display of Christ in His Essential and Mediatorial Glory*. In the sixteenth sermon of that series he wrote, “Do you see your condition how sad, miserable, wretched it is by nature? Do you see your remedy, as it lies only in Christ; and his precious blood?...[Are you] striving continually for a heart to believe, and close with Christ? This will evidence you indeed to be translated out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of Christ.”¹²⁴ Once again, the necessity of a person seeing the seriousness of sin and the “wretched” condition it bespeaks and the saving worth of Jesus, is evident.

This study shall endeavour to show that in some important ways, Flavel’s theology shifted through the course of his 41-year ministry. But as we have seen, a comparison of these quotations which appear in three of his major works which appeared over the last twenty years of his life demonstrates that on this particular point, his position remained fundamentally the same.¹²⁵ It would be possible to multiply citations, but lest I cite superfluously, it is accurate to say that this was consistently his position. He regularly conveyed the indispensable recognition of two spiritual realities to his unregenerate hearers.

¹²³ Ibid., 147. See also *Englands*, 69, 239.

¹²⁴ Flavel, *Fountain*, 204-5.

¹²⁵ Receiving Presbyterian ordination in the year 1650, Flavel did not publish anything until the year 1664. His publishing career spanned from 1664 till his death in 1691. Thus, analyzing his theology at roughly ten year intervals (1670, 1680, and 1690) should provide a balanced perspective of what he consistently taught.

It might be countered that it is possible to interpret Flavel as expanding the recognitions to more than two. Some passages seem to suggest that there were three or even four realities of which one must become conscious. For example, in the passage cited above in *Englands Duty*, Flavel wrote, “to this day they never saw sin in its vileness, much less their own special sin, nor Christ in his suitableness and necessity.”¹²⁶ Here Flavel seemed to expand upon the recognition of sinfulness by distinguishing between the vileness of sin and the recognition of personal complicity. However, it seems appropriate and efficient to group these features under the single heading of recognizing sinfulness. These are two facets of one reality.

What about when he seemed to add a fourth? Flavel said this in his *Coronation Sermon*:

Now, to make a soul truly willing to accept Christ’s Government, and give his consent to him, four things must be done upon, and by such a soul (1.) He must be convinced of his sin and misery...(2.) He must know and deliberate upon the terms of Christ...(3.) Upon Deliberation; there must appear to the soul that chuseth Christ...a preponderating good; that Christ with all his reproaches and sufferings, is better than sin with all its honours and pleasures...(4.) When all is done, there must be a Divine Mighty Influence upon the Will, without which men will never heartily consent to Christ’s terms...¹²⁷

In this case, Flavel slightly reworded the same recognitions and added a fourth which concerned the will bowing to Christ. The first point in this quotation clearly corresponds to point number one in the grid I posited. The second and third points essentially comprise the same step, that of realizing the saving ability of Christ. That is, the soul recognizes that one aspect of receiving Christ is to receive him upon his own terms. As for the fourth criterion, Flavel drew into the requirements a feature which man cannot

¹²⁶ Flavel, *Englands*, 336.

¹²⁷ Flavel, *Remains, Coronation Sermon*, 21.

produce by his own power, namely the altering of one's will. As I alluded to above, this is an instance where two of the three grids overlap. Thus, here we see an interplay between the two realities which the hearer must face (sin and Christ) with the three-fold state of man which the preacher must aim to effect which shall be introduced below. In brief, the reason he gave four states of the soul is because he included the expression "upon, and by such a soul" in the above quote. The two states of awareness are those which are recognized *by* the soul; the fourth element, an influence upon the will which leads to consenting to Christ's terms, is that which happens *upon* the soul, by the power of God.

Three Human Faculties

The second grid which Flavel posited concerns the cognitive, affectional, and volitional faculties of his hearer. Whereas the previous section dealt with the two realities the hearer must accept to be saved, this section concerns the minister's understanding of his hearer's internal landscape. This is a corollary to my earlier claim that knowing the mental configuration of a minister's hearers provided him targets at which to direct his proselytising arrows. There are three primary faculties within the human soul which Flavel claimed must be spiritually affected and subdued for a person to convert. It was his job to speak in such a way that his hearer's faculties were impacted, stirred up, and appropriately directed. The influencing of two of these three faculties lay within the domain of the minister. The third, as we shall see, was immune to the minister's persuasion.

Flavel argued that there were three human faculties: mind, affections, and will.¹²⁸ References to this tri-partite view of man are numerous. In 1685 Flavel wrote *Pneumatologia* which was his most thorough treatment of the human soul. In that work, which he wrote in order to “inform your minds, and quicken your affections,”¹²⁹ he claimed: “The Soul of Man is a vital, spiritual and immortal Substance, endowed with an Understanding, Will, and various Affections.”¹³⁰ Later in that treatise he said this about the human soul: “I find that God hath answerably endued and furnished it with an *Understanding, Will, and Affections*, whereby it is capable of being wrought upon, by the spirit in the way of Grace and Sanctification in this world.”¹³¹ A few years later, in the preface to *Englands Duty*, he wrote:

Thy soul, reader, is a magnificent structure built by Christ; such stately rooms as thy understanding, will, conscience and affections, are too good for any other to inhabit. If thou be in thy unregenerate state, then he solemnly demands in this text admission into the soul he made, by the consent of the will: which if thou refuse to give him, then witness is taken that Christ once more demanded entrance into thy soul which he made, and was denied it.¹³²

The inclusion of the conscience in this inventory seems to militate against the strict tri-partite view I posit. In short, Flavel classed the conscience as a subordinate function of the mind. In doing so he also described its function: “To my Understanding also, belongs my *Conscience*, a noble, Divine, and awfull power. By which I summon and judge my self, as at a solemn *Tribunal*, bind and loose, condemn and acquit my self and

¹²⁸ This was hardly a Puritan insight. For Augustine and Plato’s tri-partite view of man, see O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, 12-3, 52. Boone’s thesis contains an extended discussion of the Puritan’s so-called ‘faculty psychology,’ which concerns the number of and relationships between the various human faculties. Boone, *Evangelism*, 92-8. Cf. Hambrick-Stowe, “Practical Divinity and Spirituality,” 195; De Vries, *Bunyan Order of Salvation*, 70.

¹²⁹ Flavel, *Soul*, a1^{r-v}.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 10, 16.

¹³¹ Ibid., 44.

¹³² Flavel, *Englands*, To the Reader, A4^{r-v}. John Owen, a contemporary Puritan, provided an identical list of these faculties when he wrote, “The Holy Ghost...works upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections agreeably to their own natures.” Owen, *Mortification of Sinne*, 40.

actions, but still with an eye and respect to the judgment of God. Hence are my best comforts, and worst terrors.”¹³³ In the fifth sermon in the *Method* sermons, Flavel identified “the whole inner man” as consisting of the three faculties of the understanding/thoughts, will, and affections: “Nor is it limited to this or that faculty of the soul, but grace or life is poured into all the faculties: *behold all things are become new*, 2 Cor. 5.17. The understanding, will, thoughts, and affections are all renewed by it: the whole inner man is changed.”¹³⁴

Concerning the sequencing of these three faculties, Flavel always placed the mind or understanding as the incontrovertible entryway into the human soul. He put these words into Christ’s mouth at the beginning of the *Englands Duty* sermons: “I still stand spiritually and representatively in my *Ambassadors at the door*, (i.e.) the mind and conscience, the faculties and powers which are introductive into the whole soul. The word *Door* is here properly¹³⁵ put to signify those introductive faculties of the soul which are of a like use to it, as the Door is to the House.”¹³⁶ Flavel spoke of the three primary human faculties of the mind, affections, and the will, and claimed that the faculty which served as the entryway into the soul was the mind.¹³⁷

Mind

Since the mind is the front door of the soul, it was also the first faculty which had to be acted upon for a person to be converted. Flavel insisted on the importance of close thought and the importance of meditation upon the Gospel for the person who put his

¹³³ Flavel, *Soul*, 45. Cf. *ibid.*, 21; *Fountain*, 2; *Method*, 532.

¹³⁴ Flavel, *Method*, 96.

¹³⁵ This word reads “improperly” in the text of the 1689 edition, though this is clearly a misprint. Not only would the flow of thought be rendered nonsense had he intended “improperly,” but it is even less likely he would criticise Christ’s words.

¹³⁶ Flavel, *Englands*, 4.

¹³⁷ Flavel, *Reasonableness of Personal Reformation*, A4^v.

faith in Christ. In the *Fountain* sermons he advised, “the Spirit of God can make those means you are capable of using effectual, if he is pleased to concur with them...Become thinking men and women. Here all conversion begins.”¹³⁸ Ten years later when he preached the sermons within *Method*, he said, “Redeem some time every day for meditation: get out of the noise and clamour of the world...and seriously bethink your selves how the present state of your soul stands, and how it is like to go with you for ever: here all sound Conversion begins.”¹³⁹ He further stated, “if it be eternal life to know Christ, then it is eternal damnation, to be ignorant of Christ; as Christ is the door that opens heaven, so knowledge is the key, that opens Christ.”¹⁴⁰ By elevating the mind to such a place of prominence, Flavel undeniably laid out a rational approach to Christianity. However, it would be wrong to therefore label him a rationalist. Flavel would stridently disagree with the suggestion that the human mind on its own was able to discover saving truth, but he would affirm that the mind was the necessary starting point. For Flavel knowledge was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for attaining Christian salvation. In his understanding of Christian conversion, the entrance of knowledge was not merely important; it was integral.

It must be remembered that Flavel used numerous synonyms to reference the mind and affections. For example, in *Fountain* he stated that the function of the mind included the ability to understand, think, and reason.¹⁴¹ In *The Reasonableness of Personal Reformation* he added to this list the capacity for the mind to “recollect,

¹³⁸ Flavel, *Fountain*, 122. Cambers claimed that Puritans reckoned attendance at sermons to be, “a matter of urgent soteriological necessity”. Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 259.

¹³⁹ Flavel, *Method*, 273. See also *Fountain*, 600; *Englands*, 18.

¹⁴⁰ Flavel, *Fountain*, 5.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

animadvert, compare, infer, ponder and judge his own Actions.”¹⁴² The affections include the functioning of the heart, the emotions,¹⁴³ passions, feelings, and desires.¹⁴⁴ Flavel described the will by that one term only.

In *Pneumatologia*, Flavel defined the mind in the following way: “*It is a Faculty of the reasonable Soul, by which a man apprehends and judgeth all intelligible things.*”¹⁴⁵ For Flavel, the mind was not only the faculty which judged; he designated it the greatest faculty: “the mind, [is] the highest and noblest faculty of the soul; whereby we understand, think and reason.”¹⁴⁶ Flavel held that intellection was the most important ability in man. Without a properly functioning mind, a person was bound to remain in utter darkness. In *Method*, he designated this faculty as “the principle power of the soul, which is the mind and understanding.”¹⁴⁷ Using a colorful expression, he likened the function of the mind to the tongue as it tasted food. “This hearing of Christs voice implies...the work of understanding, which by the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.”¹⁴⁸ It would be hard to imagine higher praise for a faculty than that which he gives in *Method* when he said, “By the eye he [Jesus] means the practical judgment, the understanding faculty, which is the seat of principles, the common treasure of rules for practice, according unto which a mans life is formed, and his way is directed.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² Flavel, *Reasonableness*, 1.

¹⁴³ Although fairly rare, Flavel occasionally used the word “emotions” to describe the affections. Cf. *Soul*, 256; *Method*, 194; *Divine Conduct*, 263; *Englands*, 301. Lewis and Cohen equated these two terms as well: Lewis, *Genius of Puritanism*, 101; Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 28. Susan Karant-Nunn’s *The Reformation of Feeling* focuses on strategies which German clergy employed to catalyse the emotions through sermons on the passion of Christ. See esp. chapters 1-3.

¹⁴⁴ Flavel, *Method*, 458, 534, 561; *Soul*, 45; *Englands*, 132.

¹⁴⁵ Flavel, *Soul*, 19.

¹⁴⁶ Flavel, *Fountain*, 119. Other synonyms Flavel used for this ability are: “wit, reason...opinion, judgment.” *Soul*, 22.

¹⁴⁷ Flavel, *Method*, 583; *Soul*, 19.

¹⁴⁸ Flavel, *Englands*, 278.

¹⁴⁹ Flavel, *Method*, 583.

Perhaps the most important function of the mind was its ability to positively apprehend spiritual truth. Flavel called this function the product of “cogitation.”¹⁵⁰ A later chapter shall deal with the concept of multiple levels of apprehension upon the faculties, but for now we must notice the all-important potential of the mind to grasp spiritual truth. Flavel also wrote about the mind being “the eye of the soul”¹⁵¹ in *Fountain*. Twenty years later in *Englands Duty*, he wrote the following about the moment just before the Holy Spirit altered the will of a person: “There’s a New Eye created in the mind...Oh that eye! That precious Eye of Faith which shews the soul as it were a new world, a world of new and ravishing objects...All the Angels in Heaven, Ministers, and *Libraries* upon Earth, cannot create such an Eye, give such an Illumination.”¹⁵² In *Englands Duty* also he claimed that men were converted “by the sight of the excelling glory of Spiritual things.”¹⁵³ We shall return to this concept of illumination and the “new eye” created in the mind, but for now I point out the potential for the mind to spiritually apprehend truth. Clearly, something determinative must happen within this faculty for conversion to take place.

Affections

As was just demonstrated, Flavel taught that the mind was the front door to the soul. If the mind is the front door to the soul, what is the next faculty found inside the figurative house? Flavel argued that the affections lay inside the entry point of the mind. We shall see in the next section that the will is the last faculty which must be influenced before a person is converted. Logically then, the affections must occupy the territory

¹⁵⁰ Flavel, *Soul*, 20-2.

¹⁵¹ Flavel, *Fountain*, 119; *Soul*, 19.

¹⁵² Flavel, *Englands*, 61.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 62.

between the entrance of information into the mind and the bowing of the will to receive Christ. How did Flavel define the affections? In *Pneumatologia* he wrote:

These Passions and *Affections* of my Soul are of great use and dignity. I find them as manifold as there are considerations of good and evil. They are the strong and sensible motions of my Soul, according to my apprehensions of good and evil. By them my Soul is capable of union with the highest good. By love and delight I am capable of enjoying God, and resting in him as the Centre of my Soul.¹⁵⁴

Flavel suggested that the whole purpose of the affections was to prepare humans for fellowship with God. The closest definition in this paragraph is found in the phrase “the strong and sensible motions of my Soul,” though the affections are more than this.

Flavel listed some of the affections: “All the affections and passions of Hope, Desire, Love, Delight, Fear, Sorrow and the rest, are all rooted in it [the soul], and spring out of it...”¹⁵⁵ Later in *Pneumatologia* Flavel also added to this list the emotions of “*Fear, Grief, Indignation, Jealousie, Anger, &c.*”¹⁵⁶

Perhaps the best way to practically define this concept would be to say that one is affectionate about that which his inner being most delights in and most relishes; or most despises and loathes. The affections can be functioning rightly or wrongly in relation to God. Flavel spoke about the affections being disordered when he wrote that for some people their, “affections [are] bewitched to their Lusts”.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, Flavel urged his hearers to stir up their own affections in such a way that they might would experience Christian conversion.¹⁵⁸ He stated:

¹⁵⁴ Flavel, *Method*, 45.

¹⁵⁵ Flavel, *Soul*, 13.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵⁷ Flavel, *Method*, 74.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *Fountain*, 271, 273, 339.

Be filled with tender affections toward the souls of men with whom you treat for reconciliation: you had need be men of *bowels* as well as men of *brains*: you see a multitude of poor souls upon the brink of eternal misery, and they know it not, but promise themselves peace, and fill themselves with vain hopes of heaven: and is there a more moving, melting spectacle in the world than this!¹⁵⁹

This paragraph gets at the heart of Flavel's concept of the affections. The affections comprise the portion of the soul which feels deeply. It is the portion deeply touched by certain mental content which enters the mind. Flavel was concerned to exert an influence upon not only his hearer's minds, but upon their affections as well. Flavel said:

Believe it sirs, if Christ hold you to himself by no other tye than the slender thread of a single conviction, if he have not interest in your hearts and affections, as well as in your understandings and consciences: if you be men of great light and strong unmortified lusts: if you profess Christ with your tongues, and worship the world with your hearts: a man may say of you without the gift of prophecie what the prophet said of *Hazael*, I know what you will do in the day of temptation.¹⁶⁰

Having elaborated upon the front door of the mind and the front room of the affections, we proceed to the last faculty.

Will

The will is the final faculty which must move for a person to be converted, whilst simultaneously being that which no human hand can move. In *Englands Duty*, Flavel stated, "We [the minister] preach, and pray, and you hear; but there is no motion Christward, until the Spirit of God...blow upon them; till he illuminate the understanding with divine light, and bow the will by an almighty power; there can be no Spiritual motion heaven-ward."¹⁶¹ Flavel also claimed that the understanding must be

¹⁵⁹ Flavel, *Method*, 64. This statement flies in the face of Brauer's claim that Puritan ministers were unkind to those who had not been converted. He wrote: "Almost every Puritan of stature appears to have had a profound conversion experience. They preached for it, they sought it, they recounted it in spiritual biographies and in hagiographies, they checked its authenticity with those already converted, and they disdained those who had not experienced it." Brauer, "From Puritanism to Revivalism," 230.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 561.

¹⁶¹ Flavel, *Englands*, 329.

illuminated and the will must bow by way of divine power.¹⁶² In *Method*, we see the will fall into its proper order amongst the three faculties when he stated, “the exceeding greatness of Gods power goes forth to produce it [the new creature]; and indeed no less is required to enlighten the blind mind, break the rocky heart, and bow the stubborn will of man; and the same almighty power which at first created it, is necessary to be continued every moment to preserve and continue it.”¹⁶³ How do we define this faculty which Flavel insisted was incorrigible and unyielding? He laid out a relatively simple definition of the will in *Pneumatologia* when he wrote:

God hath endued the Soul of man not only with an *Understanding* to discern and direct, but also with a *Will* to govern, moderate and over-rule the actions of Life. The Will is a faculty of the rational Soul, whereby a man either chuseth, or refuseth the things which the understanding discerns, and knows. This is a very high and noble power of the Soul. The understanding seems to bear the same relation to the Will, as a grave Counsellour doth to a great *Prince*.¹⁶⁴

The will is that faculty which governs, moderates, overrules, chooses, and refuses that which is known in the mind. I stress this point because if the mind were evacuated of

¹⁶² This statement reveals something of Flavel’s profound insight into the nature of conversion. I shall explicate upon this at length in a later chapter. For now, the substance of this thought is that there are actually two levels at which the mind and affections must be informed and stirred. On the other hand, the renewal of the will at the point of conversion only happens on one level – the second, or spiritual level. Norman Fiering claimed that Flavel’s understanding of the interaction between the mind and will was a “curious blend”. After he cited Flavel’s claim that the mind was “the leading faculty” which dictated the direction of the will he pointed out the apparent inconsistency when Flavel wrote that “The understanding gives the will only ‘a directive light...pointing as it were....at what it ought to chuse.” Fiering continued: “It is as though there were two wills in Flavel’s analysis, one that follows the judgments of intellect and another which can only obey the judgments of God.” Fiering, “Will and Intellect,” 538. Fiering is exactly right – there was the will before conversion, which would not move toward God even in the face if compelling reasons, and the will which was ultimately directed by God, which gladly moved toward Him when God began to work: “Tis not forced or driven, *but it comes*: being made willing in the day of Gods power.” Flavel, *Method*, 195. He also claimed that Flavel was “confused” as to the role of the conscience: “Flavel’s confusion is apparent when he comes to discuss conscience, which he calls the ‘Chief *Counselor*, *Guide*, and *Director*...” Ibid., 539. The confusion is merely apparent (though inconsequential) as Flavel taught that the conscience was a sub-set of the mind.

¹⁶³ Flavel, *Method*, 454-5.

¹⁶⁴ Flavel, *Soul*, 23; Cf. 20.

information, the will would have no raw material on which to perform any of these functions.

Flavel's statements about the will suggest that whilst defining it is fairly simple, getting it to budge was a herculean task. The movement of the will toward Christ was vital for Flavel because when the will bowed (or was *renewed*¹⁶⁵), the person inexorably put their faith in Christ and experienced conversion. Flavel said that God only looks for one thing in "*the soul that is coming to Christ*"¹⁶⁶ and it is this: "The eye of God is first and mainly upon the will; if that be sincere and right for God, small things will be accepted; and if not, the greatest shall be abhorred..."¹⁶⁷ In conclusion then, the will is the third primary faculty which constitutes the human soul. I must briefly highlight a point of difference between myself and another interpreter of Flavel concerning the number of faculties.

Boone's dissertation on Puritan evangelism provides a thorough and capable discussion of the subject of Flavel's view of the human faculties.¹⁶⁸ Boone picked up on a statement that Yuille made regarding whether Flavel held to a bi-partite¹⁶⁹ or a tri-partite division of man. Boone stated:

Yuille suggests that 'Flavel seems to fluctuate between a bi-partite and tri-partite division. In the final analysis, the difference is unimportant given the fact that the function of the affections remains the same in both paradigms'. We suggest that a careful examination of the places in which Flavel emphasizes the intellect and will to the exclusion of the affections, in light of the places in which he is trying to be comprehensive in his definitions, reveals that he indeed holds to a 'tri-partite division.' Yuille's comment that the difference between the two views is

¹⁶⁵ Flavel, *Exposition of Assemblies Catechism*, 68.

¹⁶⁶ Flavel, *Method*, 381.

¹⁶⁷ Flavel, *Fountain*, 362. Cf. Cohen, *God's Caress*, 29.

¹⁶⁸ Boone, *Evangelism*, 92-131.

¹⁶⁹ The bi-partite position usually reduces the faculties to that of the mind and will.

unimportant is true in Flavel's case precisely because he actually holds to the 'tri-partite' view.¹⁷⁰

I agree with Boone on this point, and I would add that it is difficult to see how a person can "fluctuate" between a bi-partite and a tri-partite division of the human constitution. If Flavel indicated that his view had changed, that would be a relevant consideration, but there is no evidence to suggest that Flavel altered his view of the human constitution. If the question we are posing is, "Did Flavel maintain that the human soul is comprised of two or three primary faculties?" the answer is emphatically a tri-partite division. Flavel held to this view of man consisting of mind, affections, and will. It was to these specific targets that his arrows were trained whilst he preached and published.

The reason Flavel only mentioned two faculties at certain points is because he understood the affections to be actuated through the front door of the mind.¹⁷¹ For the affections to be aroused, information must pass through the temporally prior door of the mind.¹⁷² After all, what is the *stoff* that is stirring up the affections if there is no cognitive content? Later we shall see that the mind is also indispensable to the will's making choices, though what enters the mind does not necessarily determine that which the will choose. Mental content was a necessary condition for the will to choose Christ, but it was not a sufficient condition.

According to Flavel, for persons to convert their three faculties had to be powerfully influenced by God. When the will was renewed, it then directed the other two faculties and caused them to undergo a total renovation in disposition. Of the change which takes place in the mind, Watkins wrote: "When the gospel broke on a man it

¹⁷⁰ Boone, *Evangelism*, 98; citing Yuille, *Inner*, 35-6n14.

¹⁷¹ This is an idea to which most other Puritans held. Cf. Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 97.

¹⁷² Howard, *Clear Waters*, 8.

brought such a reorientation that all previous understanding appeared to have been inadequate and superficial, to have been going on mainly at an intellectual or ‘notional’ level only.”¹⁷³ In addition to changes in the *kind* of knowledge a person possessed, Flavel would fully agree with Questier: “Conversion came about by a ‘simultaneous seizure’ of all man’s faculties by grace.”¹⁷⁴ When the Spirit of God gripped a person’s three faculties, he was converted. Questier also supplied a simple, yet sufficient definition for the term conversion. He wrote: “In Christian theology [conversion] indicates initially the point at which man enters into a new relationship with Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit...and then subsequently embarks on a pilgrimage of grace.”¹⁷⁵ It was this change that Flavel was primarily interested in aiming to bring about in his preaching and books.

The Pathway to Conversion

According to Flavel, there were numerous theological phases through which one must pass to be converted. As we progress through these steps we shall observe something noticeably distinct from the two major grids explicated heretofore. We shall notice that these articles are *mixed* as to the hearer’s level of self-awareness. Whilst in the first grid, the hearer was aware of whether or not he saw his sins or that Christ was the only Saviour. In the second grid, the pastor was aware that he must aim for these targets. In the third grid, which is comprised of numerous theological states, as the hearer passed through these theological states some phases were consciously known to him whilst others were unknown, or secret. This distinction resolves a dilemma within scholarly debates. In Patricia Caldwell’s *The Puritan Conversion Narrative*, she objected to the concept of an extended Puritan morphology. She wrote: “contemporary

¹⁷³ Watkins, *Puritan Experience*, 97. Watkins added: “Not that ‘notional’ knowledge was to be despised, for although inadequate in itself it formed the essential foundation for the other.” *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁷⁴ Questier, *Conversion*, 66.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

descriptions of New England admissions do concentrate on the two basic stages of repentance, rather than on the elaborate five- or ten-step morphology of conversion that present-day scholarship claims was demanded in public testimony.”¹⁷⁶ My presentation of what Flavel taught alleviates the tension between attempting to determine whether there were two, five, ten, or more steps through which the convert must pass. The key nuance here is between the elements which were required in public profession and those which were unconsciously experienced. I must add several qualifiers before we investigate the third grid.

First, we must bear in mind that the steps from “lost” to “saved” on Flavel’s scheme are mysterious. It is difficult to situate every movement along a temporal continuum, especially since several of these features are chronologically simultaneous (though logically sequential). This was especially the case when the person’s will began to bow to Christ. When the will bowed to Christ, numerous events transpired in an instant. Flavel’s soteriological scheme was exact, but only up to the point that God revealed how these events unfolded in time. When necessary Flavel was not afraid to appeal to the mysterious movement of the wind in John chapter three.¹⁷⁷ Sometimes these phases took place in the subject in a matter of moments, at other times conversions took decades to fully transpire.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, not everyone *sensibly* experienced all of these events. Flavel described this reality thus:

¹⁷⁶ Caldwell, *Puritan Conversion Narrative*, 67. Cf. Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 438; Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 68-72, 90-1. Brauer posited seven necessary stages. Brauer, “From Puritanism to Revivalism,” 233. Cohen argued for seven: knowledge of the Law and Gospel, a sight of sin, sorrow for sin, desperation, faith, illumination, and perseverance. Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 79-80.

¹⁷⁷ Flavel, *Method*, 99, 103-4, 434.

¹⁷⁸ Robert Murray M’Cheyne recorded a remarkable account of a man who heard Flavel preach a sermon and was converted through the remembrance of it 85 years after it was delivered: “The excellent John Flavel was minister of Dartmouth, in England. One day he preached from these words: ‘If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.’ when Mr. Flavel rose to pronounce the blessing, he paused, and said, ‘How shall I bless this whole assembly, when every person in it who loves

Believers are the birth or off-spring of the Spirit, who produceth the new creature in them in an unintelligible manner even to themselves. So far is it above their own ability to produce, that it is above their capacity to understand the way of its production: as if you should ask, do you know from whence the wind comes? no: do you know whither it goes? no, but you hear and feel it when it blows? yes, why so is every one that is born of the Spirit: he feels the efficacy and discerns the effects of the Spirit on his own soul, but cannot understand or describe the manner of its production: this is not only above the carnal, but above the renewed mind to comprehend.¹⁷⁹

As emphasized above, it must be reiterated that whilst Flavel believed that people had to be aware of the two chief convictions of sin and Christ, he did not suggest that a person must necessarily be able to articulate every one of the following steps as they happened. In other words, the two conscious recognitions were indispensable, whereas some of the phases which we shall elaborate upon could be passed through unnoticed. Indeed, Flavel said that many times people were not fully aware of exactly how or when they were converted. Defending this idea Biblically by quoting the gospel of John, Flavel wrote:

The wind bloweth where it listeth...but thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth... just so it is with him that is born of the spirit: the holy Spirit of God, whose nature and operations we understand but little of, comes from heaven, quickens, and influences our souls, beats down and mortifies our lusts by his almighty power: these effects of the Spirit in us we experimentally feel, and sensibly discern; but how the Spirit of God first entred into, and quickened our souls, and produced this new creature in them, we understand little.

not the Lord Jesus is anathema maranatha?’ The solemnity of this address deeply affected the audience. In the congregation was a lad named Luke Short, about fifteen years old, a native of Dartmouth. Shortly after he went to sea, and sailed to America, where he passed the rest of his life. His life was lengthened far beyond the usual term. When a hundred years old, he was able to work on his farm, and his mind was not at all impaired. He had lived all this time in carelessness and sin; he was a sinner a hundred years old, and ready to die accursed. One day, as he sat in his field, he busied himself in reflecting on his past life. He thought of the days of his youth. His memory fixed on Mr. Flavel’s sermon, a considerable part of which he remembered. The earnestness of the minister, the truths spoken, the effect on the people, all came fresh to his mind. He felt that he had not loved the Lord Jesus; he feared the dreadful anathema; he was deeply convinced of sin, was brought to the blood of sprinkling. He lived to his one hundred and sixteenth year, giving every evidence of being born again. Ah! how faithful God is to his word. He did let none of his words fall to the ground.” M’Cheyne, *Works* 2, 221-2. Cf. Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 441.

¹⁷⁹ Flavel, *Method*, 104.

He concluded by writing, “Therefore is the life of the new creature called a hidden life, the nature of that life is not only hidden totally from all carnal men, but in a very great measure it is an hidden and unknown life unto spiritual men, though themselves be the subjects of it.”¹⁸⁰ It is at this very point that we are enabled to make sense of the unity and diversity evident in Flavel’s proselytising. Although Flavel held that, theologically, people who were being converted usually passed through ten (as we shall see) states, he claimed that they must be conscious of only two realities. I would argue that this is why Flavel’s writings were so well-received during the Great Awakening (the argument of chapter five of this thesis). Flavel successfully packaged abstruse theological matter in a highly accessible manner.

Second, it is worth mentioning that in the places where Flavel was somewhat imprecise with his language, we do well to remember that these messages were delivered and subsequently printed as sermons, not as divinity tomes. It is fair to grant Flavel some leeway in not being as academically precise as we would like. However, in general we find a remarkably consistent and coherent presentation of his theological convictions, excepting, of course, those points within his theology where his views changed.¹⁸¹

Perhaps the best way to summarize the three faculties of a person would be in terms of seeing the excellencies of Christ. At times Flavel described peoples’ conversion as their seeing Christ for the first time as a most excellent and lovely being – Christ was seen in a new way, or with new eyes. When the mind was informed the glory of Christ

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 434.

¹⁸¹ Howard wrote this about Flavel, “Because he believed in a God of order he was able to produce a system which had unity and order.” Howard, *Clear Waters*, 80.

was known. When the affections were stirred, Christ was seen as lovely. When the will bowed to Christ, his glories were felt, loved, and embraced – the person’s internal being moved toward Christ. Laying out Flavel’s scheme in this manner logically introduces a fourth condition which is prior to the acceptance of content into the mind, namely the state of ignorance. Before a person accepted the content of revelation, the front door of the mind was not open. For Flavel, this state was the most lamentable and bleak. Thus, he saw a major part of his pastoral role as that of informing his hearer’s minds. Before addressing Flavel’s steps to conversion we shall address two important factors: various types of knowledge and the *ordo salutis*.

Several kinds of knowledge

When Flavel thought it necessary to graphically illustrate an important point, he did not hesitate to use gruesome language. He therefore provided his congregants with a striking image to describe the poor benighted soul who, spiritually speaking, didn’t know his right hand from his left. This was the way Flavel described the ignorant person who was not only blind to the things of God, but also to his own condition. Flavel stated that it was a terrible judgment from God, “when a person’s leading directive power [is] blind; Judge what a sad and dangerous state such a soul is in. Just like a fiery high mettled Horse, whose eyes are out, furiously carrying his rider among rocks, pits, and dangerous precipices...The soul that’s so blinded, can neither see sin, nor a Saviour.”¹⁸² Perhaps Flavel reasoned that if his people didn’t have eyes to see their sin, he could at least display before their imaginative eyes a comparable horror in an effort to rouse them. In quotations like this, which one nineteenth-century reviewer of Flavel’s writings

¹⁸² Flavel, *Fountain*, 119-20.

called, “remarkably graphic,”¹⁸³ we also get a glimpse of Flavel’s vivid power of imagination and striking use of imagery.¹⁸⁴ Such a ghastly image was sure to stick in his hearer’s minds. He claimed that it was inscrutable how to account for the difference between those who heard with faith and those who were spiritually dead while they yet had a physical heartbeat.¹⁸⁵ Elaborating further on the desperate condition of those who were dead spiritually, he compared them to amoral creatures who possessed the rudimentary ability to eschew danger, and in so doing were better off than Flavel’s ignorant and blind hearers: “The poorest fly or silliest worm will shun danger: the wrath of God hangs over them in the threatnings, but they tremble not at it: Hell is but a little before them, they are upon the very precipice of eternal ruine; yet will use no means to avoid it.”¹⁸⁶

At this point, I must introduce an important nuance into the discussion. Flavel posited four different types of knowledge a person might have, and only one of them was that which saved. First, some people had no knowledge of Christian truth whatever because they had no access to it. In this category of ignorance were those who dwelt in Stygian darkness, who knew absolutely nothing of God or the Bible. Flavel had a measure of compassion towards such people, suggesting that their total ignorance partially explained their enmity to God: “*ignorance is the usual cause of enmity to*

¹⁸³ J. B. W., *Evangelical Magazine*, 321.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Stoughton, *History of religion* 4, 404; Tulloch, *English Puritanism*, 342; Chang, *John Flavel*, 163-4.

¹⁸⁵ Flavel, *Englands*, 310.

¹⁸⁶ Flavel, *Method*, 533-4.

Christ.”¹⁸⁷ Later he wrote, “*there is forgiveness with God, for such as oppose Christ out of ignorance.*”¹⁸⁸

Second, Flavel spoke of people who knew Christian doctrine but rejected it. England largely consisted of people who already had the basic furniture of Christianity in their minds. Most of Flavel’s hearers knew about God, Jesus, the Bible, sin, and the cross.¹⁸⁹ It was this group that Flavel suggested were in a state of culpable ignorance.¹⁹⁰ The key difference between the first and second types of ignorance is that the latter group rejected the message they heard preached.¹⁹¹ This distinction is implied in *Fountain* when he wrote: “the minds of sinners are naturally blinded by ignorance...and their affections bewitched to their lusts...and while it is thus, no arguments or intreaties can possibly prevail to bring them off from the ways of sin to Christ.”¹⁹² Flavel did not say that the cure was for them to hear the Bible preached, as would be the case of someone unacquainted with the Bible. He said that their minds were blind. This implies

¹⁸⁷ Flavel, *Fountain*, 402.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, *Englands*, 50.

¹⁸⁹ It is worth mentioning at this point that Flavel believed that converted people remained ignorant of many things after conversion but not those ingredients essential for salvation. Cf. *Fountain*, 186.

¹⁹⁰ The clearest instance of this appeared in the following statement: “The Sun shines forth in its glory, but the blind see no glory in it: the fault is not in the Sun but in the eye...Many there are that see no beauty in Christ, nor necessity of him; though both are so plainly and evidently revealed in our Gospel...though we Preach [the Gospel] in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, using all plainness of speech...yet it is hid from many under our ministry: ’tis hid from their understandings, they see no glory in it; and hid from their hearts, they feel no power in it” Flavel, *Method*, 567.

¹⁹¹ This distinction harkens back to Luther and two of his greatest influences, Augustine and Lombard. In Luther’s commentary on the book of Hebrews he made reference to the difference between several varieties of faith and belief: *credere deum* contrasted with *fides acquisita*. The editor of the commentary includes this extended footnote: “(a) BELIEF: Peter Lombard (*Sent.* III, dist., 23, cat. 4) following Augustine says, 1. *Credere deo* means to believe that the things God says are true, in other words, to believe in God’s Word. 2. *Credere deum* means to believe in the existence of God. 3. *Credere in deum* means to love him by faith, to approach him in faith, to cleave to him in faith and be a member of his body. (b) FAITH Biel (*Sent.* III, dist., 23 qu., art 1, lit) uses the terms *fides acquisita* and *fides infusa*, as the faith which the natural man acquires for himself, and the faith which is created by God in the human soul. The *fides acquisita* is possible for a man to acquire without the operation of divine grace, and Luther called this *fides humana* and dismissed its value out of hand.” Atkinson, *Luther: Early Theological Works*, 208-9. Flavel distinguished between *credere deum* (no salvific knowledge) and *credere in deum* (salvific knowledge).

¹⁹² Flavel, *Method*, 73-4.

that they knew Christian truth claims but rejected them anyway. The solution for this condition is what he called the healing of the mind: “The mind of a natural man hath not only a native blindness, by reason whereof it cannot discern the things of the Spirit, but also a natural enmity...So that until the mind be healed, and enlightened by Jesus Christ, the natural faculty can no more discern the things of the spirit than the sensitive faculty can discern the things of reason.”¹⁹³

The third type of person was the one who knew and believed Christian truth but it was not a saving faith. We might say that this person had a ‘historic faith,’ that is, he believed the central tenets of Christianity but that truth had not affected his life in a way compatible with a Christian.¹⁹⁴ In *Method* Flavel called this mere assent: “Assent is too low to contain the essence of saving faith, it is found in the unregenerate as well as the regenerate: yea, in devils as well as men *Jam.2.19*. ‘tis supposed and included in justifying faith, but it is not the justifying or saving act...*Assent* widens the nature of faith too much.”¹⁹⁵ Fourth, Flavel asserted that the final category of knowledge was saving knowledge. He called this acceptance: “*Acceptance*, which saith, I take Christ in all his offices to be mine...[this] belongs to all true believers, and to none but true believers”.¹⁹⁶

The ordo salutis

At this point it is necessary for us to turn our attention to Flavel’s understanding of the *ordo salutis*. This shall serve as a helpful guide as we navigate through the

¹⁹³ Flavel, *Fountain*, 100.

¹⁹⁴ On the difference between saving and historic faith, see Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 95; Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 43.

¹⁹⁵ Flavel, *Method*, 126-7.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

successive stages through which the sinner must pass toward obtaining salvation.

Richard Muller provided a basic definition of this Latin expression: “*order of salvation*;
a term applied to the temporal order of causes and effects through which the salvation of
the sinner is accomplished.”¹⁹⁷ Berkhof wrote:

When we speak of an *ordo salutis*, we do not forget that the work of applying the grace of God to the individual sinner is a unitary process, but simply stress the fact that various movements can be distinguished in the process, that the work of the application of redemption proceeds in a definite and reasonable order, and that God does not impart the fullness of His salvation to the sinner in a single act.¹⁹⁸

He then elaborated on this: “It aims at describing in their logical order, and also in their interrelations, the various movements of the Holy Spirit in the application of the work of redemption. The emphasis is not on what man does in appropriating the grace of God, but on what God does in applying it.”¹⁹⁹ Although there are numerous ways in which the *ordo* may be constituted,²⁰⁰ the most common Calvinistic order is: “effectual calling, regeneration, faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification.”²⁰¹

Although Flavel would have given his assent to this theological outline, I shall present his theology as an adaptation and expansion of this standard *ordo*. The reason for this is because Flavel spoke not only of the usual elements (justification,

¹⁹⁷ Muller, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, “Ordo salutis.” s.v., 215. Cf. Gonzalez, *Essential Theological Terms*, 123-4. Romans 8:29-30 provided Christian theologians with the prototypical *ordo salutis*: “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

¹⁹⁸ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 416.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 416. For his discussion, see pp. 415-23.

²⁰⁰ Olson, *Mosaic of Christian Belief*, 284; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 417. In addition to a Calvinistic *ordo salutis*, there are also those of the Arminian, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic varieties. Olson, *Mosaic*, 278-86; Dorman, *Faith for all Seasons*, 238-47, 250-3.

²⁰¹ Letham, *Union with Christ*, 89. Cf. Jeon, *Calvin and Federal Vision*, 36; Dorman, *A Faith*, 247. Wallace claimed that use of the *ordo* was a key approach for the Puritans: “Two schemes for organizing its topics especially appealed to Puritans: the order of salvation and the biblical covenants.” Wallace, “Puritan polemical divinity,” 210.

sanctification, etc.) but he also added others along the path to salvation (e.g. awakening and illumination). Flavel spoke of these occurrences as if they had lives of their own. Where are these elements, which Flavel insisted were vital to a person's conversion, to fit in? Though Flavel's approach departs from the *ordo*'s customary usage (through expansion) there is no reason to think this is off-limits. This is the case for two reasons.

First, there is room to be flexible within the *ordo* as this manner of structuring the steps to salvation is, according to John Frame, "mainly a pedagogical device".²⁰² Frame went on to write: "We should be flexible as to what goes into the *ordo* and what does not...As you go through the various items on the list, there is no consistent principle of ordering. Some items precede other items because the first comes earlier in time, the other later. That is the case with effectual calling and glorification." He continued in more depth:

[Some] items on the list precede others because one is a cause, the other an effect, as with regeneration and faith...And still other pairs of events are simply concurrent or simultaneous blessings, like justification and adoption. So, the 'order' means different things: sometimes cause and effect, sometimes earlier and later, sometimes instrument and object, sometimes mere concurrence.²⁰³

Given the inherent ambiguity in the *ordo*, it seems warranted to expand or contract elements as necessary to gain a better understanding of a writer's theology.

Second, there are debates over and difficulties with the proper use of the *ordo*. For example, what role does union with Christ play in soteriology, and where does it fit? Letham wrote: "The problem is that union with Christ does not seem to fit into it very

²⁰² Frame, *Salvation Belongs*, 183.

²⁰³ Frame, *Salvation Belongs*, 183. See pp. 176-228 for an extended discussion of the *ordo*. The concept of the *ordo salutis*, then, was developed in Post-Reformation theology, although the precise 'order' of the doctrines varied considerably from scholar to scholar. McGowan, "Justification and Ordo Salutis," 152.

easily. Indeed, John Murray, in his book *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*...indicated that it was difficult to decide how to handle the matter.”²⁰⁴ In terms of the ordering of the various components, Letham argued that the Westminster Assembly “did not discuss a rigorous logical order”. He also claimed that some Calvinistic scholars have “raised questions about the *ordo salutis*” and that Richard Gaffin of Westminster Seminary “has cautiously suggested the possibility it needed recasting.”²⁰⁵ Gonzalez agreed with this sentiment when he wrote, “Any description or definition of the *ordo salutis* must remain tentative and flexible.”²⁰⁶ All of this puts us on safe ground to slightly broaden the *ordo* in an effort to improve our understanding of what constituted salvation for Flavel.

Once his hearer was brought over the indispensable threshold of the door (knowledge entering the mind), Flavel preached so as to lead his hearer by the hand through these stages. It is important to bear in mind that although several of these steps seem to be chronologically simultaneous, they are logically separate. We should also remember that the two necessary recognitions of sin and salvation through Christ are mixed amongst these various stages of movement. How many steps are there? Lest I stretch Flavel’s writings out on a procrustean bed and lop off those chunks of evidence which do not fit my grid, I *cautiously* assert that the number of steps in this process is ten. The steps which I shall now describe are: awakening, enlightening, illumination, conviction, and regeneration. Once the step of regeneration is reached, the rest of the dominoes quickly fall in this order: faith and repentance, union with Christ,

²⁰⁴ Letham, *Union*, 89.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 2, 89.

²⁰⁶ Gonzales, *Terms*, 124.

justification, sanctification, and assurance of salvation.²⁰⁷ We turn now to the first link in the chain, awakening.

Awakening

The first effect which must take place within a person's soul was called awakening. In *Method*, Flavel wrote, "And thus we see in what glorious acts, the efficacy of the word discovers it self upon the hearts of men, and all these acts lie in order to each other: for until the soul be awakened it cannot be enlightened..."²⁰⁸ Awakening was therefore the seminal event when the preached (or written²⁰⁹) word came home to a person with particular power. This was when the complacent sinner was roused by a truth from the Scriptures. Seaver wrote this about the link between the preached word and its first effects upon the soul: "For many of the converts the first consciousness of the workings of the spirit came during or after hearing the Word plainly but effectually preached."²¹⁰ However, Flavel claimed that it was not the minister, per se, who awakened, but the word: "We can reason with sinners and plead with their souls; but awaken them we cannot, open their hearts we cannot...we have no dominion over your consciences: The keys of the doors of your souls hang not at our girdles, but are in the hands of Christ."²¹¹ Flavel elaborated on what awakening entailed when he described it thus: "Next let us see wherein the efficacy of the word upon the souls of men principally consisteth...First, It hath an awakening efficacy upon secure and sleepy sinners: it

²⁰⁷ A sub-set of assurance of salvation is confidence that one is elect.

²⁰⁸ Flavel, *Method*, 361.

²⁰⁹ Cambers is correct to claim that, "Reformation theology and iconography frequently described and depicted faith as if it came through the printed book, as if God spoke to the believer directly through the pages of the Bible." Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 2. Cf. 7, 260. Brauer argued that, "the Puritan insisted on a strictly linguistic mode of exposition and interpretation. Only the written and spoken word could be trusted as an adequate vehicle for Christian faith." Brauer, "From Puritanism to Revivalism," 229.

²¹⁰ Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships*, 173. Cf. Cohen, *God's Caress*, 91, 162-200.

²¹¹ Flavel, *Englands*, 140.

rouzes the Conscience, and brings a man to a sense and feeling apprehension, the first effectual jog or touch of the word startles the drowsie Conscience.”²¹²

Flavel suggested that the awakening effect was that which caused a man to be roused from his slumber. Awakening may be likened to a person shaking the arm of another who is asleep. The key idea is that one was awakened to danger. What was less auspicious about this effect is that it was often ineffectual – awakening was a very brief impression caused by the Word, but it did not necessarily last. Flavel wrote this about young children being awakened: “There is frequently an hopeful appearance of grace, they make conscience of sins, and duties: they have sometimes notable rouzings and awakenings under the word...and after all this, youthful lusts and vanities are found to stifle and choak these hopeful beginnings, and the work seems to stand (it may be some years) at a pause.”²¹³ If one was to be saved he must not only be awakened, but also pass into the second state as well.

Enlightening

The second stage of enlightening commenced if and when a person passed beyond awakening. The passage already quoted made the point that enlightening came after awakening, “for until the soul be awakened it cannot be enlightened.”²¹⁴ What did enlightening entail? Flavel defined enlightening as the point when God began to persuade a person that the content of the Bible was true:

Men can only teach *objectively*, by propounding truth to the understanding; but they cannot enlighten the faculty it self as God doth...he giveth man understanding as well as instructions to be understood: he opens the eyes of the

²¹² Flavel, *Method*, 360.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 77.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 361.

understanding, as well as propoundeth the object, And thus we may discern and distinguish the teachings of God, from all other teachings.²¹⁵

Enlightening was when a person was gripped with the following realization: “This word comes from God and not merely the preacher.”

Flavel identified the instrument of enlightening as the ordinances: “Attend upon the Ordinances of the Gospel diligently; that’s Gods enlightening instrument...”²¹⁶ He went on to liken this event to the eyes opening: “And if ever you will have your eyes opened, allow your selves time to ponder, and consider what you hear.”²¹⁷ In another place, Flavel reiterated that the Word was the instrument of enlightening: “It [the Word] hath an awakening efficacy upon secure and sleepy sinners...an enlightening efficacy upon the minds of men...”²¹⁸ Although the ordinance of the Word was vital at every point along the continuum to conversion, the Puritans were not guilty of “Bibleolatry,” worshipping the Bible. This sort of criticism has been laid to their charge, but it displays a misunderstanding of their view of the Bible. Flavel expressed the importance of the preached Word, which was one of the ordinances, in this way: “When we go into a boat, ’tis not with an intention to dwell and rest there, but to ferry us over the water, where our business lies.”²¹⁹ The *telos* was not the Bible but the glory of God through changed lives by means of conversion. It is, however, fair to say that the Bible was indispensable to salvation, as it was the content-laden instrument of conversion.

Again, it must be stressed that a person could be awakened and enlightened, and yet not be converted. These two states could attain in an unregenerate person: “the

²¹⁵ Ibid., 400.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 591.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 360-1.

²¹⁹ Flavel, *Englands*, 426. Flavel also wrote, “this efficacy is not inherent in the Word itself,” Ibid., 289. See also *Fountain*, 121, 173.

preaching of the gospel...hath not yet been made a regenerating quickening word to their souls. Possibly it hath enlightened them, and convinced them...but not upon their hearts and wills, by way of effectual conversion”²²⁰ Clearly, something beyond mere enlightening had to be wrought within a person’s soul. As of yet, Flavel’s unconverted subject neither recognised the problem of sin nor his need for a Saviour.

Illumination

The link between enlightening and the next phase, illumination, is found in the following passages in *Method*: “*How absurd and dangerous must it be for Christians to follow the examples of the blind world? Let the blind follow the blind, but let not those whom God hath enlightned do so.*”²²¹ Here, Flavel stated that enlightening was the opposite of blindness. Two pages later in the same sermon he wrote the following: “Let it be a word of counsel and exhortation to such as once were blind, but do now see. First, I beseech you bless God for the least degree of spiritual illumination...”²²² Flavel linked sight with the concept called *illumination*, whereas in the previous quotation he termed this *enlightening*. The resolution to this seems to be that the concepts of enlightening and illumination are closely related. At times he seemed to use the terms synonymously.²²³ It is admittedly difficult to tell the difference between being enlightened and illuminated. The reason I shall maintain the distinction (albeit loosely) is because Flavel clearly identified these steps as being in order.²²⁴ Additionally, the root

²²⁰ Flavel, *Method*, 531.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 587.

²²² *Ibid.*, 591-2.

²²³ “Three things must be wrought upon man, before ever he can come to Christ: his blind understanding must be enlightned; his hard and rocky heart must be broken, and melted; his stiff, fixed and obstinate will must be conquered, and subdued: but all these are the effects of a supernatural power. The illumination of the mind is the peculiar work of God...The breaking and melting of the heart is the Lords own work...The changing of the natural bent and inclination of the will is the Lords sole prerogative...”
Ibid., 394.

²²⁴ See Flavel, *Method*, 361.

idea in both words is the concept of light: “light” and “illumine.” The idea seems to be the moment when God shined light upon the content of the preached word.

According to Flavel, illumination was one of the effects which must happen before a person could be converted. He stated that this step was the result of divine power: “The illumination of the mind is the peculiar work of God...(it is) effectually done in the soul of man when God teacheth it, and never till then.”²²⁵ Whereas awakening and enlightening mainly consisted in a person being persuaded that the preacher’s message was truly from God, illumination consisted in a person’s realizing his sin and the remedy provided in Christ for the first time:

Lapsed man is not only in deep misery, but grossly ignorant both that he is so, and how to recover himself from it...To cure this, Christ is made to him *Wisdom*...by *imparting* his wisdom to them by the Spirit of illumination, whereby they come to discern both their sin and danger; as also the true way of their recovery from both, through the application of Christ to their souls by faith.²²⁶

At the point of illumination, two of our grids begin to overlap. The requirements within the first grid (realizing the realities of sin and Christ) were seen by the subject for the first time. In illumination the affections were acted upon for the first time. At this point, it is important to remember that the stages within the third grid were not necessarily known to the subject. Thus, a person who is in the stage of illumination will not have the thought: “I think God has brought me to the third stage of conversion, that of illumination. I must have already been awakened and enlightened.” Not at all. Rather, he would see his guilt from certain sins and that Christ can forgive. Thus, the theological state of illumination is secret, but the pain of sin and remedy offered in Christ are

²²⁵ Ibid., 394.

²²⁶ Ibid., 3.

known. This is what Flavel called a person who had been awakened, enlightened, and illuminated.

Conviction

Once illumination was attained, for some subjects, its effects were thereafter experienced in the fourth state, which is called conviction. Flavel defined conviction in this way: “Conviction being nothing else, but the application of the light that shines in the mind to the Conscience of a sinner.”²²⁷ Accordingly, Flavel situated conviction after illumination and before the stage called compunction which was the felt effects of conviction: “This blessed work is carried on by the Spirit *gradually*, bringing the soul step by step in the due method and order of the Gospel to Christ: illumination, conviction, compunction prepare the way to Christ...”²²⁸ Illumination was an effect upon the mind, whereas conviction touched the mind and also the affections. At this point the faculties enter the picture – they begin to interact with the first and third grids. Heretofore the minister was primarily concerned to inform the mind; now he aimed to influence the person’s affections. Thus, at the point of conviction, the minister’s teaching produced an additional effect which began to spill over in an influence upon his hearer’s affections. The hearer now understood and felt his two greatest needs. How do illumination and conviction relate to each other?

Flavel expatiated upon the fit between illumination and conviction as he challenged his hearers to ponder the type of knowledge they possessed:

²²⁷ Ibid., 361.

²²⁸ Ibid., 73. See also 88. Compunction was the felt result of conviction (see below), therefore I shall not enumerate a separate stage for it. This is the reason for the claim at the outset that there are *roughly* ten theological states.

But O that you would be convinced that your knowledge vastly differs from the knowledge of believers. Though you know the same things that they do, it is a knowledge of another kind and nature. You know spiritual things in another way, merely by the light of reason assisted and improved by the common light of the Gospel: they know the same things by spiritual illumination, and in an experimental way...whatever light there be in your understandings, it makes no alteration at all upon your hearts...Conviction is a great part of your cure.²²⁹

The cognitive content which brought about conviction was the realization of the guilt of sin. Flavel identified conviction as being Christ's activity: "every conviction of conscience and motion upon the affections of sinners, is a knock of Christ from heaven for entrance into their souls."²³⁰ Although conviction was the work of God, he added that people were able to resist convictions which came upon them: "Obstinate sinners, Christ hath been knocking and calling at some of your consciences from your very Childhood; thousands of convictions have been tryed upon some of you, and yet to this day your souls are shut fast against him"²³¹ Once conviction took place, another barrier was knocked down which kept a person from exercising saving faith. Flavel said, "The work of faith is always wrought in the light of conviction".²³²

According to Flavel, the goal of conviction was for the sinner to feel the awful guilt to which sin gave rise. The word *feel* was critical for Flavel as well as other writers from the Puritan period. John Owen, the highly influential and impressively learned Puritan divine, whom Flavel called, "a worthy of our own,"²³³ said this about the importance of feeling that which the mind apprehended:

²²⁹ Ibid., 590.

²³⁰ Flavel, *Englands*, 131.

²³¹ Ibid., 152.

²³² Ibid., 69.

²³³ Flavel, *Fountain*, 212.

That direction...is for a diligent endeavor to have the power of the truths professed and contended for abiding upon our hearts, that we may not contend for notions, but what we have a practical acquaintance with in our own souls...And without this all our contending is, as to ourselves, of no value. What am I the better if I can dispute that Christ is God, but have no sense or sweetness in my heart from hence that he is a God in covenant with my soul?...Let us, then, not think that we are any thing the better for our conviction of the truths of the great doctrines of the gospel...unless we find the power of the truths abiding in our own hearts, and have a continual experience of their necessity and excellency in our standing before God and our communion with him.²³⁴

Flavel insisted on this continually throughout his writings. It did a person no spiritual good to possess mere cognitive assent.²³⁵ The truth of what was known must abide on the heart and be felt. In chapter three we shall examine the diverse ways in which Flavel aimed to unsettle and impact the affections.

For Flavel's hearers to experience salvation, they had to pass through three stages which I shall argue were subsets of conviction: compunction, humiliation, and being wounded for sin. Compunction was the effect that conviction produced upon the affections. Boone articulated this well when he distinguished between conviction and compunction in Flavel's sermons. He argued that conviction affected the mind whereas compunction impacted the affections: "In Flavel's view, compunction is the emotional effect of conviction. There are times when Flavel...mentions conviction (seated in the intellect) and compunction (seated in the emotions) as separate parts of the effectual call..."²³⁶ Flavel likened compunction to a person's heart bleeding: "Vain sinner, that frothy heart of thine must be made to bleed, under Compunctions for sin, or there will be no room for Christ in it."²³⁷ The fruit of special conviction, compunction, took its place as an integral step on the way to conversion. Flavel laid this out in the *Method*

²³⁴ Owen, *Vindiciae Evangelicae*, 68-9.

²³⁵ Flavel, *Method*, 117-118.

²³⁶ Boone, *Evangelism*, 183.

²³⁷ Flavel, *Englands*, 70.

when he wrote, “In this order therefore the Spirit (ordinarily) draws souls to Christ, he shines into their minds by illumination, applies that light to their Consciences by effectual Conviction, breaks and wounds their hearts for sin in Compunction, and then moves the will to embrace and close with Christ in the way of Faith for life and salvation.”²³⁸ Although Flavel insisted that conviction and compunction involved some degree of pain, he did not state the intensity of pain a person must undergo: “there is much difference found in the strength, depth, and continuance of conviction and spiritual troubles in converts, as there is in the labours and travailing pains of women, but sure it is, the child of faith is not ordinarily born without some pangs.”²³⁹

In addition to compunction, there were two additional stages which I shall include under the heading of conviction: humiliation and wounding for sin.²⁴⁰ Flavel seemed to use these terms as synonyms for compunction. Flavel linked what he called cutting or wounding work with humiliation in sermon ten of *Englands Duty*: “The way of faith is a very humbling way; there’s much cutting work in antecedent convictions and humiliations, sad nights and sick days with many poor souls.”²⁴¹ Later in the same sermon, Flavel elaborated further: “The first work of religion is cutting work, wounding work, groaning and weeping work: thus religion usually begins.”²⁴² Flavel explicitly

²³⁸ Flavel, *Method*, 73.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁴⁰ Morgan suggested that humiliation and conviction were identical. He described that which “Perkins called a ‘legall feare,’ but which later Puritans often designated as ‘conviction’ of sin or simply ‘humiliation’.” Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 68.

²⁴¹ Flavel, *Englands*, 373. Pettit argued that humiliation was both necessary and a synergistic interaction between God and the subject: “In this preparatory process the soul had first to experience contrition and humiliation. Contrition is the moment of awareness, when a man perceives sin and is separated from its corruptions. Humiliation follows, when he submits to God and is divorced from vanity and pride. The preparationists maintained that contrition and humiliation were not in themselves saving graces but preliminary steps, and that while God takes away all resistance, this cannot be done without man’s consent.” Pettit, *Heart Prepared*, 18.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 377-8. The Baptist Dissenter John Bunyan used language strikingly similar to that of Flavel in *Husbandry Spiritualized* (1669). Writing about conversion, Bunyan says: “Why is the Conversion of the

linked cutting with compunction in his best-seller *Husbandry*: “when the Lord intends to graft a soul into Christ, the first work about it is cutting work, their hearts were cut by conviction and deep compunction; no cyence²⁴³ is ingrafted without cutting, no soul united with Christ without a cutting sense of sin and misery.”²⁴⁴ The result of compunction was to drive a person to desperation in his felt need for Christ to forgive. Now the person, he claimed, “feels himself sick at heart; home he goes from that sermon, by which Christ spake effectual conviction to him, crying, O sick, sick; my soul is distressed, because of sin.”²⁴⁵ Flavel gave a piece of advice to the person who had come this far, but thought he was still unconverted: “Pray and plead with the Lord assiduously, and importunately for the exerting of that Power upon thy Soul; and give not over thy suit till thou *feel* that Power coming upon thee.”²⁴⁶

Having progressed through four stages which Flavel said were vital to Christian conversion, we are at the point where the mind is informed and the affections are powerfully stirred. It is important to note that at every point along the continuum thus far, it was possible for the person to turn back. Once the next domino toppled, however, there was no stopping salvation being attained by the subject – Flavel’s hearer would inexorably be drawn to Christ: “but when the Spirit comes once to quicken the soul, it’s done in a moment...but O what a blessed moment is this! upon which the whole weight

Soul compared to the grafting of a Tree if that may be done without cutting? The Word is the Graft, the Soul is the Tree, and the word as the Sien [scion] must be let in by a wound; for to stick on the outside, or to be tied on with a string, will do no good here; heart must be set to heart, and back to back, or your pretended ingrafting will come to nothing. I say, heart must be set to heart, and back to back, or the sap will not be conveyed from the root to the branch. And I say, this must be done by a wound.” Bunyan, *Acceptable Sacrifice*, 226.

²⁴³ The entry under the word “scion” in the Oxford Dictionary states that “sien” and “cyence” were both common ways of spelling this word in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. OED, “Scion.” s.v.

²⁴⁴ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 181.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 299.

²⁴⁶ Flavel, *Englands*, 223.

of our eternal happiness depends.”²⁴⁷ We turn now to the all-important event of regeneration.

Regeneration

Regeneration is the next stage a person passed through on Flavel’s pathway to conversion. Of this step, which he used synonymously with the term “quickenings,”²⁴⁸ Flavel wrote, “no mans will savingly and effectually opens to receive Christ, till the spiritual quickning voice of Christ be first heard by the soul.”²⁴⁹ In other words, this step is one which no human agent could bring about. Helm described regeneration in a way consonant with Flavel’s understanding of this event: “This is, in the nature of things, an instantaneous change, though it may manifest itself in a variety of ways at the level of conscious experience.”²⁵⁰ Regeneration entailed an instantaneous change, though its effects would be received variously, depending on the subject. At this point I depart from Boone’s construction of Flavel’s soteriological account. Boone neglected an important step prior to the renewal of the will, namely, that of regeneration.

²⁴⁷ Flavel, *Method*, 101.

²⁴⁸ Flavel used the terms regeneration and quickening to signify the same thing. He claimed, “*Zanchy, Bodius* and many others; will have this *quickenings* to comprize both our justification and regeneration...but it most properly imports our regeneration, wherein the Spirit in an ineffable and mysterious way, makes the soul to live to God; yea to live the life of God which was before *dead in trespassis and sins*.” *Ibid.*, 93. Later in *Method*, he placed these words side by side to signify their virtual identity: “this word hath not yet been made a regenerating quickening word to their souls.” *Ibid.*, 532. The Savoy Confession of faith also equated these terms. It states that people, “may be born again, quickened, or regenerated...” Cf. *Congregational Church in England*, 15.

²⁴⁹ Flavel, *Englands*, 278. See also 136. It is important to point out that the term regeneration was sometimes used to mean “sanctification”. However, it was often used in the punctiliar sense of the “quickenings” which happened at the moment of conversion. Cf. Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 14. Stewart argued that whilst Calvin used the term to refer to sanctification, numerous writers and creeds used it in the sense of “the inception of spiritual life”. Bullinger, Zwingli’s successor at Zurich, used the word in this way, as did the French Confession (1569), the Scots Confession (1560), the Second Helvetic Confession (1566), and the Synod of Dordt (1619). Stewart, “Regeneration,” 44-6. This was the way in which Flavel utilised the term most often. Stewart specifically highlighted this fact concerning Flavel’s use of the term. See Stewart, “Regeneration,” 51.

²⁵⁰ Helm, “Calvin, Toplady, Bebbington,” 203.

