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Marchant, G.J.C.

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Abstract of a thesis submitted for the degree of Bachelor  
of Divinity of the University of Durham: by G.J.C. Marchant

March 1964

The Pastoral Psychology of Jonathan Edwards

with special reference to his Treatise concern-  
ing Religious Affections (1746)

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The thesis sets out to examine and to discuss the views of Jonathan Edwards of New England (1703-1758) on the nature of Christian conversion as related by him to a total religious psychology. It deals especially with four writings on the subject by him which originated in the ministry he was involved in during the revivals of 1735-1736 and 1740-1742, the latter being known as the "Great Awakening". These works are:

1. A Faithful Narrative of the surprising Work of God in the conversion of many hundred souls in Northampton etc. (1737).
2. Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God. (1741)
3. Thoughts on the Revival in New England. (1742).
4. A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections. (1746).

These are correlated and studied together in a way that has not been hitherto attempted in any published work, with especial investigation of the final work as the culminating writing of the group. Besides these attention has been given to his biography, sermons and other writings to elucidate his teaching. The most important studies on Edwards up to the time of submission have been consulted. Edwards' views

have been compared with that of contemporary Puritan teaching, and with Reformation origins. Sociological aspects have been considered in relation to his background.

Secondly, the thesis attempts an assessment of Edwards' teaching in the light of more recent psychology, especially of religious experience; and of modern principles of evangelism.

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## Introduction

This thesis is an examination of the teaching of Jonathan Edwards upon the religious experience of conversion, as this was exemplified in the revivals of 1735-36 and 1740-42, the latter of which was known as "The Great Awakening". For this purpose, it deals particularly with those writings of Edwards which were actually produced because of the revival and leads on to a more extended consideration of the work in which the previous ones culminated - The Treatise concerning Religious Emotions. It is concerned to bring out the degree to which Edwards thought ahead of his age and anticipated what later religious psychology and evangelistic experience has learnt. Thus Edwards' views are placed within the context of Puritan theology and pastoral practice, especially in the New England setting at the time of Edwards. It further notes the philosophical influences upon Edwards, which he deliberately used to clarify and elucidate the thorough-going psychology of religion which sustained his evangelistic activity and pastoral counselling. Some appraisal is attempted throughout and at the end, in the light of modern psychology and evangelistic principles, without, at the same time, expecting Edwards to be completely two hundred years ahead, or forgetting that he may have retained some things still worth observing.

Jonathan Edwards is himself a most impressive person,

combining in himself, as he does, an outstanding philosophical intellect, a highly developed aesthetic sense, a deep religious devotion and typical Puritan sanctity of quiet, dignified fervour, and finally a self-less pastoral zeal, along his own lines. His life and work occurred at a period of great interest. Dr. Perry Miller, one of the most widely read and also a most assiduous writer about the period in New England, both before and at the time of Edwards, has said that this whole era "affords the historian an ideal laboratory"; it has "a representative quality".<sup>1</sup> The question here however is, what kind of laboratory is it? What scientific categories and pre-suppositions are being used to evaluate the data? Simply sociological or psychological? Professor H.A. Hodges has said - "What is urgently needed is an enquiry into the forms or attitudes of imagination and thought which are distinctive of the religious and specifically of the Christian mind, on the assumption that these will differ from the forms of imagination and thought which underlie other competing systems of ideas".<sup>2</sup> It was to something of this concern that Edwards addressed his considerable powers, out of the pressures involved in the religious revivals of his own ministry. Consequently this may be considered a source-study making some contribution to the answer Professor Hodges is after. The

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1. The New England Mind: from Colony to Province. Harvard.

1953.p.x.

2. Christianity and the Modern World View. SCM. 1949. p.16.

aspect of Edwards that compels our constant interest is the way in which he seeks to penetrate to the association of the psycho-somatic make-up of the human being with the spiritual experience of regeneration and conversion.

Edwards has had very little attention from English scholarship in the last hundred years. He has always been regarded by religious thought south of the Tweed as somewhat too much of a good thing. His works have been "expurgated" and "improved" when republished, and in the last seventy years no English work of scholarship has been produced upon him of any size. A further instance of neglect can be gauged from the fact that his one English biography by A.V.G. Allen (1889) when borrowed from the Cambridge University Library was found to have its pages uncut. Although recent American scholarship is striving to do justice to one who has been such an outstanding thinker, it has not yet entered into his pastoral psychology, by correlating all his works on the revival with any thoroughness. The present thesis may perhaps begin the work of closer inspection of this important and abiding aspect of Edwards' thought, for in its plan and purpose it is attempting something that is, so far, very inadequately covered by any writing upon Edwards from either side of the Atlantic.

The edition of Edwards works that has been used basically for this study is the Bohn two volume edition, which is

probably the most satisfactory for text and the many footnotes which Edwards included in his works, but which his 'improving' editors severely pruned. Together with this, reference is made to the only volumes so far produced under the new Yale edition, those on the Freedom of the Will and Religious Affections. In footnote references, these two editions have been referred to as Works and Yale edition respectively.

## CHAPTER ONE

## An Outline of Jonathan Edwards' Life.

It is not proposed to go into all the details of the life of Jonathan Edwards here, but rather to give a general outline, concentrating on that part of it which particularly belongs to the subject of this thesis. His biography is perfectly straightforward; there are no mysteries or problems connected with it. Samuel Hopkins, his pupil, was the first to publish an account of his life in 1765, seven years after his death, and this prefaced collections of Edwards' writings until 1830 when a Memoir was written by Sereno E. Dwight, which thereafter superseded Hopkins' work in all collections.<sup>1</sup> Later biographies are based on Dwight's Memoir, and although they fill in the background to Edwards' life and make their own assessments, "the retelling of the story makes no change in the verdict".<sup>2</sup>

Edwards' life spans the first half of the eighteenth century; he was born October 5th. 1703 and died March 22nd. 1758. His great-grandfather, William Edwards had been brought to America as a child by his mother and step-father

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1. The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758. A Bibliography by Thomas H. Johnson. Princeton Univ. Press 1940. items 219-224 cf. items. 338-343.
  2. Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758; A Biography. O.E.Wislow, New York, 1940, p.1.

to escape from debts, and the family had turned from previous Church of England adherence to New England Congregationalism. Jonathan's father Timothy became Minister of East Windsor in 1694 and died there two months before Jonathan Edwards' own death of smallpox. His mother was descended from a prominent New England family, the Stoddards, who were well known for their intellectual ability and piety. Edwards' maternal grandparents were important influences in his life. The early intellectual promise of Jonathan Edwards is usually discerned in a letter that playfully criticises the idea of the material constitution of the soul; and a note observing carefully the flying spider, both of which were written at the age of twelve. At thirteen he entered Yale, then recently founded to be a more trustworthy academy for supplying the ministry than Harvard was thought to be. He shared in the broken course of that college's early years, and graduated in 1720 at the age of seventeen. He spent another two years at the same college in New Haven studying theology, until he undertook a short pastorate of eight months, from August 1722 to April 1723 at New York. Then for six months he was at home until he returned to Yale as tutor in 1724 having in the meanwhile accepted a pastorate in Bolton, Conn. which in fact he did not go to. He went to his old college in times of even greater stress, since Cutler, its Rector, and also

its Tutor had both become Anglicans. As tutor, Jonathan Edwards was highly regarded, in fact was "a pillar".

His public ministry really commenced in February 1727, when he was ordained to be colleague to his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, then in his eighty-fourth year, at Northampton, Mass. Stoddard was in himself a great institution. He had been minister at Northampton since 1672 and combined not only the spiritual ministry but also the civic leadership in himself. The Indians referred to him as "The Englishman's God", quite seriously, and he merited the awe thus shown by the masterly way he handled, controlled and led the factious and difficult town of Northampton. The church there was the strongest and wealthiest outside of Boston and the culture and wealth of the people made them difficult and proud of their prominent position in the country. There was a division between the rich and powerful landed gentry, "the court party", and the less well-off, "the country party". As in other prosperous townships of New England, the degree of comfort and refinement that had become possible was undermining the older Puritan outlook, and the church inclined to 'liberalism'.. Despite his powers of leadership, Stoddard had not found his ministry at all easy. In the letter to one of his Scottish friends, the Rev. Thomas Gillespie of Carnock, Edwards