Boone stressed that the effectual call was the key event in the salvation of a person, and accordingly, that Flavel sought to do all that was within his power to encourage this event. This is true, but, as Boone correctly noted, the effectual call consisted of three distinct movements. Flavel clearly laid these out in his exposition of the Westminster assembly's catechism. In answer to question 31, *What is effectual calling?*, the Catechism reads: "*Effectual Calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing one wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel.*"²⁵¹ In Flavel's commentary he elaborated upon the three movements within the effectual call: conviction of sin, enlightening of the mind, and renewal of the will.²⁵² My disagreement with Boone concerns his overlooking the fact that, according to Flavel, there is an additional movement of the Spirit of God after conviction of sin and (logically) prior to the renewal of the will. The renewed will was the first effect of regeneration. Boone used the word regeneration, but never defined it or gave it its proper place in Flavel's soteriology.

²⁵¹ Westminster Assembly, *Confession of Faith*, 163. [Emphasis Flavel's.]

²⁵² Upon a first reading of this answer it seems curious that Flavel's schema appears to invert the order of the confession. Namely, I have asserted that Flavel believed that enlightening of the mind happened before conviction of sin, whereas the WCF reversed the order. I offer these two responses: First, the WCF does not necessarily assert that this is the logical (much less chronological) order in which these events transpire. Rather, it states that these three components constitute the effectual call. Second, for the sake of argument, if we assume that the WCF is providing a chronological account, I reply that Flavel clearly situated the enlightening of the mind *to sin* (but not necessarily enlightenment in the knowledge of Christ) before conviction of sin. Flavel clearly taught that enlightenment as to the guilt of sin came before the state of conviction of that verity: "till it (the mind) be enlightned it cannot be convinced, conviction being nothing else, but the application of the light that shines in the mind to the Conscience of a sinner; till it be convinced it cannot be wounded for sin..." *Method*, 361; cf. *Fountain*, 100. Boone addressed this point as well, stating: "Part of illumination precedes conviction, and part of illumination does indeed follow conviction." Boone, *Evangelism*, 159. I concur with Boone on this point. (N.B. Boone understands enlightening and illumination to be synonyms.)

Flavel taught that regeneration must occur before the will was renewed. We must note the distinction between logical priority and temporal priority. Chronologically there was no distinguishable difference between these two events, but logically (Flavel called this the “priority of nature”) there was a difference.²⁵³ In the fifth sermon of *Method*, Flavel responded to an imaginary critic who objected that a person could conceivably be quickened by the Spirit, but then drop dead before he exercised saving faith. In responding to this objection, Flavel provided an insight into why regeneration was logically prior to the will being renewed. He claimed that when we speak of “the priority of this quickening work of the Spirit to our actual believing, we rather understand it of the priority of nature, than of time: the nature and order of the work requiring it to be so: a vital principle must in order of nature be infused before a vital act can be exerted. First make the tree good, and then the fruit good....”²⁵⁴ Flavel claimed that a vital principle must be infused *before* a vital act could be exerted. The will could not be renewed without the infusion of a vital principle. The above description of quickening harmonizes nicely with the succinct definition he provided for the synonymous term regeneration: “*Regeneration* expresses those supernatural, divine, new qualities infused by the Spirit into the Soul, which are the principles of all holy actions.”²⁵⁵ Again, the will’s renewal was the fruit or effect of the Spirit’s infusing new principles into all of the person’s actions. Flavel also called quickening the first act of the Spirit of God. Flavel argued that the term “hath quickened”,

Imports the first vital act of the Spirit of God, or his first enlivening work upon the soul in order to its Union with Jesus Christ: for look as the blood of Christ is

²⁵³ Cf. McGowan, “Justification and the Ordo Salutis,” 150.

²⁵⁴ Flavel, *Method*, 107-8.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

the fountain of all merit, so the Spirit of Christ is the fountain of all spiritual life: and until he quicken us, (i.e.) infuse the principle of the divine life into our souls, we can put forth no hand, or vital act of faith to lay hold of Jesus Christ.²⁵⁶

At the point of regeneration the Holy Spirit caused the will to be renewed. How did the Holy Spirit move a person's will? We have seen that it was neither through the mere entrance of knowledge that the will bows, nor was it merely through the affections being stirred. When the Holy Spirit renewed the will, there was no new information infused into the person's mind – in other words, the Spirit did not whisper a secret into the person's ear which in turn changed the will. Rather, Flavel insisted that a powerful and supernatural interaction took place. He wrote, "These things of God, are not only contrary to corrupt carnal reason, but they are also above right reason. Grace indeed useth nature, but nature can do nothing without grace."²⁵⁷ Another instance of this may be found in the tenth sermon of *Fountain* when Flavel drove home the point that it required more than head knowledge to enter into a relationship with Christ: "but it is further necessarie that the grace and special influence of the Holy Spirit be superadded."²⁵⁸ The only prerequisite on the part of man was sincere willingness. Flavel wrote, "I say, that question is not whether you be able, but whether you be heartily willing. Christ asks but your will, he will provide ability."²⁵⁹ At the point when the will was renewed, the doors to the soul flung open and everything changed. Flavel described the event thus:

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 92.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 100. Marshall highlights this very fact in his recent thesis on the Puritan view of natural theology. He wrote, "This apprehension of a moral corruption in human reason did not, as we have seen, prevent Puritans from using rational arguments with unregenerate souls. And in the life of the redeemed, especially, reason was accorded a prominent role." Marshall, *Puritanism and Natural Theology*, 74-5.

²⁵⁸ Flavel, *Fountain*, 114.

²⁵⁹ Flavel, *Englands*, 235.

In the exerting of his Almighty glorious power in quickening a soul spiritually dead, and opening the heart that was lockt up by ignorance and unbelief; an internal almighty efficacy passeth from Christ, along with the voice of the gospel, to effect this glorious work upon the soul...and before it the heart opens, the Will bows...man can no longer oppose the power of God...the power of man can repel the power of a fellow creature; but when the power of Christ comes along with the voice of man, there is no more power to resist...It is a beam of light shining immediately from the Spirit, into the soul of a sinner.²⁶⁰

It is imperative to notice that Flavel taught that although God the Father was sovereign in the way He effectually moved the will, He did not violate the nature of the will. Flavel described this thus:

Coming to Christ, notes the voluntariness of the soul in its motion to Christ. 'Tis true, there's no coming without the Fathers drawing; but that drawing hath nothing of *co-action* in it; it doth not destroy, but powerfully, and with an overcoming sweetness perswade the will. 'Tis not forced or driven, *but it comes*: being made willing in the day of Gods power...The souls motion to Christ is free and voluntary, *'tis coming*.²⁶¹

Note well his claim that the will was persuaded with an “overcoming sweetness.” Flavel ventured to make brave promises to those who worried that they would not be accepted by God. He wrote, “*Object[ion]*. But I have waited long, and yet see no mercy for me. *Sol[ution]*...If you wait for the mercy of God, through Christ, in the way of humiliation and faith, and continue waiting; assuredly mercy shall come at last.”²⁶² Thus, “Hyper-calvinism” was alien to Flavel’s understanding of Christian conversion; he both held out the invitation and expressed optimism as to a happy result.²⁶³

As mentioned above, Flavel claimed that God did not violate the freedom of the will in a person’s conversion. In certain statements of Flavel’s we see the amiable

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 280-1.

²⁶¹ Flavel, *Method*, 194-5.

²⁶² Ibid., 246.

²⁶³ Peter Toon provides a summary of the subject in *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765*.

marriage of deep theological conviction and pastoral sensitivity with which he approached knotty philosophical dilemmas. We noticed earlier that Flavel was quite learned. If he wanted to overwhelm his people with a flourish of theological erudition he could have. But his pastoral concerns prevented him from beating them with the blunt cudgel of scholastic verities. His pastoral side came out when he wrote this of the sweet, rather than forcible way, the Father drew people to Himself: “*Behold I come to the door and break it open by violence; no, Christ makes no forcible entries whether sinners will or no; he will come in by consent of the will or not at all...forcible actions are unfruitful to the nature of the will, whose motions are free and spontaneous.*” He continued, “Tis true, the power of God is upon the will of man in the day of his conversion, or else it would never open to Christ; but yet that power of God doth not act against the freedom of man’s will, by co-action and force; no, but of unwilling he makes it willing; taking away the obstinacy and reluctancy of the will by the efficacy of his grace...”.²⁶⁴ Could a cheerful Calvinist more fittingly urge his people to trust in Christ than by saying, “Thou art under a happy necessity to go to him.”?²⁶⁵

Lastly, I must mention that, at the moment of regeneration, Flavel described the “new eye” which was implanted by God. In *Method* he claimed that the person sees a new world: “behold and admire this surprizing marvelous change which God hath made upon men: they are come out of darkness into his marvellous light, out of the old, as it were, into a new world, *behold all things are become new.*”²⁶⁶ Approximately ten years later, when he preached the *Englands Duty* sermons, he described this change in the same way: “There’s a New Eye created in the mind, *The son of God is come and hath*

²⁶⁴ Flavel, *Englands*, 138.

²⁶⁵ Flavel, *Method*, 205.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 428-9.

given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, 1 John 5:20. Oh that eye! That precious Eye of Faith which shews the soul as it were a new world,²⁶⁷ a world of new and ravishing objects...²⁶⁸ Once regeneration took place and the will was renewed, the first act was consciously putting one's trust in Christ.

Faith and repentance

Now that the soul was regenerated and the will renewed by the Holy Spirit, several events transpired. The next step for Flavel's hypothetical hearer was to reach out and grab Christ through the exercise of faith. To Flavel's mind, even though the proverbial ball was rolling inescapably toward full salvation, faith was yet indispensable to that end.²⁶⁹ Faith, we might say, is the first cry of the newborn Christian. Twice in his sermons Flavel wrote "no Faith, no Christ."²⁷⁰ Flavel likened saving faith to a rebel reaching out his hand and receiving a pardon from a beneficent Prince: "Consider the wonderful Gospel terms...The Gospel requires nothing of you but Repentance and Faith...Can you think it hard when a Prince pardons a Rebel to require him to fall upon his Knees, and stretch forth a willing and thankful Hand to receive his pardon?"²⁷¹ For Flavel, "Faith is the applying cause, the instrument by which we receive the special

²⁶⁷ In the next generation, David Brainerd, the missionary to Native Americans in New England would echo this concept of conversion being likened to entering a new world: "I continued in this state of inward joy, peace and yet astonishment, till near dark without any sensible abatement, and then began to think and examine what I had seen and felt. And felt sweetly composed in my mind all the evening following. I felt myself in a new world and everything about me discovered a different aspect from what they were wont to do." Edwards, *Works* 7, 139-40. Cf. Hindmarsh, *Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 85.

²⁶⁸ Flavel, *Englands*, 61.

²⁶⁹ Cohen wrote the following about the integral nature of faith: "Salvation's keystone, without which the edifice of justification and the other graces tumbles down, is faith." Cohen, *God's Caress*, 95. Also, I have elected to include faith within Flavel's account of a soul being converted because he did so. However, it must be pointed out that this point has been disputed by some Calvinistic theologians. Berkouwer wrote that including faith as being among other steps along the pathway to conversion risks the "devaluation of faith" by seeming to make it meritorious. Berkouwer, *Faith and Justification*, 31-2. Cited in McGowan, "Justification and the Ordo Salutis," 155.

²⁷⁰ Flavel, *Method*, 144; *Englands*, 171.

²⁷¹ Flavel, *Englands*, 19-20.

saving benefit of the blood of Christ”²⁷² and “’tis the *bond* of Union, the *instrument* of justification, the *spring* of spiritual peace and joy.”²⁷³ Flavel carefully distinguished between three aspects of faith and showed which was mandatory: “There be three Acts of faith, *Assent*, *Acceptance*, and *Assurance*...*Assent* widens the nature of faith too much, and *Assurance* upon the other hand *straitens* it too much: but *Acceptance*, which saith, I take Christ in all his offices to be mine, this fits exactly...this therefore must be the justifying and saving act of faith.”²⁷⁴ He even went so far as to say that faith was the essence of the design of the whole Christian Gospel: “’tis the Gospels grand design to bring up the hearts of men and women to faith.”²⁷⁵

As was mentioned in my critique of Boone’s thesis, for Flavel, repentance was wedded to faith. To demonstrate Flavel’s position on this point I shall mention two passages in *Englands Duty* which stress the imperative of repentance before a person can be saved: “The Gospel requires nothing of you but Repentance and Faith...Can you think it hard when a Prince pardons a Rebel to require him to fall upon his Knees, and stretch forth a willing and thankful Hand to receive his pardon?”²⁷⁶ And again, he colorfully stated: “Many...presume upon that time for repentance and faith hereafter, which their eyes shall never see...They make a bridge of their own shadow and so perish in the waters.”²⁷⁷ Here Flavel clearly expressed that without faith *and* repentance, a person was destined to perish. Boone was quite right to argue that the renewal of the will and faith were key ingredients in the effectual call and that Flavel deliberately

²⁷² Flavel, *Method*, 544.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 129.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 126-7.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁷⁶ Flavel, *Englands*, 19-20.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

sought to encourage these in his people.²⁷⁸ However, as a writer in the mainstream of Reformed theology, Flavel held that repentance and faith were inextricably conjoined. Flavel wrote, “And why are faith and repentance prescribed as the *means* of pardon?...Reader, the word assures thee; what ever thou hast been, or art; that sins of as deep a die as thine, have been washt away in this blood.”²⁷⁹ And again, addressing the role of the Holy Spirit, he said, “he wants no ability to supply all the defects of thy repentance and faith.”²⁸⁰ As the final instance of this, Flavel linked repentance with reconciliation: “without repentance there can be no reconciliation, and without conviction there can be no repentance.”²⁸¹ Clearly, repentance and faith were requisite for a person to become a Christian.

Union with Christ

With the will renewed and faith and repentance exercised, Flavel taught that his hearer was now united to Christ – which union was the ground of all the salvific benefits then belonging to him.²⁸² The seventh stage of union with Christ was not something to act upon, but it was something now true of the person: “all our participation of Christs benefits, is built upon our Union with Christs person...and that Christs righteousness

²⁷⁸ Boone, *Evangelism*, 201. I must note that the expression “renewal of the will” is quite rare in Flavel. He tended to write that the will must “bow”.

²⁷⁹ Flavel, *Fountain*, 350.

²⁸⁰ Flavel, *Englands*, 255.

²⁸¹ Flavel, *Method*, 60.

²⁸² The placement of union with Christ along the chain of the *ordo salutis* is again controversial. Cf. McGowan, “Justification and the Ordo Salutis,” 156-62. Fesko wrote: “Union with Christ, therefore, is the all-encompassing doctrinal rubric that embraces all of the elements of redemption.” Concerning the relationship between union with Christ, justification, and sanctification, Fesko continued, “the *proximate* source of the believer’s redemption is union with Christ with its dual benefits of justification and sanctification.” Fesko, “John Owen,” 12, 18.

becomes ours by *Imputation*, is as clear from *Rom.* 4. 23, 24. but it can never be imputed to us, except we be united to him, and become one with him.”²⁸³

Regarding the broad development within Flavel’s sermons and writings, the concept of union with Christ is highly pertinent to the 35 *Method* sermons. The purpose of that 595-page work was to describe how all of the saving benefits of Christ applied to, and were true of, the Christian.²⁸⁴ Flavel said that the Christian’s union with Christ was indissoluble, “*sanctified persons are inseparably united to Christ the fountain of life,*”²⁸⁵ and the ground of justification, “our union with him is the ground of the imputation of his righteousness to us.”²⁸⁶ In fact, union with Christ created a bridge between faith and justification: “The Grace of Faith, which I am recommending to you this day, is not only the instrument of your Justification, but it is also the bond of your union with Christ.”²⁸⁷ The first effect of this union with Christ was justification.

It is at this point where controversy has arisen over the number of steps within the *ordo salutis* as well as the role of union with Christ within that order. Letham argued that the Westminster Assembly, “recognized that union with Christ is not one aspect of the process of salvation but is the overall context in which aspects are to be seen.”²⁸⁸ In that case, union with Christ would pervade each of the steps rather than being a discrete movement. Offering another suggestion Berkhof wrote, “the order is logical rather than chronological. Since the believer is ‘a new creature’ (II. Cor. 5:17), or is ‘justified’ (Acts

²⁸³ Flavel, *Method*, 28.

²⁸⁴ The subtitle of that series reads: “THE METHOD, In bringing home the Eternal Redemption, Contrived by the FATHER, and accomplished by the SON through the effectual application of the Spirit unto GOD’s Elect; being the Second Part of GOSPEL REDEMPTION: WHEREIN The great mysterie of our Union and Communion with Christ is opened and applied, Unbelievers invited, False pretenders convicted, every mans claim to Christ examined, and the misery of Christless persons discovered and bewailed.” From *Method*, t.p.

²⁸⁵ Flavel, *Method*, 37.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁸⁷ Flavel, *Englands*, 345. See also *Method*, 383.

²⁸⁸ Letham, *Union with Christ*, 89.

13:39) only in Christ, union with Him logically precedes both regeneration and justification by faith, while yet, chronologically, the moment when we are united with Christ is also the moment of our regeneration and justification.”²⁸⁹ It is not inconsequential that Letham quoted Flavel’s *Method* to support his views on union with Christ.²⁹⁰ It is my purpose here not to definitively resolve these debates, but to highlight the ambiguity surrounding this step in the *ordo*, which Flavel nonetheless saw as being integral to a person’s salvation.

Justification

Flavel defined justification as the point at which a person was credited with the perfect righteousness of Christ.²⁹¹ He explained the way in which faith received this righteousness, “’Tis the instrument of our justification, till Christ be received, we are in our sins, under guilt and condemnation; but when faith comes, then comes freedom...for it apprehends or receives the pure and perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus.”²⁹² Flavel was heavy-handed upon those who would try to improve on the merit of what Jesus did:

Did Christ finish his work with his own hand. *How dangerous and dishonourable a thing is it, to join any thing of our own, to the righteousness of Christ, in point of justification before God!* Jesus Christ will never endure this. It reflects upon his work dishonourably...O it’s an hard thing to bring these proud hearts to live upon Christ for righteousness: we would fain add our penny to make up Christs sum...God gives us the righteousness of Christ...Certainly God takes the right way to humble proud nature, in calling sinners wholly off from their own righteousness, to Christ, for their Justification.²⁹³

²⁸⁹ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 450. Cf. De Vries, *John Bunyan*, 90-1.

²⁹⁰ Letham, *Union with Christ*, 54-5.

²⁹¹ De Vries identified justification as “the fundamental experience of Protestantism.” De Vries, *John Bunyan*, 77.

²⁹² Flavel, *Method*, 129. Cf. 199.

²⁹³ Flavel, *Fountain*, 485.

Once a person was united to Christ by faith and was justified, the person also possessed a new status. I shall briefly mention two of these: reconciliation and adoption. First, reconciliation was the state where the person's relationship with God, formerly fractured by sin, had been mended. This reconciliation accounted for all of the joys the Christian experienced. Flavel explained, "The reconciliation which the Lord Jesus died to procure for broken hearted sinners...is the fountain out of which all other comforts flow to us."²⁹⁴ Second, adoption is that status which signified that a person had been brought into the spiritual family of God. Flavel said that this was one of the benefits arising out of the Christian's union with Christ: "for our right and title to spiritual Adoption and the priviledges thereof rises from our Union with Jesus Christ; we being united to the son of God, are by vertue of that Union reckon'd or accounted sons...the effect of saving faith is union with Christs person, the consequent of that Union is Adoption, or right to the inheritance."²⁹⁵ Even though adopted children of God, the Puritans all held that Christians must strive toward maturity, that process called sanctification.

Sanctification

The stage a Christian enters after being justified is called sanctification.²⁹⁶ This phase commenced when a person became a Christian and terminated when a person died. Flavel had much to say about this process, and he often spoke of the joys associated with it. Perhaps the most notable statement about the life of sanctification was that the Christian now had God as his primary object of enjoyment: "The *object* of spiritual delight...is God himself and the things which relate to him. He is the blessed

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 532.

²⁹⁵ Flavel, *Method*, 126.

²⁹⁶ It might be said that sanctification begins the instant one is justified.

Ocean into which all the streams of spiritual delight do pour themselves...the reason why so many easily part with Religion is, because their souls never tasted the sweetness of it: never delighted in it.”²⁹⁷ For Flavel, the reason to struggle through all of the above stages on this pathway to Christian salvation was because of the sheer delight that it brought into the soul. It is as if Flavel wanted to fight secular hedonists who opposed Christianity on the grounds that it was a gloomy, sullen, and morose way of life, with their own weapons:

Christ comes with such divine cordials and refreshments to defeat and undermine the plot of Satan, when he tells them that they will never again be cheerful...Well their own experiences shall now confute it, for they now taste that pleasure in Christ, in faith, and obedience, which they never tasted in the ways of sin...They find they were never truly merry till now...All true mirth commences from our closing with Christ.²⁹⁸

He went after such people when he said, “How groundless and irrational is the mirth and jollity of all carnal and unregenerate men? They feast in their prison, and dance in their fetters. O the madness that is in the hearts of men!”²⁹⁹ Indeed, Flavel taught that sanctification was the Christian’s greatest joy, never a burden.

Assurance of Salvation

Consistently walking along the path of sanctification brought a further benefit for many, but not all, Puritans. This benefit is the final point on Flavel’s pathway to Christian conversion: assurance of salvation.³⁰⁰ Flavel asserted that the proper method for attaining and enjoying the comfort of assurance of salvation was to periodically examine one’s life to see if Christian fruit was being produced and to assess one’s

²⁹⁷ Flavel, *Method*, 509.

²⁹⁸ Flavel, *Englands*, 375-6.

²⁹⁹ Flavel, *Method*, 548.

³⁰⁰ Glorification is usually the end point on the Reformed *ordo salutis*, but this lies outside of this chapter, which focuses on what happens to the soul whilst on the earth.

communion with God.³⁰¹ This approach became a heated debate in which Flavel became embroiled later in life. The controversy concerned the Antinomians, who deemed this “fruit checking” as being incompatible with salvation by grace.³⁰² But Flavel insisted that the fruit of union with Christ should be a life of continuous communion with God:

All union with Christ must evidence its self by a life of communion with him, or our pretensions to it are vain and groundless. There be many of you (I wish there were more) enquiring after evidences and signs of your union with Christ; why, here is an *evidence* that can never fail you; do you live in communion with him?...Then you may be sure you have union with him... let us evidence the life of grace in us by exercising that grace in a life of communion with God. When all is said, this is the surest evidence of our union with Christ and no gifts or performances whatsoever can amount to an evidence of our union with Christ without it.³⁰³

In *Fountain*, he added that a life of holiness was another strong evidence for assurance:

“when the spirit of holiness runs down thus upon you, a sweeter evidence the world cannot give, that Christ was sanctified for you. Holy ones may confidently lay the hand of their faith, on the head of the great sacrifices; and say *Christ our Passover, is sacrificed for us.*”³⁰⁴

I must lastly mention that the inference backward from assurance of salvation to God’s eternal election of a person was one that Flavel did not insist upon often, but he did mention it. Assurance of election might be compressed within the category of

³⁰¹ Cohen, claiming that most Puritans were in fundamental agreement with this method, wrote: “By examining one’s actions and determining that they proceed from grace, an individual can apperceive saving faith at work and through this realization come to assurance.” Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 10.

³⁰² Chang, *John Flavel*, 109-116; Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians*, 476; Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 114, 120, 162, 182. For the case that the Puritan emphasis on private interpretation of Scripture and the purported movements of the Spirit gave rise to Antinomianism and the radical sects, see David Como’s *Blown by the Spirit*. Como sees the Puritans’ inveterate practices of “compulsive sermon-gadding, collective Bible-reading, sermon repetition...as well as habitual private ‘conferences’” as implicitly advocating the principle of a person’s right (and duty) to understand Scripture for himself. He further claimed that “the logocentric/primitivistic impulse contained within it a paradoxical tendency toward discord and conflict,” especially Antinomianism. Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 439, 440.

³⁰³ Flavel, *Englands*, 427-8.

³⁰⁴ Flavel, *Fountain*, 81.

assurance of salvation.³⁰⁵ Flavel wrote, “the Soul that savingly opens to Christ by Faith, may from that work of the Spirit upon him, solidly reason backward to Gods electing love, before all time; and forward, to his glorification with God, when time shall be no more.”³⁰⁶ In another place he explained, “The Faith and Obedience of your Hearts makes it evident, that the Lords waiting upon you hitherto, hath been in pursuance of his design of Electing Love.”³⁰⁷ Questions regarding God’s electing purposes were difficult; as divisive in the seventeenth century as they are in the present day. In accord with this, Flavel, mindful of his being a shepherd of sheep, handled these questions with sensitivity and care. He pastorally resigned all difficult questions to the inscrutable and wise purposes of God: “O that I could but persuade you to resign all to Christ. He is a cunning workman...and can effect what he pleaseth... Let God work out all that he intends, have but patience till he hath put the last hand to his work, and then find fault with it, if you can.”³⁰⁸

This chapter evaluated Flavel’s teaching about the interaction amongst various components which were at work when a person underwent the Christian conversion experience. In this chapter I proposed my understanding of what Flavel claimed transpired between the state of total ignorance to that of assurance of salvation. I also proposed my interpretation of the interaction between three conceptual grids which Flavel laid out. First, I claimed that there were two recognitions at which a person must arrive if he was to undergo conversion. These goals were for him to recognize his sinful

³⁰⁵ This is an admittedly abnormal way of constituting the *ordo salutis*, as most formulations begin with election. Although this is chronologically proper (election would obviously take place prior to a person’s birth), I wish to convey that Flavel, ostensibly for pastoral purposes, encouraged people that they were elect once they had an assurance grounded on a life of obedience and regular communion with Christ. Therefore, I have included election as a rider to assurance.

³⁰⁶ Flavel, *Englands*, 76-7.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

³⁰⁸ Flavel, *Fountain*, 217.

condition and to see that Christ is a fitting saviour. Second, I asserted that Flavel understood the job of the preacher to be aiming to affect change within two of his hearer's three faculties, namely, the mind and the affections. The third faculty of the will was recalcitrant to the preacher's influence, and he should therefore consciously aim to influence the first two faculties. The third grid which I propounded is comprised of the sundry stages through which a non-Christian must pass on the pathway to conversion. Though I highlighted several nuances regarding the difficulty of positing a firm number, it is fair to say that the person coming to Christ would pass through roughly ten stages. We saw that these stages were "mixed," in the sense that the subject was aware of the passage through some of these stages whilst ignorant of others. In the next chapter we shall walk this same path again, noting the continued interaction between the three proposed grids, and also adding yet another dimension to this paradigm.

Chapter 2

Two Levels of Effectuality

“O how many thousands miscarry in this season, and like trees removed from one soil to another, dye in the removal.”³⁰⁹

It seems reasonable to suppose that once Flavel had in his mind the three grids detailed in chapter two, the process of converting his hearers would be fairly straightforward. Once Flavel had appealed to the mind and affections of his congregants in an effort to change their will; worked to get them to see and feel their sin and the beauty of Christ; and led them through the ten stages toward conversion – was conversion inevitable? Flavel did not think so, but this was not simply because of his Calvinistic persuasion which stated that the power of conversion lay outside of the preacher’s sphere of influence. This chapter shall address this reason through adding another layer of complexity to the three grids posited in the previous chapter.

In this chapter I shall demonstrate that Flavel conceived of the whole process of conversion as one which functioned on two distinct levels. The justification for positing another dimension to an already complex account is as follows. Flavel recognized that people could pass through numerous theological states and yet remain unconverted. Based on the preceding chapter, it may appear Flavel believed that once a person went through the steps of awakening, enlightening, illumination, and conviction, he would invariably be saved. Flavel explicitly stated that this was not the case. Put another way, we might ask if awakening, enlightening, illumination, and conviction operated upon each person in the same way. Could a person regress after experiencing these effects

³⁰⁹ Flavel, *Soul*, 454-6.

which Flavel intimated were from God? In this chapter I shall argue that Flavel conceived of these particular steps as happening on two distinguishable levels: the natural and the supernatural.³¹⁰ Taking into account this additional feature of Flavel's proselytising approach, it shall become evident that Flavel possessed a highly nuanced and detailed understanding of what transpired when a person was converted. It was a dynamic process in which some made false starts whilst others became Christians. This is also a point which, as we shall see later in this thesis, people noted in the eighteenth century. This chapter shall begin by laying out the problem passages which show that Flavel's schema of conversion, as it has been laid out thus far, is incomplete. It shall then describe these effects on the subject at both the natural and supernatural levels.

Not quite saved

In the final section of Flavel's book *Pneumatologia*, titled *A gale of opportunity for souls passing into eternity*, he wrote about various effects which transpired in the soul of a person brought near salvation.³¹¹ He listed five characteristics of such a person and included the buoyant note: "Now there are among others five remarkable essays, efforts, or strivings of a Soul under the impression and hand of the Spirit, which greatly tend to the fixing, settling, and securing of that great work [i.e. conversion] upon the Soul: and it is seldom known that any Soul miscarries in whom these things are found."³¹² After this he listed the following effects:

(1.) Deep, serious, and fixed consideration, which lets conviction deep into the Soul, and settles it, and roots it fast in the heart...(2.) The first stirrings and motions of the Spirit upon mens hearts do then become a season of Salvation to them, when they are accompanied with spiritual, fervent, and frequent

³¹⁰ I shall also employ other words which Flavel used as synonyms for these two levels, such as 'effectual' vs. 'ineffectual' and 'common' vs. 'special'.

³¹¹ Flavel, *Soul*, 45off.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 454.

prayer...(3.) Then do those motions of the Spirit on mens hearts make a season of Salvation to them, when they remain and settle in the heart, and are...following the man from place to place, from day to day...(4) An anxious solicitude and inquisitiveness about the means and ways of Salvation, speaks an effectual door of Salvation to be set open to the Souls of men...Thus the Lord rivets and fixes those motions in some Souls, which vanish like a morning mist or dew in others.³¹³

Here, Flavel described his hypothetical subject as having a deep sense of conviction and a fervent desire for prayer. The Spirit's motions were clinging to him and he became very anxious to know how to be saved. He continued with the fifth sign:

Lastly, That which secures and compleats this work, is the execution of those purposes and convictions, by falling without delay to the work of Faith and Repentance in good earnest. When the Spirit of God ripens his first motions to this, and carries them through that critical season thus far, then there is an effectual door of opportunity opened indeed...³¹⁴

In other words, all that remained for the potential convert was to walk through the door of salvation by exercising faith in Christ and evangelical repentance.³¹⁵ The person had come to the point of salvation but then, alarmingly, Flavel ended with this lugubrious note: "This is an acceptable time, a day of Salvation: but *O how many thousands miscarry in this season, and like trees removed from one soil to another, dye in the removal.*"³¹⁶ As distressing as it surely was to his hearers, Flavel taught that a person could undergo profound motions of the Spirit on his soul as well as deep and lasting conviction for sin, and yet draw back and finally perish.

³¹³ Ibid., 454-5.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 455-6.

³¹⁵ Flavel used the adjective "evangelical" to describe an understanding of justification and sanctification in keeping with the Protestant Reformers. In Flavel's usage, evangelical always referred to that which was effectual. Cf. Flavel, *Sacramental*, 165, 166-7, 174-3; *Englands*, 343-4; *Fountain*, 339.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 456 [*Emphasis mine*].

Flavel's teaching concerning deep conviction of sin which did not lead to thoroughgoing conversion was not limited to *Pneumatologia*. Writing a few years earlier in *Method* he stated:

Many strong convictions and troubles for sin may be found where the new creature is never formed. Conviction indeed is an antecedent unto, and preparative for the new creature, as the blossomes of the tree are to the fruit that follows them; but as fruit doth not always follow where those blossoms and flowers appear, so neither doth the new creature follow all convictions and troubles for sin. Conviction is a common work of the Spirit both upon the elect and reprobates: but the new creature is formed only in Gods elect. Convictions may be blasted and vanish away, and the man that was under troubles for sin, may return again with the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire, but the new creature never perishes, nor can consist with such a return unto sin.³¹⁷

We must note that Flavel said the work of conviction could happen to two classes of people, namely, "upon the elect and reprobates." Also, it is vital to notice his use of the word *common*, as this provides a key to the conclusion to which I am driving.

As a last instance of this phenomenon, in *Husbandry* Flavel provided a chilling description of a man whose initial conviction about sin proved to be abortive: "Thus conviction also is but a preparative to a farther work upon the soul of a sinner...Many have gone thus far, and there they have stuck; they have been like a field plowed, but not sowed...for hereby their sin is greatly aggravated, and their eternal misery so much the more increased."³¹⁸ Thus far we have seen that Flavel's reckoning of conversion must not be interpreted to assert that any person who began to tread the path toward Christian conversion would inexorably attain it. In light of this there must be at least two types of people who set out on the quest for eternal life.

³¹⁷ Flavel, *Method*, 449-50. Cf. *Englands*, 127, 161; *ibid.*, An Appendix, 58; *Balm*, 166; *Husbandry*, 49, 66, 132, 137, 152, 251-3; *Method*, 77, 107, 414; *Navigation*, 14, 82; *A New Compass*, 60-1; *Sacramental*, 48; *Soul*, 355, 443, 453-4; Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 84.

³¹⁸ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 66.

Two Levels Along the Pathway to Conversion

How far was it possible for a person to progress along the path to veridical conversion and yet remain unregenerate? We shall see that Flavel taught that a person could be awakened, enlightened, illuminated, convicted, exercise faith (specious and temporary), and even be assured of his salvation, and yet be lost. Flavel said that every one of these effects could be the result of carnal knowledge, natural effects, and common influences. I shall begin by evaluating Flavel's teaching on effectual versus ineffectual awakening. As we evaluate each of these steps, when possible, I shall demonstrate that Flavel taught this consistently across his career.

Awakening

Flavel taught that a person must be effectually awakened as the first step to true evangelical conversion. John Spurr is correct when he noted that one of the vital emphases of Puritan preachers was to strive to bring about his hearers' awakening: "The preacher's duty was to awaken sinners, to bring them to a true sense of their predicament and to initiate their repentance."³¹⁹ However, we shall see that Flavel distinguished between two types of awakening: effectual and ineffectual.

Flavel was aware of his duty to labour to awaken his congregants (and readers). In *Method* he wrote, "Ministers study for truths apt to awaken and convince the consciences of them that hear them, but their words return again to them: they turn to God and mourn over the matter, we have labored in vain, and spent our strength for nought..."³²⁰ Clearly, Flavel believed that his responsibility was to attempt to awaken his hearers. In *Husbandry*, Flavel put into rhyme the importance of a person's being

³¹⁹ Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 173.

³²⁰ Flavel, *Method*, 355.

awakened: “Lord waken sinners, make them understand; ’Twixt thee, and them; how rawly matters stand. Give them no quiet rest, until they see, Their souls secur’d, better than Lands can be.”³²¹ In 1677, writing in the appendix to the reprint of *A New Compass for Seaman* which was called *A Pathetical and Serious Dissuasive*, he tried to awaken his readers to the near-impossibility of being reclaimed from the “horrid” sin of drunkenness: “In the last place, to awaken thee thoroughly, and startle thy secure Conscience, which Sensuality hath brawned and cauterized, let me tell thee...That it is a sin out of whose power few or none are ever rescued or reclaimed.”³²² As this shows, a person’s conscience needed to be awakened, or startled, before any other steps toward salvation could be taken. Thus, the process of awakening was essentially that of the person, for the first time, becoming cognizant of his danger. It was a person realizing that spiritual realities must be taken seriously.³²³

Though it would be possible to multiply instances of his teaching about awakening, I shall cite one final example of how this worked as a person was awakened for the first time. In the *Mysterie of Providence* he suggested that God’s providential ordering of the world’s events tended to rouse and awaken the spiritually lethargic:

And as it [God’s Providence] orders very strange occasions to awaken and rouse souls at first, so it works no less wonderfully in carrying on the work to perfection; and this it doth...By quickning and reviving dying convictions and troubles for sin. Souls after their first awakening, are apt to lose the sense and impression of their first troubles for sin; but Providence is vigilant to prevent it; and doth effectually prevent [i.e. assist] it sometimes, by *directing the Minister* to some discourse or passage, that shall fall as pat, as if the case of such a person had been studied by him, and designedly spoken to. How often have I found this in the cases of many souls, who have professed they have stood amazed, to hear the very thoughts of their hearts discovered by the Preacher, who knew nothing

³²¹ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 232.

³²² Flavel, *Pathetical and Serious Dissuasive*, 202. This title appeared as part two of *A New Compass for Seaman* (1664) and was renamed *Navigation Spiritualized* in 1677.

³²³ Flavel, *Soul*, 181.

of them! Sometimes by directing them to some proper rousing Scripture, that suites their present case.³²⁴

What might seem problematic to my assertion that there were two different levels at which a person was awakened is that Flavel rarely stated that there was such a thing as ineffectual, common, or natural awakening.³²⁵ On the other hand, neither did he speak of “effectual,” “special,” nor “supernatural” awakenings. In light of this, how does my presentation of his theology on two levels not break down? Flavel stated that there were two sorts of awakenings: those which did not lead to salvation and those which issued in veridical conversion. Perhaps the clearest illustration of this comes from *Mysterie of Providence* when Flavel stated, “Souls after their first awakening, are apt to lose the sense and impression of their first troubles for sin; but Providence is vigilant to prevent it; and doth effectually prevent it sometimes.”³²⁶ The operative word in this statement is of course, *sometimes*. Phrased another way, sometimes Providence did not prevent the loss of the sense of troubles for sin which arose from these first awakenings. There are many other places in Flavel where he taught the necessity of awakening and implied a distinction between effectual and ineffectual awakening.³²⁷

³²⁴ Flavel, *Divine Conduct*, 71-2; see also page 258. Michael Winship addressed the Massachusetts Puritans’ beliefs about providence, especially in the writings of Cotton Mather, at length in *God’s Seers* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). However, Winship’s claim that by the turn of the nineteenth century, “the disappearance of providentialism paralleled the disappearance of Calvinism itself, both vestiges of Renaissance structures of knowledge crumbling before the onslaughts of naturalistic scientism and progressive social reform,” sounds strikingly similar to the dubious claim made by Henson which opened up this thesis. Winship, *Seers of God*, 152. Guyatt provides a good analysis of Flavel’s diverse uses (and limitations) of interpreting providential events. Cf. *The Peculiar Smiles of Heaven*, 56, 58, 63.

³²⁵ An exception to this comes from the passage cited above in which his hypothetical hearer lamented that even though his conscience was “awakened,” this did not issue in salvation. Flavel, *Husbandry*, 66.

³²⁶ Flavel, *Divine Conduct*, 71. Cf. Flavel, *Husbandry*, 66.

³²⁷ Cf. Flavel, *Englands*, 140, 161; *Husbandry*, 69; *Method*, 449-50, 556; *Seaman’s Companion*, 68; *Soul*, b4, 181, 241, 355, 358, 400; *Touchstone*, 10, 222.

Before we pass to the next phase, it is interesting to note that the instance of a person being awakened but not converted did not fall out of use after Flavel. In the next century, John Wesley wrote about his own experience of conducting Christian ministry as an awakened, though not a converted man, “in 1740, Wesley portrayed himself at the end of his Georgia mission as a man who was awakened, but not yet converted to God.”³²⁸ Another man from the period of the Great Awakening distinguished between awakening, conviction, and conversion in this way: “Awakened by the Reverend Mr Whitefield: Convicted by the Reverend Mr Jn Wesley: Converted by the Reverend Mr Charles...”³²⁹

Finally, during the Second Great Awakening this distinction was made as one spectator at a revival sermon complained of the evangelist’s failure to awaken and his reversion to using crass methods to engender fear, and the absence of intelligible cognition about Christ and sin. This man reported as follows:

‘It was on the parable of Dives and Lazarus. There was nothing of the love of Christ, nor of the guilt of sin;³³⁰ there was nothing to awaken conscience – hell, h-e-ll, h – e – ll – was the one cry; and the sole object aimed at was to produce a sensation of intensified torture of physical self-feeling...The skill shown in the wording was great; and the whole object of the study appeared to be the elimination of every idea or thought.³³¹ It was evidently here the chief labour of preparation had been bestowed...’³³²

The narrator was clearly distressed that effectual awakening was not the goal of the evangelist. A clear understanding of what was entailed in spiritual awakening was

³²⁸ Hindmarsh, *Evangelical*, 119.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 154. Citing Thomas Middleton, 8 Oct 1743.

³³⁰ In passing I note the appearance of Flavel’s two essential recognitions.

³³¹ I must note that this idea stands in direct opposition to Flavel’s advice in *Fountain* when he wrote: “Become thinking men and women. Here all conversion begins.” Flavel, *Fountain*, 122. Flavel would adamantly oppose Lynch’s remark that: “the writings of Reformed authors promote the imperatives of believing and persuading in the absence of objective proof – the very definition of faith.” Lynch, *Bunyan and Language of Conviction*, 1. Countering this, Perry Miller wrote, “Puritans were at one with orthodox Protestants in rejecting fideism.” Miller, *New England Mind*, 71.

³³² Stopford, *Work and the Counterwork*, 41-2. Cited in Hunt, *Hearing*, 402.

taught by Flavel and it was valued by some in the generations after him. In Flavel's writings and throughout the nineteenth century, people distinguished between an awakening that was effectual and that which was ineffectual. Given Flavel's understanding of effectual proselytising, it is important to distinguish between two different levels on which the Spirit works. For people whose awakening lead to salvation as well as those for whom the awakening aborted, the next essential steps are those of enlightening and illumination. I shall collapse enlightening and illumination into the next section as they are, as mentioned in the above section, very closely related concepts.³³³

Enlightening and illumination

In addition to Flavel's teaching that a person could undergo true or false awakening, he also wrote about the possibility of experiencing enlightening and illumination on two different levels. In the 31st sermon of *Method*, a sermon on the text Ephesians 5:14,³³⁴ Flavel not only linked enlightening and illumination, he also suggested that a person could experience both movements toward conversion without ever being converted. He wrote that the Bible possibly "hath enlightened them, and convinced them: it hath wrought upon their minds in the way of common illumination, and upon their consciences in the way of conviction; but not upon their hearts and wills, by way of effectual conversion."³³⁵ In *Fountain* Flavel hinted at the difference between common and saving enlightenment when he wrote, "He that at first said let there be light, and it was so, must shine into our hearts, or they will never be savingly

³³³ See section titled "Illumination," 85-7, 116-20.

³³⁴ "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

³³⁵ Flavel, *Method*, 531.

enlightned.”³³⁶ If there was a saving enlightenment there must have been an inverse non-saving enlightenment. In *Sacramental Meditations* Flavel turned to Scripture to vindicate the claim that people could be enlightened and yet their hopes of conversion vanish. He cited the book of Hebrews’ litany of effects on the soul which proved vaporous: “It cannot be denied but that many persons in the state of nature and unbelief, may have ungrounded confidences, and false comforts built thereupon. This is evident from...that startling Scripture, *Heb. 6. 4, 5. Who were once enlightned, and have tasted of the Heavenly gift...*”³³⁷ As a last instance of this, Flavel named Judas as one who was enlightened and yet not saved: “Judas Iscariot, *one of the twelve*. Poor wretch, better had it been for him, if he had never been numbred with them: nor enlightned with so much knowledge as he was endued with: for this rent his Conscience to pieces, when he reflected on what he had done: and presently run himself into the gulf of despair.”³³⁸ Flavel asserted that Judas received, in some measure, the enlightening effects of God on his soul. Yet surely Flavel believed that that poor soul was lost.

Flavel averred that people were often enlightened but remained unconverted because they were glued to their courses of sinful living:

O how common is it every day, and in every place to see men hazarding their souls to satisfie their lusts! every man...The Horse is a very fierce and warlike creature, and when his courage is rouzed by the sound of trumpets and shouts of armies, he breaks headlong into the ranks of armed men, though death be before him. Such boisterous and headlong lusts are found in many enlightened persons: though their consciences represent damnation before them, onward they will rush, though God be lost, and a precious soul undone for ever.³³⁹

³³⁶ Flavel, *Fountain*, 116.

³³⁷ Flavel, *Sacramental*, 64-5. Cf. *Fountain*, 332.

³³⁸ Flavel, *Fountain*, 304.

³³⁹ Flavel, *Method*, 563.

This person received some light and knowledge of God but his cravings proved too strong to overcome. He was thus still in bondage to his sinful course of life. Concerning these sorts of people Flavel said in another place: “their lusts were stronger than their light.”³⁴⁰ The last example of this I shall point to comes from the last major work Flavel wrote in his life, an exposition of the Westminster Assembly’s *Shorter Catechism*. In Flavel’s comment on question 31 he asked, “Q. 5. In what things doth it enlighten them? A. In this, That Christ is their only remedy...And their all-sufficient remedy.”³⁴¹ It is notable that a person could intellectually assent to these truths and possess some measure of spiritual enlightening, yet remain unconverted. From each of the above uses of the term enlightenment, as well as others that have not been examined,³⁴² it follows that Flavel believed that people could be enlightened and never experience Christian salvation. Therefore, there are two levels at which a person could be enlightened: effectual and ineffectual.

In addition to enlightening functioning on two levels, the same thing can be said of Flavel’s concept of illumination. Flavel stressed the urgency for his people to experience illumination but recognised that there were two varieties. Writing just after the temporary expiration of the Licensing Act in 1679, Flavel published *Touchstone of Sincerity*, which he produced as a sequel to his best-selling book, *A Saint Indeed*. In *Touchstone* Flavel wrote, “See that startling Scripture, *Heb. 6. 4.* where you find among the common operations of the Spirit upon *Apostates*, *illumination*, which gives perspicuity to their minds in discerning spiritual truths, and that frequently with more

³⁴⁰ Flavel, *Fountain*, 7.

³⁴¹ Flavel, *Catechism*, 67.

³⁴² Flavel, *Englands*, 26, 60-1; *Fountain*, 100; *Method*, 394, 400, 531, 591; *Soul*, 402, 442; *Touchstone*, 21-2, 26-7; Lake, *Something by Way of Testimony*, 10 [sic: 18]. From Flavel’s Second Letter to Clement Lake.

distinctness and depth of Judgment, than some gracious souls attain unto...”³⁴³

Strikingly, Flavel stated that apostates could not only be illuminated, but endowed with gifts superior to true Christians. Flavel described these gifts as the common operations of the Spirit. Something supra-human was needed for saving illumination to occur.

What was needed was spiritual illumination, which I argue must be situated on the second level of influence. This illumination, indicated at the beginning of this study, signified that which was genuinely wrought by the Holy Spirit and brought other benefits along with it. Spiritual illumination brought humility which was not a fruit of the natural man. Writing in 1691 in his treatise *Mental Errors*, he said this about illumination: “The Arrogancy of *Reason* is the reigning Sin of the Unregenerate...When Conviction shall do its work upon the Soul, the Plumes of spiritual pride quickly fall...Spiritual Illumination cures this Ambition.”³⁴⁴ If spiritual illumination was the cure, what was the specific difference between these two types of illumination?

In the previous chapter we saw that the concept of illumination signified God’s action of shining light upon the content of the preached word. Flavel stated that saving illumination implied a different kind of knowledge from that which was common.

Writing in *Method* he claimed:

*But O that you would be convinced that your knowledge vastly differs from the knowledge of believers. Though you know the same things that they do, it is a knowledge of another kind and nature. You know spiritual things in another way, [than] merely by the light of reason assisted and improved by the common light of the Gospel: they know the same things by spiritual illumination, and in an experimental way.*³⁴⁵

³⁴³ Flavel, *Touchstone*, 21-2.

³⁴⁴ Flavel, *Planelogia*, 100.

³⁴⁵ Flavel, *Method*, 590.

Flavel defined saving illumination as that knowledge which was experimental (i.e. experiential). He then suggested that the cure for a person who experienced common but not saving illumination was conviction.³⁴⁶ He also made this connection between illumination and conviction in *Sacramental Meditations*. After quoting Jesus' words in John 7:37: "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink," he wrote, "When God by illumination and conviction makes men deeply sensible of their miserable lost and perishing condition, then ten thousand worlds for a Christ. All is but dung and dross in comparison of the excellency of Christ Jesus."³⁴⁷ Surely this was a hopeful sign! Flavel used the pathos-saturated expression of a person desiring Christ more than 10,000 worlds. This idea would seem to carry with it not only the knowledge that one was a sinner, (else, why would Christ be so attractive?) but that Christ was now the desire of the person's heart. Perhaps once illumination was conjoined with conviction his hearer could be converted?

Conviction

Having passed through the first three stages of awakening, enlightening, and illumination, we arrive at the step of conviction in hopes that Flavel's hearer might finally experience the peace and assurance of knowing that he passed the point of no return toward Christian conversion. As we shall see, and just as with the prior three states, in the arena of conviction there were also two different levels upon which these

³⁴⁶ This is a very fine point, but Flavel never addressed the question of whether common convictions morphed into saving convictions for the person who experienced salvation, or whether those who became Christians exclusively experienced saving convictions. My hunch is that it was a mix of the two. That is, common convictions (as well as illumination, etc.) were transformed into saving convictions by the Spirit.
³⁴⁷ Flavel, *Sacramental*, 180. For other places where Flavel taught on this theme, cf. *Englands*, 9-11, 139; *Fountain*, 106; *Planelogia*, 13; *Method*, 5, 73, 88, 356, 363, 394, 400-1; *Righteous Man's Refuge*, 192; *Saint*, 7-8; *Touchstone*, 8.

effects operated. Flavel wrote about effectual and ineffectual convictions in several different ways.

Flavel wrote about convictions which not only did not lead to conversion but which would rise up and testify against the stubborn person at the last judgment. In *Husbandry*, he likened the work of the Spirit in bringing about conviction to that of the plowman who tilled up the hardened earth. After describing this work he mimicked the bemoaning misery of the deceived person who did this: “Ah, fool that I am, to quench these convictions, unless I knew how to quench those flames they warn me of...Many convictions have I choaked and strangled, which it may be shall never more be revived, until thou revive them against me in judgment.”³⁴⁸ Later in the same work he relayed the dismal thought that convictions could miscarry: “So when souls were under a work of conviction, it is a critical time with them; many a one have I known then to miscarry, and never recovered again.”³⁴⁹ Since they miscarry they must be situated on the first level of ineffectual convictions; ineffectual convictions did not issue in salvation. Writing five years later he expressed the same idea when he wrote about people who “are only troubled for the commission of some more gross sins that startle the natural *Conscience*, but not for inward sins that defile the *soul*.”³⁵⁰ One of the reasons natural convictions aborted was because people choose to continue sinning against both their knowledge and first convictions: “Thou sinnest against knowledge and Conviction...And it [sic: if] so, poor sinner, what a case art thou in, to go on from day to day sinning against Light and Knowledge? Is not this a fearful rate of sinning?”³⁵¹ Using his wonderful powers of imagination, Flavel described the vivid difference between general

³⁴⁸ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 69.

³⁴⁹ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 181.

³⁵⁰ Flavel, *Touchstone*, 120-1.

³⁵¹ Flavel, *Pathetical and Serious Dissuasive*, 268.

and particular convictions of sin in *Englands Duty*: “A general conviction of sin, affects a man no more than the sight of a painted lion upon a sign-post; but when a particular conviction is set on upon the conscience by this special inward voice of Christ; sin is now like a living lion meeting a man in the way, and roaring dreadfully upon him.”³⁵²

Flavel had much to say about the effects on the second level of conviction, namely, effectual, special, or saving conviction. In *Pneumatologia*, he wrote, “The infinite weight with which the concerns of Eternity lie upon the hearts and thoughts of the People of God; nothing lies so near to their Spirits in all the World, as the Matters of Salvation do, and have still done ever since God throughly awakened them in their first effectual Conviction.”³⁵³ Effectual convictions, then, were those which placed a fixed and lasting impression upon the heart. Eleven years earlier, Flavel wrote about the sin-killing effect of saving convictions: “The plow kills those rank weeds that grow in the field, turns them up by the roots, buries and rots them. So doth saving conviction kill sin at the root, makes the soul sick of it, begets indignation in the heart against it.”³⁵⁴

Bringing about effectual conviction was always Flavel’s aim in preaching.

Why was it that common convictions came to nothing? As was mentioned in chapter two, the recalcitrant faculty which was holding out was the will. The will played the most direct role in the soul’s immovability. Writing in his first publication in 1664, he described the will as rebuffing the conscience’s attempts to persuade the soul to give in to the convictions wrought upon it. Alluding to the suggestion that “things of Eternal Duration, are infinitely to be preferred to all momentary and perishing things,” he continued,

³⁵² Flavel, *Englands*, 298-9.

³⁵³ Flavel, *Soul*, 241.

³⁵⁴ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 67.

Yet though Men be convinced of this, their stubborn Will stands out, and will not yield up it self to the Conviction...[during] Such Seasons, Conscience convinceth the Soul of, and often whispers thus in its ear: Now Soul strike in, close with this motion of the Spirit, and be happy for ever; thou mayest never have such a gale for Heaven any more. Now though these be allowed Maxims of Reason, and Conscience inforces them strongly on the soul, yet cannot it prevail; the proud stubborn Will rebels, and will not be guided by it.³⁵⁵

What is so striking about this statement was his insistence that this motion, which ultimately proved ineffectual, was “of the Spirit.” This leads us to conclude that in Flavel’s soteriology a person’s motions toward God could truly be influenced by the Spirit but not lead to salvation. It was as if the Spirit began a work but then halted before completing it. In several places Flavel likened this to the instance in the Old Testament when the Spirit of God at certain times came upon Saul and at other times departed from him in the book of 1 Samuel.³⁵⁶ Now that we have examined Flavel’s take on common or ineffectual conviction, in what way did Flavel speak about effectual conviction?

Flavel wrote about the necessity of people passing through effectual convictions in numerous places. After stating that the power of common convictions faded quickly, he wrote in *Englands Duty*, “special convictions will be continued, one thing backs another, for Christ is in pursuit of the soul, and will give it chase till at last he overtake and come up with it.”³⁵⁷ Once the first effectual conviction influenced the soul it would not cease impacting the person until it lead to conversion. Ten years previously he wrote the following about the inexorable effects of effectual conviction: “That breach which effectual conviction once made, can never be made up any more: *they will return no more to folly*...indeed it seems to them that have endured so many fears and sorrows for

³⁵⁵ Flavel, *A New Compass*, 39-40.

³⁵⁶ Flavel, *Soul*, 258. Cf. *Balm*, 91; *Method*, 321; *Navigation*, 264.

³⁵⁷ Flavel, *Englands*, 156-7.

it...they admire the mercy of their escape from sin, to their dying day; and never look back upon their former state but with shame and grief.”³⁵⁸ Effectual conviction was the opposite of fleeting in that those who were convicted in this way could never again forget the bitterness of their former sins. Five years prior to that, Flavel spoke about the overwhelming power which effectual conviction entailed. Though Flavel did not specifically identify this as effectual conviction, the fact that it overwhelmingly attracted the person to Christ is proof that it was. Flavel averred that the Holy Spirit:

Pierces their very souls by conviction...It comes upon the conscience with such pinching dilemmas, and tilts the sword of conviction so deep into their souls, that there is no stenching the blood, no healing this wound, till Christ himself come and undertake the cure...this barbed arrow cannot be pulled out of their hearts by any but the hand that shot it in.³⁵⁹

The very one who created the wound was also the one who healed it.

From the above quotations we have seen that Flavel taught that some people underwent conviction but never experienced Christian salvation. At this point along the ten stages, how did a person who never experienced saving conviction relate to the two needful recognitions? Speaking about those who underwent “Partial convictions on the understanding,” he asserted: “Though alas, to this day they never saw sin in its vileness, much less their own special sin, nor Christ in his suitableness and necessity.”³⁶⁰ A person who underwent the hopeful steps of awakening, enlightening, illumination, and conviction had nonetheless not come to the point of realizing, with his whole soul, that sin was serious or that Christ alone was the fitting saviour. He said of these effects, “These things may be where the heart never effectually opens to Christ; all this may be

³⁵⁸ Flavel, *Touchstone*, 118-9.

³⁵⁹ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 64.

³⁶⁰ Flavel, *Englands*, 336.

but a morning dew, an early cloud that vanishes away.”³⁶¹ Something must be superadded for them to lead to the securing of eternal life, or, what Flavel called “a compleat Conversion to *Jesus Christ*.”³⁶² As with each step covered thus far, Flavel consistently taught that conviction came upon the soul on two levels.³⁶³ We shall now proceed to the most important facet in the *ordo salutis*, that of saving faith.

Faith

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, faith was arguably the most important reaction in the whole train of salvific responses. Since this was the most important step, Flavel was concerned that his hearers and readers understood the true nature of saving faith.³⁶⁴ As we have asked before so we again ask here – was it possible for people to exercise a common, general, or merely human kind of faith, and thus delude themselves into thinking that they were saved? To answer this question, we turn first to *Mental Errors*, one of Flavel’s last writings. One of the errors toward which Flavel directed his polemical firepower was the doctrine of the Antinomians, who were on the rise in the 1690s. Addressing their doctrine of justification “from eternity,” or before the exercise of faith,³⁶⁵ Flavel wrote, “This Doctrine³⁶⁶ is certainly unsound, because it confounds the

³⁶¹ Ibid., 337.

³⁶² Ibid., *Divine Conduct*, 61.

³⁶³ Ibid. *Englands*, 19-20, 60-1, 335, 343-4, 453; *Husbandry*, 109-110; *Method*, 129, 144, 544; *A New Compass*, 39, 60-1; *Planelogia*, 152.

³⁶⁴ In his perceptive master’s thesis, Howard referenced: “the two kinds of knowledge, natural and spiritual, and the way in which this knowledge was the eye that guided the hand of faith.” Howard, *Clear Waters*, 77. Howard was the first interpreter of Flavel to distinguish between these two levels of knowledge. I might add that I discovered this thesis late into my research, long after I pinpointed the idea that these effects are happening on two levels. Even though Howard’s thesis does not elaborate on the “two kinds of knowledge,” it encouraged me that, since one other interpreter of Flavel’s also held to this distinction, I was on the right track.

³⁶⁵ Chang, *John Flavel*, 109-16; Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 116-8; Watkins, *The Puritan Experience*, 89. For a survey of its earlier manifestation in New England see Higgins, *Aspects of the Doctrine*, 2-46, 95-117.

³⁶⁶ “Justification by Faith is no more but the manifestation to us of what was really and actually done before we had a being...it is [wrote Mr. Saltmarsh] a being persuaded more or less of Christ’s love to us; so that when we believe, that which was hid before, doth then appear.” *Planelogia*, 319-20.

distinction betwixt Dogmatical, and Saving Faith; and makes it all one, to believe an *Axiom*, or Proposition, and to believe savingly in Christ to Eternal Life...yea, the very Devils themselves assent to the truth of Scripture Axioms and Propositions, as well as Men..."³⁶⁷ Surely this sort of faith did not constitute the saving variety. Another sort of common faith which had no power to justify was faith which did not issue in good works – yet another fruit which tended to flourish in Antinomian soil. Warning his readers in *Englands Duty*, Flavel stated, "Yea, here's the true way of Justification indeed; where the imputed righteousness of Christ comes, all self-righteousness vanishes before it. By him that worketh not, understand not an idle, lazy believer, that takes no care of the duties of obedience; no, no, an idle Faith can never be a saving Faith."³⁶⁸ One integral mark of true saving faith was that it necessarily issued in orthopraxy.

In *Method*, written ten years before *Mental Errors*, Flavel stated that there must be assent to the basic facts which lay behind the Christian message: "The receiving Christ necessarily implies the *Assent* of the understanding to the truths of Christ revealed in the Gospel...though it be not in itself saving faith, yet it is the foundation and groundwork of it."³⁶⁹ Without assent to the facts of the Christian message a person could never be saved. Yet, as surely as he stressed this, it must not be thought that mere assent was saving faith. Assent to the truths of Christianity was located on the first level of effects. Saving faith was altogether different. What was the nature of this second level of faith? In *Method* he wrote the following about receiving Christ by faith alone:

And indeed it involves many deep mysteries and things of greatest weight...[people] have very slight thoughts of faith, who never past under the illuminating, convincing and humbling work of the Spirit: but we shall find that saving faith is quite another thing, and differs in its whole kind and nature from

³⁶⁷ Flavel, *Planelogia*, 347.

³⁶⁸ Flavel, *Englands*, 72.

³⁶⁹ Flavel, *Method*, 117.

that traditional faith, and common assent, which is so fatally mistaken for it in the world.³⁷⁰

This was a key distinction Flavel made. Notice how he grouped the steps of illuminating, convincing (i.e. conviction), and humbling³⁷¹ as those effects which the Spirit must produce before saving faith could be exercised. This is vital to bear in mind as we move into the next chapter and as I attempt to demonstrate how the three grids and two levels function together in the salvation of some and the loss of others.

In the seventh sermon of *Method*, he preached on the text located in the Gospel of John: “*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name*” (John 1:12). The sermon was fittingly titled, “Of the Active Reception of Christ, or the Vital Act of Faith.” He drove home his point that saving faith was caused by the power of God: “the least degree of saving faith is more than all the power of nature can produce: there must be a special revelation of the arm of the Lord in that work.”³⁷² Flavel then proceeded to highlight the key difference between those who had saving faith and those with a merely common faith: “all believing motions towards Christ are the effects of the Fathers drawing, a glorious and irresistible power goes forth from God to produce it.”³⁷³ The Father’s drawing in the one case and absence in the other made the difference between these two kinds of faith.

In Flavel’s *Exposition of the Assembly’s Catechism* he clearly articulated the difference between general and saving faith. After defining saving faith in Jesus Christ as “*a saving Grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for Salvation as he is*

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 116.

³⁷¹ In the previous chapter I showed this to be a sub-set under conviction. See section titled “Conviction,” 87-92.

³⁷² Ibid., 144.

³⁷³ Ibid.

*offered to us in the Gospel*³⁷⁴ he added that the seat of saving faith was “*Not only the Head or Understanding, but principally the Heart and Will.*”³⁷⁵ On the same page he reiterated that his definition of non-saving faith was “*The meer assent of the Understanding to the Truths of Scripture.*” He continued by warning that this assent “is not such a Faith as will save the Soul.”³⁷⁶ What was saving faith for Flavel, then? He likened it to a hearty receiving of Christ: “*Tis the receiving of Christ by the full and hearty consent of the heart that justifies us.*”³⁷⁷ He went on to add that the person who had saving faith was one who “having been convinced of his sin and misery, and of his own and all other Creatures inability to save him, and of the ability and willingness of Christ to save him, lets go all hold, and dependance on Creatures, and his own Righteousness, and casts himself entirely upon Christ for Righteousness and Life.”³⁷⁸ Faith was that which abandoned all hope of salvation outside of Christ.

The idea that there was a difference between these two levels of faith was a widely held belief not only in the Puritan period but also by the magisterial Reformers, whose understanding of this distinction came from the book of James. An influential gentlewoman living in the Civil War period distinguished between the two: “And so, as Lady Harley observed, ‘we must examine ourselves whether we have only a general faith or the special faith, which is called a saving faith.’”³⁷⁹ Tipson also made the point that the Puritans distinguished between a general faith and saving faith. The former was in no way seen as salvific: “Anyone could have a general faith in God’s promises; this was a

³⁷⁴ Flavel, *Catechism*, 162.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 164.

³⁷⁹ Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 51. Cited in Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 43.

dead faith.”³⁸⁰ The instances cited above are selections where Flavel seemed to make this point most clearly.³⁸¹ Now that we have sufficiently investigated those places where Flavel differentiated between true and false faith, we turn lastly to address the case of people who possessed assurance of salvation when they had, in reality, no justification for believing such.