remarked that "In one ecclesiastical controversy in Mr. Stoddard's day, wherein the church was divided into two parties, the heat of spirit was raised to such a degree, that it came to hard blows" and this was only one of other "mighty contests and controversies among them...which were managed with great heat and violence".<sup>1</sup> And Edwards goes on to note that after Stoddard's time the pride of the people increased as a result of both material expansion and spiritual experience and the consequent reputation enjoyed.

When Edwards settled in Northampton, it was a town of two hundred families, the church having a congregation of six hundred people. It was a period of religious decline in the place, since for nine years previously Stoddard had observed a growing rejection of religion, especially among the younger members of the community. Dwight, quoting presumably from Hopkins, refers to "dissipation and licentiousness" which may well refer to the popular practice of "bundling", a custom that allowed young couples to sleep together fully clothed; he mentions further the breakdown of family control, the profanation of the sabbath and the disturbing of "the decorum of the sanctuary".<sup>2</sup> Although it was customary in that period to lament the trend of the times, without always giving good evidence for such an outlook, it was in

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1. Memoirs of Jonathan Edwards; by S.E. Dwight. p.clxxiv (in the two vol. edition of The Works of Jonathan Edwards (Bohn.) London 1871.
  2. op. cit. p.lxxx.



fact, also being recognised that the Puritan social values were producing a change in society that was militating against Puritanism. So Edwards learned to discriminate from the first between the outward endowment, both material and religious, of Northampton, under the long and successful ministry of his grandfather, and the real spirituality of the church. In a private meditation out of a series kept throughout his life, he refers to backsliders and hypocrites as "them that are rested high in knowledge, wealth and worldly dignity and also in spiritual privilege".<sup>1</sup> However, soon after Edwards' settlement in Northampton, there was a small religious revival, bringing about twenty people to an experience of conversion. Such an event would have seemed nothing less than the Divine seal upon the new ministry, and the people who had known him from his boyhood, as well as his family, and who had unanimously welcomed him to the church, would assuredly see in this the highest confirmation of their choice. For Edwards, this experience shared with his grandfather, whom he revered as a great spiritual guide and pastor, meant a great deal: "I have reason to bless God for the great advantage I had by it".<sup>2</sup> He was able to have the experience of seeing one

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1. Images or Shadows of Divine Things by J. Edwards, ed. by Miller, Yale U.P. New Haven and O.U.P. 1948. Image 159.
  2. Dwight's Memoirs (Works. vol.i.) p. lxxx

of the great pastors of the age guiding members of the flock in their receiving the grace of God, and to take part in it with him, and learn, in intimate discussion, the application of the principles of Puritan pastoral psychology. This close and important association went on for almost precisely two years; Stoddard died on February 11th, 1729.

Edwards was now in sole charge of the church at Northampton. He had already married Sarah Pierrepont, the daughter of a New Haven minister and a descendant by a cadet line from the Earl of Kingston; her mother was of the family of the Rev. Thomas Hooker, the 'Father of the Connecticut churches' and a prominent spiritual director in his time. It was not surprising that, with this ancestral background, Edwards should look upon his own ministry as primarily that of "preaching and writing, and conversing with persons under religious impressions, in his study; whither he encouraged all such to repair; where they might be sure, in ordinary cases, to find him, and to be allowed easy access to him".<sup>1</sup> This was not because he thought that house to house visitation was not part of the normal work of a minister. But he considered that ministers