Assurance

Why did some Puritans appear to labour to shake people’s confidence in their standing with God? Were they merely doing this for sport, or to keep lazy people alert?³⁸² Did the Puritans enjoy telling others (and their parishioners enjoy hearing!) that they might be going to hell? Flavel’s sequel to *A Saint Indeed* was called *The Touchstone of Sincerity* and was first printed in 1679. The design of the former was to display the way in which a person could maintain communion with God. In the latter publication, Flavel wrote to prompt people to search their hearts to see if there was sincerity in their Christian profession. In that work Flavel provided the reason for his preaching in such a way that it might appear that he was trying to frighten people into thinking that they were not Christians. He wrote, “My design in this discourse is not to shake the well-built hopes of any Man, or beget groundless Jealousies; but to discover the real dangerous flaws in the foundation of many Mens hopes for Heaven.”³⁸³ Flavel’s purpose in preaching sermons which questioned people’s reasons for believing they

³⁸⁰ Tipson, *Puritan Understanding of Conversion*, 186.

³⁸¹ Cf. Flavel, *Englands*, 238-9, 323; *Fountain*, 339; *Husbandry*, 52; *Planeologia*, 80-1, 263; *Method*, 117, 126-7, 146, 546; *Sacramental*, 126, 134, 134-6, 166-7. See also Perkins’ category of “temporary faith,” Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, P4^v.

³⁸² Morgan suggested that Puritan preachers’ constant message about assurance of salvation was, “in order to be sure one must be unsure...the surest earthly sign of a saint was his uncertainty; and the surest sign of a damned soul was his security.” Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 70. This may have been true of some ministers but not so with Flavel as we shall see. When there were appropriate evidences Flavel delighted to assure his people that they were saved.

³⁸³ Flavel, *Touchstone*, 13.

were in good standing with God was because he feared that many were basing their confidence on ill-grounded hopes. For this reason Flavel did not shy away from challenging people's self-evaluations.

Flavel stated that there were two sorts of people who were deceived: those who were converted but doubted that they were for sundry reasons (perhaps failure with ongoing sin, propensity to doubt, etc.) and those who flattered themselves that they were converted when they were not. The latter sort was in eternal danger and needed to be made aware of that reality. Since Flavel was unable to differentiate between the two as he stood in the pulpit, he preferred to err on the side of trying to rouse both and make sure they were all in a converted state. Since what was at stake was of eternal import, he would rather err on the side of assuming that they were mistaken about their good standing with God, rather than presuming that they were saved and needed assurance about that reality. These thoughts might serve as a useful corrective to interpreters of the Puritans who label them cruel misanthropes who relished needlessly distressing their congregants. This leads us to our discussion of those who were assured but had no reason to be so and of those who were assured with good reason.

Flavel offered an arresting caution to that class of citizens who were most inclined to think that they were impervious from being questioned about their eternal state: fellow ministers. In *Touchstone*, he challenged his own confrères thus: "Among this sort of self-deceivers, how many gifted men, and among that sort some employed in the office of the Ministry, will be found!...as if the subject must be, because the object is sacred."³⁸⁴ In *Englands Duty* Flavel gave this vivid caution: "Hypocrites have their delights and comforts, in a false and imaginary happiness which they fancy to

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 28-9.

themselves; but this is a vanishing shadow: they take comfort from their groundless hopes of heaven, whither they shall never come...Thus they make a bridge of their own shadow, and are drowned in the waters.”³⁸⁵ Flavel conceded that hypocrites could have their delights, comforts, and happiness in believing that they were saved but he warned that these were imagined, invented, immaterial. The preceding quotations serve to demonstrate that Flavel warned ministers and laypeople that there was such a thing as false assurance. What did he believe about a true Christian having the assurance that he was in a state of grace? Happily, we shall see that Flavel more than counteracted any accusations of the preponderance of gloom by offering Christians cheerful confidence that they could know that they had eternal life.

Flavel unambiguously spoke with great hope and confidence that true Christians could know and enjoy the reality that they were saved. He took a clear stance in the debate about whether persons could be assured of their salvation. Flavel taught that assurance was certainly attainable in this life, though he believed that not everyone who should have assurance attained that persuasion. He also distinguished between assurance which was attained in the normal way and that which was arrived at in a supernatural way. For Flavel, the normal way of a person’s attaining assurance was through living a life of consistent, albeit imperfect, Christian obedience and communion with God. There is no need for me to linger on the supernatural way of attaining assurance – that is – through an overwhelming encounter with the Holy Spirit, as this

³⁸⁵ Flavel, *Englands*, 380. Cf. 291, 365; *Soul*, 132, 294, 437; *Method*, a1^v, 64, 102.

was addressed in Embry's thesis.³⁸⁶ Gladly, the amount of material which demonstrates Flavel's positive teaching about assurance is prodigious.³⁸⁷

In his earliest writings Flavel taught that Christians had the ability to be fully assured of their salvation and that this was something for which they should strive. Early in his career, in *Englands Alarm*, he identified love for other Christians as “a positive mark of your Regeneration...And to speak truth, it is (ordinarily), the clearest signe that many poor Christians can find in their own breasts.”³⁸⁸ Assurance could be gained by Christians as they expressed love for one another. The same year he alluded to this repeatedly in *A Saint Indeed*, and, in fact, this was one of the key themes in that work. He said, “The comfort of our Souls doth much depend upon the keeping of our hearts, for he that is negligent in attending his own heart, is (ordinarily) a great stranger to assurance, and the sweet comforts flowing from it.”³⁸⁹ Not only did he imply that assurance was possible and a goal to be sought after, but he explained how to go about attaining it. Along the same lines he stated, “I deny not but it is the work and office of the Spirit to assure you, and yet do confidently affirm, that if ever you attain assurance in the ordinary way wherein God dispenses it, you must take pains with your own hearts”.³⁹⁰ Again, Christians were advised to keep a close watch over their hearts if they ever desired to be assured of their salvation. Within that work Flavel also provided the way in which Christians ought to seek assurance, namely, by comparing their hearts with Scripture: “An instance of the like nature the learned *Gerson* gives us, Of one that was driven by temptation upon the very borders of desperation, at last being...assured,

³⁸⁶ Embry, *Keeper*, 44-5, 104.

³⁸⁷ Flavel perhaps spoke more about assurance than any other facet of Christian salvation. Therefore, I must be highly selective and relegate much evidence to the footnotes.

³⁸⁸ Flavel, *Tydings*, 27.

³⁸⁹ Flavel, *Saint*, 28.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28-9.

one asked him, How he attained it? He answered, Not by any extraordinary revelation, but by subjecting his understanding to the Scriptures, and comparing his own heart with them.”³⁹¹ Albeit Flavel taught that assurance was attainable, he did not teach that there was an easy path to it. Writing in *A Saint Indeed* he said:

God doth not usually indulge lazy and negligent Souls with the Comforts of Assurance, he will not so much as seem to patronize sloth and carelessness, he will give it, but it shall be in his own way...they are mistaken that think the beautiful Child of Assurance may be born without pangs: Ah, how many solitary hours have the people of God spent in heart examination? How many times have they looked into the Word, and then into their hearts? Sometime they thought they discovered sincerity, and were even ready to draw forth the triumphant conclusion of Assurance, then comes a doubt they cannot resolve, and dashes all again; many hopes and fears, doubtings and reasonings they have had in their own breasts, before they arrived at a comfortable settlement.³⁹²

In *Fountain*, he succinctly summed up the matter in this way: “The new creature may be sick, it cannot die. Saints may fall, but they shall rise again.”³⁹³ Surely this provided saints who were wont to doubt a great measure of hope that assurance was something after which they ought to strive.

The last written words of Flavel’s, within his last book which he was writing when he died, are contained in *An Exposition of the Assemblies Catechism*. The last few pages of exposition that remained to be written when he died were completed by an associate³⁹⁴ and the work was published posthumously in 1692. As he expounded on question number 36 of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*,³⁹⁵ he intimated that the

³⁹¹ Ibid., 29-30.

³⁹² Ibid., 31-2. Cf. Hindmarsh, *Evangelical*, 216. In an extract from his diurnal, Flavel wrote about the different grounds for doubting one’s conversion: “I have laboured all along carefully to distinguish betwixt such sins as are grounds of doubting, and such as are only grounds of humiliation; knowing that not every evil is a ground of doubting, though all, even the smallest infirmities, administer matter of humiliation.” See Appendix C of this thesis for the full text of this fragment.

³⁹³ Flavel, *Fountain*, 379.

³⁹⁴ Flavel, *Exposition*, A2^v-A3^r.

³⁹⁵ “What are the benefits which in this life do either accompany, or flow from Justification, Adoption, and Sanctification?” Ibid., 77.

usual seasons of strong assurance come during periods of suffering.³⁹⁶ He continued by suggesting that “joy unspeakable amidst outward troubles” could be the reality for converted people. He was quick to add, however, that “negligence in duty starves it.”³⁹⁷ Flavel certainly thought that attaining it was a vital component of salvation after which all ought to strive. Flavel repeatedly, and in many places, reiterated this point about assurance.³⁹⁸

To sum up the argument of this chapter, Flavel clearly delineated two classes of people who were, in some sense, under the influence of the Holy Spirit and were en route to obtaining eternal life. The first group of people included those who began to walk down the path to salvation but whose motions toward God did not issue in their full salvation. These were the people who passed through such stages as awakening, enlightening, illumination, conviction, (specious) faith, and (unwarranted) assurance but never received any of Christ’s salvific benefits. I have designated these effects as occurring on the first level of spiritual influence. The second class of people was comprised of those who experienced the Spirit’s saving influences in a binding, lasting, and saving way. They passed through all of the phases that the former category did, but they were regenerated, exercised faith and repentance in a saving way, were united to Christ, justified, and began the process of sanctification. In addition, some of these basked in a state of assurance that they had been converted.³⁹⁹ All of these effects I have so denominated the second level of the Spirit’s operations. Anyone who experienced

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 78.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Flavel, *A New Compass*, 167; *Divine Conduct*, 151; *Fountain*, 379; *Husbandry*, 119; *Method*, 57-8, 500, 509; *Practical Treatise of Fear*, 102; *Righteous Man’s Refuge*, 244; *Sacramental*, 66, 70, 144, 196-7, 202; *Saint*, 29-30, 31-2, 84-5; *Soul*, b4^v, 447; *Touchstone*, A5^v, 32, 186.

³⁹⁹ Flavel stated that not all true Christians experience assurance of their salvation. Ordinarily, this was something that only the diligent received. Cf. *Husbandry*, 119; *Sacramental*, 202; *Saint*, 29-30.

effects on this level would assuredly come to experience full salvation. If this was the way in which the first and second levels functioned within the third grid (the “ten phases”), how did the two levels relate to the other two grids?

The Three Grids Interaction with the Two Levels

The three grids presented in the previous chapter bear a vital relationship to the two levels presented in this chapter. What did Flavel teach about the way in which these paradigms interact? In terms of the two spiritual realities which a person must recognize to be converted Flavel explicitly stated that persons who underwent the first level of effects would recognize neither their sinfulness, nor the saving worth of Christ. He stated this clearly in *Englands Duty* when he addressed those who experienced partial convictions but, fatally, did not realize their sin or need for Christ. In a section where he asserted that “the opening of the Heart to Christ, [is] the great and direct intention and end of the Gospel” he warned, “There be two things which are exceeding apt to deceive Men in this matter.” The first of these were “Partial Convictions upon the Understanding; light and knowledge breaking into the mind, producing orthodoxy of Judgment; this seems to be the effectual opening of the Understanding to Christ, though alas, to this day they never saw sin in its vileness, much less their own special sin; nor Christ in his suitableness and necessity.”⁴⁰⁰ Clearly then, those who experienced convictions on the first level believed neither of the two great tenets which led to eternal life. As bad as they may have felt when they experienced awakening, conviction, and the feeling of a vaporous faith, they did not savingly realize their sin or need for Christ. Therefore only the person who had second level effects influencing him would ever

⁴⁰⁰ Flavel, *Englands*, 335-6.

recognize these necessities. How did the human faculties relate to the first and second levels of effects?

Which of the hearer's faculties were being influenced on the first level of influence? Flavel would argue, as was briefly alluded to in the preceding chapter, that the mind could be informed and the affections powerfully stirred up but the person remain unconverted because of a recalcitrant will.⁴⁰¹ The will was the faculty which held out and resisted the work of God in salvation. Flavel expressed this clearly in many places. One such place occurs in the preface to *Englands Duty* when he wrote, "If thou be in thy unregenerate state, then [God] solemnly demands in this text admission into the soul he made, by the consent of the will."⁴⁰² In *Pneumatologia*, he said this regarding the will: "The Will is a faculty of the rational Soul, whereby a man either chuseth, or refuseth the things which the understanding discerns, and knows."⁴⁰³ Since the will constituted that part of man which decided for or against actions, it could fairly be said that the will would not move until the person was inexorably on the path to salvation. Lastly, in *Fountain*, Flavel conveyed this about the inexorable will: "The eye of God is first and mainly upon the will; if that be sincere and right for God, small things will be accepted; and if not, the greatest shall be abhorred."⁴⁰⁴ In summary then, the holding back of the will was the factor which prevented people from converting. Therefore, the mind and affections were influenced within people on both the first and second level, but only those who underwent second level effects had wills which budged.

⁴⁰¹ I shall only summarize with a few sentences at this point as this was already brought out in the previous chapter. See section titled "Three Human Faculties," 60-70; Flavel, *Englands*, 329.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, To the Reader, A4^{r-v}. John Owen, a contemporary Puritan, provided an identical list of these faculties when he wrote: "The Holy Ghost...works upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections agreeably to their own natures." Owen, *Mortification*, 40.

⁴⁰³ Flavel, *Soul*, 23; Cf. 20.

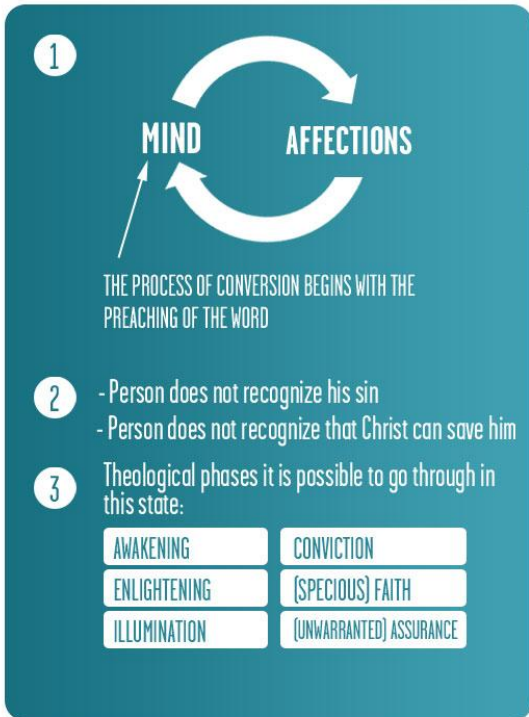
⁴⁰⁴ Flavel, *Fountain*, 362.

What have we learned thus far about Flavel's elaborate paradigm for proselytising? The previous chapter established that in his conception of a person's conversion to Christianity, Flavel maintained that there were three distinct grids functioning. This chapter added a second dimension to these grids. This accounted for the fact that Flavel alluded to people's progress toward conversion as manifesting itself in two different ways. He asserted that there were two distinct levels upon which people were drawn toward God. The first level he described with the word common, and maintained that people who experienced these influences of the Spirit did not ultimately convert. The second level he described as special, or saving, and communicated that people who experienced effects on this level experienced Christian conversion. (For a visual depiction of all these elements, see the chart below.) Flavel espoused an extraordinarily intricate and highly nuanced conception of Christian salvation which, as we shall see in chapter five, was influential in the religious revivals of the next century and beyond.

As the previous two chapters elaborated Flavel's beliefs about salvation on a highly theoretical level, the next chapter shall draw these threads together and investigate the ways in which Flavel brought theory directly into the ears and bosoms of his regular hearers – whether they were his weekly hearers in Dartmouth, or Transatlantic readers whom his writings converted many generations after his death.

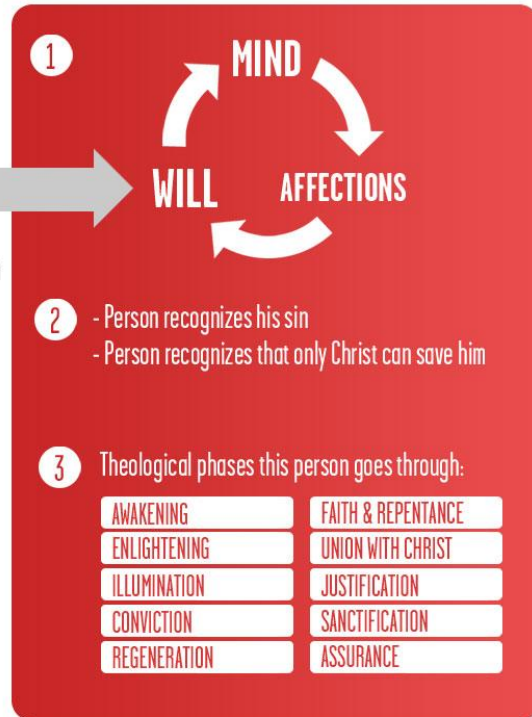
FIRST LEVEL OF EFFECTS

"COMMON" OR "NATURAL"



SECOND LEVEL OF EFFECTS

"SPIRITUAL" OR "SAVING"



Regeneration and renewal of the will by the Holy Spirit

Chapter 3

An Application of Flavel's Method⁴⁰⁵

“In all the foregoing sermons I have been pleading and wooing for Christ.”⁴⁰⁶

Whilst all of the accumulated quotations used in the previous chapters support the account of Flavel's method that I have posited, it was rather unlikely that one of his hearers would have been able to fully reconstruct such a schema after the Sunday sermon or lecture. As was mentioned in chapter one, there was not one spot in any of his books where Flavel spelled out his exhaustive theology of conversion. Rather, the various components were scattered (though concentrated in some places) throughout his writings. Thus, the cumulative impact of his instruction came to his hearers in a palatable, homiletical form. It is appropriate to recall that to the degree that Flavel has gone down in history, it was not necessarily his depth of theological insight that situated him there. It was, rather, the salutary effect of his pastoral, affectionate, and evangelistic writings that did so. It is also for this reason that Flavel's writings had the impact on the eighteenth century that they did – the argument of chapter five of this thesis. This chapter shall display the way in which Flavel's proselytising operated from the standpoint of his congregants and readers. It is at this point that unity and diversity become clear within Flavel's writings. Albeit he clearly taught a nuanced theology of conversion (e.g. the third grid with its ten theological stages overlapping with two levels of effectuality), Flavel desired people to simply admit their sin and need for Christ (the

⁴⁰⁵ I would like to express my thanks to the attendees of the February 2012 meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Seminar, Durham University. Their thoughtful questions, criticisms, and feedback in response to a paper which was based on this chapter, titled: “‘Lively Emblems’: A Seventeenth-century Puritan's Variegated Approach to Proselytisation’ helped sharpen this chapter.

⁴⁰⁶ Flavel, *Englands*, An Appendix, 1.

first grid). I would argue that it was this nexus between complexity and simplicity in Flavel's writings which caused people at the time of the Great Awakening to be impacted by his message.⁴⁰⁷ As we shall see, Flavel would have been less pleased after a sermon if one his congregants said, "I think I might be ready to move into the fourth stage on my way to conversion," but overjoyed if he said, "Christ was beautifully displayed this morning, and I feel myself drawn to him."

For this reason, as I attempt to display Flavel's evangelistic method in this chapter, I shall not merely slog through the three grids a third time. This is for four reasons. First, it would risk becoming prosaic to travel down that well-worn road, in the same manner as before, a third time. Second, that Flavel held to these components and that he sought to appropriate this pattern has already been demonstrated. Third, Flavel was primarily preaching sermons to ordinary Devonians. His chief interests were to convert non-Christians and build up Christians. If we lose sight of this we risk missing his primary burden. Lastly, Flavel knew that the best laid plans of the preacher could be instantaneously brushed aside by the Spirit of God, should He choose to act. In *The Necessity of Conversion*,⁴⁰⁸ one of his last writings, he explained:

Nor do thy sins exceed the ability and power of the *Applying Cause* of pardon, namely, *the Spirit of God*. For though I should suppose thy *mind* to be clouded and overshadowed with grossest ignorance, thy *Heart* to be as hard as an *Adamant* or *Nether Mill-stone*, thy *Will* stiff and obstinate, thy *Affections* enchanted and bewitched with the pleasures of Sin; yet this Spirit of God in a moment can make a convincing beam of light to dart into thy dark

⁴⁰⁷ This addresses the difference between Puritan theology and that of Evangelicals in the eighteenth century and what David Bebbington referred to as the difference between "baroque metaphysics and new light". From email correspondence dated 25 Sept 2012. This chapter shall attempt to prove that, given Flavel's ability to reach both eras, this distinction is largely illusory.

⁴⁰⁸ This work is the second half of *The Reasonableness of Personal Reformation* (1691).

mind, make thy hard *heart* relent, thy stubborn *will* to bow, and all the *affections* of thy Soul to comply, and open obedientially to Christ.⁴⁰⁹

Flavel was open to the possibility that his sophisticated method of preaching for conversion could be put to one side and God instantly convert people, much as He did the Apostle Paul.

This point is vital to bear in mind as some interpreters of the Puritans insist that intense emotional states were integral to conversion. For example, Cohen wrote:

Puritan theology insisted that the straight and narrow path to heaven traversed the gate of conversion; those whom God had elected to salvation passed through a protracted experience of desperation and relief. To glimpse one's heart beating faster at the sound of the Word and find the terror of God's wrath assuaged by the joy of deliverance signified admission into the Kingdom of Heaven.⁴¹⁰

Whereas there is some truth to the claim that people frequently went through protracted inner turmoil when en route to conversion, it was not always the case, and Flavel's approach accounts for that. Pettit also alluded to this idea when he wrote about the importance of the prolonged interiority which was supposedly required:

By preparation they meant a period of prolonged introspective meditation and self-analysis in the light of God's revealed Word. In this process man first examined the evils of his sins, repented for those sins, and then turned to God for salvation. From conviction of conscience, the soul moved through a series of interior stages, always centered on self-examination, which in turn were intended to arouse a longing desire for grace."⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ Flavel, *Reasonableness*, 127. On this ignorance of which Flavel spoke, see chapter two, "Three Human Faculties," 75-8. In this case, the person had the information but did not yet believe it to be true. The Spirit does not impart new information.

⁴¹⁰ Cohen, *God's Caress*, 5. He later wrote, "The new birth was a prolonged process that began years before one joined a congregation and whose impact resonated throughout a believer's life." Cohen, *God's Caress*, 15.

⁴¹¹ Pettit, *Heart Prepared*, 17.

Cohen's suggestion that a "protracted experience" was requisite and Pettit's claim that "prolonged introspection" was necessary are both overstated. Whilst neither is foundationless, both are exaggerated.

In addition to Flavel's explanation given above, an instance of conversion happening almost instantly appears in the Puritan Thomas Goodwin's (1600-80) account of his own conversion. Goodwin wrote the following about his conversion as a teenager in the second decade of the seventeenth century: "So God was pleased on the sudden, and as it were in an instant, to alter the whole of his former dispensation towards me, and said of and to my soul, Yea, live...it made a noise over my whole heart, and filled and possessed all the faculties of my whole soul."⁴¹² Flavel knew that examples like this abounded in the church. The reason that this possibility does not vitiate Flavel's elaborate system of evangelistic preaching (and undermine this thesis) was because according to Flavel's understanding, even though the Lord *could* convert instantaneously upon the first hearing of the Word preached, *it was not His ordinary practice*. Flavel would counsel a person that it would be presumptuous to expect Him to do so.⁴¹³ Therefore, my approach to laying out Flavel's practice of evangelising shall be slightly different from the previous two chapters. In this chapter I shall refer to the three

⁴¹² Goodwin, *Works* 2, lxi-lxii. Along similar lines, Beeke wrote: "Brakel's [1635-1711] *Reasonable Service* emphasizes the need for conversion. In an intriguing section on regeneration, he explains that sinners are often converted in different ways. Some are converted suddenly, like the Philippian jailer, some are brought to conversion via the Spirit's application of the condemning power of the law...Most commonly, Brakel says, sinners are converted by being convicted of sin and brought to need and then find salvation outside themselves in Jesus Christ." Beeke, "Dutch Further Reformation," 152-3.

⁴¹³ Cf. Flavel, *Divine Conduct*, 71; *Englands*, An Appendix, 32, 37, 59, 60; *Saint*, 144; *Method*, 350, 572. Cohen added, "God could convert by using other means, but He chose not to." Cohen, *God's Caress*, 162. On his way to pointing out that Puritan evangelism failed in Lancashire during the reign of Elizabeth (in part because of the Puritan preachers, in part because of apathetic laity), Haigh alluded to the early Puritans' belief that the ordinary means of salvation was understood to be through sermon attendance and catechizing. Haigh "Puritan Evangelism," 31, 51.

grids and the two levels of effectuality, but not necessarily uniformly. This shall be an attempt to present his technique from the viewpoint of his hearer.

Thus, I shall present Flavel's method of preaching for conversion through three lenses. These repeatedly played a role in the method which pervaded his writings.⁴¹⁴ First, Flavel extensively elaborated upon the person and work of Christ in an effort to encourage his audience to come to saving faith. This first theme is also, in my judgment, the quintessence of Flavel's approach to proselytising. Through a careful examination of all of Flavel's writings, I conclude that Flavel's exposition of Christ *was* his evangelism. In other words, he saw the central task of evangelising as fulfilled once he thoroughly and compellingly elaborated upon the person and work of Christ. When he did his job, the imperative to evangelise was largely, though not exclusively, complete.

The second feature that we find continually in Flavel's evangelistic writings are his vigorous attempts to stir up his people's affections to bring them to faith. As mentioned previously, Flavel believed the minister could influence the mind and the affections but not the will. Therefore, Flavel labored to inform the mind and rouse the affections through the use of vivid metaphors in an effort to move the will. Flavel threatened, pled, encouraged, and wooed his people from the pulpit and in print in vivid ways. Flavel directed his linguistic gifts to stir up people's affections to win them to

⁴¹⁴ At this point it is imperative to add that 28 of his major 29 writings contain some form of evangelistic appeal. This is because of the nature of the direction of this thesis, which shall later move to an evaluation of Flavel's influence on the next century. Because of the ubiquity of proselytism in his writings, that people read Flavel entails that they were exposed to his evangelistic methods. The one writing which contains no hint of proselytising is his polemical work *Vindiciae Legis et Foederis: or, A Reply to Mr. Philip Cary's Solemn Call* (London: Matthew Wotton, 1690), which was written against a local pastor and concerned the practice of infant baptism, a practice which Flavel held to and defended. For Flavel, the work of proselytising was integral to being a faithful pastor.

Christ. It is, in part, because of his skill with metaphors and word pictures that his writings endured for so many years.⁴¹⁵

The final theme which pervaded Flavel's proselytisation was his routinely urging people to move toward God by appealing to their innate desire to be happy. He pointed to the Christian life as the essence of living well and happily. I have chosen to denominate this concept Flavel's "Christian Hedonism."⁴¹⁶ When we reach the third section of this chapter we shall see that Flavel regularly placed the life of the Christian beside the life of the non-Christian and contrasted the solid and abiding pleasures of the former with the shallow and vapid gratifications of the latter.

Stating the three-pronged approach of this chapter in another way: doctrinally, Flavel labored to exposit the person and work of Christ; affectionally, Flavel tapped his tremendous literary abilities to arrest his hearers; *hedonistically*, Flavel displayed God as that which was best for the human soul. These were three of Flavel's notable approaches to convert people. We shall begin by seeing how Flavel displayed Jesus Christ as the substance of these efforts.

Expounding Upon Christ

As with any good writer, Flavel was careful to state his purposes for and intentions in writing up front. It is in the prefaces to his books that we find a helpful key to understanding the reasons he taught on various subjects. In the preface to his longest sermon series we learn that Flavel's preaching on Christ was synonymous with his

⁴¹⁵ The number of instances which could be cited for this point is, indeed, quite large. I shall reserve an analysis of the reception of Flavel's writings for a subsequent chapter.

⁴¹⁶ This is the expression given by the theologian John Piper. As it is a most fitting term, I shall plunder his most useful designation.

evangelism.⁴¹⁷ On the first page of the Epistle Dedicatory of *Fountain*, Flavel wrote, “If by displaying (which is the design of these papers) the transcendent excellency of Jesus Christ, I may win glory to him from you, to whom I humbly offer them; or from any other into whose hands providence shall cast them: that will be glory indeed, and an occasion of glorifying God to all eternity.”⁴¹⁸ Flavel’s aim in these sermons, then, was for his readers to be brought to the place where they glorified God. To do this he sought to bring together the two elements required for that effect: for the awesome glory of Christ to be displayed and for glory to be won for Christ in the hearts of his hearers. Already on the first page of this 630-page sermon series, Flavel clearly conjoined displaying the glory of Christ with people being converted.

Later in the same preface, Flavel spoke again of the way in which a person’s seeing Christ’s “loveliness” tended to his heart being won to him: “My lovely Lord Jesus...is able to compel love from the stoniest heart!...How the minds of many are captivated and ensnared by every silly trifle...till they be persuaded to Christ: and then, ’tis as easie to melt the obdurate rocks into sweet syrup, as their hearts into divine love.”⁴¹⁹ In the first sermon he pressed his hearers that evangelism was to be their work, especially through unfolding their understanding of Christ to others: “It’s our calling (as the Bridegrooms friends) to woo and win souls to Christ: to set him forth to the people as Crucified among them...to present him in all his attractive excellencies that all hearts may be ravished with his beauty, and charmed into his arms by love.”⁴²⁰ An accurate sight of Christ was that which usually compelled people to turn their lives over to him.

⁴¹⁷ *Fountain of Life* (First published in 1673, though completed in 1671) contains 42 sermons and runs just shy of one quarter of a million words.

⁴¹⁸ Flavel, *Fountain*, A2.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, The Epistle Dedicatory, A3.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

The 42 sermons in *Fountain*, whose full title also tells us much about Flavel's evangelistic purposes, were arranged such that Flavel could distinctly elaborate upon each facet of the person and offices of Christ.⁴²¹ The first sermon serves as an overall introduction to the topic. Flavel stated his heart-felt goal both in these sermons and in his life as follows:

Christ shall be the Center, to which all the lines of my Ministry shall be drawn. I have spoken and written of many other subjects in my Sermons and Epistles, but it is all *reductively* the Preaching and discovery of Jesus Christ: of all Subjects in the world, this is the sweetest: if there be any thing this side [of] heaven worthy our time and studies, this is it.⁴²²

The knowledge of Christ was sweet to Flavel, so he felt compelled to present it as such to others. Once he was out in open water, he proceeded to expound upon Christ's role as Redeemer (six sermons) and his work as mediator (one sermon). Following this he delved into nine sermons on the three-fold offices of Christ. Next was a section of 21 sermons on Christ's humiliation. This included, among others, two messages on Jesus' life and conversation, five on his life between the Garden of Gethsemane and walking the hill to Golgotha, and seven on the last seven words of Christ from the cross. Flavel closed out the series with four sermons on Christ's exaltation.

Flavel's approach as he meticulously unpacked a rich, nuanced Christology may be best described by the word *cumulative*. He built an aggregate case for why Christ was the most suitable, the only fitting, the perfect Saviour. Reading page after page of

⁴²¹ The full title of the series is also a great help to understanding Flavel's overarching interest: "THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE OPENED: OR, A Display of Christ in his *Essential* and *Mediatorial* Glory. Wherein the IMPETRATION of our Redemption by Jesus Christ is orderly *unfolded* as it was begun, carried on, and finished by his *Covenant-transaction*, mysterious *Incarnation*, solemn *Call* and *Dedication*. Blessed *Offices*, deep *Abasement*, and super-eminent *Advancement*. In all which the great *supernatural mysterie* of the *wisdom* and *Love* of God, in his most gracious, plenary, and wonderful Salvation of sinners by *Jesus Christ*, is distinctly *explicated*, and in its several parts as well as generally *Applied* for the winning of *Unbelievers* to him, and the confirmation of all that do believe in him." Flavel, *Fountain*, t.p.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 2.

Flavel's meditations, one gets the sense that he was a mountain guide walking his congregants through the vistas of divine utterance. With each successive display of Christ, one climbed higher and higher into the folds of revelation until the case was overwhelmingly established. After such a detailed treatment the skeptic's only recourse would be to deny that what the Bible said about Christ was true, something which few were willing to risk in the seventeenth century. In sermon 42 of *Fountain*, Flavel likened his cumulative method to that of God himself filling a scale with his own arguments: "as a man when he weighs a thing, casteth in weight after weight, till the scales are counterpoised: so doth God cast in engagement, after engagement and argument upon argument, till thy heart (Christian) be weighed up, and won to this heavenly life..."⁴²³ In an earlier sermon in *Fountain*, Flavel vividly expressed it thus:

"it is a wonderful salvation. It would weary the arm of an Angel⁴²⁴ to write down all the wonders that are in this salvation. That ever such a Design should be laid, such a project of grace contrived in the heart of God; who might have suffered the whole species to perish... These...are such wonders as will take up eternity it self to search, admire, and adore them."⁴²⁵

Throughout *Fountain*, he employed this cumulative approach in his doctrine of Christ.

In the penultimate sermon of that treatise, Flavel said that the very sight of Christ was enough to change a person, even convert them: "And you know how the *Queen* of the South fainted at the sight of *Solomon* in his glory. But this sight you shall have of Christ, will change you into his likeness."⁴²⁶ Flavel laboured for people to accurately see Jesus because he believed this often led to Christian conversion. In the same sermon he penned this about King Jesus: "Away with light and low thoughts of Christ. Away with

⁴²³ Ibid., 609.

⁴²⁴ This vivid expression is similar to one made by the Puritan Thomas Manton: "It would weary the *arm of an Angel* to write down Gods repeated Acts of Grace." Cf. Manton, *Exposition on Jude* (1657), 102.

⁴²⁵ Flavel, *Fountain*, 525.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 582. Cf. *Englands*, 50.

formal irreverent, and careless frames in Praying, Hearing, Receiving, yea, in conferring and speaking of Christ. Away with all deadness, and drowsiness in duties, For he is a *great King* with whom you have to do.”⁴²⁷ Lastly, in *Englands Duty*, he wrote, “I have laboured to shew you some part of the unsearchable riches of Christ, if by any means I might allure your hearts, and be instrumental to close the happy match betwixt him and you.”⁴²⁸ Thus expounding upon Christ was central to Flavel’s purpose in proselytising.

Was such an in-depth explication into Christology really warranted? Flavel believed that it was. He did not want his people to think that they knew, loved, and had received Jesus if all they knew was a Jesus of their own devising. In *Method* Flavel wrote:

No man can receive Jesus Christ in the darkness of natural ignorance...If we know not his person and his offices, we do not *take*, but mistake Christ...where ever faith is, there is so much light as is sufficient to discover to the soul, its own sins, dangers, and wants; and the all-sufficiency, suitableness, and necessity of Christ for the supply and remedy of all; and without this Christ cannot be received.⁴²⁹

This was the reason Flavel felt it was imperative to protractedly explicate upon themes such as the offices of Christ and the nature of his mediation. Having touched upon Flavel’s method within *Fountain*, how did he go about drawing sinners to Christ specifically? I shall argue that Flavel elaborated upon Christ by particularly highlighting the following five rationales: he presented Christ as the soul’s only true good, the ardency of Christ’s love for sinners, the lowliness of his humiliation, the value of his proffered salvation, and lastly, the wicked affront of rejecting him.

Presenting Christ as the soul’s only durable good

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 584.

⁴²⁸ Flavel, *Englands*, An Appendix, 1.

⁴²⁹ Flavel, *Method*, 117.

First, Flavel tried to win people to Christ by presenting him as the soul's only durable good.⁴³⁰ Writing in *Fountain* he expressed the thought that:

Though all other things do, yet Christ neither doth, nor can grow stale...The blood of Christ doth never dry up...When the saints shall have fed their eyes upon him in heaven thousands and millions of years, he shall be as fresh, [and] beautiful...as at the beginning. Other beauties have their prime, and their fading time; but Christs abides eternally...the longer you know Christ, and the nearer you come to him, still the more do you see of his glory. Every farther prospect of Christ, entertains the mind with a fresh delight. He is as it were a new Christ every day; and yet the same Christ still.⁴³¹

For Flavel, Christ was the only perpetual novelty, whose freshness was ever eternal. It was not only in the early 1670s that Flavel spoke about Christ in this way. Ten years later in *Method* he claimed that God the Father drew people to Christ by “shewing them infinitely more good in Christ than in the Creature, and in their lusts...Such an invaluable *Pearl* is Jesus Christ, infinitely more worth than all that a poor sinner hath to part with for him, and is a more *real* good than the creature.” As he continued in this sermon, it is fascinating to see how Flavel tried to emulate precisely that which he said was Christ's work – that of enticing people to Him: “Christ is a solid substantial good...Thus Christ appears in the day of conviction infinitely more excellent than the world, he out-bids all the offers that the world can make, and this gives the main stroke to this work, of drawing a Soul to Jesus Christ.”⁴³² Christ did the drawing and wooing, but Flavel saw himself as God's vital instrument to perform the very same functions. In holding Christ out as the only durable good, he also maintained that Christ was the original good who gave the stamp of life and loveliness to all else: “Angels and men, the world and all the desirables in it, receive what excellency they have from him, they are

⁴³⁰ In a sense, this point overlaps with the later section on Christian Hedonism. The idea is that there was a Christological dimension to his hedonism.

⁴³¹ Flavel, *Fountain*, 278-9.

⁴³² Flavel, *Method*, 74.

streams from the fountain...and the farther anything departs and is removed from its fountain and original, the less excellency there is in it.”⁴³³ Lastly, as the primordial and preeminent good, Flavel suggested that because of Christ’s divine nature, true human rest was found only in him. In the *Appendix to Englands Duty* he wrote, “Hasten to Christ in the way of faith, and you shall find rest; and till then all the world cannot give you true rest.”⁴³⁴ Chapter five shall show that there is much evidence that many weary Dartmouthians and those across the Atlantic heeded the invitation to come to Christ as their soul’s chief good.

The ardency of Christ’s love for sinners

In addition to proffering Christ as the soul’s only lasting possession, he also endeavoured to draw people to Christ by exhibiting the great ardency of Christ’s love for sinners. In *Englands Duty* he wrote pathetically about how Christ’s sufferings demonstrated his fervent love for people: “Christ endured all that you have heard, and infinitely more than tongue or pen of man can express; and all to draw thy soul and win thy consent to come unto him: the Lord Jesus by his sufferings casts a threefold cord over the souls of sinners, to draw them to himself.”⁴³⁵ Later in the same sermon he added, “The greatness of the sufferings of Christ discover the ardency of his affection.”⁴³⁶ In the second sermon of *Fountain*, Flavel wrote about the “drawing” effect

⁴³³ Ibid., 251. This statement has a familiar ring to one made by Jonathan Edwards in September 1733, from the sermon titled “The Christian Pilgrim.” Edwards wrote: “God is the highest good of the reasonable creature. The enjoyment of him is our proper happiness, and is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here: better than fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of any or all earthly friends. These are but shadows; but God is the substance. These are but scattered beams; but God is the sun. These are but streams; but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean.” From the sermon ‘The True Christian’s Life a Journey Toward Heaven’, in Edwards, *Works* 19, 437-8.

⁴³⁴ Flavel, *Method*, 192 [sic: 200]. Page numbers are incorrect at this point in the book.

⁴³⁵ Flavel, *Englands*, 193.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 189.

of Christ's leaving the bosom of the Father to rescue trifling sinners: "I present you a Christ this day, able to ravish any soul that will but view, and consider him. O that you did but see this lovely Lord, Jesus Christ! then you would go home sick of love: surely he is a drawing Saviour...he that left Gods bosom for you, deserves yours."⁴³⁷ When he preached a sermon to commemorate the accession of William and Mary to the throne, Flavel wrote this about the magnetic appeal of Christ's love: "None ever saw him savingly by the eye of faith, but were charmed into his bosom by love...he shed his invaluable blood to redeem you to God: he loved you, and gave himself for you; if there be a drop of love in your hearts, methinks the excellency of Christ should extract and engage it; write that man a beast, a senseless stock, that hath no love for Christ."⁴³⁸ In another example of this approach, Flavel offered a clear instance of the cumulative effect of the case he was building. In *Fountain* he stated:

It should never be forgotten, that Jesus Christ was exposed to these extremities of sorrow, for sinners, the greatest of sinners; who deserved not one drop of mercy from God. This commends the love of God singularly to us, in that *whilst we were yet sinners, Christ dyed for us* Rom. 5.8. Thus the love of God in Jesus Christ still rises higher and higher in every discovery of it. Admire, adore, and be ravished with the thoughts of this love.⁴³⁹

The lowliness of Christ's humiliation

The third way in which Flavel explicated on the person of Christ as his method of converting people was by presenting the depths of humiliation to which Christ lowered Himself to procure salvation for His people. Writing about Christ's humble nature in

⁴³⁷ Flavel, *Fountain*, 21.

⁴³⁸ Flavel, *Coronation*, 45-6.

⁴³⁹ Flavel, *Fountain*, 476.

Fountain he said, “O what a stoop was this!...But oh the admirable condescensions of a Saviour, to take such a nature! to put on such a garment when thread-bare and ragged! did this become the Son of God to wear? Oh grace unsearchable!”⁴⁴⁰ Flavel heightened the level of wonder at the incarnation when he wrote the following about Christ: “the Lord embraced him from eternity, but never wounded him till he stood in our place, and room...be forever astonished at the love of Jesus Christ, to poor sinners: that ever he should consent to leave such a bosom, and the ineffable delights that were there for such poor worms as we are.”⁴⁴¹ A further feature of Christ’s humiliation concerned his “digesting” the ignominy of his people’s sins and shame to qualify him for the atonement. Flavel wrote, “Obedience to his Fathers will, and zeal for your salvation, made him digest the shame of it, and despise the baseness that was in it.”⁴⁴²

Flavel believed that presenting Christ in this way had a tendency to touch the affections and cause people to seek salvation in him. In sermon nine of *Method*, he clearly connected the two:

I am now orderly come to the general *Use* of the whole; which in the first place shall be by way of *Exhortation* to invite and perswade all men to come to Christ, who in all the former sermons hath been represented in his *garments of salvation*, red in his apparel, prepared and offered to sinners as their all-sufficient and only remedy: and in the following Sermons will be represented in his *perfumed garments* coming out of his *Ivory Palaces*, to allure and draw all men unto him.⁴⁴³

Christ being clothed with bloody garments of apparel on behalf of sinners was an argument, per se, for people to rush to him. Another place where he explicitly aimed to do the same thing is found in the 25th sermon of *Fountain*:

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 227.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 17, 20.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 344.

⁴⁴³ Flavel, *Method*, 181-2.

Ah, Christian, canst thou look upon Jesus as standing in thy room; to bear the wrath of a Deity for thee? Canst thou think on it and not melt? (think) Out of these wounds comes that balm that heals my soul...When he hang'd upon the Cross, he bore my name upon his breast, like the high priest... Oh you cannot hold up your hearts long to the piercing thoughts of this; but your bowels will be pained, and like *Joseph*, you will seek a place to vent your hearts in...Faith...can *reason* and *conclude* such things from his death, as will fill the soul with affection to him, and break the heart in pieces in his presence.⁴⁴⁴

With respect to the faculties, Flavel wrote in this way because he understood that a greatly stirred heart was key to converting people. Of course, stirred affections did not *necessitate* conversion, but it was an integral precursor. Lastly, in *Sacramental Meditations* Flavel asked his hearers to fix their eyes upon Jesus and averred that in so doing their affections would be triggered: “Surely if the Rocks rent asunder at his passion, thy heart is harder than a Rock, if it thaw not at such a sight as this. Fix thine eyes a while here, and thine eye will affect thy heart.”⁴⁴⁵ In each of these examples Flavel argued that people should trust Jesus because of the humble stoop which he underwent in the incarnation, and that envisioning this debased state would catalyse the affections.

The value of Christ's proffered salvation

The fourth way in which Flavel argued for his people's salvation was by setting forth the inestimable value of the salvation which Christ secured for those who humbly come to him in sincere faith. One device which he employed in *Fountain* was that of juxtaposing radical opposites. For example, he set the benefits sinners received alongside the dramatic suffering Christ underwent to rescue rebellious people. In sermon seven of that series he wrote, “And now we may say Lord, the *condemnation* was thine, that the justification might be mine. The agony thine, that the victory might

⁴⁴⁴ Flavel, *Fountain*, 335.

⁴⁴⁵ Flavel, *Sacramental*, 96.

be mine. The pain was thine, and the ease mine...Thou payedst the price, that I might enjoy the inheritance... Is he all for us, and shall we be nothing for him?"⁴⁴⁶ Writing in the same vein in the 24th sermon, he said:

But certain it is that out of his condemnation flows our justification. And had this sentence not been given against him, it must have been given against us. Oh what a melting consideration is this! That out of his agony comes our victory; out of his condemnation comes our justification; out of his pain our ease; out of his stripes our healing; out of his gall and vinegar our hony.

He continued,

Out of his curse our blessing; out of his crown of thorns our crown of glory; out of his death our life: if he could not be released, it was that you might. If *Pilate* gave sentence against him, it was that the great God might never give sentence against you. If he yielded that it should be with Christ as they required, it was that it might be with our souls, as well as we can desire.⁴⁴⁷

This approach of situating extreme opposites against one another was the result of Flavel indulging in the Puritan proclivity to see the substance of true Christianity as being the exaltation of the greatness of God, on the one hand, and the lowering of humans on the other. Again, Puritan alacrity in this direction was in no way because they were misanthropes. They cheerfully embraced the reality of humanity made *imago dei* – but they wanted to humble man because of the vast extent of the contrast. God always kept his place as God; man always kept his place as man.

The wicked affront of rejecting him

The final element of portraying the great salvation in Christ entails yet another creative angle Flavel utilised. This was Flavel's proclivity to create mock conversations

⁴⁴⁶ Flavel, *Fountain*, 75.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 325.

between God the Father and the Son as they discussed the fate of Flavel's congregants.⁴⁴⁸ In *Fountain*, Flavel acted as Christ's ventriloquist:

Son: O my Father, such is my love to, and pitty for them; that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them, as their surety: bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe. *Lord* bring them in all, that there may be no after reckonings with them; at my hand shalt thou require it...Upon me, my Father, upon me be all their debt.⁴⁴⁹

(As this sermon was given just after the second Conventicle Act of 1670, and with this talk about bills and debt, one wonders if Flavel and his parishioners had in the back of their minds some of the harsh penalties levied against Dissenters.⁴⁵⁰) Employing the Father-Son dialogue in a similar tack, he wrote the following in *Method*:

Christ leads every Believer as it were by the hand, into the gracious presence of God; after this manner bespeaking acceptance for him. Father, here is a poor soul that was born in sin, hath lived in Rebellion against thee all his days; he hath broken all thy laws, and deserved all thy wrath; yet he is one of that number which thou gavest me before the world was. I have made full payment by my blood for all his sins. I have opened his eyes to see the sinfulness, and misery of his condition: broken his heart for his rebellions against thee: bowed his will in obedience unto thy will: united him to myself by faith, as a living member of my body. And now, Lord, since he is become mine by regeneration, let him be thine also by special acceptation: let the same love with which thou lovest me, embrace him also who is now become mine.⁴⁵¹

The fifth and final strategy Flavel used to win his people to Christ was his stress on the seriousness of the affront of rejecting Christ. Taking this salvation lightly was an

⁴⁴⁸ Interestingly, there is no place in which the third person of the godhead was brought into these dialogues. Isaac Watts took especial interest in this approach of Flavel's: "This excellent Author, represents this Transaction between the Father and the Son before the World was in a way of *Dialogue*: He supposes the Father to say..." Watts, *Useful and Important Questions*, 112.

⁴⁴⁹ Flavel, *Fountain*, 35. Dahlman also noted this unique homiletical technique of Flavel's. Cf. Dahlman, *Opening a Box*, 282-3. See also Shore, *Renouncing Rhetoric*, 187-8.

⁴⁵⁰ Cragg, *Great Persecution*, 11-2, 17-8, 52. One of the saddest accounts described a man who ministered in Staplehurst: "Pastour has 5 children was in 1684 plundred of all his goods, and Suffered 6 months imprisonment." And, in another case, it was written of a man: "his condition is very low, his very bed was Seized from under him...most of his helpers are dead, his daughter as helpless as himself through poverty, hee is past preaching through age and other infirmities", Gordon, *Freedom After Ejection*, 57, 97.

⁴⁵¹ Flavel, *Method*, 312.

egregious and colossal error. Flavel asserted that the greater the dignity of the person who offered himself, the greater the degree of offense when the offer was rejected. To snub the Son of God was the epitome of outrageous rebellion. In *Fountain* he wrote:

Every sermon and prayer you have sat under, with a dead heart; every motion of his Spirit which you have quencht, what is this but the making light of Christ, and the great salvation? Here the deepest project of infinite wisdom, and the richest gift of free-grace, wherein God commends his love to men, are vilely undervalued as small things; and thus have you done days without number; and yet his hand is not stretched out, to cut thee off in thy rebellion; *Who is a God like unto thee!* What patience like the patience of Christ!⁴⁵²

Flavel went further and likened those who rejected the gift of God to beasts and monsters. In *Method* he asserted,

*How unreasonable and worse than brutish is the sin of infidelity by which the sinner rejects Christ...he is wholly polluted and plunged into original and actual pollutions of nature and practice, yet will have none of Christ, who would become sanctification to him...and yet is so in love with his bondage that he will neither accept Christ, nor the redemption he brings with him to sinners. Oh what monsters! what beasts hath sin turned its subjects into!...You see then that Sinners cannot, (should they study all their days to do themselves a mischief) take a readier course to undo themselves, than by rejecting Christ in his gracious offers.*⁴⁵³

To reject the salvation which Christ purchased was to commit an irrecoverable error incomparable to any other. What could people who slighted Christ's gift and preferred their self-righteousness expect? In *Fountain* he warned his readers thus: "ye shall lie down [i.e. in death] in sorrow...That's all the thanks, and reward you must expect from him, for slighting Christs, and preferring your own righteousness before his." Desiring to end on a cheerful note, Flavel hastened to add: "Reader, be convinced, that one act of faith in the Lord Jesus, pleases God more, than all the obedience, repentance and

⁴⁵² Flavel, *Englands*, 91.

⁴⁵³ Flavel, *Method*, 17-8.

strivings to obey the Law through thy whole life can do.”⁴⁵⁴ The reason Flavel presented Christ as everything was because, for Flavel, he was everything. In *Divine Conduct* Flavel explained this by linking Christ with the Covenant of Grace: “The Covenant of Grace, in which all your comfortable enjoyments are comprized, and by which they are secured, sanctified, and sweetned to you, is made in Christ, and ratified by him betwixt God and you. Your mercies are all comprized in this Covenant...But now all this hangs entirely upon Christ.”⁴⁵⁵ Flavel believed that apart from Christ there was not a shred of hope that any of his hearers would rejoice on the judgment day. Christ was truly the centerpiece of Flavel’s soteriological system.⁴⁵⁶

Although Flavel labored to inform his people about Christ’s salvation through the mind, he was quick to cheer those who were without extraordinary powers of intellection. The essence of this great salvation he described was not bare understanding, but *felt* understanding. In *Fountain* he used a vivid metaphor to describe what his hearers needed:

Others may know more in other things than you...but if ye knew Jesus Christ, and the truth as it is in him, one drop of your knowledge is worth a whole sea of their gifts. One truth sucked by *faith* and *prayer* from the breast of Christ, is better than ten thousand dry notions beaten out by wracking the understanding. It’s better in kind, the one being but natural, the other supernatural, from the saving illuminations, and inward teachings of the Spirit...It is better in respect of effects. Other knowledge leaves the heart as dry, barren, and unaffected, as if it had its seat in another man’s head: but that little you have been taught of Christ, sheds

⁴⁵⁴ Flavel, *Fountain*, 177-8.

⁴⁵⁵ Flavel, *Divine Conduct*, 191. Cf. Flavel, *Balm*, 13. For a fine treatment of the place of the covenant in Puritan theology, see John von Rohr’s *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Theology*. See especially his reference to this concept in Flavel’s theology, page 42.

⁴⁵⁶ I wish to quickly qualify this by stating (lest it sound as if Flavel was a proto-Barthian) that the life and activities of the members of the godhead were Flavel’s primary theological foundation. This was also the standard approach of seventeenth-century Reformed theology. By asserting that Flavel held Christ to be the centerpiece of his soteriology I mean strictly from his evangelistic standpoint. Whilst other groups claimed that acquaintance with the Holy Spirit (Quakers) or the Father (Unitarians and Socinians) was the essence of salvation, Flavel presented Christ as the only way to both the Father and Spirit.

down its gracious influences upon your affections, and slides sweetly to your melting hearts.⁴⁵⁷

The striking language which suggested that a person sucked faith and prayer from the breast of Christ was reminiscent of Thomas Shepard's usage: "but now when [the Christian "Traveller" is] laid in the bosom of Christ, when sucking the breasts of the grace of Christ, when you can go no farther, though thou wert in heaven, for there is no other happiness there, now sit still contented."⁴⁵⁸ As jarring and upsetting as the image is, it got the point across that all Christian graces came from Christ through believers' intimate union with him.⁴⁵⁹ As a helpless infant lying in his mother's arms received sustenance from her, so the Christian did with Christ. In every sense, Flavel's evangelism was preeminently Christological. To summarise, Flavel's approach to converting people to Christianity was Christ-centered: he presented Christ as being the soul's only solid good, he portrayed the fervency of Christ's love for sinners, he explicated upon the extent and expanse of Christ's humiliation for the sake of saving others, he displayed the great value of this salvation, and lastly, he warned of the awful guilt which one incurred by rejecting the only plank of salvation.

As we close this section it is appropriate for us to peer into an incident which displays the way in which one of Flavel's sermons on Christ affected a young American in the next century. The story is told of an adolescent named Devereux Jarratt⁴⁶⁰ who

⁴⁵⁷ Flavel, *Fountain*, 106.

⁴⁵⁸ Shepard, *Parable of Ten Virgins*, 171.

⁴⁵⁹ Taking this imagery to the next level, Schwanda explained that, "when a Puritan minister spoke of feeding his congregation through his breasts he was not acting in a sexually aberrant manner but rather mirroring Jesus Christ and God the Father." Schwanda, *Soul Recreation*, 80.

⁴⁶⁰ Jarratt (1733-1801) was an American Anglican who went on to become a revivalist. He imitated John Wesley's Methodism and helped to bring about a revival in several of the southern states in America. Jarratt, *Life of Devereux Jarratt*, 57, 97, 109, 156.

was staying with a woman named Mrs. Cannon and, through her, came to embrace the Christian faith under the influence of Flavel's evangelistic writings about Christ:

As Jarrett wished to win her approval, he undertook 'to act the hypocrite,' to pretend that he was religious to the point of piety. In consequence, he affected to pay close attention to the sermon that she habitually read aloud every evening after dinner. And when she wearied of reading, he was asked to take his turn at it. At first, due to his total lack of religious education, he understood 'not the tenth part of what was read.' But after many weeks of exposure to Mrs. Cannon's serenity of soul and to the strong dramatic imagery of the sermons of the eloquent Presbyterian divine, John Flavel...who was a great favorite of hers, young Jarratt began to find that Christian doctrine made sense and exactly fitted his own case. One sermon in particular, on the text, 'Then opened he their understanding,' made a great impression on his mind.⁴⁶¹ And it proved to be a lasting one. It followed him to bed, it haunted him the next day. For the first time in his life, he became convinced of his complete separation from God and resolved to seek forgiveness and reconciliation.⁴⁶²

This story comports seamlessly with Flavel's understanding of how people came to put their faith in Christ. First, the young man believed that he was an upstanding Christian. Second, once he heard the message he became discouraged and downcast that he understood, "not the tenth part of what was read." Third, "after many weeks of exposure to...the strong dramatic imagery of the sermons of...John Flavel...[he] began to find that Christian doctrine made sense and exactly fitted his own case." Lastly, the young man was convicted and resolved to seek salvation. From what we know of Devereux, who went on to become an eighteenth-century revivalist, he lived out his days vindicating the change he claimed took place through Flavel's impact on his life.

Appealing to the Affections

⁴⁶¹ This is a reference to the tenth sermon of Flavel's *Fountain of Life*. This sermon examines: Christ's opening the hearts of men in his office of Prophet; what is included in the opening of the understanding; the idea that man is unable to open his own heart to Christ; that Christ alone can open man's heart; by what acts Christ opens the heart; and how great the sinner's misery is.

⁴⁶² Middleton, "The Colonial Virginia Parson," 425-440, 437. Cf. Adair and Jarratt, *Autobiography of Devereux Jarratt*, 370-1.

Flavel's efforts to convert people not only came through his continual efforts to expound upon the topic of Christ, he also leveraged his linguistic abilities to see his hearers won to God. Since Flavel knew that the minister's only domain of influence lay within the mind and affections, he sought to alternately touch these faculties through the spoken word. This section shall analyze exactly how Flavel went about this task of stirring up people's affections. We shall discover that Flavel was especially inclined to approach the task of stirring up people's affections through the use of threats, promises of comfort, and reminding them of the brevity of time. At the end of this section we shall observe sundry other tactics which he used with lesser frequency.

Just as Flavel copied the Holy Spirit's model in proffering the offer of salvation to people,⁴⁶³ he felt warranted to utilise the Spirit's approach to affixing truth in people's minds. In his sermon series *The Seaman's Companion*, Flavel wrote the following: "The Spirit of God hath used a very lively similitude to represent to us the mischievous effects of this sin [unjust gain] upon all humane diligence and industry. *Jer. 17. 11. As the partridge sitteth upon eggs and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.*"⁴⁶⁴ Since the Holy Spirit felt at liberty to use vivid, creative metaphors and word pictures such as this, why not do the same? This was exactly what Flavel did and these works evidently made an impact.⁴⁶⁵ Sweet wrote, "Flavel, in his effort to expand the range of

⁴⁶³ See chapter two, "The Spirit's Work as a Pattern for Proselytisation," 54-107.

⁴⁶⁴ Flavel, *Seaman's Companion*, 148.

⁴⁶⁵ It is of interest to note that two of his three best-sellers (*Husbandry Spiritualized* and *Navigation Spiritualized*) utilised a metaphorical approach to teaching Christian truth. In these works he allegorized the labour of a farmer and a sailor, respectively. According to Mott, *Husbandry Spiritualized* was one of only three titles (40 years after it was first published in England – between the years 1700-09) to sell copies numerically equal to or greater than 1% of the population of the American colonies in that decade. Cf. Mott, *Golden Multitudes*, 303. *Husbandry* was "One of the most popular emblematic works of the seventeenth century...[that] probably influenced [Samuel] Sewall's thinking about the natural world."

natural emblems in the spiritual catalog, minimizes the process of working through the problem of aesthetic response.”⁴⁶⁶ Indeed, the Holy Spirit’s inspiring “Scripture emblems”⁴⁶⁷ was the foundation for Flavel using his own “lively emblems.”⁴⁶⁸

Flavel’s goal in utilising this approach was for the express purpose of touching the affections, the soul’s faculty which tended to influence the will. In perhaps the first words that Flavel ever published he described his aim of assaulting the affections in this way: “I have endeavoured to cloath Spiritual Matters in your own Dialect and Phrases, that they might be the more intelligible to you; and added some pious Poems, with which the several Chapters are concluded, trying by all means to assault your several Affections, and as the Apostle speaks, *to catch you with guile.*”⁴⁶⁹ In addition to trying to catch people, Flavel believed that one means of advancing people from the level of ineffectual effects to the effectual (cf. chapter three of this thesis) was through the affections. In *Antipharicum*, which was written in 1664, he wrote this: “Lest all this should leave but a floating and ineffectual conviction upon you, give me leave to follow it a little farther, and endeavour to work it in by a few warming considerations upon your hearts.”⁴⁷⁰ Flavel knew that an affected and warmed heart was a hopeful sign that the will was close to moving. However, one aspect of Flavel’s approach to stirring up the affections is surprising. In *Method* he wrote: “Just as a man that is fast asleep in a house on fire, and whilst the consuming flames are round about him, his fancy is sporting it

Sweet, “What Concernment Hath America,” 222. Cliff Boone wrote: “Perry Miller, in a discussion of the development in New England of ‘a new type of Puritan literature invented after the Restoration,’ stated that Flavel’s *Husbandry Spiritualized* was its ‘chief exemplar.’” Boone, *Puritan Evangelism*, 59. Cf. Dyrness, *Reformed theology and visual culture*, 268-9, 278, 298.

⁴⁶⁶ Sweet, “What Concernment Hath America,” 213-240, 225.

⁴⁶⁷ Flavel, *Righteous Man’s Refuge*, 156. Cf. *Catechism*, 30.

⁴⁶⁸ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 70, 241; *Preparation for Sufferings*, 11.

⁴⁶⁹ Flavel, The Epistle Dedicatory, *A New Compass*, A6^v-A7^r.

⁴⁷⁰ Flavel, *Antipharicum*, 7. Cf. *Divine Conduct*, 40.

self in some pleasant dream, this is a very lively resemblance of the unregenerate soul.”⁴⁷¹ Counter-intuitively, one of the methods Flavel used to stir up people’s affections to loving God was decidedly negative, via threats. It is this approach which we shall now evaluate.

Flavel’s use of threats

Flavel sought to warn people about the tormenting reality of hell. In his last full publication before he died, Flavel used the following comparison to express this:

Suppose you were allowed to spend the longest Summers Day in the highest gratifications of all your Senses together, or successively one after another, upon condition that you would endure the Torments of the Rack till that day twelvemonth came about again; do you think the importunity of all your intimates in the world would prevail with you to accept the Pleasures of a day under such a condition as this? And yet what are the Torments of a year upon the Rack, to the Torments of Hell for ever and ever?⁴⁷²

There is no evidence that Flavel enjoyed believing in hell, but he taught about it because he saw that the Bible spoke so much about it. In lurid detail Flavel portrayed hell in a way which would make any thinking person lose sleep. In a move to exhort his hearers to not take sin lightly, he wrote:

Suppose the bars of the bottomless pit were broken up, and damned spirits should ascend from thence; and come up among us; with the chains of darkness rattling at their heels, and we should hear the groans, and see the ghastly paleness, and trembling of those poor creatures, upon whom the righteous God hath imprest his fury and indignation; if we could hear how their consciences are lashed by the fearful scourge of guilt, and how they shriek at every lash the arm of justice gives them...O then, let not thy vain heart slight sin; as if it were but a small thing.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Flavel, *Method*, 528.

⁴⁷² Flavel, *Reasonableness*, 75.

⁴⁷³ Flavel, *Fountain*, 470-1.

In another place he specifically warned that lust was one sin which hastened people into the pit of destruction: “Some derive the word Hell from a Verb which signifies to carry or thrust in, millions go in, but none return thence: millions are gone down already, and millions more are coming after as fast as Satan and their own lusts can hurry them onward.”⁴⁷⁴ Incidentally, it is interesting that he identified the twin causes of reprobation as being Satan and people’s own lusts. He did not mention a word about God’s decree of predestination, though this was a doctrine in which he unambiguously believed. For Flavel, predestination and reprobation were not topics that he regularly alluded to in his sermons.⁴⁷⁵

In addition to warning his hearers about the reality of hell, Flavel warned his hearers that it was not the absence of God, but His very presence in hell which made it hell:⁴⁷⁶ “what if God should give you a Vision of Hell it self, and of the inconceivable and unexpressible misery of those desperate and forlorn Wretches, that lie there sweltring and groaning under the heavy pressures of the wrath of a great and terrible God, immediately and everlastingly transacted upon their Souls?”⁴⁷⁷ Flavel warned his people that God was present in a state of wrath in hell, not absent from it.

Sometimes Flavel’s use of images was downright frightening, as was the case in *Pneumatologia*. In one place in that work he warned his reader about how quickly life, seemingly in full bloom, could be cut off: “What a rapture and transport of joy did the

⁴⁷⁴ Flavel, *Pneumatologia*, 395.

⁴⁷⁵ In all of his extant writings there is only one sermon which had this as its central theme, namely, the fourth sermon in *Method of Grace*, which is an exposition of Jesus’ words: “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.” Flavel, *Method*, 64.

⁴⁷⁶ Jonathan Edwards would later come to hold the same position. Cf. Edwards, ‘The Portion of the Wicked’, in Edwards and Dwight, *Works* 8, 203.

⁴⁷⁷ Flavel, *Reasonableness*, 150.

sight of a full Barn cast that Worldling into?⁴⁷⁸ little dreaming that death was just then at the door to take away the cloth, guest, and all together; that the next hour his *Friends* would be scrambling for his Estate, the *Worms* for his body, and the *Devils* for his Soul.”⁴⁷⁹ Playing on the concept of the Devil taking possession of a person, in another place he wrote these chilling words: “What sadder word can the Lord speak than this,⁴⁸⁰ unless it be *take him Devil?*”⁴⁸¹ At times, Flavel aimed to scare his auditors into thinking seriously about the matter of their souls.

In the introduction to *Fountain*, Flavel utilised a jarring illustration of beasts who were unwilling to go into a fire, yet Christ-less sinners being unwilling to keep themselves out:

How often hath Jesus Christ in like manner laid hold upon you in the Preaching of the Gospel, and will you not fly for refuge to him? Will you rather be consumed, than endeavour to escape? A beast will not be driven into the fire, and will you not be kept out?...To this day his arms are stretched forth to gather you, and will you not be gathered?⁴⁸²

In *Fountain* Flavel spoke of the terrific folly of investing in things which would shortly vanish into insignificance, and how grim that realization would be on the day of judgment: “It’s horrible to see how industrious many are for an inheritance on earth, and how careless for Heaven...What will ye do when at death you shall look back over your shoulder, and see what you have spent your time and strength for, shrinking and

⁴⁷⁸ The “worldling” here is a reference to the wealthy man (in Luke 12:19-20) who built bigger barns for himself on the very night his soul was required of him.

⁴⁷⁹ Flavel, *Pneumatologia*, 443.

⁴⁸⁰ In this context Flavel was writing about the state when God gives a person up to “a mind that should elect the worst things, and reprobate the best”.

⁴⁸¹ Flavel, *Englands*, 48, 157.

⁴⁸² Flavel, *Fountain*, The Epistle to the Readers, b2^{r-v}.

vanishing away from you...and see vast eternity opening its mouth to swallow you up?"⁴⁸³

In *Method* Flavel presented a theodicy to people whose qualm with God was that their lot in life was difficult, and therefore felt they deserved some form of mercy. He said these two kinds of misery were not to be compared: "O then what a dreadful word is Condemnation! All the evils and miseries of this life are nothing to it: put all afflictions, calamities, sufferings, and miseries of this world into one scale, and this sentence of God into the other, and they will be all lighter than a feather."⁴⁸⁴ As a last example of how Flavel used threats to rouse people's affections, he graphically cautioned those who believed that they were too young to take seriously matters of eternity. He warned children thus: "There are graves in the church yard just of your length."⁴⁸⁵ In all of the above ways Flavel tried to press his people into taking seriously matters of eternity through the use of metaphors and word-pictures suitable to the weight of those realities. Happily, Flavel also turned those same abilities in the direction of comforting his weekly hearers and later readers.

Promises of comfort

In addition to threatening people in an effort to rouse them, Flavel emulated the Bible's method of lavishing people with copious promises of grace and forgiveness. A text which he repeatedly cited in this regard was Romans 2:4: "despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 190.

⁴⁸⁴ Flavel, *Method*, 543.

⁴⁸⁵ Flavel, *Fountain*, 446. Cf. *Englands*, 317.

God leadeth thee to repentance?”⁴⁸⁶ On balance, Flavel preferred to woo sinners to God rather than threatening them. He realized that beating people with the demands of the law, important as it was when people were self-righteous or recalcitrant, did not tend to warm the affections toward Christ. The first example of this we shall examine comes from *Husbandry*. Likening the grace of the Gospel to rain showers, he wrote, “’Tis best plowing when the earth is prepared and mollified by the showers of rain, then the work goes on sweetly and easily.” He then continued:

And never doth the heart so kindly melt, as when the Gospel clouds dissolve, and the free grace and love of Jesus Christ comes sweetly showing down upon it; then it relents and mourns ingeniously...So it was with that poor penitent, Luke 7. 38. when the Lord Jesus had discovered to her the super-abounding riches of his grace, in the pardon of her manifold abominations; her heart melted within her, she washed the feet of Christ with tears. And indeed, there is as much difference betwixt the tears which are forced by the terrors of the law, and those which are extracted by the grace of the Gospel, as there is betwixt those of a condemned malefactor, who weeps to consider the misery he is under, and those of a pardoned malefactor, that receives his pardon at the foot of the ladder, and is melted by the mercy and clemency of his gracious Prince towards him.⁴⁸⁷

Flavel had a wonderful way of weaving together the conditions of two contrasting people: the repentant prostitute in the Gospel of Luke and a hardened criminal who expressed regret simply because he was about to be executed. Flavel was at his best when he wrote of God’s mercy. In the 12th sermon of *Fountain* he wrote about the way in which the mercies of God should “slide sweetly” into the heart. He painted a vivid picture – a man leaping through all of his forgiven sins:

What shall we call this grace? Surely we should do somewhat more than admire it, and faint under the sense of such a mercy...Reader, let me beg thee, if thou be one of this pardoned number, to look over thy cancelled bonds, and see what vast sums are remitted to thee...what canst thou do less than fall down at the feet of

⁴⁸⁶ Flavel, *Englands*, t.p. Cf. *Exposition*, 19, 156, 167 ; *Englands*, 93; *Necessity*, 124-5.

⁴⁸⁷ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 66-7.

free grace, and kiss those feet that moved so freely towards so vile a sinner?...O let these things slide sweetly to thy melting heart.⁴⁸⁸

The historical evidence verifies that Flavel's efforts were realized in the bosoms of many.

If unbelievers had every rational reason to fear the day of judgment, how should the converted person view that day? Flavel tried to instill confidence and even a measure of anticipation into his hearers' hearts. In *Fountain* he wrote the following: "He that judgeth them [those who were in Christ] is their head, husband, friend, and brother; who loved them, and gave him self for them: Oh then, with what confidence may they go, even unto his throne?"⁴⁸⁹ The fact that the one at the bar of judgment was also the one who had saved them must have been a source of peace to his congregation. In *Mount Pisgah*, which Flavel preached on William and Mary's Coronation Day,⁴⁹⁰ he wrote the following to his countrymen and women: "O *England, England!* thy God this day calls thee to thy knees, though it be thy day of thanksgiving and rejoicing. He expects to see thy tears upon thy cheeks this day for thy former iniquities...never to return any more to folly. 'Tis not bells and bonfires, but repentance for thy past follies, and new obedience thy God looks for at thy hands."⁴⁹¹ The comfort of that day for Nonconformists was legitimate so long as it was combined with caution for the future. In any event, his pathetic appeal to his country seemed a good balance between warning and comforting.

Another comforting strategy Flavel used was to personify abstract concepts and realities. In *Sacramental Meditations* he wrote about grace's seeming ability to triumph

⁴⁸⁸ Flavel, *Fountain*, 147-8.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 597.

⁴⁹⁰ 11 April 1689. Flavel seems to have held a special service on that day, which was a Monday.

⁴⁹¹ Flavel, *Mount Pisgah*, 20.

over the petty excuses people held out for slighting this blessing of God. He wrote, “How doth free grace make its own way through swarms of Vanity! How doth it break through all the deadness, infidelity and hardness of our hearts to do us good! Though evil be present with us, our gracious God will not be absent from us notwithstanding that.”⁴⁹² This must have been a powerful comfort to those who felt that they were too overcome by this world’s vanities to shift their allegiance to God. As a final instance of how Flavel tried to woo people to the God of mercy, in *Englands Duty* Flavel spoke thus of the reality of grace – which reality had the power to break the hardest hearts:

Thus the goodness and forbearance of God, doth as it were take a sinner by the hand, leads him into a corner, and saith, Come, let thou and I talk together; thus and thus vile hast thou been, and thus and thus long-suffering and merciful have I been to thee; thy heart hath been full of sin, the heart of thy God hath been full of pity and mercy. This puts the sinner into tears, breaks his heart in pieces; if any thing in the world will melt a hard heart, this will do it. Oh, how good hath God been to me! How have I tryed his patience to the uttermost, and still he waiteth to be gracious, and is exalted that he may have compassion; the sobs and tears, the ingenuous thaws and relentings of a sinner's heart under the apprehensions of the sparing mercy and goodness of God, is the musick of heaven.⁴⁹³

Whatever else Flavel might be accused of, one cannot charge him with being a prosaic writer. He harnessed his tremendous literary powers for the purpose of trying to win people to Jesus Christ – his supreme goal and calling in life, both in the pulpit and in print.

Cautions about the brevity of time

We shall now turn to the third and final strategy Flavel utilised to stir up people’s affections. This tactic was his striving to arrest people with the sheer weightiness of the reality of the brevity of time. Puritans like Flavel were steadfast in their determination to

⁴⁹² Flavel, *Sacramental*, 49.

⁴⁹³ Flavel, *Englands*, 97.

not allow a moment of time to pass unimproved. They understood that the effects of what was done in a finite time period have stupendous effects for eternity, either magnificent or ghastly. In terms of sheer metrics, there is nothing like a comparison of the finite and the infinite. For whatever else about the Puritan lifestyle people may criticize, they should at least appreciate their prodigious scrupulosity over every moment of their time because of their beliefs about the realities of eternity. Whether modern critics agree with their beliefs about life after death or not, the Puritans were assiduously consistent with their beliefs. And so, Flavel repeatedly used lively metaphors to display the travesty of time squandered versus the infinite wisdom of time well-spent. In fact, some of his most potent use of language centers on this topic.

One way Flavel tried to communicate the importance of time was through conveying the breath-taking heaviness of eternity. In *Method*, he wrote:

O what will you do when the season of mercy and all hopes of mercy shall end together! When God shall become inaccessible, inexorable and unreconcilable to you for evermore...(speaking as the unreconciled sinner) is this the place where I must be, are these the torments I must endure, what for ever! Yea, for ever: will not God be satisfied with the sufferings of a thousand years? No, nor Millions of years! Ah sinner, did you but clearly see the present and future misery of unreconciled ones, and what that wrath of the great and terrible God is which is coming as fast as the wings of time can bring it upon you; it would certainly drive you to Christ, or drive you out of your wits. O, 'tis a dreadful thing to have God for your eternal enemy.

He then closed out the thought by adding, “an eternal weight hangs upon an inch of time.”⁴⁹⁴ In *Fountain* he drew an analogy between Christ’s agony on the cross and that of a sinner being in hell for eternity: “If Christ complain’d, *I thirst*, when he had consisted but a few hours with the wrath of God; what is their state then, that are to

⁴⁹⁴ Flavel, *Method*, 65-6. Cf. *Pneumatologia*, 457, 460.

grapple with it forever! When millions of years are past and gone, ten thousand millions more are coming on.”⁴⁹⁵

It was not merely the weightiness of eternity but its fixedness that Flavel tried to impress on his hearers. Writing in *Pneumatologia* he stated, “Finish your work for eternity before you die: for as the Cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away; so he that goeth down to the Grave shall come up no more...Your Souls will be fixed in eternity, soon after they are loosed from your Bodies: when death comes, away you must go, willing or unwilling: ready, or unready.”⁴⁹⁶ Because death fixed eternity for each person, he urged his people to consider whether they would be eternally content with their present state. One corollary to this was the idea that all should keep the accumulation of possessions to a minimum. Flavel provided a warning against the folly of piling up too many material objects around oneself in *Pneumatologia* when he wrote, “Drive moderately, you will be at the end of all these things sooner than you imagine. We need not victual a Ship to cross the Chanel, as they do that are bound to the *Indies*. What is your life? *It is even a Vapour, which appeareth for a little while; and then vanisheth away.* In one moment the Projects of many years are overturned forever.”⁴⁹⁷ Language like this, no doubt, stuck in sailors’ minds as they set out on voyages.

Because of these factors surrounding eternity, Flavel argued that people must give heed to the preciousness of time. In *Fountain* he wrote, “Is there an eternal state into which souls pass after this life. *How pretious then is the present time, upon the improvement whereof that state depends!* O what a huge weight hath God hanged upon a small wyer!” He continued by arguing that their wastefulness with time proved they

⁴⁹⁵ Flavel, *Fountain*, 472.

⁴⁹⁶ Flavel, *Pneumatologia*, 273. Cf. 76.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

did not take the realities of eternity seriously: “Every day, every hour, nay every moment of your present time hath an influence into your eternity...Surely our prodigality in the expence of time, argues we have but little sense of great eternity.”⁴⁹⁸ Given the importance of the subject, Flavel thought it worth wracking his brain to generate fresh and forceful ways of speaking.

In *Pneumatologia* he wrote an extended passage which relates his use of “lively emblems” to cause people to meditate upon eternity. He began the passage by writing, “Get thee out of the noise and clamour of this world, which makes such a continual din in thine ears, and consider how thou hangest over the mouth of Hell it self, by the feeble thread which is spun every moment out of thy Nostrils. As soon as that gives way, thou art gone for ever.” He then suggested that many people prevent themselves from thinking about eternity through food, drink, and work: “What shift do you make to quiet your fears, and eat and drink and labour with any pleasure?” Flavel then pulled from his deep coffers of literary knowledge by referring to a story about Dionysius and Democles: “Tis storied of *Dionysius* the Tyrant, that when *Democles* would have flattered him...*Dionysius* to confute his fancy, caused him to be placed at a Table richly furnished...but just over his head hanged a sharp and heavy Sword by one single hair; which when *Democles* saw...earnestly begged for a discharge from that place.” Flavel then drew the comparison:

This is the lively emblem of thy condition thou unregenerate man....For every sand of time which run out of the glass of Gods patience towards you, a drop of wrath hath been running into the Vials of his Indignation against you...but as soon as you dye, all that wrath which hang'd over your heads, so many years, in the black clouds of Gods threatnings, will pour down in a furious storm upon you...O think, and think again...there is but a Breath betwixt you and Hell.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁸ Flavel, *Fountain*, 435-6.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78-80.

Flavel was unambiguous that his attempts to get people to ponder eternity were directed towards those who had yet to experience Christian conversion. He explicitly stated that he was targeting unconverted people by highlighting the stark reality of their precarious position:

We hang every moment of our life over the Grave, and the gulf of Eternity, by this slender thread of our breath; but it cannot break, how feeble soever it be, till the time appointed be fully come...When this uncertain breath is once expired, the last hope of every unregenerate person is gone for ever. It is as impossible to recover hope, as it is to recover your departed breath, or recall the day that is past...All means of Salvation now cease for ever. No *Ambassadors* of peace are sent to the Dead. No more Calls, or Strivings of the Spirit, no more space for Repentance. O! what an inconceivable weight hath God hanged on a puff of breath?⁵⁰⁰

With persuasive evangelistic appeals tied to such vivid imagery as this, it should be no surprise that so many people were converted by Flavel's writings in his own lifetime and in the ensuing centuries.⁵⁰¹

Within *Pneumatologia*, Flavel preached a sermon which bears uncanny resemblance to one preached 49 years later by Jonathan Edwards. In December 1734, Edwards preached a sermon in which he expounded upon the subject of time in a way that is strikingly similar to Flavel's. Much more shall be made of this claim in the final chapter of this thesis, but to anticipate that section, it is fitting to show the ways in which Edwards' efforts to stir up the affections were quite close to Flavel's.⁵⁰² The language in Edwards' sermon, 'The Preciousness of Time and the Importance of

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 74, 75-6.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* 4, 323; Flavel, *England's Duty*, To the Reader, A3^v.

⁵⁰² It is interesting to note that when this paper was delivered before the Ecclesiastical History Seminar, the Jonathan Edwards scholar William Schweitzer was present. When I read these Flavel statements and indicated their similarity to Edwards he nodded his head in agreement. This was an encouraging non-verbal indicator that I was on the right track. In a discussion with Schweitzer afterwards, he reaffirmed his agreement with my claims about the manifest link between these two men.

Redeeming It,' bears resemblance to *Pneumatologia*. In the following quotation I shall footnote those places where Edwards sounded Flavellian:

Must we put off our Tabernacles, and that shortly? *What a Spur is this to a diligent redemption and improvement of time?*⁵⁰³...You have but a little time in these Tabernacles, what pity is it to waste... (1) *Great* is the worth and excellency of time, all the Treasures of the World cannot *protract, stop, or call back* one minute of time⁵⁰⁴...(2) More precious are the Seasons and Opportunities, that are in time, for our Souls, those are the golden spots of time...(3) Invaluable are the things which God doth for mens Souls in time. There are works wrought upon mens hearts in a seasonable hour in this life, which have an Influence into the Souls happiness throughout Eternity⁵⁰⁵...Of Illumination and Conversion, and on that point of time Eternal life hangs in the whole weight of it⁵⁰⁶...(4) Lost opportunity is never to be recovered by the Soul any more⁵⁰⁷...There is no calling back time, when it is once past...(5) It is wholly uncertain to every Soul, whether the present day may not determine his Lease in this Tabernacle, and a writ of Ejection be served by death upon his Soul tomorrow⁵⁰⁸...(6) As soon as ever time shall end, Eternity takes place. The stream of time delivers Souls daily into the boundless Ocean of vast Eternity...(7) In Eternity all things are fixed and unalterable. We have no more to do, all means and works are at an end.⁵⁰⁹

Whilst there does not appear to be evidence of untoward borrowing, it is evident that for Flavel and one of his eighteenth-century admirers, highlighting the importance of time was vital.

Writing of the link between time and the brevity of life in *A Token for Mourners*, Flavel wrote about the fact that death comes to each person: “O, Friends, How many graves have you and I seen opened for our dear Relations! How oft hath death come up into our windows, and summoned the delight of our eyes? It is but a little while and we

⁵⁰³ “Eternity depends on the improvement of time.” “The Preciousness of Time,” in Edwards, *Works* 17, 250.

⁵⁰⁴ “When once [time] is gone, it is gone forever. No pains, no cost will fetch it back.” Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ “’tis by that that we have opportunity of escaping everlasting misery and of obtaining everlasting blessedness and glory”; “So time is the more to be prized by men, because an whole eternity depends upon it.”; “The work that we have to do to prepare for eternity must be done in time, or it never can be done.” Ibid., 248.

⁵⁰⁶ “According as we either improve or lose our time, so shall we be happy or miserable to all eternity.” Ibid., 247.

⁵⁰⁷ “Time is very precious, because when it is past, it can’t be recovered.” Ibid., 249.

⁵⁰⁸ “Time ought to be looked upon as very precious by us upon this account also, that we are uncertain of its continuance.” Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ Flavel, *Pneumatologia*, 179-80.

shall go to them, we and they are distinguished but by short intervals.”⁵¹⁰ Indeed, the time we have left on this earth is but a few brief moments. Because of the weight of that reality, it was worth devising a terrifying word picture.

I shall close out this section by bringing balance to Flavel’s earlier warning to young children that they, too, were mortal. Not only was Flavel willing to go after youth, he also aimed to arouse the affections of the grey heads within his flock. Note especially his use of the word “startle,” as that was certainly his aim: “*Let this convince and startle such as even to their gray hairs remain in an unconverted state...whose time is almost done, and your great work not begun.*” He continued, “[You] who have but a few sands⁵¹¹ more in the upper part of the glass to run down, and then your conversion will be impossible. Your sun is setting, your night is coming; the shadows of the evening are stretched out upon you; you have one foot in the grave, and the other in hell.”⁵¹² Flavel employed his mental powers to startle, rouse, and awaken complacent sinners as he targeted their affections through stressing the importance of time. It was in this arena that he used some of his most vivid metaphors. We shall lastly turn to sundry places where he used an assortment of expressions which served the very same function in his preaching and writing.

As we saw earlier in this thesis, Flavel did not shy away from using disturbing images if he thought they would be effective to awaken his people. For example, he wrote the following about the person whose prosperity did little else than fatten him up for hell:

If I were taken captive by cruel *Canibals*, and fed with the richest fare, but withal understood, that the design of it were, to fat me up like a beast for them to feed

⁵¹⁰ Flavel, *Token*, A8.

⁵¹¹ Cf. Edwards, “How have you let the precious golden sands of your glass run?” Edwards, *Works* 17, 251.

⁵¹² Flavel, *Fountain*, 445.

upon; how little stomach should I have to their dainties? O my soul! it were much better for thee to have a sanctified poverty...than an ensnaring prosperity, set as a trap to ruin thee for ever.⁵¹³

In *Balm of the Covenant*, Flavel used an interesting analogy when trying to describe the difference between a person who believed the claims of Christianity and one who believed them but also tasted sweetness in them. He wrote, “A knowledge springing from inward experience, and spiritual sense; as we know the sweetness of Honey by tasting, better than by all the descriptions and reports that can be made of it.”⁵¹⁴

Another effective use of metaphor was when he described the pleasure which men take in sins, not realizing that they will prove to be their eternal undoing. He put it this way: “You may have your desires with a curse. He that brings home a pack of fine cloaths infected with the plague, hath no such great bargain of it, how cheap soever he bought them.”⁵¹⁵ This was certainly memorable to his congregation, many of whom no doubt suffered the effects of plague. Especially poignant was the fact that both Flavel’s father and mother died after contracting the plague in Newgate in 1665.⁵¹⁶

The next instance I shall highlight is of interest not only because it shows how creative Flavel was, but also because his language was remarkably similar to that of the hymn-writer of the next century, John Newton. Flavel likened the difference between articles of eternal versus temporal concernment:

⁵¹³ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 219.

⁵¹⁴ Flavel, *Balm*, 103-4. It is notable, a propos of the previous section, that Edwards used the exact same image in his sermon ‘A Divine and Supernatural Light’. Edwards wrote: “Thus there is a difference between having an opinion that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of sweetness...There is a wide difference between mere speculative, rational judging anything to be excellent, and having a sense of its sweetness, and beauty.” Edwards, *Works 17*, 414. For Flavel, the concept of feeling and tasting spiritual truth was one of the ways he distinguished between regenerate and unregenerate knowledge of Christian truth. See also Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 214.

⁵¹⁵ Flavel, *Fountain*, 307.

⁵¹⁶ Wilkinson, *1662 and After*, 96; Calamy and Palmer, *Nonconformist’s Memorial 2*, 255.

If a man travelling on the Rode fall into the hands of Thieves who rob him of a few shillings, why this doth not much affect him: for though he have lost his spending Money, yet his stock is safe at home, and his Estate secure, which will yield him more. Or if a man have been at Court, and there obtain'd a Pardon for his Life, or a Grant of a Thousand pound per annum, and returning home should chance to lose his Gloves or his Handkerchief, sure if the man be in his wits, he will not take on or mourn for the loss of these Trifles, whilst the Pardon or Grant is safe. Surely these things are not worth the mentioning.⁵¹⁷

Flavel also expressed this in *Righteous Man's Refuge* when he wrote of the folly of being concerned with material possessions when eternal salvation had already been secured:

“[It] is as if a man that had gotten his Pardon from the King, and had it safe in his

Bosom, should be found weeping upon the way home, because he hath lost his Staff or

Glove.”⁵¹⁸ Seemingly echoing Flavel's thought, Newton later wrote: “Suppose a man was

going to York to take possession of a large estate, and his chaise would break down a

mile before he got to the city, which obliged him to *walk* the rest of the way, what a fool

we should think him if we saw him wringing his hands, and blubbering out all the

remaining mile ‘My chaise is broken! My chaise is broken!’”⁵¹⁹ Whether or not Newton

borrowed the thought from Flavel is not too important – both men shared the common

goal of seeing people won to Christ⁵²⁰ and the fact that they did so with almost identical

language suggests that Puritanism and eighteenth-century Evangelicalism shared

affinities.

⁵¹⁷ Flavel, *Balm*, 63.

⁵¹⁸ Flavel, *Righteous Man's Refuge*, 268.

⁵¹⁹ Cecil, *Memoirs of John Newton*, 268-9.

⁵²⁰ In one of his letters Newton heartily recommended Flavel's writings to the eighteenth-century abolitionist William Wilberforce. In a letter dated 6 March 1786, Newton specifically recommended Wilberforce read: “Flavel on *Providence – on the Keeping of the heart*, and any of his works, most of which have been published in small books – his *Spiritual Navigation*.” Newton, *MS Wilberforce*, fol.3. Wilberforce would later go on to encourage people to read Flavel's writings as well. Cf. Wilberforce, *A Practical View*, 240. In another place, reflecting upon Flavel's *Husbandry*, Newton wrote that it “Prompted expressions of longing for more spirituality...”. Hindmarsh, *Newton and English Evangelical Tradition*, 336. For the way in which Newton likely patterned some of his book titles after Flavel's writings see *ibid.*, 35.

As a final instance of the way in which Flavel tried to influence people's affections we shall look at a brief passage in *Balm*. What better way to end this section than to highlight a segment in which Flavel spoke about the reality which was most important to him, namely, God Himself? Flavel wrote that in Heaven:

God will be all in all: that is, all the Saints shall be abundantly satisfied in and with God alone. As there is water enough in one Sea to fill all the Rivers, Lakes, and Springs in the World; and Light enough in one Sun to enlighten all the Inhabitants of the World: so there is enough in one God eternally to fill and satisfy all the blessed Souls in Heaven, without the addition of any Creature-comfort. God is compleat satisfaction to all the Saints, in the absence (I cannot say want) of Wives and Children, Meats and drinks, Estates and sensitive Pleasures: There will be no more need of these things, than of Candles at Noon-day.⁵²¹

Having completed our investigation of the ways in which Flavel elaborated upon Christ in an effort to see people converted, and how he endeavoured to arouse people's affections, we shall now turn to the way in which Flavel appealed to people's inborn desire for happiness as the basis of rational conversions.

Christian Hedonism

The third and final theme which pervaded Flavel's proselytisation was his constantly urging his hearers to pursue their congenital desire for joy. As was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, I have chosen to designate this concept that of Christian Hedonism. In short, the basis of Flavel's appeal to his congregants and readers was that the fullest and most desirable life of wholeness was that lived under God's care and covenant, rather than that lived outside of it. Flavel positioned the life of the Christian beside the life of the non-Christian and then compared the durable and deep pleasures of the former with the fleeting and disappointing joys of the latter. I shall

⁵²¹ Flavel, *Balm*, 111-2. Notice again major Edwardsian echoes in the sermon "The True Christian's Life a Journey Toward Heaven," Edwards, *Works* 19, 437-8.

begin this chapter with a brief discussion of the concept of hedonism and my reasons for using this particular term. Next, I shall prove that Flavel’s appeal to people’s happiness emerged roughly along four lines. First, Flavel tried to show people that their design accorded with Christian Hedonism. Second, he claimed that the Christian life was the best conceivable life that could be lived on the earth. Third, he argued that the essence of this exchange was to trade inferior delights for those which were greater. Fourth, he contended that the Christian life fitted people for the most pleasurable existence after death. To begin, I shall discuss my use of the expression “Christian Hedonism”.

The method of arguing that the Christian life was the most joyful and delightful life that could be lived was not unique to Flavel. The idea goes back to Augustine,⁵²² if not earlier to the pages of Scripture.⁵²³ In recent years this concept has been written about extensively by the scholar and pastor John Piper.⁵²⁴ The expression Piper uses for this is “Christian Hedonism.”⁵²⁵ This section shall demonstrate that Flavel often spoke of the joys, pleasures, and delights which were the ordinary lot of Christians. But this

⁵²² Just one of a plethora of examples comes from the opening lines of *Confessions*: “For thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee.” Augustine, *Confessions*, 31. One Augustine scholar wrote that his conversion centered around his discovering: “how to get – and keep – the greatest degree of pleasure.” Miles, *Desire and Delight*, 9.

⁵²³ “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures for evermore,” (Psalm 16:11); “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life,” (Matthew 19:29).

⁵²⁴ Whilst teaching at Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota, Piper published his dissertation in the Cambridge University Press Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series: “*Love your enemies*”: *Jesus’ love command in the Synoptic Gospels and in the early Christian paraenesis history of the tradition and interpretation of its uses* (1979). Shortly after this he took a role as senior minister of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, which he holds to the present day.

⁵²⁵ Piper builds his understanding of Christian Hedonism on five convictions: First, “the longing to be happy is a universal experience, and it is good, not sinful.” Second, “We should never try to deny or repress our longing to be happy, as though it were a bad impulse. Instead we should seek to intensify this longing and nourish it with whatever will provide the deepest and most enduring satisfaction.” Third, “The deepest and most enduring happiness is found only in God. Not from God, but in God.” Fourth, “The happiness we find in God reaches its consummation when it is shared with others in the manifold ways of love.” Fifth, “To the extent we try to abandon the pursuit of our own pleasure, we fail to honor God and love people. Or, to put it positively: the pursuit of pleasure is a necessary part of all worship and virtue. That is, *The chief end of man is to glorify God BY enjoying him forever.*” Piper, *Desiring God*, 23.

must be differentiated from what we might call chipper happiness. Are we to believe that the Puritans were happy when they endured the expenses of crippling fines, imprisonment, or even death? Not at all, but they claimed to have joy and peace in their souls as they endured those hardships. This is why there is an important distinction to be made between happiness and Christian Hedonism. Living well as a Christian entailed a pervasive joy and peace even in the midst of trial, not necessarily an upbeat attitude in every circumstance.

Christian Hedonism best accords with human design

The first way in which Flavel sought to direct his people to Christian conversion was by arguing that their human design accorded with the joy that came from being intimately connected to Jesus Christ. In *Balm*, which he wrote as a comfort for a couple whose only son died in 1688, he claimed that Christ's overarching purpose was to prepare people for eternal fruition with himself. In the preface to the work he wrote, "Certainly, *Madam*, the intent of the Redeemer's undertaking was not to purchase for his People Riches, Ease, and Pleasures on Earth; but to mortifie their Lusts, heal their Natures, and spiritualize their Affections, and thereby to fit them for the eternal fruition of God."⁵²⁶ The purpose for all that happened in a person's life, no matter how good or bad, was to prepare people for dwelling with God.

In *Preparation for Sufferings*, Flavel wrote that the only reason people took such delight in sin was not because God provided his creatures with an innate capacity to take equal delight in sin or in righteousness, but because their God-given faculties to receive enjoyment from him had malfunctioned: "What is sin, but the *corrupt* and *vitiating* appetite of the creature, to things that are earthly and sensual, relishing more sweetness

⁵²⁶ Flavel, *Balm*, The Epistle Dedicatory, A3^v.

and delight in them, than in the blessed God? And what is sanctification, but the rectifying of these *inordinate affections*, and placing them on their proper object?”⁵²⁷ Salvation, then, was returning to the design for which people were created, namely, taking more delight in God than in sin.

Flavel rested much of what he wrote on this topic on what seems to be an eminently defensible proposition. He called this idea one which was “so immediately true and self-evident, that in the first naked proposal of it, it naturally and easily lets it self into every Mans understanding, and no sooner asks, but gains the Approbation of right Reason.” He went on to state the proposition as follows:

*That good which compriseth and involveth the true Honour, Profit, and Pleasure of the whole Man, which is more congruous to Humane Nature, and preservative of it, is to be preferred in our Estimation and Choice to that which only yields a lower degree of Pleasure, without Profit or Honour to the basest part of Man; and that low and transient Pleasure it doth yield, attended and followed with many present and future Miseries, destructive to the whole Man.*⁵²⁸

In other words, “*Good is to be chosen, and Evil to be avoided.*”⁵²⁹ Flavel then expressed his persuasion that the movement of the will was integrally connected with that which the soul perceived to be best for itself. He wrote, “For the will is naturally carried to that which is good...and shuns that which is Evil... the choice of Good rather than Evil, is the natural choice of the Will...”⁵³⁰ This brings us to a crucial point concerning the nexus between Christian Hedonism, conversion, and the human faculties. The logical corollary to the above statement is that Flavel believed that to convert people was to persuade them that God was what was best for them. Once this happened, the will bowed to Christ

⁵²⁷ Flavel, *Preparation*, 90. Cf. *Pneumatologia*, 28-9; *Reasonableness*, 19.

⁵²⁸ Flavel, *Reasonableness*, 21-2.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22-3.

and conversion ensued. How else did Flavel try to persuade people that their design best accorded with knowing God?

In *Mental Errors*, which was chiefly a polemic against antinomianism, Flavel claimed that Christian conversion was the choice of God as the soul's supreme good: "to take [the Lord God] for our God most essentially includes our taking him for our *supream good*."⁵³¹ For Flavel this was a key to what it meant to be a Christian. A Christian was not merely someone who subscribed to a particular formula of dogmatic assertions – though there were certainly vital doctrines to be believed. For him, the essence of Christianity was valuing God primarily for God's sake, not for what He did or did not do for people. As we see here and shall continue to see, Flavel urged his people to pursue in God a greater joy than they had ever known before. Furthermore, Flavel argued that people should find their happiness in God alone, not merely in the benefits he offered them. This idea was also to be found in the generations after the Puritans. In the next century, David Brainerd, the American missionary to Native Americans, wrote a letter to his brother stating essentially the same idea.⁵³² Flavel did not teach that a person ought to be unappreciative for God's benefits,⁵³³ but he placed the emphasis on loving God for God's sake, rather than the blessings derived from him.⁵³⁴

As was stated before, Christian Hedonism was not an early modern Nonconformist invention, but there were many others in that period who held to the

⁵³¹ Flavel, *Planelogia*, a7. Cf. *Englands*, 380.

⁵³² In one of the last letters he wrote before his death, Brainerd warned his brother to beware of people whose chief reason for becoming a Christian was because they feared hell. He wrote, "Labor to distinguish between true and false religion...There are many that rejoice in their supposed justification; but what do these joys argue but only that they love themselves? Whereas, in true spiritual joys, the soul rejoices in God for what he is in himself; blesses God for his holiness, sovereignty, power, faithfulness, and all his perfections; adores God that he is what he is...these joys are divine and spiritual." Edwards, *Works* 7, 497-8.

⁵³³ Flavel, *Method*, 124.

⁵³⁴ Flavel, *Fountain*, 495.

concept. Ryken wrote this about the Puritan emphasis on the place of joy in Christian piety:

Delight in God's presence was what the Puritans sought and found. Baxter's parting advice to his parishioners at Kidderminster was to *'be sure to maintain a constant delight in God.'* Cornelius Burges preached that every person should *'lift up his soul to take hold of God, to be glued and united to him...to be only his forever.'* For Thomas Watson, one of the signs of being a child of God *'is to delight to be much in God's presence.'*

He then cited John Winthrop's account of his post-conversion life: *"I was now grown familiar with the Lord Jesus Christ; he would oft tell me he loved me...he lay down with me, and usually I did awake with him: and so sweet was his love to me, as I desired nothing but him in heaven or earth."*⁵³⁵ Having highlighted some of Flavel's assertions that people's design was to know and enjoy the pleasure of life with God, we shall turn next to his promises that the Christian life was the most joyful life in the world.

Christian Hedonism is the best conceivable life to live

Second, Flavel urged his people to consider the joy that was possible in a life of fellowship and communion with God. The delight of living this sort of life surpassed any other possible life on the earth. For those who thought that the life of 'the godly' was a morose existence, he argued that "religion is no melancholy thing, but the fountain of all joy and pleasure."⁵³⁶ He even labelled this life heaven upon earth: "Well then, if God have opened to your Souls such a Chamber of love, where your Souls may be ravished with daily delights, as well as secured from danger and ruine...Need I to use an Argument, or spend one Motive to press you to enter into such an Heaven upon

⁵³⁵ Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 206-7.

⁵³⁶ Flavel, *Catechism*, 82.

Earth?”⁵³⁷ If serious godliness was heaven on earth, why did so many people fall away from such a life and not stay the course? Flavel pinpointed the reason – they had never tasted the joy and delight which flowed out of loving and being loved by God: “The *object* of spiritual delight...is God himself and the things which relate to him. He is the blessed Ocean into which all the streams of spiritual delight do pour themselves...the reason why so many easily part with Religion is, because their souls never tasted the sweetness of it: never delighted in it.”⁵³⁸ He called these realities “a delight far transcending all the delights of this life.”⁵³⁹

What of the person who objected that if he committed to Christ he will never have any of his old vices to indulge? Flavel offered a powerful hedonistic refutation to that objection. He agreed that sinful indulgence was disallowed; he totally disagreed that one would desire those sinful practices any more:

It's thy gross mistake to think thou shalt be bereaven of all delights and pleasures, by coming under the government of Christ...Indeed, it allows no sinful pleasures to the subjects of it, nor do they need it; but from the day thou closest in with Christ, all thy pure, real, and eternal pleasures and delight begin and bear date. When the Prodigal was return'd to his Father, then, saith the Text, *they began to be merry*.

He then ended with: “No, no, Soul, thou shalt want no joy; for the Scripture saith, *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink the rivers of thy pleasures; for with thee is the fountain of light*.”⁵⁴⁰ In short, Flavel turned that objection on its head and claimed that the unconverted person was the one who had not commenced the pleasurable life. Compared to the knowledge of Christ, sin was foul. Flavel wrote, “No man that is in his wits would leave the pure cold

⁵³⁷ Flavel, *Righteous Man's Refuge*, 255.

⁵³⁸ Flavel, *Method*, 509. Cf. echoes with Edwards' sermon located in *Works* 19, 437-8.

⁵³⁹ Flavel, *Righteous Man's Refuge*, 248.

⁵⁴⁰ Flavel, *Pathetical and Serious Dissuasive*, 286-7.

refreshing streams of a Crystal Fountain, to go to a filthy puddle Lake, or an empty Cistern, as the best enjoyments of this world are in comparison with Jesus Christ.”⁵⁴¹

Flavel said that only those who tasted this reality knew it: “The saints have their secret delights in God, their hidden *Manna*, which no man knows but he that eateth of it.”⁵⁴²

A final instance which proves that the pursuit of Christian Hedonism was the best life lived comes from an account given in *A Practical Treatise on Fear*. Even though a tragic account, this substantiates the Puritan claim that God was the fountain of delights to those who trusted Christ:

So Blessed Mr. *Philpot* our own Martyr, in one of his sweet encouraging Letters [wrote]...I have so much joy of the reward prepared for me, the most wretched sinner, that though I be in the place of darkness and mourning, yet I cannot lament, but am night and day so joyful as though I were under no cross at all; in all the days of my life I was never so joyful, the name of the Lord be praised.⁵⁴³

Flavel would likely have pressed his hearers with the inquiry, ‘How many atheists or mere formalists in religion could claim comfort in such a place?’ Conversely, he would have warned those living prosperous lives to beware of losing their felt need for God.⁵⁴⁴

Swapping inferior for superior pleasures

Flavel’s third strategy in arguing for a life of Christian Hedonism was by reminding his reader that the essence of conversion was to trade lesser pleasures for greater ones. In *Token for Mourners*, he told a story about a Scot called Patrick Mackewrath who had lost his son yet was able to maintain his joy in God. Flavel explained the reason why this was possible: “Oh what a sweet exchange had he made!

⁵⁴¹ Flavel, *Method*, 213.

⁵⁴² Flavel, *Seaman’s Companion*, 101.

⁵⁴³ Flavel, *Fear*, 107.

⁵⁴⁴ This theme occurred frequently throughout his writings, especially in *A Saint Indeed*, in which he presented prosperity as the greatest trial in the Christian’s life. Cf. 37-46. See also Cohen, *God’s Caress*, 110.

Surely he had Gold for brass, a pearl for a pebble; a treasure for a trifle; for so great, yea, and far greater was the disproportion betwixt the sweet light of Gods Countenance, and the faint dim light of the best creature-enjoyment.”⁵⁴⁵ He phrased the idea this way in *Pneumatologia*: “What *Merchant* will not part with an hundred pounds worth of *Glass Beads* and *Pendants*, for a Tun of Gold? A few *Tinsell Toyes*, for as many rich *Diamonds*?”⁵⁴⁶ Flavel believed that Satan was aware of this, so in *Antipharmacum* he wrote, “Satan knowes men will hardly part with their present sensible comforts, till they be assured of better.”⁵⁴⁷ Therefore, his strategy was to display the overwhelming delight experienced in the Christian life.

In *Reasonableness of Personal Reformation*, he verged on sarcasm as he wrote this about the exchange he was proposing: “The only hurt or loss (if this must be accounted so) any Man can sustain by the exchange of Pleasures made by Reason and Religion, is this, that they design for you the rational, ordinate, and congruous Delights, both of a Man, and of a Christian, in lieu of the lower, baser, and filthy Pleasures of a Beast, or a Devil.”⁵⁴⁸ This exchange was, he claimed, a “rich bargain.”⁵⁴⁹ Writing in *Divine Conduct*, Flavel made clear that God’s receiving glory from his people and his people being delighted were not at odds. This thought, so conspicuous in Piper’s writings,⁵⁵⁰ appeared in the seventeenth century. In the preface to that work Flavel wrote, “How great a pleasure is it to discern how the most wise God is providentially

⁵⁴⁵ Flavel, *Token*, 99. Earlier in the same work he wrote: “Its better for thee to bury ten sons, than to remit one degree of love or delight in God”, page 31.

⁵⁴⁶ Flavel, *Soul*, 304.

⁵⁴⁷ Flavel, *Antipharmacum*, 42.

⁵⁴⁸ Flavel, *Reasonableness*, 21.

⁵⁴⁹ Flavel, *Fear*, 98.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. Piper, *Desiring God*, 12, 53, 124ⁿ⁵, 160, 283, 307.

steering all to the Port of his own Praise, and his peoples Happiness.”⁵⁵¹ In God’s wisdom, his getting glory and people getting to live the best life imaginable was the indistinguishable *telos*. In *Token for Mourners* he wrote, “God is the Fountain of all true comfort; creatures, the very best and sweetest, are but Cisterns to receive and convey to us what comfort God is pleased to communicate to them...for no comforts in the world are so delectable and ravishingly sweet, as those that flow immediately from the fountain...Is the fulness of the Fountain yours?”⁵⁵² I shall conclude this point with a poetic portion from *A New Compass for Seaman* which well summarises Flavel’s teaching on Christian Hedonism. Describing the life of the Christian, even given its trials, he wrote:

No more desertions, troubled thoughts or tears,
Christ's full enjoyment supersedes those fears.
Delights of Princes Courts are all but toys,
To these delights, these are transcendent joys.
The joys of Christ himself, and what they are,
An Angels Tongue would stammer to declare...
My thoughts are swallowed up, my Muse doth tire,
And hang her Wings, Conception soars no higher.
Give me a place among thy Children there,
Although I lie with them in Dungeons here.⁵⁵³

It is to Flavel’s contention that conversion was best described as “the true method of making all men happy...in the world to come” that we now turn.

Prepared soul for the best enjoyment in heaven

The fourth and final way in which Flavel argued for people to become Christians was by arguing that Christian Hedonism fitted people for the most pleasurable existence after death. In *Pneumatologia*, Flavel contrasted the Christian’s vision of God on this earth versus those of heaven. He wrote that, in heaven, the Christian’s “Visions of God in

⁵⁵¹ Flavel, *Divine Conduct*, To the Reader, B1v.

⁵⁵² Flavel, *Token*, 114.

⁵⁵³ Flavel, *A New Compass*, 200-1.

the state of Separation, are more clear, distinct, and direct than...on earth; Clouds and Shadows are now fled away. The Soul now seeth as it is seen, and knoweth as it is known, its apprehensions of God there differ from those it had here, as the...confused apprehensions of a Child, do from those we have in the manly state.” He then continued by linking the depth and accuracy of one’s vision of God with a corresponding increase in pleasure and delight therein: “They are also more sweet and ravishing. As our Visions are, so are our Pleasures: Perfect Visions produce perfect Pleasures.”⁵⁵⁴

Flavel argued that the facial vision of God (i.e. seeing God face-to-face) was of such an indescribably all-satisfying nature that, in heaven, it would overflow throughout a person’s three faculties. He wrote that the sight of God “will be a *satisfying* sight. So perfectly quieting and giving rest to the Soul in all its powers that they neither can proceed nor desire to proceed any farther. The understanding can know no more, the will can will no more; the affections of joy, delight, and love are at full rest and quiet in their proper center.” He then likened all earthly good to that of a candle, and God to the sun: “For all good is in the chiefest good eminently; as all the light of the Candles in the World is in the Sun...” He then suggested, “That which makes the Understanding, Will, and Affections move farther, as being restless, and unsatisfied in all discoveries and enjoyments here, is the limited and imperfect nature of things we now converse with...” God is, he wrote, the object which “fills the faculties.”⁵⁵⁵ In other words, at present the faculties are only able to apprehend in part what they shall fully contain later.

In *Sacramental Meditations* Flavel described the effects of what the Christian could expect in heaven. When inquiring as to how the human body could “be a Co-

⁵⁵⁴ Flavel, *Soul*, 201.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 324.

partner with the soul in the ineffable joys of that presence above,” he described it thus: “That which is to be a Vessel to contain such strong liquor as this, had need be strongly hooped; lest it flie to pieces, as old Bottles do when filled with new Wine. The state of this Mortality cannot bear the fulness of that joy.” He then proceeded to recount the experience of a Christian who was gripped by a glimpse of heaven: “Hold Lord, stay thy hand (said a choice Christian once) thy Creature is but a clay Vessel, and can hold no more. If a transient glimpse of God here, be felt in the very reins; if it so work upon the very body by sympathy with the soul, O, what vigorous spiritual bodies doth the state of glory require! And such they shall be.”⁵⁵⁶ Flavel taught that the overwhelming power of being in God’s presence in heaven would dictate the need for new bodies. Indeed, for Flavel, the pleasures of heaven would be of a higher order than those the godly could expect on earth: “Divine Pleasures must needs have an higher gust and relish in Heaven than ever they had on earth.”⁵⁵⁷

I shall now close out this chapter by citing an extended section from *A Pathetical and Serious Dissuasive* which sums up the various and diverse strands of Flavel’s teachings on conversion which we have investigated. I cite this lengthy quotation because it contains many of the features which I have highlighted in the preceding three chapters, including: seeing Christ as sufficient to save, an abiding recognition of sinfulness, the great change which must occur within the three faculties, the loveliness of Christ, and lastly, arguing hedonistically that a person should put his faith in Christ.

⁵⁵⁶ Flavel, *Sacramental*, 29-30. Flavel described an account of man who asked the Lord to give him no more, else he would shatter. *Pneumatologia*, 221.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 221-2.

After Flavel called his readers to repentance and faith in question 20 of his Seaman's Catechism,⁵⁵⁸ he responded to the following potential objection: "But I have no strength of my own to come to Christ by, and is it not absurd to urge me upon impossibilities in order to my salvation?"⁵⁵⁹ Flavel responded by offering the following plea that someone should immediately bring before God:

To this glorious Redeemer I have now been invited; all my pretences against him have been confuted, and my Soul in his Name assured of welcome, if I come unto him, and cast my self upon him. And now, Lord, I come, I come, upon thy call and invitation; I am unfeignedly willing to avouch thee, this day to be my God, and to take thee for my portion. Lord Jesus, I come unto thee; thy Clay, thy Creature moves towards the Fountain of pity, look hitherto.

He continued:

Behold a spectacle of misery...behold my naked Soul, not a rag of righteousness to cover it; behold my starving Soul...ah! it has fed upon wind and vanity hitherto: Behold my wounded soul bleeding at thy foot; every part, Head and Heart, Will and Affections, all wounded by sin...Behold a returning submitting Rebel...Oh I am weary of the service of sin; I can endure it no longer. Come now, and knock off those fetters of unbelief; Oh set my soul at liberty that it may praise thee!...indeed thou art a drawing Saviour, a lovely Jesus. I have hitherto slighted thee, but it was because I did not know thee: mine eyes have been held by unbelief, when thou wast opened in the Gospel; but now I see thee as the chiefest of ten thousands. Thou art the glory of Heaven, the glory of Earth, the glory of Sion; and oh that thou wouldst be the glory of my Soul! O my Lord! I am willing to submit to any terms, be they never so hard and ungrateful to the flesh. I am sure whatever I shall suffer in thy service, cannot be like to what I have suffered, or am like to suffer by sin: henceforth be thou my Lord and Master; thy service is perfect freedom.

Flavel then closed this proposed plea to God by writing:

Oh let all my affections, as willing servants, wait upon thee, and be active for thee. Whatever I am, let me be for thee; whatever I have; let it be thine; whatever I can do, let me do for thee; whatever I can suffer, let me suffer for thee. O that I might say before I go hence, My beloved is mine, and I am his! Oh that what I have begged on Earth, might be ratified in Heaven! My Spirit within me saith, Amen. Lord Jesus, say thou. Amen.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁸ The Seaman's Catechism is the fifth section of *A Pathetical and Serious Dissuasive*, comprising pages 273-94.

⁵⁵⁹ Flavel, *Pathetical and Serious Dissuasive*, 289.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 292-4.

In this statement we see, in microcosm, the very elaborate and highly complex paradigm which Flavel used to win converts to God. All of the integral components appear here. Firstly, a sinner appeared who confessed his misery, wounds from, and weariness with sin. Secondly, he saw the loveliness of Jesus – “the glory of heaven” – whom he previously “slighted”. Thirdly, he agreed to any terms knowing that, “thy service is perfect freedom”. Fourthly, he urged all of his affections to rush towards the Saviour, which he could not do until his will was renewed. Lastly, in line with the true spirit of Calvinism, Flavel unblushingly invited people to come to Christ.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶¹ I have been unable to determine whether Flavel was a supralapsarian or an infralapsarian. Even though he made statements which could support either view, he seems closer to the more moderate infralapsarian position.

Chapter 4

Flavel's Apocalypticism⁵⁶²

“The day which all the prophets foretold, and all good men have...been eagerly looking for, is now at hand.”⁵⁶³

The historian Paul Johnson wrote, “All societies contain not only creators and builders but apocalyptic.”⁵⁶⁴ Indeed, there appears a strong apocalyptic expectation in the writings of Flavel, but, as this chapter shall argue, this appeared only in his later writings. While the belief that the end times were near was fairly common in the first several decades of the seventeenth century,⁵⁶⁵ there was great diversity in what that

⁵⁶² The attendees of the Cambridge French Graduate Conference, held at King's College, Cambridge, in April 2011 and the Society for Reformation Studies Conference, held at Westminster College, Cambridge, in April 2012, heard papers relating to various aspects of this chapter and provided useful feedback. The paper presented at the former conference, ‘Proselytism and Apocalypticism in England before and after the Act of Toleration of 1689: the French threat and a lone Puritan,’ can be found in the bibliography (forthcoming, Peter Lang, 2013). The title of the latter was ‘The Day is Now at Hand’: the Apocalyptic Teachings of a Moderate Seventeenth-Century Puritan.’ Their constructive feedback was helpful in honing the ideas and approach to the subject presented here.

⁵⁶³ Flavel, *Englands*, 15.

⁵⁶⁴ Johnson, *Enemies of Society*, 87-8.

⁵⁶⁵ The literature on the topic of apocalyptic belief in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is prodigious. Milton, echoing the prevailing thought of the age called Christ, “the shortly expected king”. Hunt, *Christian Millenarianism*, 84. Christopher Hill wrote, “In 1658 [Bunyan] had announced ‘The judgment-day is at hand’...Many in the seventeenth century believed the end of the world was imminent...Indeed in the sixteen-fifties the doctrine had become almost a commonplace.” Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution*, 325. An example from an earlier period comes from Finlayson: “What gave the proceedings of the House of Commons in early 1629 their urgency was the widespread and almost apocalyptic conviction that the last days of true religion in England were at hand.” Finlayson, *Puritanism and English Revolution*, 102. For various treatments of the issues within the English context, see: Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon*; Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*; Jue, “Puritan millenarianism,” 259-273; Keeble, *The Restoration*, 7, 45, 145, 165; Kyle, *Awaiting the Millennium*, 64-70; Lamont, *Baxter and the Millennium*; Popkin, *Millenarianism and Messianism*, 1-11; Rose, *England in the 1690s*, 175, 196, 262ff; Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 112, 115; Toon, *Puritans, Millennium, Future of Israel*; Wilks, *Prophecy and Eschatology*; Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, 83; Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 252. In a conversation I had with William Lamont at the 1662 Revisited conference held at the Dr. Williams Library in May 2012, he indicated that his positions in his book on Baxter remained fundamentally the same. For Christian apocalyptic belief from Medieval Europe through the Münster Rebellion, see the slightly dated, but still virile, Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*. For the manifestation of apocalyptic thought in the mind of one man as it stretched across England and New England see Gilpin, *The Millenial Piety of Roger Williams*. Possibly the two best treatments of English apocalyptic belief leading up to the year 1660 are Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse* and Ball, *A Great Expectation*. These authors are especially interested to bring out the theological and exegetical concerns which lay back of British eschatological thought, an

entailed. A relatively small minority, such as the Fifth Monarchists, extrapolated radical implications from this idea.⁵⁶⁶ For a season after the Restoration it was much rarer for people to predict the end of the world. In fact, after the apocalyptically-freighted year 1666, belief in the imminent return of Christ diminished and was almost non-existent by 1676.⁵⁶⁷ It is notable that, by the time of the Glorious Revolution, this belief was incorporated into the preaching of a peaceable and deeply conciliatory pastor. Even though Flavel thought the return of Christ was at hand in 1689, he held out some hope that if the nation amended its ways, the cataclysmic end might be averted. Accordingly, Flavel interpreted the religious freedom provided in the Toleration Act under William and Mary as both a blessing and a dire warning.

This chapter shall demonstrate that Flavel's beliefs about the apocalyptical return of Christ shifted through the course of his writing career, thus prompting him to increasingly focus on evangelism in the final years of his life.⁵⁶⁸ Earlier in his life he expressed no belief that the return of Christ was imminent, and thus, that the world was on the brink of a fiery end. However, as the decades passed he became persuaded of this. In the early and middle parts of his career he warned his hearers that if they did not amend their lives national judgment was looming. Flavel expected any national judgment to be foreshadowed by at least four events, all of which he saw signs in the last three decades of his life: the removal of Gospel ministers from their pulpits, the removal of God's ordinances from the church, a surge of national unrighteousness, and

angle often overlooked by economic and social historians. Lastly, *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* does not restrict itself to Christian eschatology but contains several helpful articles.

⁵⁶⁶ The standard work on the Fifth Monarchy Men is Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*.

⁵⁶⁷ Dandelion, *Quakerism*, 42-3. Cf. Hunt, *Christian Millenarianism*, 87; Kyle, *Awaiting the Millennium*, 55.

⁵⁶⁸ This becomes especially evident in two works published in the final three years of his life: *Englands Duty* (1689) and *The Reasonableness of Personal Reformation and the Necessity of Conversion* (1691).

heightened schism and division amongst the people of God. In his early writings he averred that if Christ's return was not to be expected soon, England stood under the judgment of God and was liable to face His wrath at any moment. Because of the appearance of these four omens between 1680-1689, his concerns about his own country inflated into the belief that Christ's return was to be expected for the whole world. We shall arrive at these conclusions through an analysis of his writings covering a 25-year period. As this thesis has shown, Flavel consistently evangelised in his published works through the course of his entire career, but I now add that his writings especially evince an emphasis on proselytising in the last decade of his life. One corollary of this chapter's argument is that this heightened emphasis on evangelising was due, in part, to his shift of eschatological expectations.

In arguing the conclusion stated above, this chapter shall proceed in the following manner. First, I shall lay out the evidence that, for Flavel, the removal of ministers, the removal of Gospel ordinances, escalating national wickedness, and heightened schism amongst Christians were all precursors to national judgment on England. Second, I shall prove that in the period of the early 1660s to 1670 Flavel did not express the belief of Christ's imminent return. Third, I shall show how he began to warm to this idea between the years 1670-1680. Fourth, I shall argue that he taught judgment was at hand in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. Fifth, I shall lastly show that, even given his direct warnings about the end, Flavel was still willing to hold out a glimmer of hope that the end would be delayed if his fellow Nonconformists would only heed his words. To the extent that Flavel hoped that the end would be postponed, this was merely so that more people would be converted. There was always an evangelistic edge underlying his

purposes. We shall begin with an examination of Flavel's assertions about the four harbingers of judgment.

Signs of judgment

Scattered throughout Flavel's writings are allusions to his belief that certain signs and circumstances tend to precede, and even precipitate, the judgment of God. For Flavel, God's judgment was entirely warranted in light of the abundance of blessings that he had given England, which blessings she had squandered. Flavel asserted that these national advantages were gloriously unique. Writing in *Method* in 1680 he declared the following: "We are bound with all thankfulness to acknowledge the bounty of heaven to this sinful generation in furnishing us with so many excellent means of light beyond many other nations and generations that are past." He went on to warn his listeners chillingly:

I fear the time is coming when many among us will wish they had never set foot upon English ground. God hath blessed this nation with many famous, burning and shining lights; it was once said to the honour of this Nation, *that the English ministry was the worlds wonder...*the greater will our account be for abusing such light and rebelling against it: the clearer our light is now, the thicker will the mists of darkness be hereafter...⁵⁶⁹

As is clearly seen in passages like this, Flavel sometimes donned the prophetic hat and enumerated the reasons why God's displeasure justly rested upon the nation.⁵⁷⁰ In so

⁵⁶⁹ Flavel, *Method*, 560.

⁵⁷⁰ It is significant that in Increase Mather's preface to Flavel's posthumously published exposition on the catechism, he called Flavel "a Prophet". Speaking about Devonians who would later reflect upon the man who labored amongst them, he wrote, "*Dartmouth* will know, and *Devonshire* will know, that there has been a Prophet among them". Flavel, *Catechism*, To the Reader, A4^v. In one sense, for any English Nonconformist, Gospel ministers had a prophetic role and could aptly be labeled prophets. However, this capitalized reference (and Mather's preceding comments) does seem to have an eschatological ring to it – the idea of a minister calling people to repentance before it was too late.

doing, Flavel listed four signs that God's wrath was about to be poured out on the nation and bring about the end of the age.⁵⁷¹

Removal of gospel ministers

The first precursor to judgment was the removal of Gospel ministers from the church. The reason Flavel saw this as a key area in which to be concerned had to do with the nature of the mediatorial treaty between the first and second persons of the godhead. Flavel stated it this way: "Gospel Ordinances and Offices came in upon the fall, and expire with the Mediators dispensatory Kingdom: thenceforth no more Ordinances, no more Ministers; what use can there be of them, when the treaty is ended?"⁵⁷² Flavel argued there was no more need for Christian pastors when the Kingdom of God – for him, the ingathering of all of God's elect – was full and complete. Just as Christ's role as mediator between God and man was ended when Christians were with the Father, so there would no longer be any need for ministers. Therefore, the removal of ministers was one sign that the end was near. In *Englands Duty* Flavel wrote the following about the unworthiness of people who did not take advantage of the faithful labours of ministers: "Of the time men have enjoyed under the means of Salvation; how many years they have sat barren and dead hearted, under the labours of Gods faithful ministers..."⁵⁷³ Why should God continue to be gracious to people who snubbed his blessings? In another place Flavel wrote the removal of ministers meant that the Lord was about to declare war on the earth and bring about terrific calamity. Speaking about

⁵⁷¹ In another place he asserted that he believed that their trials were brought on as punishment by God for their lethargic response to the Gospel, calling them: "the causes of God's indignation..." Flavel, *Character of a Complete Evangelical Pastor* (1691), in *Works* (1701), 1336.

⁵⁷² Flavel, *Method*, 48.

⁵⁷³ Flavel, *Englands*, 9.

what was “implied and imported in Christs treaty with sinners by his Ambassadors or Ministers,”⁵⁷⁴ he wrote, “it implies the removal of the Gospel ministry to be a very great judgment to the people. The remanding of *Ambassadors*, presages an ensuing War. If the reconciling of souls to God be the greatest work, then the removal of the means and instruments thereof must be the sorest Judgment.”⁵⁷⁵ In poetic verse he warned the same thing about the removal of God’s ambassadors in *Husbandry Spiritualized*:

O dreadful, dark, and dismal day!
How is our glory fled away.
Our Sun gone down, our stars o're cast;
God's heritage is now laid wast.
Our pining souls no bread can get,
With wantons God hath justly met,
When we are fed unto the full,
This man was tedious; that was dull...
Sure heaven intends not peace, but wars;
In calling home Ambassadors.⁵⁷⁶

Flavel sounded an eerie note by warning that the removal of God’s ambassadors preceded judgment. What was awful about the removal of ministers was not only that faithful shepherds were gone, but the very means of salvation, the preached word, was also absent. The preached word of God was responsible for the edification, nourishment, and salvation of humans. Therefore, the removal of ministers was a dire judgment indeed. It is to this warning of Flavel’s that we now turn.

Removal of ordinances from the church

Flavel believed the eradication of the ordinances from the church was another sign of Christ’s inevitable return. Flavel held the ordinances of God in very high esteem

⁵⁷⁴ Flavel, *Method*, 47.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁷⁶ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 99.

– he saw their function as being integral to the life of the church and human salvation.

One of the reasons Flavel valued the sacraments so much was because the preaching of the Word was one of them. Indeed, the Puritans saw the preaching of the Word as the central feature of the worship service.⁵⁷⁷ Speaking about the worth of the preached word, Flavel wrote:

'Tis a blessing far above our estimation of it; little do we know what a treasure God committeth to us in his Ordinances... 'tis the very power of God unto salvation, and salvation is ordinarily denied to whom the preaching of the word is denied...the eternal decree of Gods election is executed by it upon our souls: as many as be ordained to eternal life shall believe by the preaching of it.⁵⁷⁸

Flavel linked God's execution of the decree of election with the preaching of the word. What greater place of prominence could be attached to any human activity? Thus, the removal of the preached word signaled, at least, a terrible judgment of God upon the nation. Flavel's use of the word judgment would later connote the final judgment when Christ would return to judge the living and the dead, but at this point in his career, his concerns were restricted to Englishmen and women.⁵⁷⁹

The next instance where Flavel taught that the removal of the means of grace warned of God's judgment comes from *Englands Duty*. Flavel spoke of several gradations of punishment with respect to the Lord showing displeasure toward a nation: "What an unspeakable loss is the loss of the Gospel, seeing the Presence of Christ comes and goes with it? When the Gospel departs, the Spirit of Christ departs with it from among men; no more conversions, in God's ordinary way, are then to be expected..."

With the removal of the preached word, so the Spirit of Christ departed, along with any

⁵⁷⁷ Ryken wrote: "for these worshippers the Word became a verbal sacrament." Ryken, *Worldly Saints*, 125. Cf. 91-107; Maclure, *Paul's Cross Sermons*, 165.

⁵⁷⁸ Flavel, *Method*, 365.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. Flavel, *Saint*, 43; *Englands*, 146-7, 317, 312-3, 321; *Method*, 16, 49-50; *Navigation*, 186.

hope of Christian conversions. He continued: “The Spirit may in some sense depart, whilst the ordinances are left standing for a time among the people, but then expect no such blessings or benefits from them. But when God takes away Ordinances and Spirit too, wo indeed to that People; and are there not sins amongst us presaging such a Judgment?” Flavel then warned his hearers about the dangers of continuing in such a course:

O *England*, reflect upon thy barrenness...where be the fruits answerable to such precious means? The Gospel is a golden Lamp, the graces of the Spirit communicated by it are golden Oyl...will God maintain such a lamp, fed with such precious Oyl, for men to trifle and play by?...This great hatred brings on the days of visitation, and the days of recompence, with a swift and dreadful motion upon any people.⁵⁸⁰

Although there seems to be ambiguity about the question of whether Flavel was threatening a temporal judgment on England for a short season or the last judgment at the end of the age, by the time he wrote these words he was concerned about both. Thus, by 1689 Flavel’s concerns were two-fold. First, he warned his hearers that their sins would bring judgment upon the nation. He added to the first a second caution, namely, that the *parousia* was at hand. It must be pointed out that Flavel linked the removal of Gospel ministers with the removal of Christian ordinances. For Flavel, the removal of both from the earth indicated God’s national and potential apocalyptic judgment.⁵⁸¹ However, Flavel only made this distinction clear in 1689 when he preached the *Englands Duty* sermons. In both cases, the absence of the ordinances presaged dark times for England.

⁵⁸⁰ Flavel, *Englands*, 41-2.

⁵⁸¹ “Ordinances and Offices” and “Ordinances...Ministers” are clearly linked in Flavel’s mind. In *Method of Grace* the removal of both had apocalyptic overtones. Cf. Flavel, *Method*, 48, 49, 365.

Increasing national sinfulness

The third harbinger of judgment which Flavel clearly warned his people about was that of increased national sinfulness. Flavel was deeply concerned that if English people continued in their sins, they were going to prompt Jesus Christ's speedy return to earth in judgment. In *Husbandry*, he used a nautical image to convey this: "You see now, what are the signs of a full ripe sinner; and when it comes to this, either with a Nation, or with a single person, then ruine is near. It is in the filling up of the measure of sin, as in the filling of a vessel cast into the Sea, which rowls from side to side, taking in the water by little and little, till it be full, and then down it sinks to the bottom." It is vital to note that in 1669 he was not yet ready to pronounce the verdict that judgment was near. There was no clear eschatological note sounded. In fact, in the very next sentence he intimated that God's patience was still restraining his hand from judging them. He wrote: "Mean while, admirable is divine patience, which bears with these vessels of wrath, whilst fitting for destruction."⁵⁸² By the end of the next decade he would change his mind about this. In short, Flavel warned his people through the course of his career that a positive sign of God's judgment was an increase in national sinfulness, which Flavel saw rising, and was therefore deeply concerned.

Schism and division amongst Nonconformists

Lastly, Flavel warned his fellow Dissenters that the final sign that the return of Christ was near was because of the proliferation of schism and division within their own ranks. He addressed this clearly in *Mental Errors*: "These Schisms and Dissentions in the Churches of Christ are ominous presages, and foreboding signs of some sweeping

⁵⁸² Flavel, *Husbandry*, 136. Cf. *Englands*, 14-5, 30; *Preparation*, 16.

Judgment, and common Calamity near approaching us...I am sure 'tis so here, if God turn not our hearts one towards another, he will come and smite the Earth with a Curse.”⁵⁸³ Flavel was earnest on this point, and he spent a significant amount of time following through on these words. For example, Flavel was integral to the formation of the ‘Happy Union’ – an attempt in 1691 to unite Congregationalists and Presbyterians.⁵⁸⁴ So interested was Flavel in the success of this treaty that when he heard the news of this union, he was so overjoyed he burst into tears.⁵⁸⁵

Not only were division and schism reasons to expect judgment from God, but, linking Flavel’s apocalypticism with his proselytism, he believed that division was one of the major reasons people were kept away from the Christian faith. In *Mental Errors*, he wrote using this vivid metaphor: “The alluring beauty of Christianity...is sullied and defaced, and thereby conversion hindered, and a new stone, as it were, rolled over the graves of poor sinners, to keep them down in their impenitency: Tremble therefore at

⁵⁸³ Flavel, *Planelogia*, 436.

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. Walker, *Creeches of Congregationalism*, 445-6; Sell and Bebbington, eds., *Protestant Nonconformist Texts 1*, 400ff.; Mullett, *Sources for English Nonconformity*; Cragg, *Great Persecution*, 253; Gordon, *Freedom*, 153-5; Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians*, 459-61.

⁵⁸⁵ Galpine wrote, “he was of a peaceable and healing spirit, becoming an ambassador of the Prince of Peace. He did what lay in him to live peaceably with all men, but especially to promote peace and love among Professors. If any difference did arise, either between ministers or private Christians, he would do his utmost to compose them; divers painful journeys has he taken about this work. He had a real love to, and kept a good correspondence with, those in whom he beheld the image of Christ, though in some controverted things, their judgements and practices differed from his, hoping at last that he should meet them in the same heaven, where all their mistakes should be rectified and their differences adjusted and composed. He was even transported with joy when, by a letter from a reverend minister in London, he received the good news of the happy agreement of the ministers in that city, who in some lesser points were of different apprehensions, and went under different denominations, hoping that it would have a good influence on the whole Kingdom...He did frequently bless the Lord for that mercy, both in public and in private, and even melted into tears of joy at the mention of it, saying God had herein answered the prayers that his people had been putting up to him these many years. When he saw the Heads of Agreement, which had been assented to, and subscribed by the London ministers, he told a friend that was with him that he could now take up the words of old Simeon, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.” Galpine, *Life of Mr. John Flavel*, in Flavel, *Remains*, a1-a2. Cf. Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, 479; Hoskins and Finberg, *Devonshire Studies*, 374; Stoughton, *Philip Doddridge*, 29-30.

the thoughts of Divisions and Separations.”⁵⁸⁶ Here, Flavel warned his fellow Dissenters of the evils of needless division. Separation, if it had to be wielded, was only to be used as a last resort.⁵⁸⁷ As I close out this first section, I must respond to one possible problem with the construction of events I have laid out above.

One possible objection to my claim that Flavel did not believe the end was near in the early 1660s is that if the first two factors in the schema I am positing are correct, the early 1660s should be *exactly* when Flavel would have expected it, granted that the Great Ejection effectively defrocked the best (in Flavel’s view) 1800+ pastors in England, removing both ministers and ordinances.⁵⁸⁸ The reason this objection will not stand is because of the entrance of the third and fourth factors. Namely, Flavel became convinced that the end was near, not only because elements one and two occurred within Nonconformist churches, but because of the way in which dissenters became schismatics, and the rampant increase of national sinfulness. So, this objection ends up strengthening the claim that it was not two but the four factors presented here which were responsible for England’s fate.

Flavel’s Early Writings (1664-1671)

Flavel’s first written work, *A New Compass for Seaman*, was published in the year 1664 when he was in the 14th year of his ministry.⁵⁸⁹ As there are no extant writings

⁵⁸⁶ Flavel, *Planelogia*, 447.

⁵⁸⁷ The tension which the Reformers and Nonconformists (those who attempted to be thoughtful about their actions anyway) had to address regarding the question of when it became legitimate to separate from a body claiming to be Christian was especially exemplified in the Donatist controversy of the fourth and fifth centuries. Augustine was the movement’s chief antagonist. The as yet last word on this topic remains Frensd’s *The Donatist Church*. For charges that the Puritans were neo-Donatists see Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 4, 6.

⁵⁸⁸ For these numerical estimates, see Fawcett, *Liturgy of Comprehension*, 5. Duffy, incidentally, argued with good warrant that the ejection spelled the death of Nonconformity by the turn of the century. Duffy, “The Long Reformation,” 65.

⁵⁸⁹ Flavel was ordained as a Presbyterian at Salisbury on 17 Oct 1650. Quick, *Icones*, 923.

prior to this it is, of course, impossible to know what Flavel thought or taught about anything. However, when he began writing, he never suggested that he believed Christ's return was near. For example, writing in *Preparation for Sufferings* in 1665,⁵⁹⁰ he held out the hope that the very end of time was not yet upon the nation: "The light of Gods countenance shall not only be restored *Certainly*, but it shall be restored *Seasonably*; when the darkness is *greatest*, thy troubles at the *highest*."⁵⁹¹ Writing in 1665, Flavel clearly seemed to believe that God's judgment was not to be expected in the near future.

In a sermon he preached in the year 1670, he struck an optimistic note about the future: "Two things relieve me; one is, that future times may produce more humble, and hungry Christians, than this glutted age enjoys."⁵⁹² Implicit in expressing hope that future times would generate a better brand of Christian, he suggested there was a buoyant future for the nation. In another sermon within that same series, he spoke as if the cataclysmic final judgment was a distant event: "O Sirs, one of these days the Lord will break out of heaven, with a shout, accompanied with myriads of angels...The heavens and earth shall flame and melt before him."⁵⁹³ This event was to happen "one of these days", not necessarily "imminently". Whilst "one of these days" could have been in the near future, this is unlikely given that nowhere else in *Fountain* did he insinuate that world history was coming to a close.

In *Fountain* he also warned about the great sin of abusing ministers and ordinances, but did not yet extrapolate to warnings about the end of time. He wrote,

⁵⁹⁰ For a discussion of my claim that this work is to be dated 16 years prior to what has long been thought (from 1681 back to 1665), see the discussion in Appendix A of this thesis under the entry for Mall, *A Cloud of Witnesses*.

⁵⁹¹ Flavel, *Preparation*, 141.

⁵⁹² Flavel, *Fountain*, 30-1.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 365. Cf. Flavel, *Fear*, 75-6.

“Abuse not the *Ordinances* and Officers of Christ...For this the Lord hath a Controversie with the Nation, and by a sore Judgement he hath begun to rebuke this sin already. And I doubt before he make an end, plain truths will down with us; and we shall bless God for them.⁵⁹⁴ Flavel mentioned God’s rebuke as a judgment, but he did not suggest that this was the apocalyptic end of time. We have seen that Flavel did not warn his people that Christ’s return was near in the first decade of his writing career. However, events which transpired over the next decade began to shake Flavel’s confidence and caused him to think this fiery grand finale lay in the near future.

Flavel’s Middle Writings (1671-1680)

Roughly ten years after publishing *Fountain*, particularly in the sermon series *Method*, Flavel began to warm to the idea that something eschatologically significant was approaching. Flavel seemed to suggest the Lord was about to remove His ministers and ordinances, which constituted a first step toward final judgment: “those that were wise in heart could not but discern the distress of nations with great perplexity in these seeds of judgment and calamity...O take up your lodgings in the Attributes and Promises of God, before the night overtake you...when the Ministers and Ordinances of Christ have taken their leave of you, and bid you good night.”⁵⁹⁵ He clearly warned his hearers that God would remove the Christian Church’s leavening presence if a nation continued in its sins, as England had been doing. Again, in *Method* he wrote, “My Friends, let me speak as freely as I am sure I speak seasonably. A sound of judgement is in our ears...*All things round about us seem to posture themselves for trouble and distress. Where is the man of wisdom that doth not foresee a shower of wrath and indignation coming?*

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 307-8.

⁵⁹⁵ Flavel, *Method*, To the Reader, 16-17.

We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear and not of peace.”⁵⁹⁶ Clearly, by the early 1680s Flavel believed there was trouble ahead for the Dissenters and the nation. During these years, especially in the aftermath of the Popish Plot, Flavel gestured toward the rise of Roman Catholicism as a harbinger of doom. Giving his estimate of the state of Christendom, he wrote:

The far greater part [of Christendom] is overspread with popish darkness: separate from the remainder, the multitudes of prophane, merely civil and hypocritical professors of Religion; and how few will remain for Jesus Christ in this world?...How few have ever had any awakening convictions on them? And how many of those that have been convinced have miscarried and never come to the new birth?⁵⁹⁷

It is worth noting, incidentally, that Flavel expressed dismay that so many professing Christians were unconverted, neither doing the works of new creatures nor experiencing awakening convictions. Flavel’s apocalyptic beliefs pressed him to be urgent in his proselytism. Regarding Roman Catholicism, Flavel believed that Christ’s judgment was near, in part, because of the threat which King Charles II (and later James II) posed to the Protestant settlement in England.⁵⁹⁸ A concomitant to this reason is that some linked Roman Catholicism with the rise of ungodliness.⁵⁹⁹ In the 1680s Flavel thought that England’s best days were behind her. Flavel wrote this lugubrious note in *Method*:

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 16. Cf. Flavel, *Fear*, A5^r-A5^v.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 447.

⁵⁹⁸ For justification of this claim, see Parker, “Proselytism and Apocalypticism”.

⁵⁹⁹ Flavel explicitly linked the rise of ungodliness to the Roman Catholic Church: “For nothing in the world can reconcile men to *Popery*, yea, and even endear them to it, like Debauchery. Under *Popery*, *Gentlemen* may come up to the rates of costly Pardons and Indulgences, for their greatest Sins. They may give themselves liberty to wallow in prophaneness all the days of their life. They may give their lusts the utmost scope and liberty, and yet have a plenary Pardon when they die. So that they need not abridge themselves of any sinful liberty, or boggle at the loudest Blasphemy, whilst they have that in their Pocket to still and quiet something that grumbles in their Bosom. Do you not see, *Gentlemen*, the natural tendencies of these things? Does not Debauchery look like a Shooing-Horn to *Popery*.” Flavel, *Reasonableness*, 51-2. The same linkage is supplied by a broadside which suggested that Catholicism was more conducive to wanton living than Protestantism: “Your Majesty was pleased to wish, that all your subjects were of your own religion...But...we freely declare, that if ever we should be obliged to profess any

We of this nation have long enjoyed the light of the glorious Gospel among us: it hath shone in much clearness upon this sinful island for more than a whole century of happy years: but the longest day hath an end, and we have cause to fear our bright sun is going down upon us; for the shadows in England are grown greater than the substance, which is one sign of approaching night...Happy were it if in such a juncture as this, every man would make it his work and business to secure himself in Christ, from the storm of Gods indignation which is ready to fall upon these sinful Nations.⁶⁰⁰

In several other places in his writings he expressed these same concerns.⁶⁰¹ Although he certainly sounded pessimistic, Flavel was not yet prepared to say that the end had come. As we have seen, from the period between 1664 to 1680 Flavel began to fear God's judgment was about to smite the world, in large part because of the state of English society. By the time another decade passed, he was fully convinced that England's time had expired because of the weak religious state of the nation.

Flavel's Later Writings (1680-1691)

In the preface to *Englands Duty*, Flavel commented upon the verse in the Apostle Paul's first letter to Timothy, *In the last days perilous times shall come*.⁶⁰² Flavel then cited the fourth century Christian Lactantius⁶⁰³ to support his claim that the last days were at hand: "Of [such] perilous times, Lactantius writes thus; 'When the end of this world is approaching, the state of human affairs must needs be greatly changed, and grow worse, through the prevalency of wickedness...'" Flavel then followed this remark by saying, "What think you, reader, is not this a description of our own times...? That

religion, we would prefer the Church of *Rome*, which does not much trouble the world with the affairs of invisible beings, and is very Civil and Indulgent to the failings of humane nature...". Titled, *To the King's Most Excellent Majesty, the Humble Address of the Atheists, or the Sect of the Epicureans*, this was signed, "From the Devil-Tavern, the Fifth of November, 1688." The dating, the purported location, and the open avowal of Atheism certainly seem to suggest that this is Protestant black propaganda, but it does reinforce the idea that Roman Catholicism was perceived to be congenial to loose living. On the Devill Tavern being a regular meeting place for Tories, see Timmons, "From Persecution to Toleration," 483. See also Keeble, *The Restoration*, 63.

⁶⁰⁰ Flavel, *Method*, 14-5.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 563-4; *Preparation*, 18, 20, 32; *Righteous Man's Refuge*, 165, 166-8, 273, 275, K3^v-K4^r.

⁶⁰² 2 Timothy 3:1.

⁶⁰³ Lactantius (c. 240-320 AD) was an advisor to Constantine.

this hath been fulfilled in our late troubles, none surely can hesitate that hath any discernment.”⁶⁰⁴ This is an incredibly important statement and is the central quote which demonstrates that Flavel’s eschatological expectations significantly shifted by the year 1689. To sum up the salient points, Flavel cited Lactantius’ statement regarding the end of the world and he followed this up by commenting that only a person with no discernment could disagree that this was an accurate description of their own days. Flavel explicitly asserted that the end of the world was near in the late 1680s. To erase any doubt, Flavel made a similar statement later in the same preface to that work when he wrote, “It is very probable, that the day which all the prophets foretold, and all good men have, as it were, with outstretched neck, been eagerly looking for, is now at hand.”⁶⁰⁵ In its wider context, this was a reference to the return of Christ to the earth to both judge and bring an end to the world. Based on these statements, Flavel believed that the last judgment was at hand the year 1689. This represents a significant shift in his eschatological views over a 25-year period.⁶⁰⁶

However, Flavel did not take the Thessalonikian approach of quitting his job to wait for the return of Christ. Albeit he was convinced that the end of the age was upon

⁶⁰⁴ Flavel, A Letter, *Englands in Works 4* (1820), 8.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 15. A possible defeater for my maintaining that James II (and his Roman Catholicism) had anything to do with precipitating the return of Christ might be this: Flavel believed the end of time was near *after* the Protestant settlement was established in England. To respond, I would posit three reasons why Flavel could nevertheless partially lay the blame for the end of the world at the foot of Roman Catholics even with Protestants on the throne. First, William and Mary’s constitutional foundation was shaky. People knew that William’s claim to the throne was a non-starter. Parliament selected William, not hereditary succession. Second, James and his Jacobite supporters continued to pose a threat to the nation’s stability, even beyond his death. Cf. *A Letter Written by King James to His Holiness the Pope*, dated 26 November 1689, where James tried to get money directly from the Pope to support his invasion of England. Bromley, *Cambridge Modern History 6*, 250; Turner, *James II*, 474-5; Ogg, *England in the Reigns*, 471. Third, Flavel’s two major concerns for England were Catholicism and the overall state of moral decay into which the nation had fallen, not exclusively the Catholic threat. Flavel’s concerns were complex.

⁶⁰⁶ For other passages which intimate the brevity of time before judgment between the years 1689-91: cf. *Englands*, An Epistle to the Reader, A3^v, 13, 41-2; *Pisgah*, 321, 322-3, 328, 332; *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of John Upton* (1691, printed with *Balm*), 149.

them, he clung to a hope that England would be able to reform herself and delay the Lord's return. This was for several reasons. One hope that Flavel held onto in 1689 was that Protestants were on the throne, which might postpone God's judgment: "But God at length, pitying our distresses, hath raised up a man,⁶⁰⁷ both zealous for the truth, and a lover of godliness, boldly to assert his cause in the face of danger and toil, and to put a new face on things."⁶⁰⁸ A second hopeful sign which followed the coronation of William and Mary was that the English Parliament passed the Act of Toleration in May 1689, which granted religious liberty to Protestant Nonconformists. Although this act limited the freedoms Nonconformists enjoyed, this was certainly a cause for cautious optimism. Thus far we have seen that Flavel gradually came to maintain that the apocalyptic end was near, but how was the Roman Catholic faith connected with this concern?

Flavel preached a sermon titled *Mount Pisgah* two days after William and Mary took the crown as joint sovereigns over the kingdom. Utilising the "deliverance out of Egypt" motif, Flavel compared the blessings and mercies that the Children of Israel experienced when God brought them out of Egypt, to England's deliverance from the Popish threat which had just been accomplished through the abdication of James II and the coronation of William and Mary. In that sermon he wrote, "behold! another *eighty-eight* crowned and enriched with mercies, no less admirable and glorious than the

⁶⁰⁷ The marginal note at this point in the 1820 edition reads: "William III. Prince of Orange". Although this note was added later, the context makes it obvious that Flavel was alluding to his new king. This marginal note first appeared in the 1754 Glasgow edition of Flavel's *Works* 2, ii. This sixth edition of Flavel's *Works* also translated Flavel's introductory "Letter" from Latin into English for the first time, which translation appeared in the 1820 edition, as well as subsequent facsimile editions of that work in 1968, 1982, 1997, and 2005. The 1754 edition translation appears in some, but not all, subsequent editions. In several the Latin continued to be printed. Cf. 1762 Edinburgh edition (David Gray for J. Johnston).

⁶⁰⁸ Flavel, A Letter, *Englands* in *Works* (1820), 8. Timmons wrote, "He [Flavel] willingly acknowledged by February 1689 [new style dating] that William III's invasion had freed England from the threat of Roman Catholicism, just as the defeat of the Spanish Armada had a century before." Timmons, "From Persecution to Toleration," 485.

former.”⁶⁰⁹ This was an unambiguous reference to the year 1588 when the Elizabethan Protestant settlement was protected from the Roman Catholic Spanish Armada. Flavel clearly likened the two events and interpreted them as being deliverances from God. Later in the same sermon he wrote, “There have been plots upon plots to destroy the begun reformation. Rome and hell have consulted our destruction, as they did [the Reformation], but to no purpose.”⁶¹⁰ Later, Flavel went further in linking Roman Catholicism with God’s judgment:

God hath loosed the Yoke of Popery from our Necks, which neither we nor our Fathers could bear...If our God ha[s] been so good unto us...surely he expects that those who have found mercy, should be ready to shew mercy, else we must expect he will make good his threatening against us...and the Instruments and Executioners of his Judgments are not so far off, but he can quickly hiss for them again...⁶¹¹

The conclusion to which Flavel nudged his hearers was obvious. William and Mary were God’s instruments who rescued England from the yoke of Popery, thus averting the threatened apocalypse. Flavel wrote, “Praise thy God, O England! for setting thy crown this day upon the head of a Protestant Prince, who accounted not his treasures, or blood dear unto him, to redeem the interest of Christ out of the dangers that were ready to swallow it up.”⁶¹² He then challenged his hearers to pray thus for their country: “That God would cleanse and wash the crown of England, from all that guilt and pollution it has contracted under former governments, that the sins of the Crown may not descend with it.”⁶¹³ Flavel did not directly say that King James was Anti-Christ, but when one reads behind his statements about popery and Rome it seems clear that

⁶⁰⁹ Flavel, *Pisgah*, 2. On 13 Feb 1688 William and Mary accepted the crown; *Mt. Pisgah* was preached on 14 Feb 1688.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶¹² Flavel, *Coronation*, 4.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, 5.

this was what his people heard.⁶¹⁴ In *Mount Pisgah*, he made a hopeful remark about the return of Christ:

The Lord in this dispensation of his Providence will I hope so establish the just Liberties of his People, that it shall never be in the power of violent and wicked men to oppress them. There was a time when the Witnesses of Christ lay dead, and their Enemies rejoiced over them; the Lord hath begun to revive them, and the time (I trust), even the appointed time is at hand, when *they shall hear a great voice from heaven saying, Come up hither. And both England and France shall rejoice together in their Spiritual as well as Civil Liberties and Mercies.*⁶¹⁵

Although there was positive expectation, Flavel asserted that the only lasting peace would be after Christ returned and brought an end to time, that is, in heaven.

In light of Flavel's expectation that the apocalypse was near in 1689, Flavel urged his fellow ministers, whom he explicitly addressed in his preface to *Englands Duty*, to be about the work of evangelism above all else. He wrote, "Especially and above all, I humbly beseech you, that, having laid aside all designs of smaller importance, you would mind this one thing how you may gain to Christ the souls committed to you, to which all earthly things are to be postponed. This is the labour, this the work incumbent on us."⁶¹⁶ According to Flavel, the best and most important work they could be about was that of proselytising. In 1691 he again linked apocalyptic warnings with the necessity of evangelism: "These last times are certainly the most perillous times...and if we flatter not our selves, all things seem to be disposing themselves in the Course of Providence towards it. But Sir, if our Union with Christ be sure in it self, and sure to us

⁶¹⁴ It must be added that he, along with many Protestants who had endured Roman Catholic persecution since the early Reformation, did identify the Papacy with that Biblical figure: "Certainly *Rome* shall feel the dint and force of the many millions of prayers that are gone up to Heaven from the Saints for many generations: the cries of the blood of the Martyrs of Jesus, joyned with the cries of thousands of Believers, will bring down vengeance at last upon the Man of sin." *Method*, 317. Flavel also identified the Pope as "the Lawless One". Cf. *Catechism*, 104; *Tydings*, 20. "Nearly all Reformers regarded the Papacy as Antichrist." Kyle, *Awaiting the Millennium*, 61.

⁶¹⁵ Flavel, *Pisgah*, 10-1.

⁶¹⁶ Flavel, *Englands*, 13.

also; if Faith give us the daily visions and Praelibations of the World to come, what well composed Spectators shall we be of these Tragedies!”⁶¹⁷ If Flavel’s hearers (and especially ministers) neglected to bear fruit, judgment was in store. Flavel called this cutting the root of the tree: “The mercies and liberties of this day are a new trial obtained for us by our potentate Advocate in the heavens; if we bring forth fruit, well; if not, the ax lieth at the root of the tree. Let us not be secure.”⁶¹⁸

The last factor I must mention concerns Flavel’s willingness to venture guesses as to when Christ would return. Although in *The Righteous Man’s Refuge* he asserted that any attempts at this were guesswork, this did not stop him from having a crack at it: “Though National troubles must necessarily come, the wisest of men cannot positively determine the precise time of those judgments; we may indeed by the signs of the times discern their near approach; yet our judgment can be but probable and conjectural, seeing there are tacite conditions in the dreadfulest threatnings.”⁶¹⁹ This was as close as Flavel got to “calendarizing.”⁶²⁰ To use “1681 Flavel” to rescue “1689 Flavel,” we might say that his efforts at prognostication were a tactic to urge fellow Christians to take seriously their callings as Christians, no matter where events stood in relation to the apocalypse.

One criticism of Flavel which seems warranted would be the implicit nationalism in his claims about the end of the world. After all, it sounds a bit cheeky to think that because events are tumultuous in one’s own backyard, the entire human race is therefore in jeopardy. To be fair, some interpreters of the Puritans do not believe they

⁶¹⁷ Flavel, *Fear*, A5^r-A5^v. From the dedication to “the right worshipful Sir John Harton, Knight and Baronet”, A4.

⁶¹⁸ Flavel, *Englands*, 3-4.

⁶¹⁹ Flavel, *Righteous Man’s Refuge*, 149.

⁶²⁰ Kyle, *Awaiting the Millennium*, 57.

had intense apocalyptic concerns. Much as I value his overall take on the Puritans, I differ with Iain Murray on this point. In *The Puritan Hope*, which Crawford Gribben called the “classic account”⁶²¹ of Puritan eschatology, Murray wrote: “Christopher Hill in his *Puritanism and Revolution* published in 1958, gives the impression, as do other writers, that the Puritans far from being characterized by hope expected the imminent end of the world!”⁶²² Murray also stated that those books which dealt with prophecy were written by, “men of acrobatic imaginations or of half-crazy fanatics.”⁶²³ Some Puritans did appear to expect the end of the world, and Flavel proves an example of this. Apocalypticism was certainly not Flavel’s hobby horse, and he never devoted much energy to the topic, but eschatological concerns appear in a number of his writings.

Even with this said, Flavel stands liable to just criticism on at least two counts. First, as mentioned above, he had a very Anglo-centric view of the world. Second, in at least one clear case, he used unadvised language in addressing the Antichrist (whom his hearers understood to be embodied in the Roman Catholic Church). In *Husbandry*, he stated, “There is no truth of God recovered out of *Antichrists* hands, without great wrestlings, and much blood.”⁶²⁴ Whatever he intended by this, it would be easy to draw potentially violent implications, and as such, stands to be fairly rebuked.

Having extensively covered Flavel’s proselytistic methods and connected those with his morphing apocalyptic beliefs, the final section of this thesis shall turn in a fresh direction and address the ways in which later readers received his ideas.

⁶²¹ Gribben, “Evangelical Eschatology,” 377.

⁶²² Murray, *Puritan Hope*, xxiii.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

⁶²⁴ Flavel, *Husbandry*, 223.

Chapter 5

Flavel as a Transatlantic Bridge between Puritanism and the Eighteenth-century Awakenings

“New light! it may be new to such as never saw it before;
but it is what I saw fifty years ago, from good Mr. Flavel.”⁶²⁵

Accounts of people who were influenced by Flavel in the eighteenth century

Having argued for Flavel’s intricate understanding of the nature of Christian conversion as he attempted to proselytise his listeners and readers, and having proven that his eschatological understanding shifted through the course of his career, we turn in the direction of assessing the reception of Flavel’s ideas. This chapter shall argue that the theology of John Flavel, especially his theology of the nature of Christian conversion, had a significant Transatlantic impact. It served as a bridge between seventeenth-century British Puritanism and the revivals of the Great Awakening in England and America. Furthermore, Flavel’s understanding of how a person was converted, in its essentials, lived on into the eighteenth century and beyond. Flavel served as one, though certainly not the only, crossing point between these two movements. I shall argue that many people who lived during the eighteenth century revivals interpreted its theological features as nothing short of a renaissance of the theology of John Flavel. The use which Jonathan Edwards, and to a lesser extent George Whitefield, made of Flavel will then be examined. An analysis of Flavel in print will follow that which shall take the form of an evaluation of the copious reprintings of Flavel’s writings. Lastly, I shall present my findings from examining marginalia within 295 copies of Flavel’s writings printed

⁶²⁵ Philip, *Life of Whitefield*, 154.

between 1664 and 1799. Before we turn to these points, I shall briefly position this argument within a debate concerning the rise of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism.

In 1989 David Bebbington published a volume which has proven to be an extremely influential evaluation of the origins of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* was quickly termed a “classic” on the subject, and has supplied scholars with an enduring definition of the term Evangelical.⁶²⁶ Despite the book’s value in the field, it contains several claims which have, of late, been called into serious question. One recent publication which challenges various aspects of Bebbington’s argument is *The Emergence of Evangelicalism*.⁶²⁷ In that book, numerous British and American scholars contest Bebbington’s primary contentions. The central claim of Bebbington’s book, that “The Evangelical Revival represents a sharp discontinuity in the Protestant tradition,”⁶²⁸ is just such a point of debate. The current chapter on Flavel’s influence shall lend weight to those who have criticised Bebbington’s thesis. Proving that the seventeenth-century revivals were, in part, a renaissance of the theology of Flavel, shall serve to blunt the force of Bebbington’s argument.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁶ Larsen, “The Reception Given Evangelicalism,” 23. Bebbington defined the term through a quadrilateral consisting of the elements: Biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism, and activism. Furthermore, he claimed Evangelicalism was heavily indebted to the Enlightenment (and Romanticism and modernism as well) and that the Puritan quest for assurance was outmoded, given that Evangelicals held that this was to be expected at the time of conversion. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 2-3, 50-67, 42-50.

⁶²⁷ Haykin and Stewart, *Emergence of Evangelicalism*. See also Stewart, “Evangelicalism,” 135-53.

⁶²⁸ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 73. In a 1966 essay, Walsh argued that Evangelicalism was assisted by, though not the direct descendant of, Puritanism. He claimed that during the eighteenth-century revivals Puritan literature often “led a man already awakened to find peace of mind, or helped a man already converted to discover a satisfying theological basis for his spiritual life.” Although he delineated numerous similarities and differences between the two movements, he wrote, “Early evangelicals were conscious that they stood upon well trodden paths.” Walsh, “Origins of Evangelical Revival,” 159, 154. Bebbington’s *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* is an expansion and deepening of this idea.

⁶²⁹ It is significant that, predating Bebbington’s book, Wallace wrote this about the Puritan movement: “To recognize this seventeenth-century revival of spirituality belies that vision of church history that regards the evangelical revivals of the eighteenth century as a new departure after generations of religious

In the 1701 edition of his *Works*, Flavel's second biographer recorded a remarkable story about *A Saint Indeed* directly leading to the conversion of a belligerent gentleman:

Mr. Flavel being in London in 1673, his old bookseller, Mr. Boulter, gave him this following relation, viz. That sometime before, there came into his shop a sparkish gentleman to enquire for some play-books; Mr. Boulter told him he had none, but shew'd him Mr. Flavel's little treatise of *Keeping the Heart*, intreated him to read it, and assur'd him it would do him more good than play-books. The gentleman read the title, and glancing upon several pages here and there, broke out into these and such other expressions; What a damnable Phanatick was he, who made this book! Mr. Boulter begg'd of him to buy and read it, and told him he had no cause to censure it so bitterly; at last he bought it, but told him he would not read it: What will you do with it then? said Mr. Boulter. I will tear and burn it, said he, and send it to the Devil. Mr. Boulder told him then he should not have it: Upon this the gentleman promised to read it; and Mr. Boulter told him, if he dislik'd it upon reading, he would return him his money.

The account continued:

About a month after, the gentleman came to the shop again in a very modest habit, and with a serious countenance bespeaks Mr. Boulder thus: Sir, I most heartily thank you for putting this book into my hands; I bless God that mov'd you to do it, it hath saved my soul; blessed be God that ever I came into your shop; and then he bought a hundred more of those books of him, and told him he would give them to the poor who could not buy them, and so left him, praising and admiring the goodness of God. Thus it pleased God to bless the sermons, discourses and writings of Mr. Flavel.⁶³⁰

Andrew Cambers retold this story in recent *Godly Reading*, claiming that it was “a remarkable providential instance of a book effecting a conversion in ways only rarely found in the historical record”.⁶³¹ This is indeed a striking account of the way in which a man was directly converted by Flavel's writings between 1668 and 1673. However, as we

deadness. In fact, the evangelical revivals were continuations (and simplifications) of seventeenth-century developments in piety and spiritual life.” Wallace, *Spirituality of Later Puritans*, xii. In his most recent publication, Wallace continues to hold this position: *Shapers of English Calvinism*, 139. Cf. Cohen, *God's Caress*, 111-33.

⁶³⁰ Anon., “The Life of Mr. Flavel,” in Flavel, *Works 1* (1701), 7-8.

⁶³¹ Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 200-1.

turn to evidence from the next century, we shall see that this is a theme which frequently recurred.

The first biography of George Whitefield, written in support of the itinerant evangelist, was Robert Philip's *The Life and Times of George Whitefield*. Philip recorded the following interaction:

[Charles] Chauncy assailed the character and motives of Whitefield, and criticized the '*Narrative and Vindication of the Work of God*,' by Edwards. By his own confession, he travelled farther to collect the materials of his book against, what he called, 'the new light,' than [Gilbert] Tennent did to guard that light. The book itself was answered by various writers; but the best reproof it called forth, was administered by a venerable lady, who had been converted under the ministry of Flavel. 'New light!' she exclaimed; 'it may be new to such as never saw it before; but it is what I saw fifty years ago, from good Mr. Flavel.'⁶³²

It is striking that an elderly lady, whose life spanned late Stuart Puritanism and the Great Awakening, in the midst of the nascent controversy over the nature of the eighteenth-century revivals, identified the 'new' theology of the necessity of the rebirth as being nothing other than the theology of "good Mr. Flavel."

In the early 1740s, many people were awakened through reading Flavel's writings. Samuel Davies (1723-1761), the so-called 'Apostle of Virginia' and fourth president of Princeton University, wrote this of Flavel: "Before the Revival in 1743, there were a few who were awakened, as they have told me, either by serious Reflection, suggested and enforced by divine energy, or on reading some Authors of the last

⁶³² Philip, *Life of Whitefield*, 154. Unfortunately, Philip did not indicate the source of this quotation. Given that this woman claimed to be "converted under the ministry of Flavel," this would situate the statement sometime prior to the year 1741. Charles Chauncy (1705-87), Congregational minister of First Church, Boston, from 1727-87 was the arch-opponent of the Evangelical Revival. Cf. Jones, *Shattered Synthesis*, 92, 165-97. A biography of Chauncy which shows him to have desired both religious stability and rationalistic tendencies is Lippy, *Seasonable Revolutionary*. On the other hand, Gilbert Tennent (1703-64) was, along with Edwards, Whitefield, and John Wesley, recognized as being one of the key leaders of the Great Awakening.

Century, particularly Bolton, Baxter, Flavel, [and] Bunyan.”⁶³³ We have seen in the previous chapters that a person’s being awakened did not necessarily entail that he was converted. For Flavel, and for eighteenth-century supporters of the revival, these were separate things; but being awakened was necessarily the first step to being converted. Another link which connected people, not merely being awakened but being converted through Flavel’s writings, comes a few pages later in Davies’ *An Account of a Remarkable Work of Grace*. He wrote:

I might have given you a particular Account of the Conversion of some Persons here, as indeed there are some uncommon Instances of it, but I shall only observe in general, that abstracting from particular Circumstances, the Work of Conversion has been carried on in such Steps as are described by experimental Divines, as *Allein, Shepherd, Stoddard, Flavel, &c.* And nothing confirms me more in the Truth of their Opinions about experimental Piety, than the Agreement as to the Substance, in the Exercises of those that can make the fairest Claim to saving Grace.⁶³⁴

We should especially notice his claim that he was noting, not merely “uncommon Instances” of people being converted, but that the conversions were “carried on in such Steps as are described by experimental Divines” and included Flavel on that list. Here we have evidence which conjoined the effects of the eighteenth-century awakenings to the spiritual guide and advisor John Flavel. Flavel’s account of how a person was converted had an effect upon people at the time of the Great Awakening.

Along similar lines, the late eighteenth century Irish attorney William Haslett (1766-1821) testified to Flavel’s influence on the inhabitants of Virginia: “We have unquestionable authority for believing that the writings of the holy Flavel, have been

⁶³³ Davies, *Account of a Remarkable Work*, 1. This letter is dated “Hanover, June 28, 1751.” Cf. O’Brien, “Eighteenth Century Publishing Networks,” 44.

⁶³⁴ Davies, *Account of a Remarkable Work*, 9.

acknowledged by many of the pious settlers of Virginia and elsewhere, to have been the means of their awakening to a sense of the importance of religion.”⁶³⁵ Haslett’s conversion, incidentally, is a remarkable instance of someone who read Flavel and was delivered from the erroneous belief that a person must pass through every step of the conversion morphology on his way to being converted.⁶³⁶ Later in this chapter we shall go into greater depth as to exactly how Haslett was converted through the direct influence of Flavel.

Flavel was identified by some supporters of the revival as being instrumental to its perpetuation. In 1741 Mather Byles, a friend of the revival, reprinted an extract from *Englands Duty* in the hopes that it would add fuel to the work already begun. He wrote that Flavel’s writings “speak immediately to the Heart, and set the great Doctrines of the Gospel in the most affecting and engaging Lights, with great Clearness and Pathos of Stile and Language.” Byles added that it was fitting to print these sermons at such a time because they were originally preached by Flavel in “a Season something like this among ourselves, when there were mighty Impressions from God upon the Hearts of Multitudes.” He explained that, “In Hopes that the same Almighty Agent may accompany the reading of it in the like Manner, it is now again committed to the Press. It seems to be well timed, when such Numbers are awakened, to direct and encourage them in the Way to Salvation”. Significantly, Byles concluded the letter by writing, “GOD

⁶³⁵ Haslett, *Meditations*, 60. William Haslett emigrated to the Colonies as a young man and practiced law in Philadelphia his adult life.

⁶³⁶ Haslett described his conversion as a teenager and included this description of the unease which led to it because he had never experienced, “those preparative works of the spirit which usually introduce faith into the soul of God’s children, such as illumination, conviction, self despair, &c.” Haslett, *Meditations*, 8. He went on to describe reading Flavel’s writings and becoming overwhelmed with emotions. A short time after contemplating the Gospel which Flavel described, he wrote: “I saw Jesus every way suited to my wants, and found in him that rest to my weary soul which I had so long sought in vain elsewhere.” Haslett, *Meditations*, 15.

be blessed for the Resurrection of these Doctrines of Gospel Grace.”⁶³⁷ Again, we see that Flavel’s theology was recognized as being important to the furtherance of the eighteenth-century revivals.

Joseph Tracy, the nineteenth-century historian of the phenomenon and the one who, incidentally, coined the term Great Awakening,⁶³⁸ recorded that the driving reality behind the movement was a cluster of theological convictions which are familiar to students of seventeenth-century Puritanism.⁶³⁹ What was notable about the Great Awakening was the way in which the old Puritan theology, which lay dormant for nearly two generations in England, came home to people in a vivid and fresh way. Tracy recorded the meeting of 24 supporters of the revival who held a conference in summer 1745, wherein they declared:

We cannot but also observe that the principal means of the late revival were, the more than ordinary preaching up such Scripture and most important doctrines as these, namely: the nature and necessity of regeneration to the holy image of God by the supernatural operation of the divine Spirit; with the various parts of his office in enlightening our minds, awakening our consciences, wounding,

⁶³⁷ Byles, Preface to *An Extract from this work titled The Great Design of the Gospel Opened*, A3-A3^v. In the preface, Byles wrote: “As there appears to be a remarkable Effusion of the SPIRIT of GOD among us, so there is a peculiar Gust revived for those Doctrines which are the distinguishing Glories of Revelation...To fall in with this happy Turn, and promote these Interests of Religion, the following warm and lively Discourse of the excellent Mr. Flavel is here re-published. Nothing can now be added to the Reputation of an Author so long and justly admired in the Church of GOD.” Cf. Lambert, *Inventing*, 173.

⁶³⁸ Lambert, *Inventing*, 5.

⁶³⁹ Tracy’s work, *The Great Awakening*, has come under heavy criticism in the past several decades. Cf. Butler, “Enthusiasm described and decried,” 325; Lambert, “Whose Interpretive Fiction,” 659; and Lambert, *Inventing*. Whilst some of Tracy’s theological conclusions might be unpalatable to the modern historian, this work should not be rejected out of hand. Harry Stout, hardly an obsequious admirer of Whitefield or Tracy nevertheless granted that Tracy’s volume is “still unexcelled for its breadth of scope”. Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 288. In the first ten pages of this work, which was the first complete history of the Great Awakening, Tracy spelled out an impressive list of the primary historical sources which served as the basis of his chronicle of the event. Additionally, Tracy does not uncritically accept all that the “inventors” (to use Lambert’s phrase) of the event claim. Cf. Tracy, *Great Awakening*, 69-70, 84n, 88n, 111, 113, 145, 179, 226, 234, 333-4, 361, 393, 427. (N.B. Tracy’s warning of the dangers attending the revivals, 425ff.) In light of Thomas Kidd’s recent monograph on the subject, *The Great Awakening* (Yale University Press, 2007), Butler and Lambert’s desideratum that the very term “Great Awakening” be expunged from the historian’s vocabulary seems to be unrealistic.

breaking, humbling, subduing and changing our hearts...being the same which were so successfully preached by the first sound and pious fathers of New England, have been the principal means of the late revival.⁶⁴⁰

Tracy then proceeded to link the exposition of these particular truths to the doctrines of Puritans, including Flavel among that number. He also highlighted a grave concern that these men shared:

We are sorry to see, that under the name of New Light, many of the preachers of these most important truths...are by many run down and ridiculed; as those our pious forefathers were in their day, under the same or alike reproachful terms, by many on the other side of the water; and they who preach the same truths of the gospel and experimental piety as those great divines, Hooker, Cotton, Shepard, Goodwin, Owen, Flavel, the Mathers, Willard, Stoddard, are represented by some as New Light, Enthusiastical or Antinomian preachers; whereby the awful danger grows, of banishing even the faith of the glorious office of [the Holy Spirit] in the work of conviction, conversion, sanctification and comfort, first out of our pulpits, and then out of the land.⁶⁴¹

These pro-revivalists were concerned that anti-revivalists might hasten the Holy Spirit's departure from the land.⁶⁴² In short, we might say that in the various revivals of the Great Awakening, something, not unique, but fresh, was afoot. As an aside, it would be well to note at this point that, as with the above list, Flavel's name regularly appeared within a cluster of other Puritan writers. It would be overstating the case to argue that eighteenth-century Evangelicalism was a revival of nothing-but-Flavel. In some lists Flavel's name appeared first; in others it appeared amongst a litany of other writers;⁶⁴³ in still others, Flavel's name did not appear. The researcher must be careful to not

⁶⁴⁰ Tracy, *Great Awakening*, 400.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 400-1.

⁶⁴² Kidd's recent monograph on the Great Awakening describes three (as opposed to two) distinct groups during the revivals: anti-revivalists, moderate evangelicals, and radical evangelicals. Roughly congruous in the Interregnum would be the Anglicans, Presbyterians, and any number of the separatist groups (Quakers, Levellers, Fifth Monarchists, etc). Kidd, *Great Awakening*, xiv. Kidd's analysis of the movement primarily focuses on the differences between the moderate and radical evangelicals.

⁶⁴³ Cf. White, *Testimony*, 9; Dunton, *Dublin Scuffle*, 108-10; Chambers, *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, 454.

succumb to the propensity to deliberately exclude contrary evidence. This shall be elaborated upon in due course.

Isaac Watts was recognized as being an important eighteenth-century figure who sympathised with the revivals. Watts wrote to a friend, who was evidently being opposed in his support of the revivals, and stated this: “I think, Sir, you have very happily found out several things among the writings of our fathers, Mr Baxter, Flavel, &c., which may be very usefull in your day and circumstances. I hope it will not be in y^e power of all y^e evill agents, either in this or the infernal world, to stop the work of God.”⁶⁴⁴ Watts did not explain what it was in the writings of Flavel and Baxter that would assist him, but he made it clear that their writings would tend to push back against forces which were opposed to the work. It is significant that Watts recommended Flavel’s writings (which his friend had evidently already discovered), and that he interpreted their contents as those which would further “the work of God”.

At about the same time, even the urbane campus of Harvard College felt the impact of the Great Awakening as old Puritan tomes were being reissued in droves. Reilly and Hall note that this influence persisted until the American Revolution. They argued:

Elsewhere, too, this [religious] insurgency played itself out in patterns of reading, as it did even in the liberal confines of Harvard College, where a tutor observed in his diary, ‘There is a new face upon things. [Solomon] Stoddard and [Thomas] Shephard [sic] are the Books now.’ Suddenly, out-of-print sermons and long-lasting steady sellers by Nonconformists and seventeenth-century New England divines were being reissued in edition sizes that easily ran to 2,000 copies...Demand fell off somewhat after 1745, but the reading community that

⁶⁴⁴ Watts, *Proceedings of Massachusetts* 399-400. The letter is signed: “Newington, Nov^r 15, 1742”.

asserted its preferences so strongly in the 1740s remained a major presence up to the Revolution and beyond.⁶⁴⁵

George Whitefield corroborated this account of the change that took place at Harvard in those days. It is notable that the high church author John Tillotson (1630-94) was set aside in favour of Nonconformist writers, and Flavel in particular:

When Whitefield first visited [Harvard] college he was dismayed by the laxity he found: tutors did not pray with their pupils and their favorite theologian was Tillotson, whom Whitefield declared 'knew less of Christianity than Mohamet.'⁶⁴⁶ But after the religious awakening of 1740, it was said that only 'Voices of Prayer and Praise' were to be heard in students' rooms and Tillotson and Clark were cast aside for Flavel and the Mathers.⁶⁴⁷

Reilly and Hall also noted an account of a man who frenetically snapped up as much Evangelical literature as he could. In the process, he imbibed some of Flavel's writings: "Thanks to the diary of Nicholas Gilman, the Congregational minister in Durham, New Hampshire, we can see the evangelical reading community in action...In a single month (January 1740)... he noted reading two of Thomas Shepard's books and sermons by such English Nonconformists as John Flavel, James Jennings, and Matthew Henry."⁶⁴⁸ The proliferation of Flavel's writings testifies to his clout as a shaper of the eighteenth century revivals on both sides of the Atlantic.

We must not think that the only reason the Puritans continued to be read was because they were the only writings available. After categorizing the essential reading

⁶⁴⁵ Reilly and Hall, "Practices," 395.

⁶⁴⁶ Cf. Smyth, *A Curious Letter*, 6.

⁶⁴⁷ Miller, *Sam Adams*, 6. See also the letter Wigglesworth wrote to Whitefield, in which he claimed: "from the 28th Nov. 1732, to that very day (for almost nine years) *Tillotson* had not been so much as once taken out of the *Library* by any Undergraduate; nor any of Dr. *Clarke's* works for above two years: whereas *Owen, Baxter, Flavel, Bates, Howe, Doolittle, Willard, Watts,* and *Guyse* (who be sure most of them may be reckoned *Evangelical writers*, as well as *Shepherd* and *Stoddard*) have some or other of them been borrowed by *Undergraduates* during this whole time; and that they are scarcely ever in the *Library*." Wigglesworth, *Letter to Whitefield*, 30-1. See also: Peirce, *History of Harvard*, 147-8.

⁶⁴⁸ Reilly and Hall, "Practices," 395; O'Brian, "Eighteenth Century Publishing Networks," 38. Cf. Gaustad, *Great Awakening in New England*, 43.

material at the time of the revivals as being “works from the past in the Reformed and Puritan traditions, sermons and discursive writings generated as part of the current revival, and revival news,”⁶⁴⁹ Susan O’Brien described the ongoing interest in reading the Puritans in this way:

An early step for many ‘seekers’ and newly awakened was to familiarize themselves with the literature of the Reformed and Puritan traditions, or at least with works emphasizing personal experience and conversion...This is not to argue that pastors and people turned to this literature simply because there were insufficient alternatives. On the contrary, they continued to buy them in increased numbers, even when there were newer revival works available.⁶⁵⁰

O’Brien also included Flavel amongst what she described as a “shared pool” of influential authors who were reprinted: “Ordinary people as well as pastors confirmed that earlier piety suited their state of mind and met their emotional needs, and a number of titles were referred to so consistently by revivalists in Britain and America that they composed what might be called a common or shared pool of reading.”⁶⁵¹ Along with Flavel’s *A Saint Indeed* were included writings by Alleine, Baxter, Boston, Bunyan, Law, Scougal, and Shepard.⁶⁵² Whilst the eighteenth century was a currency-based economy, in some cases businesses were willing to barter for Puritan sermons and volumes: “In 1742 Boston bookseller and printer Daniel Henchman recorded that he paid a bill...by printing two thousand copies of Hooker’s *Doctrine of Christ*, and an equal number of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, while William Bradford of Philadelphia printed a thousand copies of a Flavel sermon for Samuel Hazard, a local

⁶⁴⁹ O’Brien, “Eighteenth Century Publishing Networks,” 43.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 43-4.

⁶⁵² Ibid., 44n32.

merchant.”⁶⁵³ Here we see the intrinsic worth of Flavel’s writings at the time of the Great Awakening.

As a final exemplum, let us hear the words of someone who bemoaned that Flavel’s importance in the 1830s was not what it was in former years. One writer in the nineteenth century lamented that whilst Flavel’s written expressions were formerly household words, they were now cast aside for tomes of lesser stature:

The time was, when the plainest Christian considered a few standard works on theology indispensable to the furnishing of his house...Nor did these works merely grace the sideboard...They were read, and understood. They showed by their soiled pages and turned down leaves, by the strings and slips of paper that were scattered through them and hung out from their ends, that they were read. But a few years since, and Newton’s works and the Saints' Rest, and the Rise and Progress of Religion, and Allein's Alarm, and Boston's Fourfold State, and some of the works of Flavel and of the Erskines, and Edwards on the Affections, were as familiar as household words. Plain Christians were heard quoting them on every occasion. But these are now laid aside to be eaten by moths, for light and flashy works on religious subjects, or for our yet more frothy and senseless Annuals.⁶⁵⁴

This is an interesting piece of evidence, suggesting the impact Flavel had on everyday parlance. With this being written in 1838, the halcyon days when Flavel’s writings were familiar to all was presumably closer to the turn of the century.

Flavel was not only influential within the bounds of England and New England; we can also see his impact in Britain, *extra* England. Flavel’s influence within the three kingdoms is justified, not only in Scotland, where a total of 56 editions appeared, but also in Wales and Ireland, where there were five and four editions printed,

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁵⁴ Woods and Pigeon, “Literary and Theological Review,” 99.

respectively.⁶⁵⁵ We shall first turn to two instances of Flavel's fingerprint within Wales during the time of the Evangelical revivals in 1741 and in 1760.⁶⁵⁶

First, Flavel's books were instrumental in the spiritual growth of people in Wales. Welsh historian Roger Brown wrote this about the conversion of a famous evangelical Methodist minister whose mind was changed to the Evangelical point of view through reading Flavel:

In around 1760, when Jones was curate of Llanfair Caereinion, Montgomeryshire, it was alleged by Edward Morgan that a great change took place in his life, 'the foundation of all the extraordinary exertions and labours' that followed, through his reading of the Puritan writer, John Flavel...It was probably this time that Jones's ministry changed direction from a conventional one into one full of evangelical fervor.⁶⁵⁷

Flavel was credited with being the instrument of a significant shift in this Welsh minister's outlook in a more evangelical direction.

Flavel's importance was also illustrated in a letter Edmund Jones sent the Welsh revivalist Howell Harris. In this letter, dated 7 August 1741, Jones requested that Harris make an effort to find Flavel's *Works*, so that he might give them out to younger ministers. Jones wrote this in his postscript: "If you can get Dr. Goodwin's works at second-hand, very cheap in London, as perhaps you may (else do not buy them), bring

⁶⁵⁵ See Appendix A of this thesis for details on the Scottish editions. Between 1776-1811 the following editions were printed in Wales: *Token for Mourners* (1776, 1780, extracts from Flavel, titled *Annogaethau Efangylaid* (1792), and *A Double Scheme* (1811). And between 1700-1820 in Ireland: *Remains* (1700), *A Saint Indeed* (1743, 1799), and *Works* (1820). Appendix A contains the details of all these editions. See also: *Proposals for printing the whole works of John Flavell*. Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, Andrew Bell, and Thomas Cockerill, 1700. This broadside, dated 1 May 1700 in Edinburgh, spoke of, "The great Demand for this Author's Works by Sober and Pious Persons of all Perswasions in these three Kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland".

⁶⁵⁶ It must be noted that in each of these instances, 1741 and 1760 being before Flavel's writings were first printed in Wales, the writings alluded to must have been printed outside of Wales (most likely in London). Very little was printed in Wales prior to 1776.

⁶⁵⁷ Brown, *Evangelicals in Wales*, 61. Brown wrote that, among the Welsh clergy, David Jones of Llangan was "the most famous of the Glamorgan Methodist clergy." Ibid.

them down with you, or a second-hand Flavel, and I will pay you for them, to dispose of them to young preachers.”⁶⁵⁸ Flavel’s writings were evidently regarded as being worthwhile (though admittedly, neither his nor Goodwin’s were worth full price!) by these leading Welsh revivalists, such that they desired that young preachers would be influenced by Flavel.

Second, Flavel also made his mark in Ireland. Kevin Herlihy recorded the following story about a wealthy Baptist named Mary Earwalker who lived in Kilkenny. To her great sadness, none of her nine children stayed in the Baptist faith, save one: Joseph. Mary seemed to have valued Flavel’s writings second only to the Bible. Herlihy wrote: “When Joseph came of age, had married and ‘kept a shop’, Mary still withheld her fortune from him because she wanted to make sure that he ‘retain’d his integrity’. When he left Kilkenny to take part in the Williamite War she gave him a ‘pocket bible’ and a Puritan devotional book written by the English Independent, John Flavel.”⁶⁵⁹ We are then told that Joseph did stay true to the faith for the rest of his days, becoming a leading supporter of the Baptists. In any event, it is worth noting that at one time in Ireland, Flavel’s writings were handed out in conjunction with the most important book of all, the Bible.⁶⁶⁰

Perhaps a more striking example of Flavel’s writings directly resulting in an Irishman’s conversion comes from the life of the barrister William Haslett, mentioned

⁶⁵⁸ Long and Moore, *Protestant Nonconformist Texts* 2, 240. The original letter is printed in Rees, *Nonconformity in Wales*, 339-42.

⁶⁵⁹ Herlihy, “Gay and Flattering World,” 60.

⁶⁶⁰ There is a nearly identical story found in *A Memoir of Mistress Anne Fowke*: “Giving books as gifts was not, of course the sole prerogative of the clergy...Pious Protestants often gave each other gifts of Bibles, for example...Rather more dramatically the eighteenth-century Baptist Anne Fowke recalled that when her father had gone to fight for the Williamite forces at Limerick her grandmother gave him a bible and a copy of John Flavel’s *Directions how to keep the heart*. When he returned the volumes were ‘not so nicely clean as not to discover that they had been made proper use of.’” Gillespie, *Devoted People*, 156.

above. Haslett, who was a later émigré to the United States, experienced a spiritual rebirth as a teenager in the early 1780s. Sensing a need for forgiveness from God, this was how Haslett described his own condition:

I tried every way in which I had heard others were converted, vainly thinking the Lord would meet with me in the same manner, but to no purpose...As I had been a communicant for some years, I found new difficulties arise in my mind on the approach of the sacrament...The Friday preceding the sacrament was appointed to be kept as a day of fasting and prayer, preparatory to the approaching solemnity.—The day came, but to me it was a stormy day—a day of darkness as darkness itself. I attempted to pray, but found my heart entirely shut up, so that I could find no relish for, nor comfort in any duty. The sources from whence I had formerly derived encouragement, seemed to be entirely shut up, and I seemed to be left without help and without hope.⁶⁶¹

As the time of his reported conversion drew closer, he recorded: “Thus I continued that day and night:—on Saturday morning I took up Mr. Flavel’s works, and in reading one of his sermons I found my mind uncommonly engaged, so that I was constrained to lay down the book and retire to my room,—I felt my heart sensibly touched, insomuch that I shed tears in abundance.”⁶⁶² His affections were clearly influenced and he also noted that his soul was filled with a powerful thirsting after Christ: “I had nothing uncommon presented to my imagination, neither had I any assurance that my sins were forgiven me, but I felt a sweet calmness of mind, and sensible thirsting of soul after Christ, to which I had ever before been a stranger.”⁶⁶³ This testimony not only defends the salvific impact Flavel’s writings had on him, it nicely comports with this thesis’ earlier assertion that one approach he utilised was to cause people to see Christ as desirable above all things. The biography’s editor, William’s daughter Anne, went on to state that because of Flavel’s influence on him, he prized his books above all others: “Much of his reading

⁶⁶¹ Haslett, *Meditations*, 14-15.

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

was of authors whose writings were of the most spiritual and searching kind. The pious Flavel was, perhaps, his favourite; and deservedly so, for he owed to him more than any other person, living or dead.”⁶⁶⁴ In another place Haslett expressed deep affection for Flavel. He called him: “That eminent servant of God and of the church, Mr. Flavel, whose writings are a legacy which will be prized as long as there is a believer upon earth to read them.”⁶⁶⁵ Having examined numerous accounts which recount the impact of Flavel on people’s conversions, we shall now turn to another factor which strongly supports the claim that Flavel served as an important bridge between Puritanism and the eighteenth century revivals – the impact that Flavel made on two of the Great Awakening’s most significant leaders: Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield.

Jonathan Edwards’ Use of Flavel

Jonathan Edwards frequently leaned on Flavel when it came time for him to defend the Great Awakening as being a true work of God, its radical excesses notwithstanding. In this section we shall go straight to the most important and significant use for which Edwards enlisted Flavel: the defense of Edwards’ justification of this religious phenomenon.

To get to the heart of Edwards’ most advanced treatment of the Great Awakening, we must bypass the inchoate analyses found in his earlier writings: *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighbouring Towns and Villages* (written in 1736, first published in 1737), *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741), and

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., 13-7. Haslett also called Flavel “That master in Israel”, 51.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., 104.

Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England (1742).

Whilst these early works contain valuable insights, Marsden rightly calls Edwards' later reevaluation a "deeply sobered assessment."⁶⁶⁶ It would be of lesser value to show how Edwards used Flavel in his immature writings on the Great Awakening, so we shall pass to Edwards' classic treatment of the subject.

Printed for the first time four years after these writings, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (Boston, 1746) was Edwards' most mature analysis of the phenomenon of the eighteenth-century religious revivals.⁶⁶⁷ Bumsted called *Religious Affections* "the classic analysis of the phenomenon of revivalism," and Perry Miller described it as, "his ultimate philosophy of the revival."⁶⁶⁸ On the dynamism of Edwards' thought, Miller identified this work as "The most profound exploration of the religious psychology in all American literature."⁶⁶⁹ The editors of *Religious Affections* wrote, "The *Affections* contains his most acute and detailed treatment of the central task of defining the soul's relation to God."⁶⁷⁰ Marsden, in his definitive biography of Edwards, called *Religious Affections* a careful exposition that "remains the most widely read and admired of his theological works."⁶⁷¹ Having established the importance of *Religious Affections*, we now turn to the ways in which Edwards distinguished between true and false manifestations of God which appeared in the Great Awakening and the ways in which he leaned on Flavel. First, what was Edwards' method?

⁶⁶⁶ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 285; Haykin, "Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment," 57.

⁶⁶⁷ Edwards, *Works 4*, 53.

⁶⁶⁸ Bumsted, *The Great Awakening*, 180.

⁶⁶⁹ Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 177.

⁶⁷⁰ Smith, "Introduction," in Edwards, *Works 2*, 1.

⁶⁷¹ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 285.

The editor of the critical edition of *Religious Affections* pointed out that Edwards reached back several generations in order to defend his ideas and that the significance these figures had on Edwards had not been appreciated: “No other work of Edwards’ is so heavily dotted with footnotes containing long extracts from the works of other theologians and divines...Edwards drew upon the works of sixteen other authors, mostly seventeenth-century English Puritans and dissenting clergy.” He continued:

The words of Shepard and Flavel, Preston and Perkins, stand as silent witnesses lending their own weight to the definition of Edwards’ final position on the topic of conversion. All writers cited, with the possible exception of Flavel and Jones, are well known to students of Puritanism. It seems likely, however, that their contribution to the formation of Edwards’ thought has been underestimated.⁶⁷²

This is an extremely significant remark. It is the intention of this section to spell out the nature of that substantial influence.

In this work, which he saw as an improvement on his earlier, more sanguine estimate of the event,⁶⁷³ Edwards leaned most heavily on his predecessor and grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, and two Stuart Puritans, Thomas Shepard and John Flavel.⁶⁷⁴ It is highly significant that in terms of sheer numbers of quotations, Edwards turned to Stoddard, Shepard, and Flavel more than anyone else in his most trenchant analysis of the Great Awakening when he addressed questions concerning what constituted true Christian conversion. Editor John Smith wrote, “The topic common to most passages cited is the nature of conversion, of sincerity, and of genuine piety. This

⁶⁷² Smith, “Introduction,” in Edwards, *Works* 2, 52. It is perplexing that the editor included Perkins in this list. Edwards cited Perkins only one time in *Affections*. Likewise, Jeremiah Jones (1693-1724) was cited once. Cf. pp. 157n, 335n.

⁶⁷³ Goen wrote that in Edwards’ earlier assessment, *A Surprising Work of God*, he breathlessly recounted stories of conversions with “wonder undiminished.” Edwards, *Works* 4, 21.

⁶⁷⁴ In the introduction to Edwards’ earlier writings, the editor pointed out that Edwards, “draws upon the authority of both Thomas Shepard and John Flavel to support his analysis in passages that he would later quote in *Religious Affections*.” Edwards, *Works* 25, 48.

was Edwards' central theme, and he chose his sources accordingly."⁶⁷⁵ Alluding to the fact of Flavel's popularity at the time, Smith also wrote, "The name of Flavel does not occur in historical studies of seventeenth-century Puritanism as often as it should, and he is less well known than some contemporaries who wrote less and whose works were less influential among the common people. Edwards was nevertheless familiar with many of his books."⁶⁷⁶ Having prepared the context, how did Edward go about arranging his argument in *Religious Affections*?

Affections is divided up into three parts. First, for 34 pages Edwards argued for the nature, legitimacy, and importance of affections in true religion (contra those like Chauncy, who thought they had no place in religion⁶⁷⁷). Next, for 66 pages he listed a dozen signs which did not prove a person was converted – false affections, we might call them. In the final section, in which Edwards wrote 270 pages, he elaborated on the 12 "truly gracious and holy affections" which tended to typify converted people. Coming from a psychological standpoint, Perry Miller described Edwards' method as that of a two-fold approach: "A classification of those psychological symptoms that are experimentally indifferent followed by those with intelligible meaning."⁶⁷⁸ Writing with slightly more nuance, Marsden explained it this way: "*Affections* was directed first of all

⁶⁷⁵ Smith, "Introduction," in Edwards, *Works* 2, 52.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 60n4.

⁶⁷⁷ E.g. "A Judgment has been too commonly formed of Men's *spiritual* Condition, more from their *Affections*, than the *permanent Temper* of their Minds discovered in the habitual *Conduct* of their Lives; not duly considering, how precarious that Religion must be, which has its *Rise* from the *Passions*, and not any *thorow [sic] Change* in the *Understanding* and *Will*." Chauncy, *Seasonable Thoughts*, 2-3. This is a straw man, as Edwards (and certainly not Flavel) would never posit true religion as being one exclusively, or even primarily, of the passions *sans* understanding. Chauncy had this as a key theme in this work; see also pp. xxiv, B1^r, 3, 111, 113, 159, 302, 324, 325n, 419, 422.

⁶⁷⁸ Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 180.

toward the misguided emphases of the extreme New Lights⁶⁷⁹ who had led many people into arrogant self-delusion...He reiterated the point here by expounding briefly on twelve signs (various displays of religious fervor) that were ‘No Certain Signs that Religious Affections Are Truly Gracious, or They Are Not.’” Lastly, Marsden brought out the important point that Edwards was not attempting to provide his readers with a definitive list whereby a person could tick off the boxes to determine whether one was deluded or warranted in his profession of Christianity. Rather, Edwards “took the greatest care to argue that such a project was impossible. Only God could judge the heart.”⁶⁸⁰ Thus, Edwards was just as concerned to expose those whose Christian profession relied on a false foundation as to encourage those whose profession was on a sturdy one. To sum up this section thus far, Edwards utilised Flavel (along with Stoddard and Shepard) more than anyone else when he was faced with the need to help people discern between true and false conversion. We have also briefly seen how Edwards went about his salvific project. We turn now to the diverse ways in which Edwards enlisted Flavel to argue his case.

In harmony with the format listed above, Edwards enumerated twelve signs which concerned the method of determining the validity of people’s supposed regenerate affections. In arguing for the signs which neither affirm nor deny that a person was converted, Edwards cited Flavel eight times; when he specified the signs which argued for a person’s sincerity, he cited Flavel four times. These citations form the substance of Edwards’ use of Flavel in *Religious Affections*. First, we turn to instances of the former variety.

⁶⁷⁹ The New Lights were those ministers and laypeople who believed that the Great Awakening was a genuine work of God. They were also known as “pro-revivalists”. Cf. Edwards, *Works* 4, 65, 75; Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 238, 275, 306-10, 379-85.

⁶⁸⁰ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 286.

Edwards marshaled Flavel to prove the following points, which I shall elaborate upon in due course:

- I. Hypocrites were more inclined to boast about their religious experiences;
- II. a person's extreme confidence that he was saved did not make him so;
- III. just because people gave accounts of their conversions that were persuasive to Christians did not mean that they were saved;
- IV. it was extremely difficult for the human eye to discern the difference between saving and natural effects of the spirit;
- V. people could have unprecedented impressions and conclude that they were from God when they were not;
- VI. a person could have exciting thoughts about spiritual things, yet remain unconverted;
- VII. the notion of the witness of the Spirit by immediate revelation was unreliable;
- VIII. people whose hearts were only briefly engaged with spiritual truths and quickly rushed back to worldly things proved themselves to be without true grace.

First, Edwards argued, "False affections, if they are equally strong, are much more forward to declare themselves, than true. Because 'tis the nature of false religion, to affect show and observation; as it was with the Pharisees."⁶⁸¹ At this point, Edwards quoted Flavel's *Touchstone of Sincerity*:

⁶⁸¹ Edwards, *Works 2*, 137n. Quoting, Flavel, *Sincerity*, 21. Cf. Edwards, *Works 25*, 55. The quote below comes from the section which argued: "'Tis no sign that affections are truly gracious, or that they are not, that they cause those who have them, to be fluent, fervent and abundant, in talking of the things of religion." Edwards, *Works 2*, 135. As a relevant aside, at this point it should be noted that Smith's judgment was true when he wrote, "Edwards' citations give no clue to the editions he used." Smith, "Introduction," in Edwards, *Works 2*, 61. Although Edwards excluded this information, after comparing his quotations of Flavel with Flavel's writings, I can confirm that they are highly accurate.

And holy Mr. Flavel says thus: ‘O reader, if thy heart were right with God, and thou didst not cheat thyself with a vain profession, thou wouldst have frequent business with God, which thou wouldst be loth thy dearest friend, or the wife of thy bosom should be privy to. *Non est religio, ubi omnia patent*. Religion doth not lie open to all, to the eyes of men. Observed duties maintain our credit; but secret duties maintain our life...There are inclosed pleasures in religion, which none but renewed spiritual souls do feelingly understand.’ Flavel’s *Touchstone of Sincerity*.⁶⁸²

Edwards appealed to Flavel in an effort to prove that true religious affections were less likely to be expressed than those which were spurious. Both Edwards and Flavel agreed that there would be a reticence in true saints, rather than brash boasting about the wonderful things God had done in their lives.

Second, Edwards used Flavel to address the idea that just because people were extremely confident that they were saved did not make them so. Edwards wrote, “It is no sufficient reason to determine that men are saints, and their affections gracious, because the affections they have are attended with an exceeding confidence that their state is good, and their affections divine. Nothing can be certainly argued from their confidence, how great and strong soever it seems to be.”⁶⁸³

Here, Edwards cited Flavel’s *Touchstone of Sincerity*:

O professor, look carefully to your foundation: be not high minded, but fear. You have, it may be, done and suffered many things in and for religion; you have excellent gifts and sweet comforts; a warm zeal for God, and high confidence of your integrity: all this may be right, for aught that I, or (it may be) you know: but yet, it is possible it may be false also. You have sometimes judged yourselves, and pronounced yourselves upright; but remember your final sentence is not yet pronounced by your Judge...Thy heart may be false, and thou not know it: yea, it

⁶⁸² N.B. Because of spatial limitations, I have truncated most of these citations, preserving only the key idea for which Edwards used Flavel.

⁶⁸³ Edwards, *Works 2*, 170.

may be false, and thou strongly confident of its integrity.’ Flavel, *Touchstone of Sincerity*.⁶⁸⁴

Later in the same paragraph, Edwards again cited *Touchstone* to prove the same point:

“If we see a man that boldly calls God his Father, and commonly speaks in the most bold, familiar, and appropriating language in prayer...such things are no signs at all that it is indeed so as he is confident it is. Such an overbearing, high-handed and violent sort of confidence as this...has not the countenance of a true Christian assurance.”⁶⁸⁵ At this point, Edwards cited *Husbandry*: “Lo, what strong confidence, and high-built persuasions of an interest in God, have sometimes been found in unsanctified ones. Yea, so strong may this false assurance be, that they dare boldly venture to go to the judgment seat of God, and there defend it.’ John Flavel, *Husbandry Spiritualized*.”⁶⁸⁶ Edwards and Flavel were concerned that people not maintain that their persuasion of their good state was, per se, sufficient reason for thinking they were correct.

Third, Edwards looked to Flavel to argue that just because a person gave an account of his conversion which was very pleasing and powerfully persuasive to Christians, this did not mean that he was saved. Edwards wrote:

Nothing can be certainly concluded concerning the nature of religious affections, that...the relation persons give of them, are very affecting and pleasing to the truly godly, and such as greatly gain their charity, and win their hearts. The true saints have not such a spirit of discerning that they can certainly determine who are godly, and who are not.⁶⁸⁷

The footnote on this point read, “O how hard it is for the eye of man to discern betwixt chaff and wheat! And how many upright hearts are now censured, whom God will

⁶⁸⁴ Quoting Flavel, *Sincerity*, 34-5.

⁶⁸⁵ Edwards, *Works 2*, 170.

⁶⁸⁶ Quoting Flavel, *Husbandry*, 110.

⁶⁸⁷ Edwards, *Works 2*, 181-2.

clear!... Men ordinarily have no convictive proofs, but only probable symptoms; which at most beget but a conjectural knowledge of another's state...' Flavel, *Husbandry Spiritualized*.⁶⁸⁸ Edwards then continued, "But yet the best of men may be deceived, when the appearances seem to them exceedingly bright and fair, even so as entirely to gain their charity, and conquer their hearts. It has been a common thing in the church of God, for such bright professors, that are received as eminent saints, among the saints, to fall away and come to nothing."⁶⁸⁹ Another citation of Flavel followed: "The saints may approve thee, and God condemn thee; men may say, there is a true Nathanael; and God may say, there is a self-cozening Pharisee. Reader, thou hast heard of Judas, and Demas, of Ananias and Sapphira...once renowned and famous professors, and thou hast heard how they proved at last.' Flavel, *Touchstone*."⁶⁹⁰ Although separated by two generations and an ocean, Edwards and Flavel cautioned their readers that Christians must be slow to definitively judge the state of another person's soul, as attractive as his testimony may sound.

Fourth, Edwards noted that it was extremely difficult for the human eye to discern the difference between saving and natural effects of the Spirit in a person's life. Edwards wrote: "In the parable of the wheat and tares, it is said, 'When the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also' (Matt. 13:26). As though the tares were not discerned, nor distinguishable from the wheat, till then, as Mr. Flavel observes..."⁶⁹¹ Edwards continued:

⁶⁸⁸ Citing Flavel, *Husbandry*, 111.

⁶⁸⁹ Edwards, *Works 2*, 182.

⁶⁹⁰ Flavel, *Touchstone*, 35.

⁶⁹¹ The footnote on this point reads: "Flavel, *Husbandry*, 109. Also *The Whole Works of Mr. John Flavel*, 2, 652."

Till the blade of the wheat comes to bring forth the ear, that 'tis next to impossible to distinguish them. And then, Mr. Flavel adds: 'How difficult soever it be to discern the difference between wheat and tares; yet doubtless the eye of sense can much easier discriminate them, than the most quick and piercing eye of man, can discern the difference between special and common grace. For all saving graces in the saints, have their counterfeits in hypocrites; there are similar works in those, which a spiritual and very judicious eye may easily mistake, for the saving and genuine effects of a sanctifying spirit.⁶⁹²

This is a key point, and it ties in with the second chapter of this thesis, which dealt with Flavel's distinction between people who experienced common versus saving effects of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹³ Flavel and Edwards agreed that the eye of God alone was sufficient to pronounce final judgment on the state of a person's heart.

Fifth, Edwards maintained that people could have mental impressions they never experienced before and conclude they were from God when they were not. Edwards thought this to be one reason why many people ran in fanatical directions in the 1740s. He wrote:

A natural man is capable of having an idea, and a lively idea of shapes and colors and sounds when they are absent, and as capable as a regenerate man is: so there is nothing supernatural in them. And 'tis known by abundant experience, that 'tis not the advancing or perfecting humane nature, which makes persons more capable of having such lively and strong imaginary ideas, but that on the contrary, the weakness of body and mind, and distempers of body, make persons abundantly more susceptible of such impressions.⁶⁹⁴

Edwards defended his point by citing Flavel's *Preparation for Sufferings*:

Conceits and whimsies abound most in men of weak reason; children, and such as are cracked in their understanding have most of them; strength of reason banishes them, as the sun does mists and vapors. But now the more rational any gracious person is, by so much more is he fixed and settled and satisfied in the grounds of religion: yea, there is the highest and purest reason in religion; and

⁶⁹² Edwards, *Works 2*, 185-6. Citing Flavel, *Husbandry*, 109.

⁶⁹³ See chapter titled "Two Levels of Effectuality," 108-38.

⁶⁹⁴ Edwards, *Works 2*, 213.

when this change is wrought upon men, it is carried on in a rational way. Is. 1:18, John 19:9.' Flavel, *Preparation[s] for Sufferings*.⁶⁹⁵

By citing this statement Edwards appeared to affirm that which was previously stated in this thesis, namely, that the process of conversion always proceeded in a way which accorded with sound reason, rather than opposed it.

Sixth, Edwards averred that simply because a person had exciting thoughts about spiritual things did not mean grace was really in his soul. The list which Edwards spelled out is surprising in that it contained themes which one would think would assure a person of his salvation. He wrote: "And as these external ideas ["of God, or Christ, or heaven, or anything appertaining to religion"⁶⁹⁶] have nothing divine or spiritual in their nature, and nothing but what natural men, without any new principles, are capable of; so there is nothing in their nature which requires that peculiar...unparalleled exercise of the glorious power of God." Edwards continued:

'Tis certainly not above the power of Satan to suggest thoughts to men...And if he can suggest any thoughts or ideas at all, doubtless imaginary ones, or ideas of things external are not above his power; for the external ideas men have are the lowest sort of ideas. These ideas may be raised only by impressions made on the body, by moving the animal spirits, and impressing the brain.⁶⁹⁷

In supporting this point Edwards turned again to Flavel, this time to his treatise *Mental Errors*: "Consider how difficult, yea and impossible it is to determine that such a voice, vision or revelation is of God, and that Satan cannot feign or counterfeit it; seeing he hath left no certain marks by which we may distinguish one spirit from another."⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁵ Quoting Flavel, *Preparation*, 51.

⁶⁹⁶ Cf. Edwards, *Works 2*, 210.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 215-6.

⁶⁹⁸ Citing Flavel, *Planelogia*, 144.

Again, both of these men believed that Satan could suggest seemingly gracious thoughts to a person, thus deluding him into thinking that he was in good standing with God.

Seventh, Edwards argued that the witness of the Spirit by immediate revelation was not to be absolutely relied upon. It must be noted that, by this point in *Religious Affections*, Edwards had begun to delve into the final section of the work which concerned the twelve “truly gracious and holy affections” which tended to mark converted people. Whilst on the one hand he affirmed that an important feature of the converted person’s life was that he could bear witness to the presence of the indwelling Spirit, he also conveyed that this must not be absolutely relied upon. Edwards would say that whilst a person’s having no acquaintance with that which he believed to be the Spirit proved that he was unregenerate,⁶⁹⁹ having a strong encounter with that which he believed to be the Spirit did not mean that he was converted.⁷⁰⁰ Sometimes people were deceived. Edwards wrote: “When God sets his seal on a man’s heart by his Spirit, there is some holy stamp, some image impressed and left upon the heart by the Spirit, as by the seal upon the wax. And this holy stamp, or impressed image, exhibiting clear evidence to the conscience, that the subject of it is the child of God...This the devil cannot imitate.” Edwards then wrote, “as to an inward suggestion of the Spirit of God, by a kind of secret voice speaking, and immediately asserting and revealing a fact, he can do that which is a thousand times so like to this, as he can to that holy and divine effect, or work of the Spirit of God, which has been now spoken of.”⁷⁰¹ At this point, Edwards cited four sections from *Sacramental Meditations* in an extended 420-word passage. The sum of

⁶⁹⁹ “Affections that are truly spiritual and gracious, do arise from those influences and operations on the heart, which are *spiritual, supernatural* and *divine*.” Edwards, *Works 2*, 197.

⁷⁰⁰ Edwards was especially opposing those who claimed to have heard a voice which affirmed their status as a child of God. Edwards called this an “inward immediate suggestion”. Ibid, 231.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., 233.

these are that: (1) “he doth not make use of an audible voice, nor the ministry of angels, nor immediate and extraordinary revelations; but he makes use of his own graces, implanted in our hearts, and his own promises, written in the Scripture...”; (2) “Assurance is produced in our souls by the reflexive acts of faith...”; (3) “No man may now expect, by any new revelation, or sign from heaven, by any voice, or extraordinary inspiration, to have his salvation sealed; but must expect that mercy in God’s ordinary way and method, searching the Scriptures, examining our own hearts, and waiting on the Lord in prayer”; (4) “This method of sealing, is beyond, all other methods in the world. For in miraculous voices and inspirations, it is possible there may...be found some cheat, or impostures of the devil: but the Spirit’s witness in the heart, suitable to the revelation in the Scripture, cannot deceive us.”⁷⁰² Edwards was eager to drive this point home because it was precisely the people who claimed to have direct revelations from God whose fanaticism contributed to the Great Awakening grinding to a halt.

Finally, Edwards argued that if people who claimed to be Christians maintained an interest in the things of God only in short bursts and then quickly returned to worldly things, they likely proved themselves to be hypocrites. He wrote that it was no sign of grace if someone, “appear[s] greatly moved, and mightily engaged in religion, only in extraordinary seasons, in the time of a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit...but quickly return to such a frame, that their hearts are chiefly upon other things, and the prevailing bent of their hearts and stream of their affections is ordinarily towards the things of this world.”⁷⁰³ Edwards then proceeded to cite *Touchstone of Sincerity* to drive home his point: “Mr. Flavel, speaking of these changeable professors, says, “These professors have

⁷⁰² Ibid., 233-5n. Quoting Flavel, *Sacramental*, 74.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 372.

more of the moon than of the sun; little light, less heat, and many changes. They deceive many, yea, they deceive themselves, but cannot deceive God. They want that ballast and establishment in themselves, that would have kept them tight and steady.”⁷⁰⁴ In each of these eight ways, Edwards appealed to Flavel to convince his readers that there were numerous grounds for being wary of thinking that they were Christians.

On the other hand, Edwards enlisted Flavel to argue for several positive signs for which people could be being assured that they had been converted.

- I. Beautiful symmetry and proportions in a testimony suggested that one had experienced grace;
- II. it was vital for a person to have consistent affections for God no matter their temporal or spatial location;
- III. gracious sorrow tended to be more concealed, whereas hypocrites liked to tout and display false affections;
- IV. God tested his children through trials to determine whether they really love Him or not.

It is to these encouragements that we now turn.

In four ways, Edwards harnessed Flavel in an effort to show that people could enjoy positive assurance that they were saved. First, Edwards argued that “beautiful symmetry and proportion” in one’s experiences was one sign that a work was a true work of grace. Speaking of the balanced experiences which true Christians should possess, he wrote, “An holy hope and holy fear go together in the saints...But in some of these is the most confident hope, while they are void of reverence, self-jealousy and

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., 373n. Quoting Flavel, *Touchstone*, 18-19.

caution, and to a great degree cast off fear.” He continued, “In the saints, joy and holy fear go together, though the joy be never so great; as it was with the disciples, in that joyful morning of Christ's resurrection, ‘And they departed quickly from the sepulcher, with fear and great joy’. But many of these rejoice without trembling: their joy is of that sort, that it is truly opposite to godly fear.”⁷⁰⁵ At this point Edwards cited *Sacramental Meditations*: “Renewed care and diligence follows the sealings of the Spirit. Now is the soul at the foot of Christ, as Mary was at the sepulcher, with fear and great joy. He that travels the road with a rich treasure about him, is afraid of a thief in every bush.”⁷⁰⁶ For Edwards and Flavel, balance, symmetry, and due proportion were all to be valued in the life of the true Christian. Not only were proper proportions as to intensity of religious experience to be sought, so also was consistency of affection toward God with respect to time and place, Edwards’ next usage of Flavel.

Second, Edwards also wrote of the importance of a person’s having consistent affections for God no matter his temporal or spatial location. He expressed concern about a person who, at times, did not care about God. He wrote:

And as there is a strange unevenness and disproportion in false affections, at different times; so there often is in different places. Some are greatly affected from time to time, when in company; but have nothing that bears any manner of proportion to it, in secret, in close meditation, secret prayer, and conversing with God, when alone, and separated from all the world.⁷⁰⁷

Again, he appealed to Flavel at this point, citing *Touchstone*: “The hypocrite says Mr. Flavel, is not for the closet, but the synagogue; Matt. 6:5-6: ’Tis not his meat and drink

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., 366.

⁷⁰⁶ Flavel, *Sacramental*, 77.

⁷⁰⁷ Edwards, *Works 2*, 374.

to retire from the clamor of the world, to enjoy God in secret.”⁷⁰⁸ They both expressed concern for the person whose love for God varied widely according to seasons of life, as they stressed the importance of his love for God being consistent no matter where he found himself geographically.

Third, in terms of emotional expression, Edwards also stressed the idea that gracious sorrow tended to be more concealed, whereas hypocrites liked to tout and display false affections. Edwards claimed, “’Tis difficult to conceal great affections, but yet gracious affections are of a much more silent and secret nature, than those that are counterfeit. So it is with the gracious sorrow of the saints. So it is with their sorrow for their own sins.”⁷⁰⁹ Picking up on this idea in Flavel’s *Touchstone*, Edwards transcribed the following quotation: “Mr. Flavel, in reckoning up those things, wherein the sorrow of saints is distinguished from the sorrow of hypocrites, about their sins, says, ‘Their troubles for sin are more private and silent troubles than others are; their sore runs in the night.’”⁷¹⁰ Similar to the first point mentioned, that hypocrites were more inclined to boast about their religious experiences, in the true Christian there should be a reluctance to make gracious sorrow known to all.

Lastly, Edwards argued that God tested his children through trials to determine whether they really love Him or not. Once again, he utilised Flavel’s writings to support this idea. He wrote:

These trials of [God’s] are not for his information, but for ours...If we have a mind to know whether a building stands strong or no, we must look upon it when the wind blows. If we would know whether that which appears in the form of wheat, has the real substance of wheat, or be only chaff, we must observe it when it is winnowed. If we would know whether a staff be strong, or a rotten broken reed,

⁷⁰⁸ Citing Flavel, *Touchstone*, 148.

⁷⁰⁹ Edwards, *Works 2*, 375n.

⁷¹⁰ Flavel, *Touchstone*, 123-4.

we must observe it when it is leaned on, when weight is borne upon it. If we would weigh ourselves justly, we must weigh ourselves in God's scales, that he makes use of to weigh us.⁷¹¹

Here Edwards cited *Touchstone* four times in an extended, 500-word footnote. Again, I shall reproduce only the salient points. Edwards cited those places where Flavel wrote about: (1) the necessity of a person's faith being tested and proven through trials: "No man, can say...whether his graces be true or false, until they be tried, and examined by those things, which are to them as fire is to gold."⁷¹²; (2) those Christians who must part with those things which were dearest to them: "[that] such sufferings as these will discover the falseness and rottenness of men's hearts, cannot be doubted; if you consider, that this is the fire designed by God for this very use and purpose, to separate the gold from the dross...The very design and aim of Providence in permitting and ordering them, is to try you."⁷¹³ Edwards continued citing Flavel when he wrote, "A dog follows two men, while they both walk one way, and you know not which of the two is his master: stay but a little, until their path parts, and then you shall quickly see who is his master: so it is in this case."⁷¹⁴; (3) the importance of one's grace being tried: "Great numbers of persons are deceived and destroyed by trusting to seeming untried grace...If a man's whole estate lay in some precious stone, suppose a rich diamond, how is he concerned to have it thoroughly tried, to see whether it will bear a smart stroke with the hammer, or fly like a Bristol diamond!"⁷¹⁵ and lastly; (4) only those whose faith is proven to be real could have assurance: "The promises of salvation are made over to tried grace,

⁷¹¹ Edwards, *Works 2*, 433.

⁷¹² Flavel, *Touchstone*, 62.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

and that only as will endure the trial.”⁷¹⁶ In all of the above ways, both positively and negatively, Jonathan Edwards looked to Flavel to support his defense of the Great Awakening. Even though many people possessed unfounded confidence, there was still sufficient reason to think that it was a true work of God.

Outside of his purposes within *Affections*, in numerous other ways Edwards was impacted by Flavel’s writings: Edwards read Flavel’s *Englands Duty* at the age of 13;⁷¹⁷ in order to combat what he saw as excessive latitude in his grandfather’s theology, Edwards recommended Flavel’s *Gospel Unity* to others;⁷¹⁸ the editors of Volume 14 of Edwards’ *Works* point out the significance of Flavel’s “spiritualizing” method on Edwards, a method which soon saw many imitators;⁷¹⁹ Edwards recounted Flavel’s “Day in Heaven” experience, giving it express approbation;⁷²⁰ finally, the editors rightly point

⁷¹⁶ Edwards, *Works* 2, 433n5. Quoting Flavel, *Touchstone*, 202.

⁷¹⁷ “March 29. 1716. Brother: Williams of Hatfield Lent me Mr Flavels Book on Rev: 3.20. with the Life of Mr Philip Henry.” The editor of this volume incorrectly identified this work as *Touchstone of Sincerity*. Edwards, *Works* 26, 410. When Edwards first perused the shelves of the Yale library as a student, he jotted down titles of books he wanted to read. Among these were: “works by such Calvinists (or honorary Calvinists) as Elisha Coles (no. 12), John Flavel (nos. 13, 57-59)...” Edwards, *Works* 26, 18-19.

⁷¹⁸ “And now to pass over to England, neither do I find reason to think the Dissenters there in general are for Mr. Stoddard’s latitude...” He proceeded to recommend, “Mr. Flavel, in his sermon on gospel unity, and other pieces.” Edwards, *Works* 12, 333-4. This appears in an Appendix to the work, *An Humble Enquiry*. Footnote reads: “John Flavel, *Gospel Unity Recommended to the Churches of Christ*, in *The Whole Works of the Reverend John Flavel* (2 vols., London, 1716), I, 679-84.”

⁷¹⁹ “In the manner of John Flavel, Richard Steele, and Cotton Mather, Edwards spiritualizes reality as he tries to show how meaning can be drawn from ‘the book of nature’ as well as ‘the book of grace.’” The footnote at this point reads: “John Flavel, a favorite writer of the New England Puritans, was the chief practitioner of a literary technique, falling between figural and allegorical typology, that made ‘heavenly use of earthly things’...” He went on to point out the imitators: *The Tradesman’s Calling* (London, 1684), *The Husbandman’s calling* (London, 1688); and Mather, “New England’s foremost exponent of this method” wrote *Winter meditation* (Boston, 1693); *Christianus Per Ignem* (Boston, 1702); and *Agricola* (Boston, 1727).” Edwards, *Works* 14, 472; Edwards, *Works* 10, 194. Wallace called Flavel, “The master at the art of spiritualizing.” Wallace, *Spirituality*, xxx. McDermott even claimed that Flavel’s views of the millennium marginally influenced Edwards. Cf. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy*, 49n46.

⁷²⁰ Edwards, *Works* 4, 311-2. Edwards was at loggerheads with his chief antagonist, Charles Chauncy, on the question of the veridicality of such an experience. Goen wrote, “John Flavel was an English Presbyterian whose writings had long been a staple of New England devotional literature. The quoted passage is from *Pneumatologia*...Edwards surmised that the account was autobiographical in the same way that II Cor. 12:2-4 is often assumed to be, while Chauncy commented with customary testiness that ‘good men may differ in their sentiments as to the cause of such effects; and if any should think they are not to be wholly ascribed to a divine influence, I would not be too preemptory in saying, their judgment

out that, despite his weighty influence on him, Edwards did not sycophantically follow Flavel.⁷²¹

Before we proceed to investigate the impact that Flavel had on Whitefield, a key question remains. With all of the above noted, what was the link between Flavel's highly sophisticated *ordo salutis* and Jonathan Edwards' utilisation of Flavel to help people decipher whether they were true Christians or hypocrites? After all, in *Religious Affections* Edwards did not lay out the steps to salvation in exactly the same way Flavel did. Edwards seemed, rather, to offer a diverse list of reasons why one should either be slow or quick to think he had true grace. How do these seemingly disparate ends connect? I would argue that Edwards used Flavel at exactly the place where Flavel would have wanted to be used. In light of the movement of thought in this thesis, it has been argued that although Flavel possessed an intricate, elaborate proselytisation schema (chapters 1 and 2), his concern was that, week in and week out, his congregants and readers would *cognitively feel* themselves drawn to put their faith in Jesus (chapter 3). In the same way, and in a way Flavel would have applauded, Edwards cited Flavel to express his concern that his congregants and readers would disabuse themselves of false

was not according to truth' (*Seasonable Thoughts*, 92)." Using Flavel's account to provisionally justify the legitimacy of such occurrences, in the next sentence, Edwards continued: "There have been instances before now, of persons crying out in transports of divine joy in New England..." Edwards, *Works 4*, 311-2n5.

⁷²¹ "In a related vein were the 'spiritualizers' to whom Edwards referred and whose works were popular in early eighteenth-century Anglo-America. Chief among the spiritualizers was the nonconformist John Flavel, whose writings Edwards respected and used but did not accept unquestioningly. In his most famous work, *Husbandry Spiritualized*, Flavel began not with Scripture but with nature as a place to find God's revealed will. 'The irrational and inanimate, as well as rational creature,' he wrote, 'preach unto man the wisdom, Power, and goodness of God.' One conspicuous attempt to emulate Flavel was Cotton Mather's *Agricola* (1727), which combined the use of metaphorical analogies with traditional biblical typology. Edwards, however, sufficed with only a note to himself (in 'Images' no. 164) to make use of some of Flavel's specific scriptural illustrations." Edwards, *Works 11*, 108. In another volume, the editor wrote: "Of course, the practice is as ancient as Christ's parables, and Flavel, Manton, and numerous New England preachers relied on it, but Edwards brought his own techniques to this resources as he did to all the conventions he took up." Edwards, *Works 10*, 214. Cf. Edwards, *Works 11*, 23.

assurance and seek a Biblically grounded and warranted hope in Christ. In their efforts to proselytise, Edwards and Flavel were on the very same page. It is significant that when Edwards applied his best effort to help people discern whether they had been converted or not, “he chose his sources accordingly,”⁷²² and this caused him to reach back to John Flavel.

George Whitefield’s Use of Flavel

Although George Whitefield, the man recognised as the electric personality of the Great Awakening, highly valued Flavel, he cited him less frequently than did Edwards. One reason for this was because Whitefield was much less of a writer than Edwards. Other than a few dozen extant sermons, the majority of Whitefield’s corpus is comprised of his published *Journals*. While Edwards was the intellectual engine behind the Great Awakening, we might say that Whitefield was the charismatic, pathos-filled leader of the movement. For example, Edwards invited Whitefield to preach in his Northampton congregation and afterwards Whitefield wrote this about the phlegmatic Edwards: “Dear Mr. Edwards *wept* during the whole Time of Exercise.”⁷²³ Whitefield possessed a dynamic personality and was the orator *par excellence* of the Great Awakening.⁷²⁴ Owing to this and the itinerant nature of his ministry, Whitefield saw far more people profess faith in Christ than Edwards did. As with Edwards, we find Whitefield leaning on Flavel for several reasons. Whitefield personally valued his writings very highly, recommended his writings to new converts, appealed to Flavel to defend his position on

⁷²² Smith, “Introduction,” in Edwards, *Works 2*, 52.

⁷²³ Whitefield, *A Continuation*, 47. Dated, Sunday, 19 October 1740.

⁷²⁴ Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 251; Dallimore, *Whitefield 2*, 522, 530. Dallimore called him “the greatest evangelist in the history of the Christian Church.” *Ibid.*, 535-6.

predestination, held to the same view of the conversion of the faculties, and lastly, wrote with a Flavellian tang.

First, Whitefield valued Flavel's writings personally and sought to obtain them. Early in his ministry, at 22 years old, Whitefield made efforts to obtain Flavel's *Husbandry*. In a letter written to a man identified only as "Mr. H," Whitefield wrote: "LETTER XXI. *To the Same. Dear Sir, Stonehouse, April 26, 1737.* Be pleased to send the *Poor Country Curate*, and *Flavels Husbandry Spiritualized*."⁷²⁵ It is fascinating that on his first voyage to the American Colonies, this book was among his sparse possessions he brought on the ship.⁷²⁶ He evidently made use of the book, too. We find Whitefield quoting the book in his sermon titled "Marks of a True Conversion": "Mr. Flavel, in his book called, *Husbandry Spiritualized*, compares young Christians to green corn; which, before it is ripe, shoots up very high, but there is little solidity in it: whereas, an old Christian is like ripe corn..."⁷²⁷ Whitefield seems to have valued Flavel's writings.⁷²⁸

Whitefield also testified to the popularity of Flavel, among several other Nonconformist writers. Writing in the preface to a new edition of Bunyan's *Works*, in 1767, he explained: "This consideration, hath induced me to preface the present large and elegant edition of the Reverend Mr. *John Bunyan's* works; which, with the unparalleled commentary of the good Mr. *Matthew Henry*, the pious and practical

⁷²⁵ Whitefield, *Works 1*, 25. Iain Murray identified this individual as being the Rev. Samuel Hopkins. Cf. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, 489-90.

⁷²⁶ Dallimore, *Whitefield, 1*, 144; Lambert, "Pedlar in Divinity" (2002), 237.

⁷²⁷ Whitefield, *Sermons on Important Subjects*, 274. From the Sermon "Marks of a True Conversion."

⁷²⁸ It is interesting to note that Whitefield preached a sermon titled *The Method of Grace* on 13 September 1741. A connection to Flavel's work by the same name is plausible.

Writings of the excellent Mr. *Flavel*...”⁷²⁹ It is significant that in this preface Whitefield commended Flavel’s writings amongst three other Puritans (John Owen being the fourth divine).

Secondly, just as Whitefield saw that the Great Awakening was a revival of writers like Flavel, so he heartily recommended his writings to new converts. In one case, we find him urging a new convert to immerse himself in Flavel’s sermons: “Blessed, for ever blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for opening your eyes...Glad shall I be to give you all the assistance that lies within my power. *Henry on the Scriptures* will now suit your taste, and *Jenks upon the Righteousness of Christ* might do you immediate service. *Flavel’s Sermons* would be food for you.”⁷³⁰ Again, the fact that Whitefield commended Flavel’s writings to brand new Christians speaks much about his estimate of this English Dissenter.

Thirdly, Whitefield appealed to Flavel in his defense of predestination. After a long period of dithering, Whitefield finally put pen to paper to oppose his dear friend, John Wesley, on the issue of predestination. Wesley drew first blood by launching an attack on this doctrine, to which Whitefield adhered, in his most famous sermon, titled “Free Grace.”⁷³¹ In his response to Wesley’s claim that predestination undercut the ability for people to love others, Whitefield wrote:

⁷²⁹ Whitefield, “A Recommendatory Preface to the Works of Mr. John Bunyan” in Whitefield, *Works* 4, 307. Dated “London, Jan. 3, 1767.”

⁷³⁰ Whitefield, *Works* 2, 205-6. From letter #711. Dated “London, Nov. 19, 1748”. This volume of Whitefield’s letters is scattered with references to and recommendations of Flavel’s writings. Cf. 42, 64, 71, 94, 99, 106, 242, 447.

⁷³¹ This sermon can be found in Wesley, *Works* 8, 408-23. Whitefield claimed that Wesley only published his opposition to him after Whitefield departed for the Colonies: “At my desire, you suppressed the publishing the sermon whilst I was in England! but soon sent it into the world after my departure.” Gillies, *Memoirs*, 240.

No wonder, therefore, that in a letter you sent me not long since, you should tell me, ‘that no Baptist or Presbyterian writer whom you have read, knew any thing of the liberties of Christ.’ What! neither Bunyan, Henry, Flavel, Halyburton, nor any of the New England and Scots divines. See, dear Sir, what narrow spiritedness and want of charity arise from your principles, and then do not cry out against election any more on account of its being ‘destructive of meekness and love.’⁷³²

Although brief, it is significant that Whitefield appealed to Flavel as a person of whom they both esteemed from the past century.

Fourth, it is important to note that in addition to sharing Flavel’s view of predestination, Whitefield held to his approach to preaching. Dallimore wrote, “As Whitefield begins to preach there is an appeal first to the intellect. From his chosen text he makes a thorough presentation of fundamental Biblical truth and after this has found its lodgment in the mind he makes an appeal on the basis of that truth which stirs the emotion and then moves the will.”⁷³³ One of Whitefield’s hearers concurred with this understanding of Whitefield’s approach to proselytising. Far from Whitefield exclusively trying to rouse the passions of his hearers,⁷³⁴ one man claimed, “He applies himself to the Understandings of His Hearers, and then to the Affections.”⁷³⁵ This was exactly the pattern which we saw present in Flavel. Among other possible reasons, this could be owing to Whitefield’s own conversion. Lambert wrote, “Describing the infusion of grace, Whitefield wrote of his conversion: ‘My understanding was enlightened, my will broken, and my affections more and more enlivened with a zeal for Christ.’”⁷³⁶ Again, this was the same pattern we saw in Flavel’s account of how the faculties function in conversion.

Lambert argued that Whitefield’s understanding of how people were converted was a

⁷³² Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 2, 538. Taken from Whitefield’s famous letter to Wesley, “This letter, no doubt, will lose me many friends...”, 571. Also located in Whitefield, *Works* 4, 67; Gillies, *Memoirs*, 239-258.

⁷³³ Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 2, 268.

⁷³⁴ I.e. Charles Chauncy, *et al* anti-revivalists mentioned above.

⁷³⁵ Lambert, *Pedlar*, 190.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

throwback to Puritanism. He wrote, “Whitefield redefined the new birth in terms of individual regeneration, thus restoring the interpretation favored by New England’s first Puritan divines.”⁷³⁷ Although there is no direct evidence that Whitefield took this idea from Flavel, it is significant that Whitefield read Flavel and that they were in agreement on this point.

Lastly, we arrive at an admittedly more subjective judgment as to how Whitefield and Flavel were similar. To defend this claim, I am unable to do more than state that having read all that Flavel ever wrote, and having read much of Whitefield, his writings seem quite similar in their pleas for people to come to Christ. When comparing one of the letters of Whitefield with portions of Flavel’s sermons, the two sound strikingly similar. Let the reader judge whether the two in fact share affinities. In a letter written from Philadelphia in 1739, again to “*brother H.*”,⁷³⁸ Whitefield wrote the following words with great *pathos*:

Put them in mind of the freeness and eternity of GOD's electing love, and be instant with them, to lay hold on the perfect righteousness of JESUS CHRIST by faith. Talk to them, oh talk to them, even till midnight, of the riches of his all-sufficient grace. Tell them, oh tell them, what he has done for their souls, and how earnestly he is now interceding for them in heaven. Shew them in the map of the word, the kingdoms of the upper world, and the transcendent glories of them; and assure them all shall be theirs, if they believe on JESUS CHRIST with their whole hearts. Press them to believe on him immediately. Intersperse prayers with your exhortations, and thereby call down fire from heaven, even the sire of the Holy Ghost, *To soften, sweeten and refine, And melt them into love.* Speak every time, my dear brother, as if it was your last; weep out, if possible, every argument, and as it were compel them to cry, Behold how he loveth us.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁷³⁸ It is possible, as this sounds geared toward a minister, that this is directed to Howel Harris. Harris (1714-73) was a significant Welsh revivalist. After only nine years of ministry, at 30 years of age, “he looked ‘old and decaying.’” Morgan went on to write: “Harris's career as revivalist was extraordinarily heroic.” Morgan, “Harris,” *ODNB* article.

⁷³⁹ Letter XCII: Philadelphia, Nov. 10, 1739. Whitefield, *Works 1*, 88.

In a similar vein, at the conclusion of his massive *Fountain* sermons, Flavel wrote words which I shall quote at length, in order to convey the full sense of what he attempted to communicate. “Summon in then thy self-reflecting, and considering powers; get alone Reader, and forgetting all other things, ponder with thy self this deep, dear and eternal concernment of thine...let not the trifles of time wipe off the impressions of Death, Judgement, and Eternity from thy heart. O that long word *Eternity*, that it might be night and day with thee.”⁷⁴⁰ Later in that sermon he wrote:

And now Reader, thou art come to the last leaf of this treatise of Christ, it will be but a little while and thou shalt come to the last page or day of thy life; and thy last moment in that day. Wo, to thee, wo and alas for ever, if interest in this blessed Redeemer be then to get. The world affords not a sadder sight, than a poor Christless soul shivering upon the brink of eternity. To see the poor soul that now begins to awake out of its long dream, at its entrance into the world of realities, to shrink back into the body, and cry, *O I cannot, I dare not die*. And then the tears run down. Lord, what will become of me? O what shall be my eternal lot? This I say, is a sad sight as the world affords. That this may not be thy case, reflect upon what thou hast read in these Sermons; Judge thy self in the light of them. Obey the calls of the Spirit in them. Let not thy slight and formal Spirit float upon the surface of these truths, like a feather upon the water; but get them deeply infixed upon thy Spirit, by the Spirit of the Lord; turning them into life and power upon thee. And so animating the whole course and tenour of thy conversation by them, that it may proclaim to all that know thee, that thou art one who esteemest all to be but dross, that thou maist win Christ.⁷⁴¹

It appears that these two preachers shared very similar understandings of how to draw people to Christ. Again, this may appear to be a subjective conclusion, but on the other hand Shaw also postulated a fit between Whitefield and Flavel. He argued that, “Although ‘most Calvinists in England’ had adopted Whitefield’s preaching style, this was in fact a return to the ‘straightforward, pointed, address to consciences’ of ‘a Baxter, a Flavel, and their fellow labourers’.”⁷⁴² Having addressed the ways in which Flavel had an impact upon two of the most influential leaders of the Great Awakening, we would be

⁷⁴⁰ Flavel, *Fountain*, 600.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 629-30.

⁷⁴² Shaw, “Through the Eyes,” 309.

remiss to neglect that Flavel also had a marginal impact on another famous British itinerant.

John Wesley, the eighteenth-century minister, was also impacted by Flavel's writings. The editor of Wesley's *Works* wrote, "To read concurrently the works of John Wesley and those of certain of the later Puritans – John Flavel is a good example – is to encounter a startling similarity in content and emphasis...In his [Wesley's] own mind he drew a sharp distinction between essential doctrines and non-essential opinions. This was not original." The editor continued, "His views had been anticipated by John Flavel, and expressed by him with admirable clarity. 'It is a pernicious evil to advance a mere opinion into the place and seat of an article of faith; and to lay as great stress upon it, as they ought to do upon the most clear and fundamental point.'"⁷⁴³ Wesley's footnote to this point reads: "John Flavel, *A blow at the root*, Obs 9." It is also significant to note that several of Flavel's writings were included in Wesley's massive 50-volume *Christian Library*, which was his effort to put into the hands of his converts solid writings for their growth.⁷⁴⁴ Next we shall turn our attention to evidence presenting Flavel's influence on the world through the medium of print.

⁷⁴³ Wesley, *Works* 11, 9, 22.

⁷⁴⁴ Wesley, *Christian Library* (Bristol, 1749-55). It is likely that Doddridge was partially responsible for Wesley's inclusion of Flavel's writings in the *Christian Directory*. In a letter to John Wesley, dated "Northampton, June 18, 1746", Doddridge wrote: "Among the Nonconformists of the last age, (i.e.) those who flourished before the end of the last century, permit me to name the following persons, who appear to me to have been men of great piety, and some of them, of very distinguished abilities; and, as most of them were voluminous writers, and it is not to be supposed, as perhaps may be supposed with regard to the Puritans, that all their works should enter into the collection proposed, I will specify some of the books written by each, which stand in highest esteem;" Doddridge then cited Flavel amongst six other Puritan writers. He wrote that he recommended "Flavel's Fountain of Life; Token for Mourners; Sacramental Meditations; and England's Alarm; to which may be added, his Husbandry Spiritualized and Navigation Spiritualized." See Doddridge, *Correspondence* 4, 487. Oh wrote the following about the inclusion of so many Puritans: "The evidence of Wesley's relationship to and direct dependence on the Puritans is more clearly found in his use, abridgment, and recommendation of Puritan literature. Puritanism is a multifaceted tradition. Wesley's *A Christian Library* contains works of various Puritans..."

An Analysis of Flavel in Print

In the introductory chapter of *Printing and Society in Early America*, David D. Hall, historian of the book in colonial America, defended the thesis that, “Assertions about reading patterns and their cultural implications must rest on an adequate foundation of bibliography.”⁷⁴⁵ In this section, we shall analyse the footprint that Flavel left on the Transatlantic intellectual landscape through an evaluation of his bibliography and various other print evidence.

On the one hand, the impact of the book and a judicious assessment of the worth of a writer’s print history must not be exaggerated. Given that “half or two-thirds of the population that could not read were presumably excluded from the book trade...it is easy to overstate the impact of the book.”⁷⁴⁶ Indeed, in *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* Pettegree argued that the book impacted society in conjunction with other vital media: “The book did not function as an autonomous agency, but within the context created by the intermingling of a whole range of communication media. The world of oral communication impacted on print, just as print presented new possibilities for the development of preaching, drama and song.”⁷⁴⁷ The book must not be singled out as the sole force which shaped the early modern period. On the other hand, we must not strip print of its impact as a moulder of society. Books were powerful forces which shaped the way whole nations thought. In terms of books which were considered steady-

Five are such Independents or Congregationalists as Francis Rous (1579-1659), Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), John Owen (1616-1683), Lewis Stuckley (1621-1687), and John Flavel (c. 1630-1691).” Oh, *John Wesley’s Ecclesiology*, 105. See also the fine Master’s thesis which analyses this issue at length: Holgeson, *To the “Serious Reader”*.

⁷⁴⁵ Hall, *Introduction*, 7. Citing Winans, “Growth of Reading Public.”

⁷⁴⁶ Hall, *Introduction*, 11. Keeble’s figures agree with this estimate. Cf. Keeble, “Puritanism and Literature,” 310.

⁷⁴⁷ Pettegree, *Reformation and Culture*, 129. Albeit this volume’s primary focus is on various media at the time of the Reformation, its conclusions remain true for the late early modern period.

sellers, Margaret Spufford operates on the assumption that “books which were so widely bought and read inform us of beliefs among the general population.”⁷⁴⁸ Hall also wrote this about best-sellers: “By one route or another, the world view of these texts became the world view of most New Englanders.”⁷⁴⁹

What is the significance of noting the proliferation of Flavel’s writings into the next century and beyond? This point is deeply important for connecting that which may seem to be two disparate pillars of this thesis: the argument that Flavel possessed a dynamic, sophisticated approach to proselytising and the argument that Flavel was highly influential in the eighteenth century. What, if anything, connects these two claims? That which links these arguments is the fact that Flavel’s writings were saturated with evangelism. A person could not read his writings without being influenced by his instruction about how conversion was to be understood. As was mentioned in chapter four, efforts to evangelise his readers are to be found throughout his 29 major writings, with one exception.⁷⁵⁰ Given that he tried to proselytise throughout his writings, the fact that those writings were reprinted continually necessarily entails that his understanding of Christian conversion survived into the eighteenth century and had a consequent impact. The first section of this chapter sought to establish this reality and the final section on marginalia shall reiterate the point. Chapter three noted that Flavel’s intention was not to persuade his audience to conceive of conversion in exactly the same way that he did; it was rather to lead his hearers by the hand to Christ in order that that they might be saved. Nonetheless, the ubiquity of

⁷⁴⁸ Spufford, *Small Books*, 8. Cited in Hall, *Introduction*, 14.

⁷⁴⁹ Hall, *Introduction*, 36. For a good description of the New England Puritans, see Bremer’s *The Puritan Experiment*.

⁷⁵⁰ Furthermore, that single work, *Vindiciae Legis et Foederis* (1690), was never reprinted.

proselytism within his writings, combined with the vast circulation of those writings, assures us that his methods to win souls to Christ spread far and wide.

How then shall we proceed? After analyzing two sources which cement Flavel's position within the top ranks of steady-sellers, we shall examine multifarious strands of evidence which lend themselves to the same conclusion. These shall include: evidence within two recent doctoral theses, Ian Green's compendium of best and steady-sellers, squabbles over publishing rights to Flavel, conclusions which may be drawn from the first exhaustive bibliography of Flavel's writings, and, lastly, interacting with evidence which appears to contradict my presentation of the evidence. We shall first turn to two pieces of evidence which situate Flavel within the top ranks of seventeenth-century writers.

Flavel's influence through the medium of print was large on both sides of the Atlantic during and after the revivals. A survey of the holdings of household libraries in the Upper Connecticut River Valley, Windsor District, between the period 1785-1830 reveals that out of the top 112 authors whose writings appear in these holdings, Flavel's writings are the eleventh most common to appear. The only ten books to appear more frequently are dictionaries, primers, maps, the writings of Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge (the two most popular writers of eighteenth-century spirituality⁷⁵¹), and of course, the Bible. Appearing less frequently on the list of the top writers are the Book of Common Prayer and the writings of Edwards, Wesley, Baxter, Bunyan, Locke, Milton,

⁷⁵¹ Suarez and Turner, eds., *Cambridge History of the Book* 5, 597. It is significant that Doddridge pronounced Flavel's *Token for Mourners*, "inimitable". Cf. J. B. W., *Evangelical Magazine*, 318. Watts also expressed a love for Flavel's writings. He called him, "that great and excellent Man" and, "that venerable Author, whose Memory and Writings I sincerely reverence and honour". Watts, *Useful and Important Questions*, 112. Cf. 124.

Benjamin Franklin, and, coming in last place, Shakespeare.⁷⁵² If justification for Flavel's substantial impact on Evangelicalism in Britain and America has not yet been established, this evidence adds weight to the case. Gilmore, the collector of this data, wrote, "Among the most popular works read and retained in Windsor District family libraries...a small but very influential group of seven works reinforced the ethic of salvation and self-denial. Among these...were five of the twelve most popular volumes: Bibles, Watts' *Psalms* and his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, and the writings of Flavel."⁷⁵³ If this be any reflection on the popularity of Flavel's writings in a provincial area, how much more must Flavel have been read in urban centers like Boston? In fact, the printing numbers in both greater and lesser New England cities testify to this. I have been unable to locate other records which detail the contents of family libraries in New England in this period. Gilmore's study was seminal in the field.⁷⁵⁴

Another book which verified Flavel's great popularity during the eighteenth century is titled *Golden Multitudes: the Story of Best Sellers in the United States*. Mott wrote the following about Flavel's best-selling work *Husbandry Spiritualized*:

⁷⁵² Gilmore, *Reading Becomes*, 64-7. Here are the details and methods of this study of these libraries. The sample size is that of 37 family libraries, possessing a combined total of 1,746 volumes. Thirty-five of the 37 families possessed 372 volumes (two families evidently possessed enormous libraries of 1,374 volumes between the two), with an average of 16 volumes each. To take the number one holding, the Bible, as an example, there were 520 Bibles in the entire collection and 74% of families held at least one copy (which I shall notate as #1-520-74%). Here are a few other titles of interest; the writings of: Watts #3-47-12%; Doddridge #9-18-4.5%; Flavel #11-16-4% (Comprising his *Works* [4 copies], *Token for Mourners* [5], *A Saint Indeed* [4], and *Touchstone of Sincerity* [3]); Book of Common Prayer #17-12-3%; Jonathan Edwards #26-10-2.5%; Baxter #27-10-2.5%; Sir Walter Scott #30-9-2.3%; John Bunyan #33-8-2%; George Washington #50-7-1.8%; John Wesley #55-7-1.8%; Locke #67-6-1.5%; Milton #111-4-1%; Shakespeare #112-4-1%. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes*, 326. This means that, if we assume that Flavel's books were evenly distributed among these 37 households, just under half possessed at least one copy of Flavel's writings.

⁷⁵³ Gilmore, *Reading Becomes*, 62.

⁷⁵⁴ Paul Johnson wrote: "William J. Gilmore's *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life* will occupy a prominent place in that new field" of social history of reading. *Journal of American History*, 655. Gwynedd Hunter-Payne calls it "a study of epic proportions". *Australasian Journal*, 51. Cf. Review by Main, *American Historical Review*, 1627.

The two most popular devotional essayists of the Colonial period [were] John Flavel and James Hervey. The ‘painful and eminent’ Flavel, a notably original English homilist, had an amazing following in America for a hundred and fifty years. Tedious and heavy he seems today, but he won his great audience by what then seemed a clever application of theology to the vocations of common life. His first and greatest success was *Husbandry Spiritualized*, in which the work of the farmer was made to illustrate religious doctrine. This book was first published in America in 1709, though imported copies had been in the bookshops for twenty or thirty years before that. Flavel’s *Works* appear in the lists of titles advertised by Colonial booksellers probably more often than any other except those of Dr. Watts, and they continued popular into the nineteenth century.⁷⁵⁵

Mott classified books which sold copies equivalent to or greater than 1% of the population of the colonies at that time as best sellers.⁷⁵⁶ In the years 1700-1709, *Husbandry* appeared with only two other titles, each having sold 3,000 copies.⁷⁵⁷ In 1664, Baxter’s *A Call to the Unconverted* and Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1681) both made the list of best sellers, selling 1,000 copies. It is surely significant that when *Husbandry Spiritualized* hit the list in 1709, Flavel had been dead for 18 years, whereas Baxter and Bunyan were alive when their books did so. Combining this with the fact that, in the survey of Windsor family libraries, Flavel’s books appeared twice as frequently than those of Bunyan or Baxter, a case is plausible that, at one point in time in early America, Flavel was the more widely read author. Leaving these examples we briefly turn to various other strands of evidence which strengthen the case for Flavel’s significance in print.

⁷⁵⁵ Mott, *Golden Multitudes*, 15. This ranking meshes nicely with the findings of Gilmore presented above. Perry Miller described Flavel’s *Husbandry Spiritualized* as “a best seller among nonconformists for a century after its publication” Miller, *Images or Shadows*, 13.

⁷⁵⁶ His total time period is from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-twentieth century.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 303. The other two books are Robert Russell’s *Seven Sermons* (1701) and John Williams’ *The Redeemed Captive* (1707). The information Mott provided exactly matches the exhaustive bibliography of Flavel’s writings I have compiled in Appendix A.

Flavel's name often appeared in litanies of works which had an impact on people's thinking. Hall wrote the following about Flavel's position within a cluster of extremely influential writers in the Post-Restoration period:

Household libraries, the stocks of booksellers, and personal records are information about the writers and genres that the colonists preferred and those which they ignored. The favorites became such Nonconformist writers as Richard Baxter, Joseph Alleine, James Janeway, Thomas Vincent, John Flavel, William Dyer, Thomas Wilcox, and, in the eighteenth century, Isaac Watts. Books by these men gradually became staples of the New England book trade, steady sellers that, decade after decade, were imported or reprinted.

He then made the reasonable judgment: "That so many readers in New England and elsewhere in the colonies preferred those older books is an apt reminder of the difference between the rhythms of literary fashion and the rhythms of popular consumption."⁷⁵⁸ On his way to pointing out that no single author in colonial America had a corner on the market, Hugh Amory mentioned that Flavel's writings were among the top sellers of one particular bookseller. Amory wrote that within Colonial publishing, "No author, even one as eminent and voluminous as Cotton Mather, ever received a collected works; even New England's orthodoxy tended to be a canon of ideas or genres, not of any particular authors or titles...Boone's [a bookseller] most prominent English authors were John Flavel and John Bunyan, with three titles each."⁷⁵⁹ Although alluded to earlier, it is important to point out that Flavel's name did not always appear first within these lists. In a description of those books which had an impact upon the preacher Joseph Criswell, Flavel's name did appear first: "Consider the...life of Joseph

⁷⁵⁸ Hall, "Readers and Writers," in *History of the Book in America 1*, 126-7.

⁷⁵⁹ Amory, "New England Book Trade," 326-7. Cf. "A further distinction might be drawn...between a conformist end of a spectrum of those more likely to read the works of Jeremy Taylor, Richard Allestree...and a non-conformist end, of those more likely to read works by Richard Baxter, Joseph Alleine, John Janeway, John Flavell, or John Bunyan, though some of these authors probably had a much broader readership than this suggests." Barnard, McKenzie, and Bell, eds., 89.

Croswell. Born in 1712 in Charlestown, Croswell was converted during the Great Awakening and became a lay itinerant preacher. His ‘favorite’ authors, an anonymous biographer informs us, ‘were those of the Calvinistic description, such as Flavel, Erskine, Bolton, Edwards, &c.’”⁷⁶⁰ However, in his book *Penitent Confessions*, in which Richard Baxter commended the writings of both Conformists and Nonconformists, Flavel’s name appeared 16th in his litany of 18 recommended writings.⁷⁶¹ Again, Reilly recounted the sentiment during the height of the awakening that, at Harvard, “‘There is a new face upon things. [Solomon] Stoddard and [Thomas] Shephard [sic] are the Books now.’”⁷⁶² Even though he was tremendously influential in the eighteenth century, it is untenable to argue that Flavel was the most significant Puritan writer of the period. Both his appearance and absence on lists of popular early modern writers bears this out.

Two doctoral theses completed recently attest to the appearance of Flavel as being amongst the most influential figures during the revivals. In Arragon’s thesis on the influence of Cotton Mather, he wrote this about the ‘New Lights’ strategy:

In the “culture wars” of the Awakening, New Lights appealed to the past in an extensive republication of religious texts from the seventeenth-century Puritan movement in England and America...Devotional and theological classics from Richard Baxter, John Flavel, and John Bunyan, among many others, emerged from the shops of New England’s printers and booksellers.⁷⁶³

In another recent thesis, Hutchins spoke of the way in which the works of writers like Flavel replaced those of early seventeenth-century piety: “Steady sellers from the first half of the seventeenth century—including Dent’s *Pathway to Heauen*—were replaced in

⁷⁶⁰ Hall, *Introduction*, 33.

⁷⁶¹ Baxter, *Penitent Confession*, 64-5.

⁷⁶² Reilly and Hall, “Practices,” 395. See also the above quotation which also does not list Flavel amongst other writers: Hall, “Readers and Writers,” 126-7.

⁷⁶³ Arragon, *Cotton Mather*, 129-30.

the second half of the century by newer titles, including works by John Flavel, Baxter, and John Bunyan, as a ‘new flood of devotional literature helped spiritualize the pilgrimage for the second and third generations’ in New England.” Highlighting the centrality of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, he continued: “Boston booksellers imported titles from Flavel and Baxter at impressive rates, but demand for Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) was apparently so much greater that importers simply could not supply enough copies in the years immediately following its release.”⁷⁶⁴ Admittedly, this claim competes with my suggestion that Flavel was perhaps more widely read than Baxter or Bunyan, but the claim regarding *The Pilgrim’s Progress*’ regnant status is applied to the years immediately following its release in 1678. One of Flavel’s peaks in popularity came a few years after his death, in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Additionally, Mott’s quantitative evidence clearly supports my claim. Either way, Flavel is listed amongst the top selling writers in eighteenth-century New England. Having brought the evidence from several recent dissertations into account, we turn next to evidence in Green’s *Print and Protestantism*.

It is significant that three of Flavel’s writings appear in Ian Green’s *Print and Protestantism in early Modern England*. The appendix of Green’s work contains the titles of 727 books considered to be the most influential books of the time period, the so-called “best and steady-sellers.” Green’s criteria for which books appeared on this list are those which were printed in England between 1536-1700 and printed at least five times in a 30-year period.⁷⁶⁵ Green’s numbers for the printing of Flavel’s writings are as follows: *A Saint Indeed* saw 13 printings between 1668-1729. *Navigation Spiritualized*

⁷⁶⁴ Hutchins, *Inventing Eden*, 295-6. He cites: Hambrick-Stowe, *Practice of Piety*, 267.

⁷⁶⁵ Green, *Print and Protestantism*, 80.

saw nine printings between 1677-1733. *Husbandry Spiritualized* saw nine as well between 1669-1724.⁷⁶⁶ For the time periods Green used, I have located the following numbers of printings for these books: *A Saint Indeed*: 26, *Navigation Spiritualized*: 15, and *Husbandry Spiritualized*: 13. In the opening notes to this appendix, Green stated that these numbers were not meant to be absolutely exhaustive, but rather a rough guide. This seems to be the case with the reported number of Flavel's writings. Granted that, according to Green, the average number of editions for steady-sellers was 10.5 printings,⁷⁶⁷ these numbers are notable.

Hall claimed that even though Bibles and primers were always more readily available than steady sellers, they contribute to our knowledge of past cultures in a critical way. He wrote that steady sellers "turn up so many times and in so many places that they must be seen as cultural artifacts of a special kind. No less than the Bible and the catechism, steady sellers stand at the very center of traditional literacy."⁷⁶⁸ Due to the proliferation of Flavel's writings into the eighteenth century, they must be reckoned amongst this important group of artifacts. Ian Green and Kate Peters wrote that Flavel's *Navigation* and *Husbandry Spiritualized*, "went from strength to strength" as books which "combined edification with a measure of entertainment or adopted a variety of approaches."⁷⁶⁹ Lastly, apropos of the account of Devereux Jarratt's conversion given in chapter four, it is worth noting that there was an absence of godly books – especially in

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., 620.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., 81. Though one cannot be certain, the evidence points to these being new editions, rather than re-issues. One reason for this is because of the frequency with which some of Flavel's titles were sold by the same bookseller. For example, between 1668-82 Robert Boulter sold ten different editions of *A Saint Indeed*. It seems unlikely that he would have re-issued the original batch of copies that many times.

⁷⁶⁸ Hall, *Introduction*, 26, 29.

⁷⁶⁹ Green and Peters, "Religious Publishing in England," 81-2.

the southern colonies – which Jarratt was to later lament as he carried out his pastoral ministry. Hall wrote this of the paucity of books:

Jarratt remembered provincial Virginia as a veritable desert in regard to books...The very ‘first sermon book I ever had seen, or, perhaps, heard of,’ had been ‘left, by someone,’ at a neighbor’s. When he had been spiritually awakened and become curious to understand the meaning of the Bible, he found that ‘I had not a single book in the world, nor was I able to buy any books, had I known of any for sale.’⁷⁷⁰

Given the instrumentality of Flavel’s writings in his conversion, Jarratt must have been thankful that despite the relative absence of practical theological books, in terms of sheer numbers available, Flavel’s circulated more than many others. We shall next turn to a different kind of evidence that Flavel’s writings were highly valued.

There are two recorded instances where controversy arose over the printing of Flavel’s writings and these cases illustrate their value. The first case demonstrates that Flavel was counted worthy of plagiarizing; the second case shows that possessing exclusive rights to publishing his writings was deemed worthy of legal arbitration. In the *ESTC* there is a record for a book printed in 1678 titled *The seaman’s spiritual companion: or, Navigation Spiritualized. Being a new compass for seamen*. It was printed in London under the name William Balmford by the printer “Benj. Harris.” The only impropriety was that Flavel’s book by the same name was printed the previous year, itself an enlargement of his *A New Compass for Seaman* (1664). Balmford’s version, dissimilar in some ways, but similar enough to get him into legal trouble, contains the notes that the preface was written by “J.F.” “J.F.” turns out to be a

⁷⁷⁰ Hall, *Introduction*, 28. Citing his *Autobiography*, 26-8.

gentlewoman who was helped by this supposedly original work.⁷⁷¹ This prompted Thomas Fabian, Flavel's printer, to file a lawsuit against Mr. Harris. In the proceedings, dated 8 April 1678, it was alleged: "Mr Fabian had Leave given him this day to take his Course at Law against Henry [sic] Harris for printing his Cobby Entituled Flavells Navigacion Spiritualized."⁷⁷² The outcome of this lawsuit is not known but whereas Flavel's book continued to be reprinted once every four years for the next 100 years (on average), Balmford's never appeared again.

In another instance of the printing of Flavel's writings giving rise to controversy, an Englishman called Andrew Bell wished to block Mrs. Anderson's overture to the Scottish Parliament that she maintain exclusive rights to printing Flavel's *Whole Works* in Scotland. To secure this action, Bell appealed to the MP Lord Tullibardine. This record, dated 26 November 1700, contains this description of the situation:

Andrew Bell to Lord Tullibardine. 'My Lord, I presume to beg the favour of your Lordship, if Mrs. Anderson, the King's Printer, moved to have an Act in her favour for printing all Mr. Flavells works, and withal to have these from England prohibited, the right of which I have lately purchased, and am actually printing, which right cost me a vast deall of money.' Wishes Tullibardine to oppose it, or at least have it waived for this session... 'I have actually so many subscribers in Scotland according to my proposalls, and, if there be a prohibition allowed of, the countrey would lose more by those subscriptions than it could be benefited otherwise.' Hopes the Earl will use his endeavours in Parliament and with individual members, 'I having always been forward to serve my country, and suffered for it verry much of late...'⁷⁷³

Whilst it is not known whether Mr. Bell was able to block the importation of Flavel's *Works* (printed in London) into Scotland, it is certain that in 1701 they were printed for

⁷⁷¹ Balmford, *Seaman's Spiritual Companion*, A5^v.

⁷⁷² McKenzie and Bell, *Chronology and Calendar* 2, 190.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3, 303.

the first time in both London and Edinburgh.⁷⁷⁴ Both of these instances evince that before and after his death, Flavel's writings were considered a valuable commodity.

Since "assertions about reading patterns and their cultural implications must rest on an adequate foundation of bibliography,"⁷⁷⁵ we shall briefly turn our attention to Flavel's bibliography.⁷⁷⁶ We shall look at the numbers of his writings which were printed in the United Kingdom as well as those printed in America in the years 1664-1800. Within this time period, 240 printings of Flavel's various writings appeared in Britain. This included editions published in Welsh and Dutch.⁷⁷⁷ A Danish edition of *A Saint Indeed* was published in Denmark in 1750. Perhaps most impressively, 13 editions of Flavel's *Whole Works* were printed between 1701-1800. Crossing the Atlantic, Flavel's first book printed in the Colonies was *A Token for Mourners*, in 1707. Thirty editions of Flavel's writings were printed in the Colonies between 1707 and 1800.⁷⁷⁸ Out of these 30 printings, the first 18, to the year 1742, were printed in Boston. In 1743, an edition of

⁷⁷⁴ The Dunblane Cathedral Library in Stirling contains the sole existing proposal titled "*Proposals for printing the whole works of John Flavell*. This proposal, which is dated "Edinburgh, May 1, 1700," incorrectly listed the work *A Treatise of Hearts Ease* (evidently referring to James Burdwood's *Hearts Ease in Hearts Trouble* (London, 1690)) amongst those titles which were to be included in the two folio volumes. This error was rectified and it did not appear in the 1701 Edinburgh edition.

⁷⁷⁵ Hall, *Introduction*, 7. Citing Winans, "Growth of Reading Public," 267-75.

⁷⁷⁶ The evidence upon which these findings rest, the first attempt at an exhaustive compilation, can be found in Appendix A of this thesis.

⁷⁷⁷ These include one in Welsh titled *Annogaethau efangyliaidd*, Machynlleth, 1792; *A Token for Mourners* (Machynlleth, 1792), and Dutch *A Token for Mourners* (n.p., 1775); *Touchstone of Sincerity* (n.p., 1744, 1771).

⁷⁷⁸ Although the time period is beyond this project's scope, it is worth noting that between 1801-65, Flavel's various books were reprinted 89 times. It is remarkable that his writings proliferated at a time when, according to David Hall, print runs of the Puritans became virtually extinct. Hall wrote: "so many of the steady sellers limped into the nineteenth century and expired. A few were kept alive by tract societies, but we can regard these printings as artificial in comparison to the dozens of locally produced editions that had once made such titles plentiful. *With one or two exceptions* the steady sellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reached their end by 1830." Hall, *Introduction*, 42 [*Emphasis mine*]. In the time period of the supposed extinction of Puritan writings, between the years 1830 and 1890, Flavel's various writings were printed 102 times. Either Hall's claim is incorrect, or Flavel must not be included amongst the majority of Puritans whose writings fell into desuetude. Given these numbers, Coffey is surely correct when he noted that: "It was in the nineteenth century that the reputation of the Puritans flourished as never before", Coffey, "Puritan Legacies," 336. See Appendix A.

Method was printed in Philadelphia. Between 1730 and 1755, nine editions appeared in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York. Finally, between 1756-1800, eight editions were printed in such diverse cities as Elizabethtown, New Jersey, Amherst, New Hampshire, Exeter, New Hampshire, Newburyport, Massachusetts, Newbury, Vermont, and New York City. As Mott stated above, it is well to remember that even though Flavel was not printed in the Colonies until 1707, “imported copies [of Flavel’s writings] had been in the bookshops for twenty or thirty years before that.”⁷⁷⁹ Given these impressive numbers, Flavel’s influence through both American and British printers is established. Before we move to the next point, it is worth noting in passing that if we widen the aperture to include the present day, the numbers of printings increase dramatically. I have been able to substantiate the existence of 699 different printings of Flavel’s writings from 1664 to the present. If extracts located within the 18 editions of Josiah Woodward’s *Seaman’s Monitor*⁷⁸⁰ and four from Wesley’s *Christian Library*⁷⁸¹ are included in this tally, the number jumps to 721 editions.⁷⁸² Amongst these editions may be found translations into 14 languages: Armenian, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Khmer, Korean, Polish, Scottish Gaelic, Spanish, Urdu, Tamil, and Welsh.⁷⁸³ Having provided an analysis of Flavel’s impact in print, we turn lastly to a discussion of the way in which his writings were received by his readers as they jotted notes in the margins of their copies of Flavel’s writings.

⁷⁷⁹ Mott, *Golden Multitudes*, 15.

⁷⁸⁰ Editions, all of which were printed in London, appeared in 1701, 1705, 1711, 1723, 1735, 1744, 1757, 1767, 1776, 1795, 1799, 1803, 1806, 1810, 1812, 1818, 1820, and 2005.

⁷⁸¹ Wesley’s 50-volume *Christian Library* was printed four times between 1749 and 1827. Twice in Bristol: 1749-55 and 1768. Also in 1774 in Burlington, VT and between 1819-27 in London.

⁷⁸² Including nine electronic versions of his writings brings the total to 730.

⁷⁸³ See Appendix A for details of each edition.

Marginalia Evidence⁷⁸⁴

Reflecting upon the intrinsic limitations that were a part of outdoor preaching services during the eighteenth-century revivals, Lambert wrote, “Private readings were not passive events. Rather they afforded readers opportunity to express themselves more fully than they could at crowded outdoor services.”⁷⁸⁵ One of the ways in which we can learn from reader response is through analysing the hand written notations and glosses which ended up in book columns. Regarding the value of this approach to gauging reader response, Adams wrote, “There is no better evidence of reading than marginalia or other notes that register the reader’s textual engagements.”⁷⁸⁶ Another group of scholars wrote this concerning the interpretive possibilities which open up when the labour-intensive work of studying marginalia is undertaken: “Existing in the world between the private and the public, between manuscript and print, and between immediate and considered responses to the act of reading, marginalia offers a wealth of interpretive possibilities.”⁷⁸⁷

The field of evaluating marginalia began in the 1960s and emerged as a recognized field by the 1990s.⁷⁸⁸ Crone, Halsey, and Towheed wrote, “The countless marginal marks of readers through the generations constitute a potentially vast resource for scholarly study in the history of reading, one that is only now beginning to be exploited.”⁷⁸⁹ Because it is only now beginning to be exploited, there is a relative scarcity of literature on the subject. Even tomes which apparently deal with the subject are often

⁷⁸⁴ This section of chapter six was presented at the Reformation Studies Colloquium at Durham University, 4-6 Sept 2012, and has benefitted from feedback offered in the Q&A.

⁷⁸⁵ Lambert, *Pedlar* (1994), 167.

⁷⁸⁶ Adams, “Historical Dictionaries,” 58.

⁷⁸⁷ Crone, Halsey, and Towheed, “Examining the Evidence,” 39.

⁷⁸⁸ Sherman, *Used Books*, 21.

⁷⁸⁹ Crone, Halsey, and Towheed, “Examining the Evidence,” 36.

focused on issues other than the readers' hand written, columnar responses. For example, a book with the promising title, *Margins and Marginality*, ends up discussing power struggles which were at play in the shaping of several books. The marginalia referred to is almost exclusively that of marginalia printed in the columns.⁷⁹⁰ Another book, which is only minimally useful because it focuses on literary theory, is *Ma(r)king the Text: The Presentation of Meaning on the Literary Page*.⁷⁹¹ However, several books on the subject were of use in this relatively inchoate field.

In a more helpful direction, Cathy Davidson's *Revolution of the Word*, one of the first books to highlight the importance of marginalia in texts, spoke of the value of a book's physical aspects in this way: "Broken-boards, turned-down pages, and abounding marginalia do not make for a place of honor in an early Americana book collection, but they do reveal patterns of reading, patterns of use, the surviving traces of an interpretive community long since gone. But through those traces, some of the early readers remain surprisingly vivid even after nearly two centuries."⁷⁹² Unfortunately for the field, the majority of written marginalia within copies of early modern books were excised by well-meaning curators who nonetheless cropped the majority of these written words in the eighteenth century. Sherman, in his most useful book on the topic wrote, "In her

⁷⁹⁰ Tribble, *Margins and Marginality*, 2, 7.

⁷⁹¹ Bray, Handley, and Henry, *Ma(r)king the Text*.

⁷⁹² Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 148. Cf. 44, 45, 67. Hall wrote: "Books in this period were seen as more than merely words printed on paper, but "as a cultural artifact." Hall, *Introduction*, 3. Cambers wrote that Puritans loved to scribble in their books, a sign that they were being used properly. Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 36n99. We get a glimpse of the tactile nature of an oft-read copy of Flavel's writings. In Samuel Christophers' extremely rare tome *Homes of Old English Writers* (there are only six copies held in libraries across the world), the author devoted three chapters to descriptions of Flavel's birthplace and to the two towns in which he ministered. The author, whilst touring the countryside, described running into an elderly man who lived in Flavel's former parish. In the middle of a six page account of this interaction, the aged man stated: "There is his *Husbandry Spiritualized*; how I love him for that book! I have well thumbed it, I can tell you. It is almost worn out in the service...I shall never know all the good they [his writings] have done me; I am sure they have helped me to walk with God for many years, in the fields and the lanes, by night and day." Christophers, *Homes of Old English Writers*, 262.

study of incunables at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Monique Hulvey pointed out that ‘The destruction of manuscript annotations reached its peak in the nineteenth century, when printed leaves were washed and bleached in a concerted effort to ‘clean’ the margins of the books, and the edges were cropped as much as possible in rebinding, in order to get rid of all the ‘mutilating’ marks that might make the book less attractive to a new breed of wealthy collectors’.”⁷⁹³ Crone, Halsey, and Towheed lamented this reality thus: “A curatorial practice designed to preserve the book for posterity had permanently mutilated the recoverable intellectual engagement of the reader with the text.”⁷⁹⁴

Happily, given a broad enough sampling of books, many useful markings did survive the eighteenth-century purge. In terms of what to expect when pouring over thousands upon thousands of pages for bits of information, we might heartily assent to Sherman’s remark: “Anyone who turns to marginalia with high hopes of easy answers quickly discovers that the evidence they contain turns out to be (if not always thin, scattered, and ambiguous) peculiarly difficult to locate, decipher, and interpret.”⁷⁹⁵

What percentage of books managed to escape the nineteenth-century curator’s guillotine and still possess useful glosses and pen strokes? In part, because of the excision alluded to above, the most abundant and useful evidences that remain are non-verbal: lines, squiggly marks, underlining, stars, etc. In terms of frequency, I discovered that Sherman’s estimates were roughly equivalent to my own findings: “Just over 20 percent of the books in the Huntington’s STC collection contain manuscript notes by early readers (not just signatures, underlining, and nonverbal symbols but more or less

⁷⁹³ Sherman, *Used Books*, 6. Cf. Hulvey, “Not So Marginal,” 161.

⁷⁹⁴ Crone, Halsey, and Towheed, “Examining the Evidence,” 39.

⁷⁹⁵ Sherman, *Used Books*, xiii.

substantial *writing*).⁷⁹⁶ Within extant Flavel books, roughly 20 percent contain useful material; approximately five percent of these possess great value; perhaps one percent provide insights which make the toil worthwhile! With these introductory remarks made, what was the nature of my quest for marginalia within Flavel's books?

From January to June 2012 I conducted an extensive search for marginalia located within copies of Flavel's writings printed between 1664 and 1799. My aim was to determine the reception of Flavel's evangelistic method through an analysis of these books. In the end, I was able to locate and search through 295 copies of his various writings.⁷⁹⁷ Whilst many of the copies I examined were available online on *EEBO*, *ECCO*, and at Google Books, just under half of these I physically examined at numerous libraries in England and Scotland.⁷⁹⁸ These books amount to every copy of his writings held in the following libraries: British Library (BL), Dr. Williams and Congregational Libraries (DWL), Bodleian Library (BOD), National Library of Scotland, University of Edinburgh Library, Cambridge University Library, Durham University Library, and eight college libraries within Oxford and Cambridge.⁷⁹⁹ I was also remotely helped by librarians at Edinburgh Central Library, University of Aberdeen Library, and Newcastle Central Library, who flipped through three copies and notified me that these books were absent any worthwhile marginalia.

⁷⁹⁶ Sherman, *Used Books*, 5.

⁷⁹⁷ The number 295 is actually larger, when it is understood that copies of Flavel's *Works* themselves contain 35 distinct writings, in which case the number comes to 1,276 copies of his writings that I have examined (I examined 28 copies of his *Works*).

⁷⁹⁸ The total physical number of copies through which I searched is 144, which represents 48.8% of the 295 number.

⁷⁹⁹ These included libraries at the following Oxford Colleges: All Soul's Codrington, Brasenose, Harris Manchester, Queen's, Regent's Park, University, and Worcester. I also visited the library at Queens' College, Cambridge.

The underlying goal in this section on marginalia is to vindicate my implicit claim throughout this thesis that Flavel's approach to proselytising mattered. It mattered to the people who heard Flavel and followed his pulpit advice by becoming Christians and also to women and men who read him and did so after his death. Along with the testimonies presented at the beginning of this chapter, the marginal evidence is another key link which proves that people took note (literally) of Flavel's evangelistic themes. Thus, after this section on marginalia, this dissertation will have come full circle. Before we proceed, it is important to note that selectivity can be a serious issue in the presentation of marginal findings. It is extremely tempting to present only that evidence which supports one's case and to exclude opposing evidence. It is true that there is marginal evidence which indicated that Flavel's readers valued ideas in his writings which I have argued were important; at other times they valued points that I have not highlighted (these shall be briefly discussed in due course). My broad claim is that I found a tendency for that-which-this-thesis-claims-was-important to be largely in line with people's notations. Having arrived at this conclusion through skimming 100,000-130,000 pages of text, we now turn to my specific findings.⁸⁰⁰

In keeping with the outline of this thesis, we shall see that marginators valued Flavel's ideas regarding the faculties, *ordo salutis*, two levels of salvific effects, and the allure of Christ. They also seemed to notice his use of similitudes, threats, time, Christian Hedonism, and his apocalyptic teachings.

⁸⁰⁰ This very rough estimate comes from the fact that Flavel's writings average 210 pages per text. 25 of the 28 copies of his *Works* are set in roughly 1280 folio pages; the other three copies of his *Works* constitute 3600 pages in six volumes.

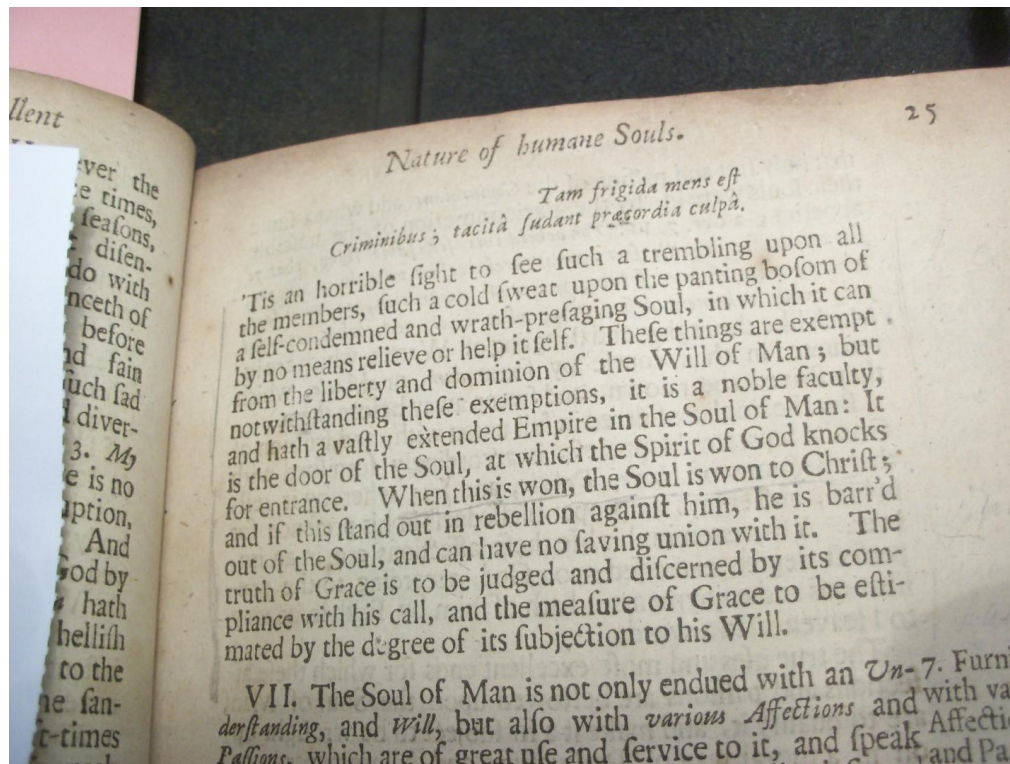
First, marginators evidently believed Flavel’s perspective on the human faculties was worth noting. Within the BL 1799 edition of his *Works*, we find ink markings around the lines: “The Soul of Man is a building of God, he hath layed out the treasures of his wisdom, power and goodness in this noble structure; he built it for an habitation for himself to dwell in. And indeed such noble rooms, as the Understanding, Will, and Affections, are too good for any other to inhabit.”⁸⁰¹ Pertaining to the importance of the mind, the BL’s 1765 edition of *Husbandry* has a line running alongside the following text, as well as a phrase underlined: “Fourthly, Coming to Christ, notes the voluntariness of the soul in its motion to Christ. 'Tis true, there's no coming without the Fathers drawing; but that drawing hath nothing of *co-action* in it; it doth not destroy, but powerfully, and with an overcoming sweetness perswade the will.”⁸⁰² Lastly, we come to one of the relatively scarce legible remarks which concerns the issue of conviction of sin. Within the Bodleian Library’s 1681 copy of *Method*, one of the four owners whose name appears on the title page responded to a section of the book where Flavel wrote, “A soul truly burdened for sin, will take no hearty joy or comfort in any outward enjoyment of this world, till Christ come and speak peace to the soul, Lam. 3. 28. Just so the soul sits alone and keepeth silence; merry company is a burden, and musick is but howling to him.” The marginator, Brooke Priches, evidently wrote, “The vicar’s advice to go to theatre – read Shakespeare.”⁸⁰³ It seems as if the local vicar’s advice to those who were in distress of conscience was to distract themselves with

⁸⁰¹ The format in which I shall lay out the notations will be: title and year, library, subject (if included), page number, shelf mark. Shelf mark will be listed in the first citation. When marginalia appears within Flavel’s *Works*, the format shall appear as (e.g.) *Works/Fountain*. Any underlining in the following passages is that which appeared in the copy. *Works/Fountain* 1799, BL, ‘mind’, 36; *ibid. Pneumatologia*, 540, 1560/3981.

⁸⁰² *Husbandry* 1765, BL, 194, RB.23.a.26103.

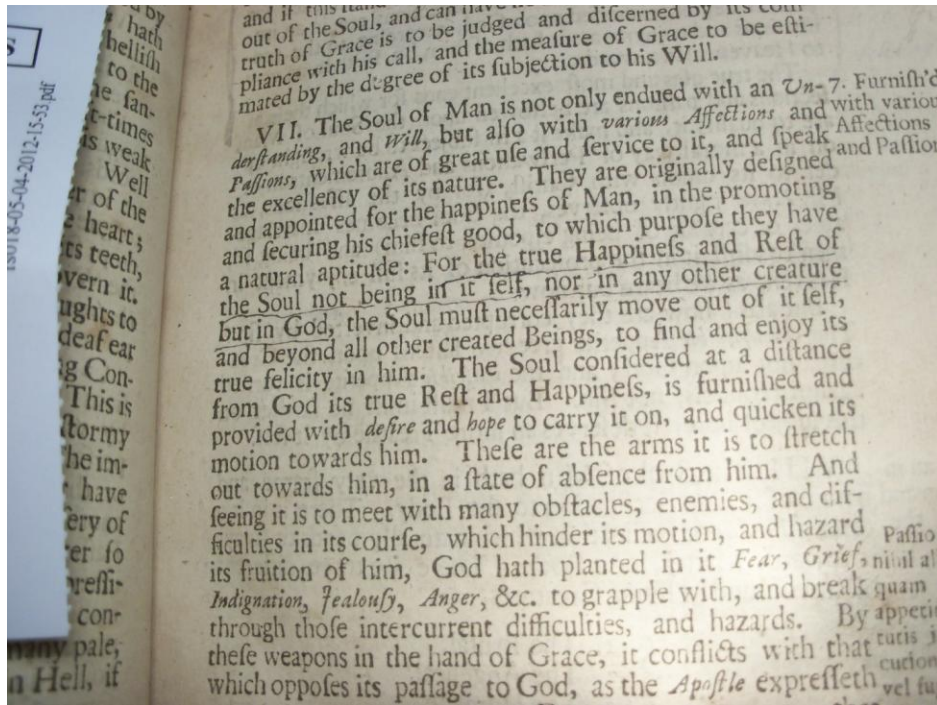
⁸⁰³ *Method* 1681, BOD, 191, Vet. A3 e.1424.

diversions, instead of trying to discern what this unease might signify. Whether Brooke was agreeing with Flavel or not is unclear, but this seems to be a scoffing note.⁸⁰⁴



Marginalia located within the BOD's 1698 copy of *Pneumatologia* which highlights several of the features of Flavel's preaching, including the purpose of the faculties and vivid descriptions aimed to stir up his readers' affections. © Bodleian Library, Oxford. Shelf mark, Vet. A3 e.1563.

⁸⁰⁴ See also *Husbandry* 1765, BL, 'mind', 391; *Pneumatologia* 1698, BOD, 'will', 25, Vet. A3 e.1563. See images on the next two pages.; *Assemblies Catechism* 1692, BOD, 'will', 34, 8° E 20(5) Linc.; *Method* 1681, Union Theological Seminary, 'faculties', 574, Wing/F1169.



Lower on the same page of the preceding image the marginator highlighted Flavel's thoughts about Christian Hedonism. © Bodleian Library, Oxford. Shelf mark, Vet. A3 e.1563.

Second, Flavel's writings about the *ordo salutis* evidently aroused interest. One reader underlined portions of a section which taught the importance of having a proper understanding of both repentance and faith. This instance is especially valuable given that there were very few markings in this particular book. Books which overdo notations tend to diminish the value of each particular instance of such. In the Bodleian's 1673 copy of *Fountain*, a reader noted this sentence: "But the two grand Articles of peace with God are Repentance and faith. In the first we lay down arms against God, and it's meet it should be so, before he readmit us into a state of peace, and favour: in the other we accept Christ and pardon through him with a thankful heart, yielding up our selves to

his government.”⁸⁰⁵ Again in the third volume of the BL’s 1799 edition of Flavel’s *Works*, a reader noted the place where Flavel wrote, “You cannot determine whether Faith goes before Repentance, or Repentance before Faith; but for all that you might feel both the one and the other upon your own Souls, which is infinitely better. 'Tis not therefore your incapacity, but negligence and worldiness that is your ruine.”⁸⁰⁶ This highlights the claim in chapter four that even though Flavel maintained there was a predictable order in which the Spirit effectually worked in people’s hearts, this did not entail that people must be able to perceive or articulate it. In numerous other places we find Flavel’s *ordo* catching the attention of a reader later in time.⁸⁰⁷

Third, there are instances in which Flavel’s readers noted places where he differentiated between two different levels of effects which take place within the human soul. One great example of this comes from the BL’s first edition of *Pneumatologia*. Incidentally, this document, apparently signed by a man called Geo. Rogers, might be one of the most valuable out of all that I have examined. There were relatively few markings within this 467 page treatise (between 30-40), but those which do appear strikingly support the central claims of my thesis. One instance surrounds the idea of common convictions fading away, as true spiritual convictions would not:

It is now with the Souls of men as it is with Fruit-trees in the Spring when they put forth blossoms, if they knit and set, fruit follows; if they be nipt and blasted, no fruit can be expected. For all convictions and motions of the affections are to Grace, much the same thing as blossoms are to Fruit, which are but the rudiment

⁸⁰⁵ Page 532.

⁸⁰⁶ Page 189.

⁸⁰⁷ Cf. *Works/Fountain* 1799, BL, ‘mind’, 36, 1560/3981; *ibid. Works/Method*, ‘sanctification’, vol. 2, 335; *Sacramental* 1700, BL, ‘awakening’, 21, Wing F1186. This last volume was signed by “Jo Friffith 1734” but the volume also includes the handwritten dates 1756 (p. 21) within it’s pages and the note “Marry latter end Agust[sic]: 1741”.

thereof, somewhat in order to it; and look as that is a critical and hazardous season to Trees, so is this to Souls.⁸⁰⁸

In the BL's 1765 copy of *Husbandry*, a short, clean line was written next to Flavel's sentence: "for all saving graces in the saints have their counterfeits in hypocrites."⁸⁰⁹ Indeed, at times readers noted Flavel's claim that there was a difference between true, saving grace and that which could be imitated by hypocrites. The final instance of someone's notice of the difference between levels of effects comes from two 1698 copies of *Fountain*. Copies at the University of Edinburgh and within the BL's 1799 *Works*⁸¹⁰ contain markings at the same point:

Hearts that will not yield a tear under other Ordinances, can pour out floods. Yet I dare not affirm, that every one whose heart is broken by the believing sight of Christ there, can evidence that it is so by a dropping eye...Yet they are truly humbled for sin, and seriously affected with the grace of Christ. For the support of such, I would distinguish, and have them to do so also, betwixt what is *essential* to spiritual sorrow, and what is *contingent*. Deep displeasure with thy self for sin, hearty resolutions and desires of the compleat mortification of it; this is essential to all spiritual sorrow; but tears are accidental, and in some constitutions rarely found. If thou have the former, trouble not thy self for want of the later.

It is surely notable that different readers at different places thought this remark worthy of preserving the place in their respective volumes.⁸¹¹

Fourth, in those places where Flavel labored to display the beauty, worth, and saving power of Christ, later readers paid attention. Within the holdings of Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, there is a 1762 folio of Flavel's *Works*. In this copy there is only one noticeable marking in the margins. That place is where Flavel was

⁸⁰⁸ *Pneumatologia* 1685, 453, 1608/199.

⁸⁰⁹ Page 149.

⁸¹⁰ University of Edinburgh, *Works /Fountain*, 246, 268, D*23.48.

⁸¹¹ *Husbandry* 1674, BOD, 'two levels', 58, Vet. A3 e.252. See also *Touchstone* 1679, DW, 'false affections', 28, 23.1.30. At this point Flavel wrote, "none are so dangerous and destructive to souls, as those that come nearest true ones."

praising Christ with all his being. The mark appears along the edge of the page where Flavel wrote:

Set ten thousand thousand new-made worlds of angels and elect men, and double them in number ten thousand thousand thousand times: let their hearts and tongues be ten thousand times more agile and large than the hearts and tongues of the seraphims, that stand with six wings before him; when they have said all for the glorifying and praising of the Lord Jesus, they have spoken little or nothing. O that I could even wear out this tongue in extolling his Highness! But it is my daily admiration, and I am confounded with his incomparable love.⁸¹²

The importance of this evidence is significant because this is such a striking passage.

However, this must be nuanced. It would be a stretch to think that the reader read all 1280 pages of these two folios and thought this was the only passage worthy of a mark.

The problem with a volume having only a single, or very few, marginal notations is that it seems just as likely that the owner randomly dipped into the volume and liked what he or she read and marked the spot rather than it being the only spot thought worthy of saving within the entire volume. In a sense, volumes which have a moderate amount of marginal marks are of more value than those which have too many or too few. Whilst occasional marks may tend to indicate a thoughtful reader, when a volume has too many, the value of each notation is cheapened; when it contains only three or four markings, these may be random, or thoughtless scribble.

The next example comes from the BL's 1796 edition of Flavel's *Works*. This volume contains notations beside passages which concern the beauty of Christ:

Other beauties have their prime, and their fading time; but Christs abides eternally. Our delight in creatures is often most at first acquaintance; when we come nearer to them, and see more of them, the edge of our delight is rebated. But the longer you know Christ, and the nearer you come to him, still the more do you see of his glory. Every farther prospect of Christ, entertains the mind with a

⁸¹² 1762 *Works/Fountain*, Trinity College, 110, BX9315.F55.

fresh delight. He is as it were a new Christ every day; and yet the same Christ still.⁸¹³

In addition to this place, there were numerous other places where marginators scribbled in the columns to note, apparently, their approval of what they read.⁸¹⁴ As a final example of readers being struck by the way Flavel expounded upon the person and work of Christ, we come to another place where the written word on the page is both legible and highly interesting. Within the third volume of the 1799 edition of Flavel's *Works*, in *Pneumatologia*, held in the BL, Flavel wrote, "*Julius Palmer* in the midst of the flames moved his scorched lips, and was heard to say, *Sweet Jesus*, and fell asleep. *Paul* fastens upon his Name as a *Bee* upon a sweet flower, and mentions it no less than ten times in the compass of ten verses, 1 *Cor.* 1. as if he knew not how to leave it."⁸¹⁵ Interestingly, the owner wrote next to this sentence, "What a rebuke to those, who scarcely ever mention his name, in their Sermons!" It is hard to divine the exact reason for someone writing this, but it is easy to imagine an indolent minister in a parish who was reticent to speak of the only person that, for Flavel, was the central figure in the world and the key to people's salvation. Not only would this have bothered Flavel, but it seems to have annoyed one of his readers.

Fifth, one reader who had his or her hands on the BL's 1765 copy of *Husbandry* noted two places in which Flavel alluded to his frequent use of similitudes to arrest his readers' attention. There appears a straight line across the edge of the column where Flavel wrote, "Notions are more easily conveyed to the understanding, by being first

⁸¹³ 1796 *Works/Fountain*, BL, 270, 1560/3130.

⁸¹⁴ *Works/Fountain* 1799, BL, 101. This copy was signed: "S. Brooth". Cf. *Fountain* 1698, University of Edinburgh, 7-8; *Sacramental* 1700, BL, 18, 20, 76-8, 86, 112, 113, 115. Page nine of this copy was signed and dated as follows: "Jo Friffith 1734."

⁸¹⁵ Page 173.

cloathed in some apt similitude, and so represented to the sense.”⁸¹⁶ In another place in that copy, Flavel’s marginator noted an idea this thesis also utilised – the idea that “there is as great a difference betwixt this intuitive knowledge of sin whereby God makes a soul to discern the nature and evil of it in a spiritual light, and the two former; as there is betwixt the sight of a *painted Lyon* upon the wall, and the sight of a *living Lyon* that meets us roaring in the way.”⁸¹⁷ Evidently, this vivid word picture stood out to one reader between 1765 and the present day. Making use of another vivid instance of this, one marginator noted the place where Flavel asked the rhetorical question, “Who may expect to receive heavenly mansions?” and replied, “To be sure, not the presumptuous, who make a bridge of their own shadows, and so fall and perish in the waters.”⁸¹⁸ In a 1733 edition of *Navigation*, where Flavel wrote, “Give me a place among thy children there [in heaven], Although I lie with them in Dungeons here,” someone wrote the word, “Amen!”⁸¹⁹ In these cases, people were struck by Flavel’s description of why he used similitudes – as well as his actual use of them – to capture people’s imaginations and, hopefully, their souls.

Sixth, marginators plied their trade in places where Flavel tried to startle people through the use of threats. For example, the University of Edinburgh’s 1698 copy of *Fountain* has a spot marked next to Flavel’s words: “Your sun is setting, your night is coming; the shadows of the evening are stretched out upon you; you have one foot in the grave, and the other in Hell. O think if all sense and tenderness be not withered up, as well as natural verdure; think with your selves, how sad a case you are in.” So long as

⁸¹⁶ Page A2v, from the Epistle Dedicatory.

⁸¹⁷ Page 379.

⁸¹⁸ Cf. *Pneumatologia* 1789, BL, 207, BL, 1570/5991.

⁸¹⁹ *Navigation* 1733, BL, 117, 4404.h.9.

Flavel kept cautioning, the reader kept pace with extended lines in the margins. He or she continued, “O strive, strive while you have a little time, and a few helps and means more. Strive to get that work accomplished now that was never done yet. Defer it no longer, you have done so too much already.”⁸²⁰ In another case, within the BL’s 1673 edition of *A Saint Indeed*, one reader noted the threatening words of Flavel when he wrote, “The fourth Argument is drawn from the smalness of the sin; 'Tis but a little one, a small matter, a trifle...If I commit this sin, I must offend and wrong a great God...Is there any little Hell to torment little sinners in?”⁸²¹ Indeed, those who read Flavel’s sermons long after he died seem to have been as much affected as those in his congregation who heard him deliver these sermons.⁸²²

Seventh, those who read and left their marks within copies of Flavel’s writings also noted with interest those places where he alluded to the importance of being mindful that time on this earth is short. For example, in the DWL 1698 copy of *Pneumatologia*, one reader noted the words, “whilst the due Crasis and Temperament of the Body remains, and Breath continues; your Souls hang as by a weak and slender thread, over the state of a vast Eternity in Heaven or in Hell.”⁸²³ A marking also appeared alongside Flavel’s remark in the 1789 BL copy of *Pneumatologia*: “O what an inconceivable weight hath God hung on a puff of breath!”⁸²⁴ Lastly, the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, made available an online copy of their 1689 edition of *A Saint Indeed*. Within that copy, there appear pen marks next to the statement:

⁸²⁰ Page 405.

⁸²¹ *Saint* 1673, BL, 143, 4409.d.23. This copy, incidentally, also contains some very beautiful written signatures on the front pages. There seem to have been at least four owners of the book: “Hannah Pearsall”; page A1^v states: “Gmoore 1794”; “Hannah Erlam” appears, along with; “(A) Flors Book”.

⁸²² See also *Husbandry* 1765, BL, 206, where Flavel wrote: “If sermons cannot, fire and brimstone must Teach men how good it is to pamper lust.”

⁸²³ *Pneumatologia* 1689, DWL, ix, 3025.B.15 & 21.7.26.

⁸²⁴ Page 116.

O keep thy heart by that Consideration! the Meal in the Barrel is almost spent, well, be it so; why should that trouble me? If I am almost beyond the need and use of all these things. The Traveller hath spent almost all his money, but a shilling or two left; Well, (saith he) though my money be almost spent, yet my journey is almost finisht too; I am near home, and then shall be fully supplied. If there be no Candles in the house, yet 'tis a comfort to think that its almost day, and then there will be no need of Candles.⁸²⁵

This passage seems to be one of the more optimistic uses of time which Flavel made (as opposed to the usual cautions which accompanied references to time). In any case, attention to this theme appears in a copy of Flavel's writings across the ocean.

Eighth, more than in any other of these nine categories, Flavel's readers noticed the places in which he urged his readers to value the joys and delights of knowing and being known by God. Flavel was a Christian Hedonist, and his readers who held pen in hand as they read were very affected by it. In the Bodleian Library's 1698 copy of *Pneumatologia*, the marginator drew attention to and underlined the place where Flavel wrote, "For the true Happiness and Rest of the Soul not being in it self, nor in any other creature, but in God, the Soul must necessarily move out of it self, and beyond all other created Beings, to find and enjoy its true felicity in him."⁸²⁶ In the Harvard University Library's 1698 edition of *Divine Conduct*, another reader was gripped by Flavel's words at the place where he wrote, "How great a pleasure is it to discern how the most wise God is providentially steering all to the Port of his own praise, and his people's happiness."⁸²⁷ Apparently, neither Flavel nor this reader saw a contradiction between God being praised and his people being happy. Within the text of *Pneumatologia*, in the BL's first edition of his *Works*, the marginator took notice of a place that this thesis

⁸²⁵ *A Saint Indeed* 1689, Henry Huntingdon Library, 87, Wing (2nd ed.)/F1192.

⁸²⁶ Page 25. The title page was signed: "Edw[ard?] Clarke 1867".

⁸²⁷ *Divine Conduct* 1698, Harvard University, A5^v, Wing/F1159.

highlighted in a previous chapter: “What *Merchant* will not part with a hundred pounds worth of Glass *Beads* and *Pendants* for a Tun of Gold? A few *Tinsel* Toys, for as many rich *Diamonds*? that is true *Merchandize* to part with things of lesser, for things of greater value.”⁸²⁸ Again, in the DWL’s 1698 book of the same title, perhaps either Joshua Wilson or Martha Jasons (the only two names to appear in the inside front flap of the book) noted the place where Flavel wrote, “deadness causes distraction, and distraction increases deadness; could you but look upon duties as the galleries of communion in which you walk with God, where your Souls may be filled with those ravishing, and matchless delights that are in his presence; your Soul would not offer to stir from thence.”⁸²⁹ It is significant that these lines, which run outside the column, were only found in one place in this book. As our second to last example of hedonistic references, we turn to the 1740 copy of Flavel’s *Works* located in the University of Texas library. In *Method*, one marginator drew a small line next to Flavel’s sentence: “Scarce anything can be more evidential of Sincerity, than a Heart delighting in God, and the Will of God.”⁸³⁰ One reader took note of the place where Flavel urged people to make God their delight. As with the other categories, many other instances of this point could be located.⁸³¹ The final proof for the point that many readers displayed their interest in Flavel’s salvific approach through their marginating in the columns comes from the BL’s

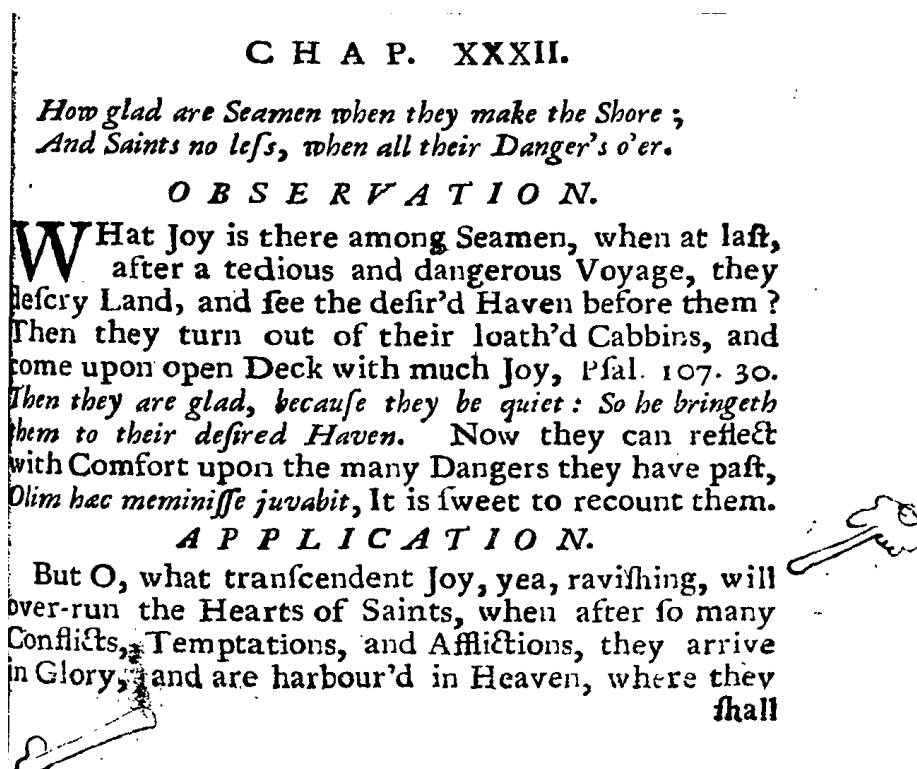
⁸²⁸ *Works/Pneumatologia* 1701, BL, 587, L.6.c.2.

⁸²⁹ Page 100.

⁸³⁰ *Works/Method* 1740, University of Texas, 393, [Flavel, John. The whole works of the Reverend Mr. John Flavel. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Durham University. 21 Aug. 2012. <http://find.galegroup.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=duruni&tabID=T001&docId=CB3332780390&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>].

⁸³¹ Cf. *A Saint Indeed* 1689, DWL, 101-2, 23.1.31; *Works/Pneumatologia* 1799, BL, vol. 2, 108-9; *ibid.* vol. 3, 173-4; *Method* 1681, Union T.S., 343; *Works/Fountain* 1799, BL, 28. This copy was signed “S. Brooth”; *ibid.* vol. 2, 72; *Touchstone* 1679, DWL, 131; *Divine Conduct* 1678, DWL, 117, 152-3, 22.7.8; *Pneumatologia* 1789, BL, 156; *Fountain* 1700, DWL, A4^v, 8, 3025.B.14 & 33.4.39; *Husbandry* 1765, BL, 208, 338.

1733 edition of *Navigation*. What is interesting about this particular copy is that various sections contain the ubiquitous manicule, the pointing finger.⁸³² In this copy, this symbol has been hand written next to the words “But O, what transcendent Joy, yea, ravishing, will over-run the Hearts of Saints, when after so many Conflicts, Temptations, and Afflictions, they arrive in Glory, and are harbour’d in Heaven...”⁸³³ It is significant that there are two manicules pointing to this idea that the joy which Christian saints will know if Heaven far exceeds anything that they will ever know on earth.



1733 copy of *Navigation Spiritualized* which describes the joys of the next life.

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⁸³² Sherman decided on the name *manicule* because it makes sense of the Latin word for “little hand,” ‘*maniculum*’. There is no agreed upon term for the pointing finger found in book margins. Cf. Sherman, *Used Books*, 34. Sherman adds that the appearance of the manicule essentially signifies ‘*nota bene*’.

⁸³³ 1733 *Navigation*, BL, 113. See image on the next page.

Ninth, and lastly, we find readers taking note of places where Flavel warned about the impending apocalypse. In the BOD's 1681 edition of *Method* he wrote, "Fifthly, It implies the removal of the Gospel ministry to be a very great judgment to the people. The remanding of *Ambassadors*, presages an ensuing War."⁸³⁴ We see this again in the BL's 1765 edition of *Husbandry*: "It is in the filling up of the measure of sin, as in the filling of a vessel cast in the sea, which rowls from side to side, taking in the water by little and little till it be full, and then sinks down to the bottom."⁸³⁵ At this point the marginator jotted down a small "x" in the column. Lastly, at the very spot in this thesis at which I scolded Flavel for his reference to violence, one reader evidently took notice. In the same copy just cited, at the place where Flavel urged people that the church would only wrestle truth out of antichrist's hands with much shedding of blood, someone from the past drew a line in the column, indicating that it was a point of personal interest.⁸³⁶

In all of the above nine categories we see some of the ways in which Flavel's readers were impacted by his thought. This exercise has gone beneath the surface of how many and which of his writings proliferated and has shown specifically what caught people's attention in them across the centuries. Whilst it would be false to argue that these nine categories were the only points of interest, judging from the evidence, people were certainly interested in these points.

It would be a tendentious analysis of the evidence to ignore the other varieties of marginal marks within copies of Flavel's writings, so I shall briefly list a few of the other

⁸³⁴ Page 49.

⁸³⁵ Page 185.

⁸³⁶ Page 298.

major categories which appeared. For the sake of consistency, and to hold at least one variable constant, I shall present marginalia which may be found within those volumes that I cited in the previous nine points. If we exclude marginal markings which deal with the issues I mentioned in those points, there are certainly other topics which surface. In general, the vast majority of marginalia throughout Flavel's writings is clustered around short, pithy, memorable comments he made. As for other issues, coming in with honourable mention would be subjects such as prayer, the sacraments, providence, comfort in the midst of trouble, fear, and hypocrisy.⁸³⁷

If I have learned anything about Flavel through the course of this thesis, out of all of the tens of thousands of pages I have perused in the search for marginalia, two written words appear in one tome which would have pleased him above all others.

Within the 1700 DWL copy of *Fountain*, on the first page of the twentieth sermon, one

⁸³⁷ (1) *Sacramental* 1700, BL: the nature of the godhead: 77, 82; the mercy of God, 84, varying degrees of faith and unbelief, 89, 99; the sufferings of Christ, 115. (2) *Method* 1681, Union: the hypostatic union, 35; justification by faith, 132; conditional promises pertaining to obedience, 197; the mercy and loveliness of Christ, 239, 251, 293; spiritual desertion, 291; prayer, 317; divine teachings, 391. (3) *Works* 1796, BL: *Fountain*: Christ's intercession, 167, 173; encouragement to persevere, 176; sacraments, 263; Christ's bitter sufferings, 265; the knowledge of Christ never grows stale, 270; prayer, 279; martyrdom, 282. (4) *Husbandry* 1765, BL: abiding with Christ, 81; grace, 191, 196; the importance of parents training up their children, 271; hypocrisy, 306. This particular volume contains proof of the reader disagreeing with the author. There are three instances in the margins of this book where the marginator differed with Flavel: "Jesus did not teach such doctrines as this!" (p. 162), "The passage does not say so." (p. 159), and "See here how inconsistent he is" (p. 163). (5) *Works* 1701, BL: death, 158 (*Fountain*), 161 (*Englands*); pride, 180 (*Fountain*); and the issue of the traduction of the soul 501 (*Pneumatologia*). (6) *Pneumatologia* 1789, BL: death, 200; soul's immortality, 156; God's condescension to sinners, 110; honour, 158. (7) *Works* 1740, University of Texas: sacraments, 100 (*Fountain*); Christ's intercession, 104 (*Fountain*); reconciliation, 251 (*Method*); opposing fruitless controversy, 438 (*A Saint Indeed*). (8) *Navigation* 1733, BL: submission to the good will of God, 49; comfort in troubles, 54; warnings to not continue in sin, 93; urging them to bring sin into the light, 94; in praise of God, 115. (9) *A Saint Indeed* 1689, DWL: God's provision, 89; communion with God, 100, 101-2, the spiritual advantages of poverty, 92. (10) *A Saint Indeed* 1673, BL: affliction, 56-7, 60; godliness, 65; fear, 78; prayer, 87; glorification, 180. (11) *Assemblies Catechism* 1692, BOD: effectual call, 68; serving God freely, 109; fear and doubt, 163; antinomianism, 168; ordinances, 179; sacraments, 178. (12) *Divine Conduct* 1678, DWL: providence, A6^v – A7^r, 149-56; human corruption, 116. (13) *Fountain* 1698, University of Edinburgh: the office of ministers, 63; Christ portrayed as a minister, 101; communion with God, 101-2; ordinances, 246. (14) *Fountain* 1700, DWL: ordinances, 8; 237; judgment, 438. (15) *Touchstone* 1679, DWL: fears, A3^v; hypocrisy, 22; self-deception, 29; holiness, 131; God's law, 132; godliness, 174-5. (16) *Works* 1799, BL, 1560/3981: phariseeism, 25 (*Fountain*); complete salvation Christ offers, 59 (*Fountain*); opposition to licentiousness, 27 (*Method*).

reader responded to what he had read: “Believed! heard –” It is not known who this reader was, but written across the cover page are the words, “mark this in the Fear of the Lord...1730.”⁸³⁸ I would argue that Flavel would have been most pleased with this remark because it sounds as if one reader underwent the spiritual change which was Flavel’s aim in all of his preaching and writing, namely that of calling people to put their faith in Jesus Christ. Before we close out this chapter, we shall turn to a few final thoughts.

Drawing the Chapter Together

Despite what may have been implied by this thesis, Flavel was not loved by everybody. In his own day and beyond some disliked both the man and his message. In a particularly caustic accusation, Whiting said this about Flavel’s rocky relationship with Clement Lake:

He had some controversy by letters with John Flavell, an Independent preacher of Dartmouth; an envious man, and great opposer of truth and friends, who formerly set up a boy to accuse two innocent women Quakers, when friends came first into that county, that they had bewitched him; which was afterwards discovered to his shame, the boy fleeing the country into New-England, where he was afterwards convinced of truth, and confessed it.

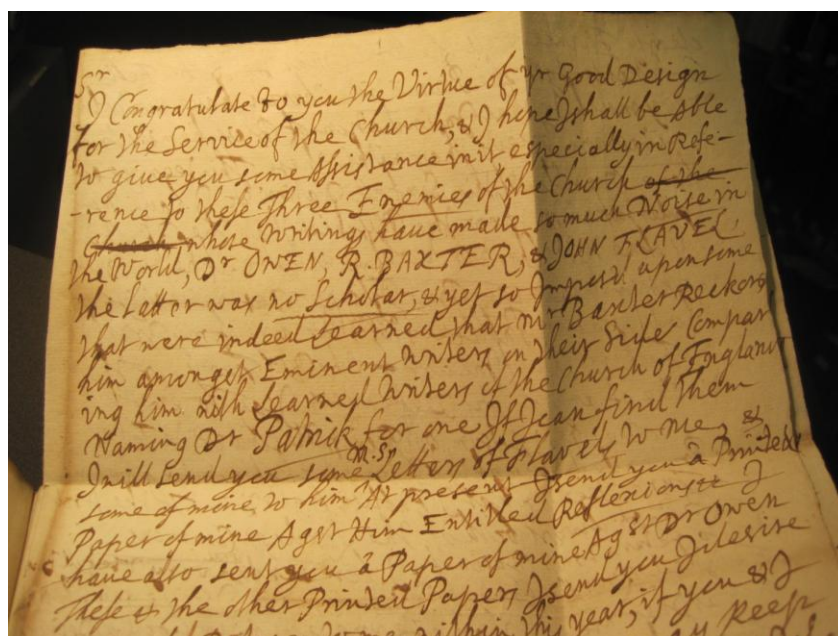
The writer then went on to insinuate that Flavel died soon after this because of his nefarious designs: “And the said Flavell going afterwards to preach an union sermon between the Presbyterians and Independents, as I heard, and bespeaking his dinner, saying they should not be long, was taken ill, and died suddenly before he preached the sermon.”⁸³⁹ This acrimonious remark should be balanced by pointing out that Lake and

⁸³⁸ The date 1807 was also scribbled onto the title page.

⁸³⁹ Whiting, *Persecution Exposed*, 406. There appears to be a reference to this incident in Windeatt, “John Flavell,” 176. He wrote, “At a meeting at the High Gaol Exeter in 11th Mo 1682 Sarah Tripe and Eliza her sister being accused by Robert Lavers of Dartmo to be witches through ye instigation of Allen Geare and John Flavell 2 Priests of Dartmo ye 18th of 8th Mo 1659. Mem to peruse ye record abt London to see

Whiting were both Quakers. Thus, it is not too surprising that they opposed Flavel in this way. In another case, a contemporary of Flavel's, the nonjuring Devon clergyman Edmund Elys (c.1633-1708), wrote the following to his friend John Walker in 1703.

Sir, I congratulate to you the virtue of your good Design for the service of the church, & I hope I shall be able to give you some assistance in it especially in reference to these Three Enemies of the church whose writings have made so much noise in the world, Dr. OWEN, R. BAXTER, & JOHN FLAVEL. The latter was no Scholar, & yet so impressed upon some that were indeed learned that Mr. Baxter Reckons him amongst Eminent writers on their side comparing him with Learned Writers of the Church of England naming Dr. Patrick for one.⁸⁴⁰



Edmund Elys' acrimonious letter to John Walker. © Bodleian Library, Oxford. Shelf mark, MS *J. Walker* e.8.32.

whether there recorded." Windeatt wrote that this information came from an entry in "R. Dymond's *Records of the Friends in Devon*, page 33." ODNB records the life of the Quaker Jonathan Dymond (1796-1828), but not R. Dymond. The latter published *Early Records of the Society of Friends in Devonshire* in 1873. Does a macabre connection exist between Flavel and Sewall? Dymond claimed the accusation toward these Quaker women happened in 1682. Flavel and Sewall men corresponded between January and August 1689; the Salem Witch Trials occurred between February 1692 and May 1693. Given the current documentation, a link between these two figures goes beyond the evidence.

⁸⁴⁰ Bodleian Library: E. Elys, letter to John Walker dated Totnes, 6 March 1703, Bodleian Library, MS *J. Walker* e.8.32. See image on this page.

Intense rancor toward Flavel is evident throughout Elys' voluminous correspondence with Walker in the collection held in the Bodleian. Several years later, during the Great Awakening, a one-time proponent of the revival, James Davenport, turned in a fanatical direction by opposing the movement's key leaders and burning his own possessions. Dallimore wrote the following about an incident which took place at New London, Connecticut in March 1743:

He [Davenport] ordered all available copies of certain well-known books to be gathered and burned. His followers made a pile of the condemned volumes and after prancing around it with shouts of 'Hallelujah!' set it afire. Thereupon Davenport declared that as the smoke of the books ascended upwards, so did the smoke of the torments of such writers who had died holding the beliefs expressed in them! Included among the deceased authors thus condemned were Flavel and Mather, and among the living, Colman and Sewall!"⁸⁴¹

Needless to say, not everyone thought the best of the pastor from Dartmouth.

Even with these examples listed, it is true that outright opposition to Flavel and his writings was much rarer than the opposite. Flavel and his contribution to the development of Christian devotion were, by and large, highly valued. But sometimes he was valued a bit too much by ministers. One author in the nineteenth century wrote this about the Congregational minister William Jay (1769-1853): "And Mr. Jay, in his 'Autobiography,' writes thus:—'I could wish the sermons of Flavel (especially by some of our ministers) were better known, and more prized and *imitated*. They excel in evangelism, and in brevity (not the common character of the age in which they were written) and in avoiding or rendering needless much explication."⁸⁴² Whilst this serves as yet another testimony to Flavel's overall usefulness, and especially his evangelism, it

⁸⁴¹ Dallimore, *Whitefield 2*, 186. See also: Heimert, *Religion*, 168n; Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 275; Tracy, *Great Awakening*, 249; Walker, *Ten New England Leaders*, 281; Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, 153.

⁸⁴² J. B. W., *Evangelical Magazine*, 318-9 [*Emphasis mine*].

is comical that his writings were imitated by one man – so much so, they were plagiarized! The famous hymn-writer and pastor John Newton (1725-1807), in a most congenial and gracious way, was forced to take another pastor to task for passing off Flavel’s teachings as his own. In a letter, Newton wrote the following:

As to the exercise of your ministry...I see no reason for your borrowing your heads and notes from Mr. Flavel, when you have the same fountain (the bible) to draw from, as he had...I am persuaded, your own experience, if you would consult it, would direct you to deduce observations from a text of scripture, more suitable and acceptable to your people, than any writer or preacher can help you to.

Newton went on to add:

Your own words and thoughts, the fruit of your own meditations, are more likely to come warm from your heart, and to impress the hearts of your hearers, than any that you can *steal* from others...I am not against diligence in the use of means; study, read and pray as much as you please, but let what you deliver in public be properly your own. Some of your hearers may have Flavel's sermons as well as you; and it will not add to your honors or your influence, to be thought a plagiarist.⁸⁴³

It is not only interesting that Newton knew the sermons of Flavel well enough to recognise that they were being plagiarized but that he suspected the minister’s other hearers might as well. As for the unidentified plagiarist, the axiom holds true that “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.”

The thrust of this chapter has challenged Bebbington’s theory that eighteenth-century Evangelicalism was strongly discontinuous with Puritanism. Through this investigation of Flavel we see, in fact, very strong continuities. Whilst the argument of this chapter challenges Bebbington’s claim that Evangelicalism arose as a novelty in the 1730s there remains a final area in which Flavel’s life and ministry practices do so. We shall highlight a final instance of the way in which Evangelicalism was the

⁸⁴³ Newton, *Sixty-Six Letters*, 120-3.

continuation of Nonconformist vectors. Bebbington claimed that even though many Nonconformists taught the importance of three elements in his quadrangle – biblicism, conversionism, and crucicentrism – they were not noted for the fourth element, their activism.⁸⁴⁴ Bebbington argued that within the realm of activism, especially in spreading the Gospel, pragmatism was a unique feature of the movement. One aspect of this was open-air preaching: “The spirit of the age – flexible, tolerant, utilitarian – affected Evangelicals as much in practice as in thought. Field preaching, an activity that lay near the heart of the revival, was an embodiment of the pragmatic temper. If people would not come to church, they must be won for Christ in the open air. Wesley was content to flout parish boundaries for the sake of souls.”⁸⁴⁵ However, the evidence from Flavel's life indicates that this was a practice he undertook. A nineteenth-century historian of the West Country wrote this in her account of a physical feature known as Salt-stone, in the middle of the Kingsbridge Estuary:

In the middle of Wide-gates is an islet, or rock, called the Salt-stone, about a hundred feet in length, and more than fifty in breadth. ‘As it is extra-parochial,’ says Hawkins, ‘and perhaps doubtful to whom it belongs, lying nearly equidistant from the parishes of Charleton, South Pool, and Malborough, it is surprising that no one has taken possession of it, to erect some building thereon for speculative purposes.’ This remark leads some to think that formerly the Salt-stone must have been considerably more raised above high-water mark than it is at present; others do not suppose this to be the case.⁸⁴⁶

In another work by the same author she connected Flavel with this patch of land, “It is traditional that in the old days of persecution, the Nonconformists took advantage of the fact of this rock being a sort of ‘no man’s land,’ and accordingly resorting thither at low

⁸⁴⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 10. It is of interest to note that three years prior to the publication of Bebbington's tome Cohen argued that the Puritan's twin emphases of utter helplessness and God's energizing grace propelled people into vigorous activity for God's Kingdom. Cohen, *God's Caress*, 111-33, 272.

⁸⁴⁵ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 65. Cf. Haykin, “Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment,” 44.

⁸⁴⁶ Fox, *Kingsbridge and its Surroundings*, 122.

water, in order to hold their meetings...These meetings appear to have been associated with the name of Flavell.”⁸⁴⁷ Even though it is difficult to firmly establish this widely cited local tradition as historical fact, it is worth noting that Kelly felt its veracity worthy of inclusion in his *ODNB* article on Flavel, as did others in their biographies on him.⁸⁴⁸ After the passage of the Five Mile Act (Oxford Act) in 1665, Flavel relocated five miles down the coast to a town called Slapton. Between 1665 and 1672 he wrote books and ministered in and around this town. Salt-stone is five miles west of Slapton and it is likely that it was during these years that Flavel preached from this place. What are particularly suggestive are the visual images of this physical feature. Salt-stone is clearly visible from every direction – it is not hidden.⁸⁴⁹ This was hardly an obscure place for

⁸⁴⁷ Fox, *Kingsbridge Estuary*, 86. Murray wrote, “We hear of Flavel preaching...at Saltstone Rock, an island in the Salcombe Estuary which is submerged at high tide: ‘Safe there from the hand of their persecutors,’ writes Lyon Turner, ‘they would linger in devout assembly till the rising tide drove them to their boats.’” Murray, “John Flavel.” This is a reference to Turner’s *Original Records of Early Nonconformity Under Persecution and Indulgence*, 2 vol. (London, 1911). It is not inconsequential that Whitefield itinerated in the same area: “The celebrated George Whitefield visited Kingsbridge [a small town 2 miles from “Salt-stone”] more than once. On one of these occasions, whether in 1749, or at an earlier date is not quite clear, he preached out of doors, near the spot now occupied by Quay House.” Fox, *Kingsbridge and its Surroundings*, 79. At one point, Whitefield’s ship bound for America was delayed out of Plymouth and for six weeks he took to itinerant preaching. It may have been during this time that he visited Kingsbridge Estuary. See Dallimore, *George Whitefield, II*, 175-6; Neimann, *Mechanical Operations*, 181-3.

⁸⁴⁸ Kelly, *ODNB*, “Flavell, John”. Cf. Windeatt, “John Flavell,” 180. Walsham described an account of a “footprint legend” where an early seventeenth-century Catholic (Father Arrowsmith) supposedly challenged Protestants who opposed his message with these words: “If my religion is right, my foot will leave its impression on this stone”. At that moment his foot allegedly sank into the rock. Walsham likened the record of Flavel preaching at Salt-stone at low tide to this incident, writing: “The case of the Congregationalist John Flavell, who, ejected from his lectureship at Dartmouth, conducted services from a rock in the Kingsbridge estuary at low tide, provides a hint of the circumstances in which such myths might arise: in this instance, though, the incoming waters regularly washed away all trace of his footsteps”. Walsham, “Footprints and Faith,” 179-80. I corresponded with Professor Walsham regarding this reference and asked her if she knew of any reasons for doubting the historical veracity of this incident. Her response was: “I took the reference to this episode from Watts, *The Dissenters*, and I have no reason at all to doubt the incident.” From email correspondence dated 4 Sept 2012.

⁸⁴⁹ As to the possibility that the physical geography has changed over the past 350 years, contemporary descriptions of Salt-stone are identical with those from the past. This physical feature currently appears on ordnance survey maps. See images on the next two pages.

Flavel to do his itinerant preaching.⁸⁵⁰ Furthermore the shape of the land suggests that it could have had an amplifying effect so as to accommodate more hearers.



Salt-stone in Kingsbridge Estuary. The spot where Flavel preached at low tide in the aftermath of the 1662 Ejection. © Copyright Derek Harper and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Licence.

⁸⁵⁰ Flavel's preaching at Salt-stone is one illustration of his itinerancy but there are others. The biography of Flavel's life which appears in the first edition of his *Works* states: "Many times when he preach'd abroad, he has had letters sent him from unknown persons, informing him how God had blessed his ministry to their souls, and converted them from being bitter enemies to religion. This encouraged him when he rode abroad, not only to accept of invitations to preach, but many times to offer his labours unto those that would be pleas'd to hear him; tho' for this he had no occasion where he was known, the people being generally importunate with him. One day after a long and hard journey, an intimate friend of his, out of a tender regard to him, press'd him with cogent arguments to forbear preaching at that season, but could not prevail with him; *his bowels of compassion to needy and perishing souls made him over-look all considerations of himself*: he preach'd an excellent sermon by which there was one converted, as he declared himself afterwards upon his admission to the Lord's table." Anon., *Life of Flavel* (1701), b2. [Emphasis mine.] This description of Flavel's determination to preach without consideration of his own health sounds identical to the mindset of a Whitefield or a Wesley. The same biographer also wrote that after the implementation of the Oxford Act, Flavel itinerated around the southwest: "In those times Mr. Flavel being at Exeter, was invited to preach by many good people of that city, who for safety chose a wood about three miles from the city, to be the place of their assembly, where they were broke up by their enemies by that time the sermon was well begun." Anon., *Life of Flavel* (1701), a2v.



Salt-stone from a distance. © Copyright Geoff F.

It could be objected that Flavel was an itinerant by virtue of being forced out of his pulpit. This, however, does not change the fact that it was his practice. Looking into the next century, Whitefield was himself ecclesiastically forbidden from preaching in Anglican pulpits and pragmatically took to the fields. Flavel's preaching at this public location combined with these visual images approaches descriptions of Whitefield and Wesley conducting open-air services in the 1730s. This is yet another reason to claim that Flavel was not only an active Puritan preacher, he was also an Evangelical activist.

This chapter has argued that Flavel's approach to proselytising, as described throughout this thesis, had a significant impact on individuals in the eighteenth century, especially around the time of the Great Awakening. This case has been constructed through the presentation of several pieces of evidence: numerous accounts of people

who were converted through reading Flavel's sermons, Flavel's influence on the thinking of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, an evaluation of Flavel's vast bibliography of reprinted writings, and the presentation of marginalia evidence located within 295 copies of his books printed between 1664 and 1799. The marginalia evidence proves that people were interested in Flavel's attempts to convert his readers. Thus, another link between Flavel's efforts to proselytise and the Great Awakening is established.

Although the Great Awakening was *more* than a revival of the theology of John Flavel, it was not *less* than a renaissance of his theology. Flavel was not the main character – there was, in fact, no single dominant figure – but the printing and bibliographical evidence suggests that he was extremely influential. The evidence for Flavel's impact may also be viewed as adding another voice to those who contest David Bebbington's thesis that the emergence of Evangelicalism in the eighteenth century was discontinuous with the past, as opposed to the continuation of a movement which was deeply rooted in seventeenth-century English Nonconformity. The theology of John Flavel, especially his highly elaborate understanding of how people were converted, along with his apocalyptic persuasions, connects two Protestant movements in the early modern period, both of which had Transatlantic manifestations: Puritanism and the revivals of the Great Awakening.

What is fascinating about Flavel's method of proselytising is that even though his paradigm is enormously elaborate – three grids which overlap with two levels of effectuality – his only desire was for people to be converted by seeing their sin and seeing the sufficiency of Christ. Herein lies the nexus of unity and diversity in Flavel's proselytising. Flavel's inordinately elaborate schema, which, when one tries to take it in

simultaneously is as inscrutable as Ezekiel's vision of the wheel in the sky, is beautifully unified by Flavel simply stressing that anyone, anywhere, at any time, need only humble themselves by admitting their sin and reaching out to Christ. Two generations after he died, people did not respond to Flavel's evangelistic writings by saying: "Wow – look at how wonderfully complicated this is!" Rather, they saw something clear and profoundly basic in its presentation and this is why they were drawn rather than repelled. It was this very simplicity, undergirded by a nuanced, richly textured soteriology which caused seventeenth-century Devonian sailors as well as eighteenth-century New England barristers to turn to, and claim for themselves, the God of the Puritans, the God of John Flavel.

APPENDIX A: FLAVEL'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography lists 721 editions, reprints, and printed extracts of Flavel's writings produced between 1664 and the present day.⁸⁵¹ The addition of nine electronic formats brings the total to 730. Book titles are arranged chronologically according to the first year of publication.

Section One: Print

Antipharmacum Saluberrimum, or, A Serious & Seasonable Caveat to all the Saints in this Hour of Temptation

1. 1664, London.⁸⁵²
2. 1689. Published in *England's Duty, and other Sermons*.

*A New Compass for Seamen*⁸⁵³

1. 1664, London: Rich. Tomlins.

⁸⁵¹ These include 18 editions of Josiah Woodward's *The Seaman's Monitor* (London: W. Haws, 1701). All editions printed in London: 1701, 1705, 1711, 1723, 1735, 1744, 1757, 1767, 1776, 1795, 1799, 1803, 1806, 1810, 1812, 1818, 1820, and 2005. It also includes four within John Wesley's *Christian Library*: 1749-55, 1768 (Bristol), 1774 (Burlington, VT), 1819-27 (London).

⁸⁵² The 1664 edition was published anonymously.

⁸⁵³ This work was combined with *A Pathetical and Serious Disswasive* (1674) to become *Navigation Spiritualized* (1677). *A Pathetical and Serious Disswasive* comprised five new sections plus a catechism specifically written for sailors. The text of *A New Compass* is essentially the same as *Navigation Spiritualized*.

Flavel, John and Mall, Thomas, *A Cloud of Witnesses, or, The Sufferers Mirrour*⁸⁵⁴

1. 1665, London: Robert Boulter.
2. 1670, London: Robert Boulter.
3. 1677, London: Robert Boulter.
4. 1747, Boston, MA.: Rogers and Fowle.
5. 1790.
6. 1800, Leominster, MA: Adams and Wilder.
7. 1852, Glasgow: W.R. M'Phun. Printed in *The Last Words and Dying Testimonies of the Scots Worthies*.

Tydings from Rome, or, Englands Alarm: Wherein Several Grounds to Suspect the

Prevalency of the Popish Religion are Seasonably Suggested

1. 1667, London.⁸⁵⁵
2. 1668, Cambridge, MA: Samuel Green.
3. 1756.
4. 1828, London: Hatchard and Son.

A Saint Indeed

1. 1668, London: "Printed by W.R. and to be sold by Robert Boulter."
2. 1668, London: "Printed by A.I. and to be sold by Robert Boulter."
3. 1670, London: Robert Boulter.
4. 1671, London: Robert Boulter.

⁸⁵⁴ Flavel wrote the preface to this work, titled: *An offer of farther help to suffering saints, or, The best work in the worst times*. The evidence also suggests that he wrote the Appendix which Flavel later published under the title *Preparation for Sufferings* (1681). The evidence for this is as follows. Mall's name is affixed to the first three parts of this work, but the fourth part, the Appendix, does not have a name appearing on the title. In 1681 when Flavel published *The best work in the worst times*, he alluded to the fact that this writing had been published before. Flavel wrote: "And what those sweetening ingredients are, and how to prepare them, you will have some direction and help in the following discourse, which hath once already been presented to the publick view." Flavel, *Preparation for Sufferings*, A5. See also, p. 78 (1681) and p. 68 (1664) where the same word is misspelled "achieve" in both works. If Flavel is to be accused of plagiarism, why would he surreptitiously republish a work under his own name that he explicitly recognized had been previously published by another person? Therefore, it seems reasonable to assert that Flavel wrote both. Based on these considerations, I would argue that Flavel first wrote the *Preparation for Sufferings* in 1665, in addition to the preface of *A Cloud of Witnesses*. N.B. The only variation between these two printings is that the chapter order is shifted in the 1681 edition. However, the material is essentially the same. Lastly, the title, *A Catalogue of all the Books Printed in England since the Dreadful Fire of London, in 1666, to the End of Michaelmas Term, 1672* (London, 1673) included *A Cloud of Witnesses* under the entry for Flavel. It seems unlikely that Clavel would have included this title amongst Flavel's writings had he only contributed the brief preface to it.

⁸⁵⁵ The 1667 edition was published anonymously.

5. 1673, London: Roger [sic] Boulter.
6. 1675, London: Robert Boulter.
7. 1677, London: Robert Boulter.
8. 1679.
9. 1680, London: Robert Boulter.
10. 1682, London: Robert Boulter.
11. 1684, London: T. Parkhurst.
12. 1684.
13. 1689, London: T. Parkhurst.
14. 1694, London.
15. 1696, Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson.
16. 1698, London: Thomas Parkhurst.
17. 1698.
18. 1701, London: Thomas Parkhurst.
19. 1706.
20. 1707.
21. 1720, Boston.
22. 1726, Boston: S. Kneeland.
23. 1726, Boston: J. Phillips.
24. 1727, Boston.
25. 1727, Boston.
26. 1729, London: A. Bettesworth.
27. 1743, Belfast: Samuel Wilson.
28. 1750, Odense: Peder Wilhelm Brandt. **Danish.**
29. 1754, Glasgow: John Hall.
30. 1760.
31. 1768, London.
32. 1789, Edinburgh: J. Paterson.
33. 1795, Amherst, NH: Nathaniel Coverly and Son.
34. 1795.
35. 1796, London: D. Jaques.
36. 1799, Mullingar: W. Kidd.
37. 18—, New York.
38. 18—, London.
39. 1800, Mullingar: W. Kidd. Printed in *The Sacred Miscellany*. Manchester: Sowler and Russell.
40. 1800?, n.p., n.d., American Tract Society. In *Tracts*.
41. 1800, Newcastle: M. Angus and Son. This volume is a re-issue of Vol. 5 of Flavel's *Works*, Newcastle: M. Angus, 1796-8.
42. 1801, New Brunswick, NJ: A. Blauvelt.
43. 1803. Printed along with *Touchstone of Sincerity*.
44. 1803, London.
45. 1805, London.
46. 1805, London: W. Baynes & Son.
47. 1809, London: W. Baynes & Son.

48. 1813, Boston: Nathaniel Willis. At some point this work was edited and abridged. This edition continues to be published in almost every modern printing.⁸⁵⁶ The 'guilty' party seems to have been Nathaniel Willis. In this edition he printed this proposal: *Nathaniel Willis proposes to publish by subscription, a treatise of the Rev. John Flavel, on keeping the heart: The style corrected and adapted to the present state of improvement.*⁸⁵⁷
49. 1813, London: William Baynes.
50. 1815, London: Religious Tract Society.
51. 1817, Hartford, CT: Susan Grindley.
52. 1817, B. & J. Russell.
53. 1819, Boston: T. Bedlington. The full title of this edition continues the abridgement begun in 1813: "The style adapted to the present state of improvement."
54. 1819, New York: American Tract Society. 12-page extract.
55. 1820, New York: American Tract Society. Claims to be the first US edition.
56. 1820, London: Religious Tract Society.
57. 182-, New York: American Tract Society. In *Narratives illustrating the usefulness of tracts and 32 other tracts*.
58. 1822, London. Printed in *Select British Divines, Vol. 8*.
59. 1823, Andover, MA: American Tract Society. Subtitle reads *The Christian Indeed*.
60. 1823, London: L. B. Seeley and Son.
61. 1825, London: L. B. Seeley and Son.
62. 1826, Richmond, VA: Joseph Martin. Printed with Flavel's *A Double Scheme*.
63. 1828, London: L.B. Seeley & Sons.
64. 1828, Hallowell, ME: Glazier & Co.
65. 183-, New York: American Tract Society.
66. 1830, London: Religious Tract Society.
67. 1830, Glasgow: Oliver & Boyd. Printed with *Touchstone of Sincerity*.
68. 1830, New York: American Tract Society.
69. 1832, London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co.
70. 1833?, New York: American Tract Society. Anderson, A., ed., *The Publications of the American Tract Society. Vol. 1*.
71. 1833, New York: American Tract Society. Printed in *Collection of tracts from the American Tract Society*.
72. 1833, New York: American Tract Society. Published in *The Life of Rev. David Brainerd*.
73. 1836?, New York: D. Fanshaw.
74. 1836, New York: American Tract Society. Published in *The Life of Rev. David Brainerd: Chiefly Extracted from his Diary; within Evangelical Family Library, Vol. 7*.
75. 1840, London: Religious Tract Society.
76. 1840, New York: American Tract Society.
77. 1843.

⁸⁵⁶ The exception which returns to the pre-1813 edition is the 1998 Soli Deo Gloria edition of this work.

⁸⁵⁷ There was also a broadside printed in 1816 which proposed a similar scheme. Cf. *Proposals, for publishing by subscription, A treatise on the keeping of the heart. By John Flavel. As the above work is somewhat ancient*. 1816, Hartford, CT: B&J Russell.

- 78.184-, New York.
- 79.1847, London: Religious Tract Society. Published with *Divine Conduct* in a book titled *Doctrinal Puritans*.
- 80.185-, New York: American Tract Society.
- 81.1850. New York: American Tract Society.
- 82.1851.
- 83.1854. **Armenian.**
- 84.1865?, New York: American Tract Society. In Hall, R., ed., *The publications of the American Tract Society. Series 1. Vol. 1.*
- 85.19--, New York: H.M. Caldwell.
- 86.1935.
- 87.1946. **Korean.**
- 88.195?, Grand Rapids, MI: Sovereign Voices Library.
- 89.1971, Grand Rapids, MI: Sovereign Grace Publishers.
- 90.1972, Wilmington, DE: Sovereign Grace Publishers.
- 91.1972, Wilmington, DE: Sovereign Grace Publishers. Extracts reprinted in *The Afflicted Man's Companion*.
- 92.1982.
- 93.199?, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
- 94.1998, Morgan, PA, Soli Deo Gloria.
- 95.1999, Morgan, PA, Soli Deo Gloria.
- 96.1999, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications.
- 97.2002, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
- 98.2005.
- 99.2007, Liskeard: Diggory Press.
100. 2007, Cosimo Inc.
101. 2009.
102. 2010, Charleston, SC: Nabu Press.
103. 2010, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale.
104. 2011, Charlestown, SC: Nabu Press.
105. 2012, Ross-Shire: Christian Focus Publications.
106. 2012, Grand Rapids, MI: Soli Deo Gloria Publications.
107. 2012, Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books. Selections titled *An Honest and Well-Experienced Heart*. Edited by Adam Embry.
108. 2012, Hagerstown, MD: Christian Heritage.

*Husbandry Spiritualized*⁸⁵⁸

1. 1669, London: Robert Boulter.
2. 1671, London.
3. 1674, London: Robert Boulter.
4. 1678, London: Robert Boulter. "The fourth edition."

⁸⁵⁸ There appears to be a mimicking of Flavel's title in Collinges, J., *The Weavers Pocket-Book: or, Weaving Spiritualized* (London: A. Maxwell for Tho. Parkhurst, 1675).

5. 1693, London: T. Parkhurst.
6. 1700, London: Thomas Parkhurst. "The 6th ed., corrected."
7. 1705, London: Tho. Parkhurst.
8. 1705, London: T. Bunce.
9. 1709, Boston: Nicholas Boone. "The tenth edition, corrected."
10. 1709, Boston: John Allen.
11. 1714, London: A. Bettesworth.
12. 1724, London: A. Bettesworth.
13. 1725, Boston.
14. 1732, London: D. Midwinter.
15. 1754, Glasgow: Archibald M'Lean.
16. 1760, London: C. Hitch. "The twelfth edition, corrected."
17. 1762, Edinburgh: David Gray.
18. 1764.
19. 1765, London: J. Thomson.
20. 1769, London, n.p.
21. 1772, London: J. Buckland.
22. 1772, London: Edward and Charles Dilly.⁸⁵⁹
23. 1774, London: James Buckland.
24. 1777, London: A. Millar.
25. 1788, Leeds: John Binns.
26. 1791.
27. 1794, Berwick: W. Phorson.
28. 1794, Elizabethtown, NJ: Shepard Collock.
29. 1795, Elizabethtown, NJ: Shepard Collock.
30. 1799.
31. 1800, Newcastle: M. Angus and Son. This volume is a re-issue of Vol. 5 of Flavel's *Works*, Newcastle: M. Angus, 1796-8.
32. 1805, Witham.
33. 1807, London: W. Nicholson.
34. 1810, Berwick.
35. 1818, London: J. Smith.
36. 1820, Boston. This abridged version was published in Thomas Scott's *Devotional Exercises* alongside *Navigation Spiritualized*.
37. 1821, Boston.
38. 1821, Boston: New England Tract Society. In *Religious Exercises*.
39. 1822, London: J. Smith. In *Select British Divines, Vol. 7*.
40. 1824.
41. 1824, Middletown, CT: J.A. Boswell.
42. 1825, London: L.B. Seeley.
43. 1832, London: J. Smith. In *Select British Divines, Vol. 7*.
44. 1834, London: F.J. Mason.
45. 1987, Macon, GA: Mercer University Press. An extract from *Husbandry Spiritualized* appears in Dewey Wallace's *The Spirituality of the Later English Puritans*.

⁸⁵⁹ Advertised in the back flap of *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend George Whitefield* (London, 1772).

46. 2005, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale.
47. 2007.
48. 2010, Charlestown, SC: Nabu Press.

The Fountain of Life Opened

1. 1673, London: Francis Tyton.
2. 1698, London: Thomas Parkhurst.
3. 1700, London: Thomas Parkhurst. "The third edition very much corrected."
4. 1700?, Bristol: Lane & Co.. This is sermon 23 in this series and is titled *Judas's Treason Opened and Applied for a Warning to all Professors*.
5. 1728, Boston: John Phillips. This contains sermon 31 in this work, titled, *A discourse shewing that Christ's tender care of his mother is an excellent pattern for all gracious children to the end of the world*.
6. 1729, London: J. Willis.
7. 1732, Boston: Benjamin Grey. Sermon 26 was published under the title *The cursed death of the cross described, and comfortably improved: Wherein is opened, the nature and quality of the death Christ died upon the cross*.
8. 1740, London: D. Midwinter. Titled *Two Treatises*; printed together with *The Method of Grace*. "5th edition, corrected."
9. 1743, Boston: Charles Harrison. Sermon 26 was published under the title *The cursed death of the cross described, and comfortably improved: Wherein is opened, the nature and quality of the death Christ died upon the cross*.
10. 1770, London: M. Lewis. Printed in *The ax laid to the root of Antinomian licentiousness*.
11. 1783, Springfield, MA. This contains sermon 31 in this work, titled, *A discourse shewing that Christ's tender care of his mother is an excellent pattern for all gracious children to the end of the world*.
12. 18-- , London.
13. 1819, London: Burton & Smith.
14. 182-, New York: American Tract Society.
15. 1820, New York: American Tract Society.
16. 1822, London. An edition of *Antinomianism*.
17. 1824, Richmond, VA: Joseph Martin. This edition claims to be the "First American edition."
18. 183-?, New York: American Tract Society.
19. 1830, New York: American Tract Society.
20. 1834, London: F.J. Mason.
21. 1836, London: Religious Tract Society.
22. 1838.
23. 1840.
24. 1841. Published in *Religious Library*.
25. 1845: London: Religious Tract Society.
26. 1845, New York.
27. 1848, Ilahabad: American Tract Society. **Urdu.**
28. 1869, Allahabab: American Tract Society. **Urdu.**

29. 196-, Grand Rapids, MI: Inheritance Publishers. Titled *The Foundation* [sic] of *Life*.
30. 1962.
31. 1968, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.
32. 1977, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
33. 1989, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House. *The Believer's Prophet, Priest, and King*. This work contains extracts from three writers and contains three sermons from *Fountain of Life*.
34. 199?, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
35. 199?, Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library. An extract, titled: *The kingly office of Christ as providentially executed for the redeemed*.
36. 1990.
37. 2000.
38. 2001, Fort Wayne, IN. An extract within *Rare Ordination and Dedication Sermons*.
39. 2002, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
40. 2002, Rumpt: De Schatkamer. **Dutch**. *Het Koninklijk ambt van Christus: Efeze 1 vers 22*. Translates as "The Royal Office of Christ: Ephesians 1 Verse 22."
41. 2005, Printed in *The ax laid to the root of Antinomian licentiousness*.
42. 2005, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale.
43. 2007, Liskeard: Diggory Press.
44. 2009, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust. Rushing, R., in *Voices from the Past*.
45. 2009, Reformed Church Publications.
46. 2009, Apeldoorn: De Banier. **Dutch**. Titled *Volbracht: de zeven kruiswoorden, or, Accomplished: The seven words from the cross*.
47. 2010, Benediction Classics.
48. 2010, Kessinger Publishing. Facsimile of the 1698 edition of *Fountain of Life*.
49. 2010, Charleston, SC: Nabu Press.
50. 2011. **Dutch**.

*A Token for Mourners*⁸⁶⁰

1. 1674, London: Robert Boulter.
2. 1680, London: Robert Boulter.
3. 1690, London: Thomas Parkhurst.
4. 1694, London: Thomas Parkhurst.
5. 1707, Boston: T. Green.
6. 1710, London: A. Bettesworth.
7. 1722, London: A. Bettesworth.
8. 1725, Boston: N. Boone.
9. 1726, Belfast: James Blow.
10. 1729, Boston: S. Kneeland, and T. Green.
11. 1730, Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green.
12. 1731, London: A. Bettesworth.

⁸⁶⁰ The title for this work is possibly a take-off from the work *A love-token for mourners* (1655) by Samuel Fisher.

13. 1741.
14. 1742.
15. 1754.
16. 1755.
17. 1759.
18. 1762.
19. 1773.
20. 1774, London: James Buckland and George Keith.
21. 1775. **Dutch.**
22. 1775.
23. 1776, Dublin: W. Kidd.
24. 1780, Belfast: James Magee.
25. 1788, Kilmarnock: J. Wilson.
26. 1788, Paisley: John Neilson.
27. 1790, Berwick: W. Phorson. *A Hymn upon Romans 5:6-11* is also printed in the back of this edition.
28. 1791, Glasgow.
29. 1792, Machynlleth: Titus Evans. **Welsh.**
30. 1795, Exeter, NH: Henry Ranlet.
31. 1795, Newbury, VT: Nathaniel Coverly.
32. 1796, Newbury, VT: Nathaniel Coverly.
33. 1800, Newcastle: M. Angus and Son. This volume is a re-issue of Vol. 5 of Flavel's *Works*, Newcastle: M. Angus, 1796-8.
34. 1802, Salem, MA: Nathaniel Coverly.
35. 1803, Philadelphia, PA: John McCulloch.
36. 1813, Brattleborough, VT: William Fessenden.
37. 1814, New York: American Tract Society.
38. 1815.
39. 1816, Boston: Nathaniel Willis.
40. 1818, Andover, MA: Flagg and Gould.
41. 1820, Andover, MA: Flagg and Gould.
42. 1820.
43. 1821, Boston.
44. 1821, Boston: New England Tract Society. In *Religious Exercises*.
45. 1822, London. Printed in *Select British Divines, Vol. 8*.
46. 1823, Andover, MA: American Tract Society.
47. 1824, Dunfermline.
48. 1824, Glasgow: W. Collins & Co. Extracts printed in *The Mourner's Companion*, by Robert Gordon.
49. 1825.
50. 1827.
51. 1828, Alastair Mac-an-Toisich. **Scottish Gaelic.** Titled *Companach do luchd-broin*. Published alongside the writings of Samuel Rutherford.
52. 183-, New York: American Tract Society. Abridged and titled *A Gift for Mourners*.
53. 1832.
54. 1833.

55. 1834, New York: American Tract Society. Abridged and titled *A Gift for Mourners*.
56. 1839.
57. 1840.
58. 1841, Edinburgh.
59. 1843, New York: American Tract Society. Printed in *A Friendly Visit to the House of Mourning*.
60. 1846?, New York: American Tract Society. Printed in *A Friendly Visit to the House of Mourning*.
61. 1846?, New York: American Tract Society. Titled *A Gift for Mourners*.
62. 1848, New York: American Tract Society. Printed in *Publications of the American Tract Society. Vol. 2*.
63. 1849, Duneidin [Edinburgh]: Thornton agus Collie. **Scottish Gaelic**. Titled *Companach do luchd-broin*.
64. 1850.
65. 1876.
66. 1877.
67. 1878.
68. 1965.
69. 1996, Cambridge, MA. Printed in *True professors and Mourners: two works*.
70. 2003, Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Extracts printed in *A Potent Spell*.
71. 2005, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomas Gale.
72. 2010, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust. Titled *Facing Grief: Counsel for Mourners*.
73. 2010, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. Titled *Facing Grief: Counsel for Mourners*.

A Pathetical and Serious Disswasive from the horrid and detestable sins of drunkenness, swearing, uncleanness, forgetfulness of mercies, violation of promises, & atheistical contempt of death: Applied by way of caution to seamen; and now added as an appendix to their new compass

1. 1674, London: R. Tomlins.
2. 1698, London: Thomas Parkhurst and M. Fabian.
3. 1725, Boston.
4. 1799, Paisley: Neilson & Weir.

The Sea-mans Companion

1. 1676, London: Francis Titon [sic].
2. 1681, Glasgow: Robert Sanders.
3. 1808.

4. 1810.
5. 1822.

Navigation Spiritualized, or, A New Compass for Sea-men

1. 1677, London: Thomas Fabian.
2. 1682, London: Thomas Fabian.
3. 1690, London: Collins.
4. 1698, London: M. Fabian. "The fourth edition."
5. 1698, London: Thomas Parkhurst. "The fourth edition."
6. 1705.
7. 1708, London: C. Parkhurst. "The fifth edition."
8. 1708, London: Thomas Parkhurst and J. Baker.
9. 1721, London: J.&B. Sprint. "The sixth edition."
10. 1723.
11. 1725, Boston. One portion of this published as *A Pathetical and Serious Dissuasive*.
12. 1726, Boston: Nich. Boone.
13. 1726.
14. 1731, Boston: Eleazer Phillips. Titled, *Prophane Swearing*.
15. 1733, London: D. Midwinter. "The seventh edition."
16. 1735.
17. 1754, Glasgow: William Duncan.
18. 1755. See John Wesley's *Christian Library*, Vol. 43; reprinted 1819.
19. 1760, London: C. Hitch "The eighth edition."
20. 1762, Edinburgh: David Gray.
21. 1764.
22. 1772, London: Edward and Charles Dilly.⁸⁶¹
23. 1773, London: J. Buckland.
24. 1774, London: James Buckland and George Keith.
25. 1776.
26. 1788, Leeds: John Binns. "A new edition."
27. 1791, Hull: Thomas Lee.
28. 1796, Newburyport, MA: Edmund M. Blunt.
29. 1799.
30. 1800, Newcastle: M. Angus and Son. This volume is a re-issue of Vol. 5 of Flavel's *Works*, Newcastle: M. Angus, 1796-8.
31. 1800, Air: John & Peter Wilson.
32. 1801, Edinburgh: Mundell & Son.
33. 1807, Burslem: J. Tregortha.
34. 1808, London.
35. 1815.
36. 1819. In Wesley's *Christian Library*.
37. 1820, Boston. This abridged version was published in Thomas Scott's *Devotional Exercises* alongside *Husbandry Spiritualized*.

⁸⁶¹ Advertised in the back flap of *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend George Whitefield* (London, 1772).

38. 1821, Boston.
39. 1821, Boston: New England Tract Society. In *Religious Exercises*.
40. 1822, Plymouth: J. Bennett.
41. 1822, London: J. Smith. In *Select British Divines, Vol. 7*.
42. 1823, London.
43. 1825, London: James Nisbet.
44. 1827.
45. 1832, London: J. Smith. In *Select British Divines, Vol. 7*.
46. 1840, Northampton, MA: J. Metcalf. Extracts published in *The Yankee Tar*.
47. 1987, Macon, GA: Mercer University Press. An extract from *Navigation Spiritualized* appears in Dewey Wallace's *The Spirituality of the Later English Puritans*.
48. 2005, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale.
49. 2007.
50. 2008, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth. An extract titled *Impure Lust*
51. 2008, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth. An extract titled *Binge Drinking*.
52. 2009, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth. An extract titled *Sinful Speech*.
53. 2010, Nicholasville, KY: Schmul Publishing Company.
54. 2010, Charleston, SC: Nabu Press.

Divine Conduct, or, The Myserie of Providence

1. 1678, London: Francis Tyton.
2. 1681, Edinburgh: John Cairns.
3. 1682, Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson.⁸⁶²
4. 1689.
5. 1698, London: Thomas Parkhurst.
6. 1708, Glasgow: R. Sanders.
7. 1712, London: J. Lawrence.
8. 1727, London: J. & B. Sprint.
9. 1750, Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden.
10. 1753, Glasgow: John Hall.
11. 1761, London: George Keith.
12. 1771, London: George Keith.
13. 1774, London: James Buckland and George Keith.
14. 1776, Glasgow: A. Adam.
15. 1786.
16. 1788, Bolton: B. Jackson.
17. 1788.
18. 1791, Berwick: W. Phorson.
19. 1800, Newcastle: M. Angus and Son.
20. 1801, London: W. Baynes.
21. 1809, London.
22. 1814, London.
23. 1816, London.

⁸⁶² "Printer to His most Sacred Majesty."

24. 1818, London: Richard Baynes.
25. 1820.
26. 1822?, Plymouth: J. Bennett.
27. 1822, London. Printed in *Select British Divines, Vol. 8.*
28. 1822, London: W. Baynes & Son.
29. 1824, London: Thomas Tegg.
30. 1825, London: L.B. Seeley.
31. 1830, London: SPCK.
32. 1836, London.
33. 1837, London.
34. 1840, Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication.
35. 1847, London: Religious Tract Society. Published with *A Saint Indeed in Doctrinal Puritans.*
36. 1891.
37. 1935. **Polish.**
38. 1935, London: Sovereign Grace Union.
39. 1963, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.
40. 1981, Evangelical Press: Hervey Mockford. This edition, titled *God Willing*, is touted as an “Easy to read version of Divine Conduct”.
41. 1981, London: Grace Publications Trust. Titled *God Willing*.
42. 1991, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.
43. 2002, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust.
44. 2003, Roudnice nad Labem: Poutníková četba. **Czech.** Published as *Dá-li Bůh, or, God Willing*.
45. 2005, Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan. **Dutch.** Titled *Verwonderd omzien, or, Surprised looking back*.
46. 2005, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale.
47. 2009. **Korean.**
48. 2009, Berlin: Verlag GmbH. **German.** Titled *Alles in seiner Hand, or, Everything in His Hand*.
49. 2009, Phnom Penh. **Khmer.** Titled *Fount of Wisdom*.
50. 2009, Ross-Shire: Christian Focus. Selections printed in *Helpful Truth in Past Places: the Puritan Practice of Biblical Counseling*.
51. 2010, Charlestown, SC: Nabu Press.
52. 2012, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust.

(This book has also been published by Banner of Truth in Hebrew, Spanish, and Tamil, the copies of which I have been unable to locate. See Thomas, “New Books on the Puritans.”)

Sacramental Meditations (includes *A Hymn Upon Romans* and *A Familiar*

Conference)

1. 1679, London: Jacob Sampson. This work also contains, for the first time, Flavel's one extant hymn, *A Hymn Upon Romans* 5: 6-11.
2. 1680, Glasgow: Robert Sanders.
3. 1690, London: Nathaniel Crouch.
4. 1700, London: Nathaniel Crouch. "Fourth Edition." This edition also contains, for the first time, Flavel's booklet *A Familiar Conference Between a Minister and a Doubting Christian, Concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, pp. 145-158.
5. 1708, Boston: B. Green.
6. 1712, Boston: B. Green.
7. 1713, London.
8. 1729, Boston: N. Boone.
9. 1812, Dunstable.
10. 1822, London.
11. 1824, Richmond, VA: J. Martin.
12. 1879, Glasgow: William Gilchrist. **Scottish Gaelic**.
13. 2005.
14. 2009, Houten: Den Hertog. **Dutch**. Titled *De tafel toegericht : twaalf meditaties rond het Heilig Avondmaal*, or, *The Table Prepared: Twelve meditations around the Lord's Supper*.

The Touchstone of Sincerity

1. 1679, London: F. Tyton.
1. 1684, Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson.
2. 1698, London: Thomas Parkhurst.
3. 1707, Glasgow: Robert Sanders.
4. 1731, Boston: J. Edwards.
5. 1744, **Dutch**.
6. 1771, **Dutch**.
7. 18--, New York: This edition was published alongside William Wilberforce's *Practical view of the prevailing religious system of professed Christians*. This was also published in the year 183-.
8. 1800, Newcastle: M. Angus and Son. This volume is a reprint of Vol. 5 of Flavel's *Works*, Newcastle: M. Angus, 1796-8.
9. 1800, Air: John & Peter Wilson.
10. 1800.
11. 1803.
12. 1808, London: William Baynes.
13. 1809, New Haven, CT: Sidney's Press.

14. 1814, Boston: Early American Imprints. Contained within *A sermon, in which is attempted a full and explicit answer to the common and highly important question, "What wilt Thou have me to do?"*.
15. 1815.
16. 1818, Boston: E. Bellamy.
17. 1818, New York: American Tract Society.
18. 1820?, New York: American Tract Society. Wilberforce, W., *A practical view of the prevailing religious system of professed Christians, in the higher and middle classes: contrasted with real Christianity*. Flavel's *Touchstone* was printed together with this work, in Vol. 2 of *Christian Library*.
19. 1822, London. Printed in *Select British Divines, Vol. 8*.
20. 1824, Middleton, CT.
21. 1824, London: L.B. Seeley and Son.
22. 1825, Philadelphia: Ann M. Haslett. In a work titled *The Advices and Meditations of the late William Haslett, Esquire*. A note for this volume reads: "The extracts from Mr. Haslett's favorite author, are therefore, added."
23. 1826, London: W. Baynes & Son.
24. 1828, Hallowell: Glazier & Co.
25. 1828, London: Hamilton, Adams & Co.
26. 183-, New York: American Tract Society.
27. 1830, Glasgow: Oliver & Boyd. Printed with *Touchstone of Sincerity*.
28. 1830.
29. 1833, Paris. Printed within *Susan Stewart's Private Odds and Ends*.
30. 1836?, New York: D. Fanshaw.
31. 184-, New York: American Tract Society.
32. 185-, New York, published with *Religious Affections* by Jonathan Edwards, reprint of previous "183- New York" citation, and again in 185-.
33. 1996, Cambridge, MA. Printed in *True professors and Mourners: two works*.
34. 2010, Memphis, TN: General Books.

The Method of Grace

1. 1681, London: Francis Tyton.
2. 1699, London: Tho. Parkhurst. "The second edition, very much corrected."
3. 1740. Printed together with *The Fountain of Life*.
4. 1743, Philadelphia: William Bradford. Sermons 22-23 of this book were published under the name *The teachings of God: opened in their nature and necessity*.
5. 1799.
6. 1800?, New York: American Tract Society. "1st American edition...somewhat abridged."
7. 1800.
8. 18--.
9. 1819, London: Westley.
10. 1820, New York.

11. 184-, New York: American Tract Society.
12. 1841. Published in *Religious Library*.
13. 1845, New York: American Tract Society.
14. 1852, Ipswich?.
15. 1853, London.
16. 1858.
17. 1875.
18. 1977, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
19. 199?, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
20. 1995, Chalon-sur-Saone: Europresse. **French**. Titled: *Il parlera de Christ : l'oeuvre du Saint-Esprit dans le salut*, or, *He will speak of Christ: The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation*.
21. 1997, Winnipeg Manitoba: Hartland Publishers.
22. 2000.
23. 2005, Evangelical Press.
24. 2007. **Dutch**
25. 2007. **Korean**.
26. 2010, Benediction Classics.
27. 2011. **Korean**.
28. 2011, University of California Libraries reprint.
29. 2012.

Preparation for Sufferings, or, The Best Work in the Worst Times

1. 1681, London: Robert Boulter.
2. 1681.
3. 1682.⁸⁶³
4. 1832.
5. 1833.
6. 2011, Forest, VA: Corner Pillar Press.

A Practical Treatise of Fear

1. 1681, London: R. Boulter.
2. 1682, London: R. Boulter.
3. 1684, Edinburgh: John Reid.
4. 2011, Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books. Titled *Triumphing Over Sinful Fear*.

⁸⁶³ Jonathan Edwards cited this edition of this work. Cf. Edwards, *Works 2*, 214n2.

Two Treatises: The Righteous Man's Refuge and A Practical Treatise of Fear

1. 1682, London: Robert Boulter.
2. 1684, Glasgow: Robert Sanders.
3. 1800, Air: John & Peter Wilson.

Pneumatologia, A Treatise of the Soul of Man

1. 1685, London: Francis Tyton.
2. 1693, London: Thomas Parkhurst.
3. 1698, London: Thomas Parkhurst. "The second edition, carefully corrected."
4. 1700, London: Thomas Parkhurst.
5. 1701, London: Thomas Parkhurst.
6. 1750, Boston: S. Kneeland. Printed as one section of this work, titled *A Discourse [on 1 Pet.iii. 19] of the Unspeakable Misery of the Departed Spirits of the Unregenerate in the Prison of Hell, while Reserved to the Judgment of the Great Day* (from pp. 334-61 of the first edition).
7. 1770, Paisley: A. Weir.
8. 1789, London: T. Pitcher. "A new edition, carefully corrected."
9. 179-?.
10. 1794, Bristol: N. Biggs.
11. 1824, London: W. Jones.
12. 2000, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
13. 2005. Reprint of *A Discourse of the Unspeakable Misery of the Departed Spirits*.
14. 2005, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale. Printed in *The Evangelical Library*.

The Balm of the Covenant with A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of John Upton

1. 1688, London: J. Harris.
2. 1754.
3. 1785, London: J. Wren.
4. 1820.
5. 1822, London. Printed in *Select British Divines, Vol. 8*.
6. 1826, London: James Nisbet.
7. 1828, Richmond, VA: Joseph Martin. Reprinted with *A Faithful and Succinct Narrative*.
8. 1832, Merthyr: B. Morgan. **Welsh**.
9. 1855, London: Houlston & Stoneman.
10. 2005, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale.

*Englands Duty Under the Present Gospel Liberty*⁸⁶⁴

1. 1689, London: Matthew Wotton.
2. 1701, London: Andrew Bell.
3. 1740.
4. 1741, Boston: H. Foster. An extract titled *The Great Design of the Gospel Opened*. Contains a preface by Mather Byles.
5. 1756, London: George Keith.
6. 1761, London: George Keith.
7. 185-, New York: American Tract Society. Titled *Christ Knocking at the Door of the Sinners' Hearts*.
8. 1860, American Tract Society. Another edition of *Christ Knocking at the Door of the Sinners' Hearts*.
9. 188-.
10. 1880. Another edition of *Christ Knocking at the Door of the Sinners' Hearts*.
11. 189-, New York.
12. 18--, New York.
13. 1950, Grand Rapids, MI: Inheritance Publishers. Titled *The Excellency of Communion between Christ and Believers on Earth*.
14. 1978, Welwyn: Evangelical Press. Printed under the title *Christ Knocking at the Door of the Sinners' Hearts*,
15. 2001, Rumpst: De Schatkamer. **Dutch**. This edition, a Dutch version of *Christ Knocking at the Door of the Sinners' Hearts* was significantly shortened and Flavel's language modernized.
16. 2002, Rumpst: De Schatkamer. **Dutch**. Another printing of *Christ Knocking at the Door of the Sinners' Hearts*.
17. 2005.
18. 2009. *Christ Knocking at the Door of the Sinners' Hearts*.
19. 2011, University of California. Reprint of *Christ Knocking at the Door of the Sinners' Hearts*.

Mount Pisgah

1. 1689, London: Matthew Wotton.
2. 1701. Published alongside *Englands Duty*.
3. 1756. Published alongside *Englands Duty*.
4. 1761. Published alongside *Englands Duty*.

⁸⁶⁴ It is possible that the title of this work is an ironic spin-off from one praising the Restoration, titled, *The new-cured cripple's caveat, or, England's duty for the miraculous mercy of the King's and kingdoms restauration* (London, 1662) by Richard Meggott.

Vindiciae Legis et Foederis: or, A Reply to Mr. Philip Cary's Solemn Call

1. 1690, London: Matthew Wotton.

Mr. John Flavell's Remains being two sermons composed by that reverend and learned divine, the former preached at Dartmouth in Devon, on the day of the happy coronation of Their Majesties King William and Queen Mary, the latter⁸⁶⁵ intended to be preached at Taunton in Somerset, at the meeting of the united ministers of several counties to be held there, September 2. 1691: with a brief account of the life and death of the reverend author

1. 1691, London: Tho. Cockerill.
2. 1700, Belfast: Patrick Neill & Company.
3. 1734, Edinburgh: W. Cheyne.
4. 1814, London: Josiah Conder.
5. 1986.

Planelogia, A Succinct and Seasonable Discourse of the Occasions, Causes, Nature,

Rise, Growth, and Remedies of Mental Errors⁸⁶⁶

1. 1691, London: R. Roberts and Thomas Cockerill.
2. 1742, Boston: Rogers & Fowle. *Antinomianism* was individually published under the title *A Word to the Well-Wishers of the Work of God in this Land.*⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶⁵ The other sermon alluded to is *The Character of a Complete Evangelical Pastor, Drawn by Christ* and does not appear in any pre-1700 copy of this work. The first extant edition of this work is found in the 1701 edition of Flavel's *Works*. Edmund Elys was therefore mistaken to state that this work was first published in 1669. See Elys, *Reflections upon several passages in a book entitled*, 14.

⁸⁶⁶ This work contained two appendices: *Vindiciarum vindex*, *Antinomianism*, and one sermon titled *Gospel Unity*. *Vindiciarum vindex* consists of a rejoinder to Philip Cary's reply to Flavel's *Vindiciae Legis et Foederis*.

⁸⁶⁷ It is significant that this printing took place at the behest of several figures who opposed the Great Awakening. (E.g. The same printer, Rogers & Fowle, printed Chauncy's *Seasonable Thoughts on the State*

3. 1755, *Planelogia* was published under the title *A Blow at the Root* and included in John Wesley's *Christian Library*, Vol. 44.
4. 1819, *Planelogia* was published under the title *A Blow at the Root* and included in John Wesley's *Christian Library*, Vol. 44.
5. 1822, London: J. Smith. In *Select British Divines*, Vol. 7.
6. 1823.
7. 1830, Philadelphia, PA. *Planelogia* was published under the title *A Blow at the Root*.
8. 1830?, London: Religious Tract Society. *Planelogia* was published under the title *A Blow at the Root*.
9. 1832, London: J. Smith. In *Select British Divines*, Vol. 7.
10. 1840, Philadelphia, PA. *Planelogia* was published under the title *A Blow at the Root*.
11. 1832.
12. 2010. Another edition of *A Word to the Well-Wishers of the Work of God in this Land*.

The Reasonableness of Personal Reformation and the Necessity of Conversion

1. 1691, London: Thomas Cockerill.
2. 1725, Boston: B. Green.
3. 1756, Edinburgh: T. Lumisden.
4. 2009.

Flavel, John and Mather, Increase. *An Exposition of the Assemblies Catechism*⁸⁶⁸

1. 1692, London: Tho. Cockerill.
2. 1695, London: Tho. Cockerill.
3. 1695, Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson.
4. 1699, Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson.

of *Religion in New-England* the very next year.) Flavel's *Antinomianism* was reprinted to combat Whitefield's message, and the spread of what the anti-revivalists saw as, "vain intellectual curiosity". Cf. Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 167-8. What is whoppingly ironic about this is that Flavel (as well as the supporters of the revivals), stringently argued for inculcating the very same teachings the revivalists did. In *Antinomianism*, Flavel was opposing those who quibbled about what he deemed vain and speculative matters, a far cry from central doctrinal issues such as determining whether people were born again or not! It is highly significant, and quite ironic, that the anti-revivalists saw that Flavel was valuable currency to lend support to their case. Heimert claimed that this effort by those who stood against the revivals was itself a form of obscurantism: "Given such evidence, it might be that, in the search for the sources on anti-intellectualism, in America, the place to begin is not with the revivalists but with those more reasonable Bostonians who, long before the era of the younger Holmes, thought it dangerous for one to play too much with his mind." Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 168.

⁸⁶⁸ Increase Mather penned the preface to this work which was published the year after Flavel died. Prior to Mather's preface there is a three page introduction which explains that Flavel passed before expositing the final five questions of the catechism. This introduction is signed "VALE," not as a person's name as several researchers on Flavel have suggested, but is the Latin term meaning "Farewell/Goodbye/Adieu". Cf. A3.

5. 1714, Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson.
6. 1767, Salisbury: Edw. Easton.
7. 1776.
8. 1848: Philadelphia: William S. Young.
9. 1853.
10. 1856, Philadelphia: William S. Young. The "First American edition."

Flavel, John and Burdwood, James. *Helps for Faith and Patience in Times of Affliction:*

To which is added, A Sure Tryal of a Christian's state, by John Flavell late minister

(also) in Dartmouth

1. 1693, London: T.W. for Jonathan Robinson.

The Whole Works of the Reverend Mr. John Flavel, Late Minister at Dartmouth in

Devon, In Two Volumes

1. 1701, London: T. Parkhurst.
2. 1701, Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson, Printer to His most Sacred Majesty.
3. 1716, London: J. Nicholson.
4. 1731, Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson.
5. 1740, London: D. Midwinter. "The fourth edition, carefully compar'd with the several tracts published in the author's life-time."
6. 1742, n.p.p.: David Gray.⁸⁶⁹
7. 1754, Glasgow: A. Stalker.
8. 1754, Glasgow: J. Orr.
9. 1762, Edinburgh: David Gray.
10. 1770, Paisley: A. Weir.
11. 1796, Newcastle: M. Angus. 6 Vol.
12. 1799, London: J. Matthews. 6 Vol.
13. 1800, Newcastle: M. Angus and Son. This edition was a re-issue of Vol. 5 from the 1796 Newcastle edition.
14. 1820, London: W. Baynes and Son. 6 Vol.
15. 1820, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes.
16. 1820, Dublin: M. Keene.
17. 1824, Edinburgh.

⁸⁶⁹ The only copy of this edition of which I am aware is held in the Torbay Library in Devon. It is possible that this dating is incorrect.

18. 1834, London. *The select works of the rev. John Flavel, with an account of his life* [ed. by G.B.], in Bodleian Library.
19. 1968, London: Banner of Truth. Reprint of 1820, London: Baynes edition.
20. 1982, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth. Reprint of 1820, London: Baynes edition.
21. 1997, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth. Reprint of 1820, London: Baynes edition.
22. 2005, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth. Reprint of 1820, London: Baynes edition.
23. 2009, Ann Arbor, MI. Reprinted from the University of Michigan Library copy of Flavel's *Works*.
24. 2010, Kessinger. Facsimile of the 1799 edition of Flavel's *Whole Works*.
25. 2010, Charleston, SC: Nabu Press.
26. 2011, Charleston, SC: Nabu Press.
27. 2012, Charleston, SC: Nabu Press.

*A Faithful and Succinct Narrative of Some Late and Wonderful Sea-deliverances*⁸⁷⁰

1. 1701, London: T. Parkhurst.
2. 1701, Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson, Printer to His most Sacred Majesty.
3. 1754, Glasgow: John Hall. Printed together with *A Saint Indeed*.
4. 1819, London: A.A. Paris, Hawker, R. There is an extract from this work located in *The Spiritual Gleaner*.
5. 1828, Richmond, VA: Joseph Martin. Reprinted with *The Balm of the Covenant*.

*A Double Scheme, or Table*⁸⁷¹

1. 1811, Aberystwyth: James Williams. **Welsh**.
2. 1826, Richmond: Joseph Martin. Printed with Flavel's *A Saint Indeed*.
3. 1830?, London: Tracts of the Society for Promoting Ecclesiastical Knowledge. Printed as a four-page tract, titled, "*Sins and Duties of Church Members*". No. 2.

*Hints for Church Members*⁸⁷²

1. 1803, London: T. Williams.

⁸⁷⁰ This title appeared for the first time in the first edition of his *Works* (1701), *Vol. 2*, 69-76.

⁸⁷¹ This title appeared for the first time in the first edition of his *Works* (1701), *Vol. 2*, 1339-1340. The DWL's 1691 edition of *Remains* states the following: "A double scheme or table, in which you have the sins forbidden and the duties enjoined on the members of particular churches; being a full Broadside Sheet, prepared for the press, by Mr. *John Flavell* before his death." In the books for sale section. Cf. Dr William's Library, shelfmark: NCP.B.200, K8^v.

⁸⁷² This eight-page chapbook, which is listed as a 'New Edition', is probably an extract from *Sacramental Meditations*. The only copy of this (to my knowledge) is held in the rare book shop Jandyce Booksellers, London. I have never seen this work referenced either in print or in any electronic form.

*Hints to Professing Christians, particularly Church Members*⁸⁷³

1. n.d., London: W. Nicholson, Warner-street, for Williams & Smith, Stationers' Court. By the Rev. J. Flavel. [*Price 1d. or 6s. per 100.*] No. 67.

The Sinner Directed to the Saviour: An Extract from Flavel. 8 pages.

1. 1820, London.
2. 18??.
3. 182-, New York: American Tract Society.
4. 1825, New York: American Tract Society, Vol. 4.
5. 1830, Baltimore. Printed in *Female Tract Society of Baltimore*.
6. 1830, London: Religious Tract Society.
7. 1830, New York: American Tract Society.
8. 1831?, New York: American Tract Society, No. 51. **German**. Published under the title *Sünders Zum Heilande*.
9. 1833, New York: The Society. Printed in *Tracts Vol. 4*.
10. 1840, London: Religious Tract Society.
11. 1840, Glasgow: Religious Tract Society.
12. 1848, New Yorkk [sic]: American Tract Society.
13. 1860, London. **Dutch**.
14. 1860. **Spanish**.
15. 1860. **Scottish Gaelic**.

Golden Gems for the Christian: Selected from the Justly Admired Writings of The Rev. John Flavel. Edited by Joseph Banvard.

1. 1843, Salem, MA.
2. 1848, Boston: Gould and Lincoln.

Flavel, the Quaker and the Crown: John Flavel, Clement Lake, and Religious Liberty in 17th Century England

1. 2000, Cambridge, MA: Rhwymbooks.

⁸⁷³ Held in the National Library of Scotland. This tract (and probably the one above) is essentially the contents of *Double Scheme, or Table*. The editor wrote the following in the front of this tract: "In reprinting this little Tract, from the works of the Pious and instructive FLAVEL, I have no fear of being charged with legality, conscious that I am only contending for 'the fruits of the Spirit...'"

Various Other Flavel Printings:

1. 1783, Kent?: Austen, T., Extracts from Flavel are printed in this work, which was described as a “Commonplace book of devotional literature”.
2. 1789, London: T. Pilcher. Extracts from Flavel titled *The evangelical library; or, repository of scarce and valuable divinity containing select works of the Reverend Thomas Brook...with the lives and portraits of the different authors, complete indices, notes, &c. John Flavel.*
3. 1792, Machynlleth: T. Evans. **Welsh.** Extracts from Flavel’s writings: *Annogaethau efangylaidd, i sancteiddrwydd bywyd; mewn annerch at waredigion yr Arglwydd o bob enw: a dalfyrwyd allan o waith Mr Fflafel gan W Mason.* I have been unable to determine the identity of this work, which translates as: “Evangelical exhortations to the holiness of life, in an address to the saved of the Lord from every name: abridged from the work of Mr (John) Flavel by W Mason.”
4. 1807, Brattleborough, VT: Cole, Benjamin. *Authentic extracts from the lives of John Flavel and Rev. William Tennent.*
5. 18--, Edinburgh: William Whyte & Co. An unidentified selection of Flavel’s writings appears in *The Quiver: on the person of Christ setting forth the orthodox and catholic doctrine of his true humanity and proper deity.*
6. 1859, Edinburgh: John Menzies. *Flaveliana; or, Selections from the Works of John Flavel with A Brief Sketch of His Life.*
7. n.d., n.p.p., *The publications of the American Tract Society. Series 1. Vol. 2.* Includes several extracts of Flavel’s writings.
8. 19--, Derbyshire: Sovereign Grace Union. Unidentified selection of writings (perhaps *Fountain of Life?*) titled *Christ the Only Mediator.*
9. 1935, London: Sovereign Grace Union. Titled *Inestimable Love.*
10. 1959, Gorinchem: Romijn & Van der Hoff. **Dutch.** Titled *Christus menschwording.*
11. 196-, Grand Rapids, MI: Inheritance Publishers. Titled *The Third Title of Christ: “Altogether Lovely”.*
12. 1960, Gorinchem: Romijn & Ven der Hoff. **Dutch.** Titled: *De vrucht van Christus' dood.* Translates as “The Fruit of Christ’s Death”.
13. 1961, Gorinchem: Romijn & Ven der Hoff. **Dutch.** Titled *Het verbond der verlossing tussen de Vader en de Zoon, or, The Covenant of redemption between the father and the son.*
14. 1964, Gorinchem: Romijn & Ven der Hoff. **Dutch.** Titled *Hoedanige behoort gij te zijn in heilige wandel en godzaligheid.* Translates as: “What manner ought ye to be in holy conduct and godliness?”.
15. 1964, Gorinchem: Romijn & Ven der Hoff. **Dutch.** Titled *De heiligheid is Uwen huize sierlijk.* Translates as: “The Holiness in thy gracious house”.
16. 1988, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. *All the saints adore thee: insight from Christian classics.* Contains an extract from Flavel’s writings titled: “Self-denial”.
17. 199?, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Titled *Christ Altogether Lovely.*
18. 199?, Grand Rapids, MI: Treasured Meditations. Titled *Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Professing Christians.*
19. 1999, Shippensburg, PA: Mercy Place. *The Lost Passions of Jesus* contains an extract of Flavel’s titled ‘Christ Altogether Lovely’.

20. 2000, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. *The Life of the Late Rev. Mr. John Flavel*.
21. 2000, Grand Rapids, MI. Carson, *Fire and Ice: Puritan and Reformed Writings*. Contains extracts from Flavel's sermons.
22. 2002, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Titled *Christ Altogether Lovely*.
23. 2005, Lunteren: Stichting De Tabernakel. **Dutch**. Unidentified work titled *Wat zal het getuigenis over u zijn?* Translates as *What will your testimony be about?*
24. 2007, Lunteren: Stichting De Tabernakel. **Dutch**. Titled *De Zonde Gekruisigd*, or, *Sin Crucified*.
25. 2011, Houten: Den Hertog. **Dutch**. Titled *Genadetijd*.
26. 2011, Veenedaal: De Tabernakel. **Dutch**. Titled *Mens geworden*.
27. 2011, Veenedaal: De Tabernakel. **Dutch**. Titled *Stervenskunst*.
28. 2011, Titled *Christ Altogether Lovely*.
29. 2012, Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers. Bell, *From the Library of Charles Spurgeon: Selections from Writers Who Influenced His Spiritual Journey*. Contains multiple sections from *A Saint Indeed*, *Divine Conduct*, *Navigation Spiritualized*, and *Husbandry Spiritualized*.

Section Two: Electronic Media

Flavel's writings are available for use on the Kindle Reader:

1. *The Life of the Late Rev. Mr. John Flavel* (2010)
2. *Pneumatologia* (2010)
3. *Keeping the Heart* (2010)
4. *Method of Grace* (2010)
5. *Fountain of Life* (2010)
6. *Mystery of Providence* (2011)
7. *The Treasures of John Flavel* (Includes titles #3-6; 2011, Monergism)
8. *Christ Altogether Lovely* (2011)
9. *The Essential Works of John Flavel* (2012)⁸⁷⁴

Section Three: Works Speciously Attributed to Flavel

1. *A Briefe Treatise of Gods mighty povver, and Miraculous protection of His Church and People, From the beginning of the World even to these our days*. "By John Flavell. Printed at London for Rich. Harper, at the Bible and Harpe in Smithfield. 1642."

⁸⁷⁴ As of June 2012 this work was ranked #65 on Amazon.co.uk within the category: Books – Protestantism – Calvinism.

The *ESTC* attributes this to Flavel though it is highly unlikely Flavel wrote it as he would have only been between 12-15 years old on this date (depending of the date of his birth). As well as this six-page tract being the product of a mature mind, Flavel intimates that his conversion did not take place until later in the 1640s. Furthermore, there are numerous differences between the ways in which the two Johns spelled words and cited Scripture. The only existing copy of this tract, bound in the volume *Ecclesiastical Pamphlets 1640-5*, is located in Worcester College Library, Oxford. This is a four-page prayer to God with a two-page introduction. The prayer consists of 25 petitions to God, especially asking Him to protect the gospel from the Catholic Church.

The most likely author was John Flavell who attended Oxford and published the handbook on logic titled *Tractatus de demonstratione methodicus & polemicus* (Oxford, 1619). Foster reads: “Flavell, John: of Somerset, cler. fil. Trinity Coll., matric. 24 Jan., 1610-11, aged 14; scholar Wadham Coll. 1613, B.A. 28 June, 1614, M.A. 23 June, 1617, fellow 30 June, 1617, died 10 Nov., following, buried in the outer chapel.”⁸⁷⁵ The other possibility would be the father of this John Flavel, also called John Flavel. The entry for this John Flavell, recorded in *Alumni Oxonienses*, reads: “of co. Worcester, pleb. Broadgates Hall, matric. 11 Oct., 1583, aged 14; B.A. 7 Feb., 1587-8, M.A. 8 July, 1591, B. and D.D. 26 June, 1616, vicar of Bishops Lydiard, Somerset, 1595, and rector of Brushford 1599, rector of Tallaton, Devon, 1613, until his death in 1623; father of John next-named and of Thomas.”⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷⁵ Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, 505.

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 505.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF MARGINAL SOURCES CITED

A Saint Indeed 1689, DWL, 23.1.31.

A Saint Indeed 1689, Henry Huntingdon Library, Wing (2nd ed.)/F1192.

A Saint Indeed 1673, BL, 4409.d.23.

Assemblies Catechism 1692, BOD, 8° E 20(5) Linc.

Divine Conduct 1698, Harvard University, Wing/F1159.

Divine Conduct 1678, DWL, 22.7.8.

Fountain 1698, University of Edinburgh, D*23.48.

Fountain 1700, DWL, 3025.B.14 & 33.4.39.

Husbandry 1674, BOD, Vet. A3 e.252.

Husbandry 1765, BL, RB.23.a.26103.

Method 1681, BOD, Vet. A3 e.1424.

Method 1681, Union Theological Seminary, Wing/F1169.

Navigation 1733, BL, 4404.h.9.

Pneumatologia 1685, BL, 1608/199.

Pneumatologia 1698, BOD, Vet. A3 e.1563.

Pneumatologia 1698, DWL, 3025.B.15 & 21.7.26.

Pneumatologia 1789, BL, 1570/5991.

Sacramental 1700, BL, Wing/F1186.

Touchstone 1679, DWL, 23.1.30.

Works 1701, BL, L.6.c.2.

Works 1740, University of Texas, [Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Durham University. 21 Aug. 2012.

<http://find.galegroup.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=duruni&tabID=Too1&docId=CB3332780390&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>].

Works 1762, Trinity College, BX9315.F55.

Works 1796, BL, 1560/3130.

Works 1799, BL, 1560/3981.

APPENDIX C: AN 800-WORD EXTRACT FROM FLAVEL'S DIARY⁸⁷⁷

To make sure of eternal life, is the great business which the sons of death have to do in this world. Whether a man consider the immortality of his own soul, the ineffable joys and glory of heaven, the extreme and endless torments of hell, the inconceivable sweetness of peace of conscience, or the misery of being subject to the terrors thereof; all these put a necessity, a solemnity, a glory upon this work. But, Oh! the difficulties and dangers attending it! How many, and how great are these? What judgement, faithfulness, resolution, and watchfulness does it require? Such is the deceitfulness, darkness, and inconstancy of our hearts, and such the malice, policy and diligence of Satan to manage and improve it, that he who attempts this work had need both to watch his seasons for it, and frequently look up to God for his guidance and illumination, and to spend many sad and serious thoughts before he adventure upon a determination and conclusion of the state of his soul.

To the end therefore that this most important work may not miscarry in my hands, I have collected, with all the care I can, the best and soundest characters I can find in the writings of our modern divines, taken out of the scripture, and by their labours illustrated and prepared for use, that I might make a right application of them.

1. I have earnestly sought the Lord for the assistance of his Spirit, which can only manifest my own heart unto me, and show me the true state thereof, which is that thing my soul does most earnestly desire to know; and I hope the Lord will answer my desire therein, according to his promises, Luke 11:13. John 14:26.

⁸⁷⁷ Located within the text of Flavel's *Works* (1701), a4^{r-v}. This text is printed here in full because, heretofore, no researcher has noted that this portion of his Diary has been preserved. Its inclusion here is to call attention to its importance.

2. I have endeavoured to cast out and lay aside self-love, lest my heart being prepossessed therewith, my judgement should be perverted, and become partial on passing sentence on my estate. I have, in some measure, brought my heart to be willing to judge and condemn myself for an hypocrite, if such I shall be found on trial, as to approve myself for sincere and upright. Yea, I would have it so far from being grievous to me so to do, that if I have been all this while mistaken and deceived, I shall rejoice and bless the Lord with my soul, that now at last it may be discovered to me, and I may be set right, though I lay the foundation new again. This I have laboured to bring my heart to, knowing that thousands have dashed and split to pieces upon this rock. And indeed he that will own the person of a judge, must put off the person of a friend.

3. It has been my endeavour to keep upon my heart a deep sense of that great judgement day throughout this work as knowing by experience what a potent influence this has on the conscience, to make it deliberate, serious and faithful in its work, and therefore I have demanded of my own conscience, before the resolution of each question, O my conscience, deal faithfully with me in this particular, and say no more to me than thou wilt own and stand to in the great day, when the counsels of all hearts shall be made manifest.

4. Having seriously weighed each mark, and considered where in the weight and substance of it lieth, I have gone to the Lord in prayer for his assistance, ere I have drawn up the answer of my conscience, and as my heart has been persuaded therein, so have I determined and resolved: what has been clear to my experience, I have so set down; and what has been dubious, I have here left it so.

5. I have made choice of the fittest seasons I had for this work, and set to it when I have found my heart in the most quiet and serious frame. For as he that would

see his face in a glass, must be fixed, not in motion, or in water, must make no commotion in it; so it is in this case.

6. Lastly, To the end I may be successful in this work, I have laboured all along carefully to distinguish betwixt such sins as are grounds of doubting, and such as are only grounds of humiliation; knowing that not every evil is a ground of doubting, though all, even the smallest infirmities, administer matter of humiliation; and thus I have desired to enterprize this great business. O Lord, assist thy servant, that he may not mistake herein; but, if his conscience do now condemn him, he may lay a better foundation whilst he has time; and if it shall now acquit him, he may also have boldness in the day of judgement.”

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Walker MS C.2.422. A letter from Humphries Smith to the Reverend Mr. John Walker, a minister in Exeter. Dated 26 July 1704.

MS C.4.7-8. Flavel's legacy to his people annexed to his last will and testament. Date unknown.

Walker MS C.7.189. A sermon manuscript of Flavel's titled 'Abraham's Obedience.' Date unknown.

Walker MS E.8.32, 35, 39, 40. Edmund Elys' letters to John Walker which contain rough drafts of Elys' letters to Flavel. Dated 6 March 1703.

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