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1. S.E. Dwight. Memoirs (quoting Hopkins) p.lxxxii

should foster their own special gifts; if they were easy conversationalists (which he was not), then it would seem that the ministry of wide visitation was theirs. But as he had no easy manner with people in the general way, he felt that this kind of ministry would not be profitable for him. He certainly visited the sick; he called the young to group meetings in his house; he catechised the children; he preached frequently at private meetings; he promoted Bible knowledge by written questions to certain individuals; above all he prepared two discourses weekly, one of which was preached as a week-night lecture. But from the beginning of his ministry he set himself to spend a large proportion of his time in Bible study, in reading, and in investigating theological subjects by "the origination and arrangement of thoughts, in the invention of arguments, and in the discovery of truths and principles".<sup>1</sup> Thirteen hours a day were commonly spent in his study. The results of his reading and thinking were committed to a number of hand-made note-books, though there is an over-spill on the backs of bills, letters and other scraps. Some were intended as source books for a projected Summa - "A Rational Account of the Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion Attempted" to show "how all the arts and sciences, the more they are perfected, the more they issue in divinity

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1. ibid.

and coincide with it and appear to be as parts of it".<sup>1</sup>

Early beginnings on this were made at Yale between 1716 and 1720 in "Notes on the Mind" and "Notes on Science", while another source was a life-long journal called "Miscellanies". His Bible study can be seen in his "Notes on the Scriptures" consisting of a small A.V. Bible interleaved, with three volumes of numbered annotations; the interleaves were for shorter notes, the manuscript volumes held the longer, which were cross-referenced to the biblical text.<sup>2</sup> The actual extent of his reading can be gauged by his home-made "Catalogue " which lists several hundred titles of books as he noted them to be read, read them and commented on them. While this series begins with the stock student books read at Yale, it is not just a parallel to other reading at the time but is distinguished by its breadth and thoroughness.<sup>3</sup> Not only does his "Catalogue" and references in his writings refer to theological works, but his range

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1. Images or Shadows of Divine Things by Jonathan Edwards. edit. by Perry Miller, (New Haven; Yale U.P. 1948) Intro. p.1.
  2. op. cit. p.144, note 2. The Edwards MSS. total 1093 at Yale Univ. Library and 55 at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary Library (See Jonathan Edwards the Preacher by R.G. Turnbull (Baker Book House 1958 p.47) but this only refers to Sermon MSS and needs supplementing from the bibliography in Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758; A Biography, by O.E. Winslow. (New York 1940).
  3. See Jonathan Edwards by O.E. Winslow pp.119,120. cf. R.G. Turnbull in Evangelical Quarterly XXX No.2 1958 pp.68ff.

included philosophy, some branches of science such as Newtonian physics and astronomy, the novels of Fielding and Richardson, and a number of periodicals such as the "Monthly Review".<sup>1</sup>

The first outstanding event in Edwards' ministry was his accepting the invitation to give the Commencement lecture for Harvard at Boston on July 8th 1731, when he was still only twenty-seven years old. It was before the President, staff and graduates of the college, besides a wider clerical audience that was critical of all such occasions, although it published the lectures that passed as "the best". There was special interest in this young man; he was from Yale, which had been founded because of Harvard's "Latitudinarianism", and yet had had its own troubles through the "apostasy" of its Rector, Timothy Cutler, to the Church of England, with the result of a divided college, and no Rector being appointed for four years. There was rumour of "Arminianism" in it, yet at the same time there were students showing tendencies to "enthusiasm" and to Quakerism. But even more, the lecturer was the grandson of the redoubtable Stoddard, and had been associated by him in the ministry at the church at Northampton which had become a symbol of a new and challenging attitude in theology and churchmanship in New

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1. Jonathan Edwards, the Preacher. pp.30; 36ff.(by R.G. Turnbull)

England. Stoddard divided the leadership of the New England churches with the Mathers, Increase and Cotton. He had challenged them openly and while the East followed them, he was the undisputed leader in the west. In Jonathan Edwards was to be seen his "hand-picked and personally trained...crown prince, selected with an eye to the preservation of the empire".<sup>1</sup> The question to be settled, now that the great man had gone, as well as his rivals, the Mathers, was whether this young successor to the struggle might be brought to peaceful co-existence if not co-operation with the Boston and Eastern church life; as well as to gain the measure of him. For there were other members of the Stoddard family who were prominent, notable Edwards' uncle, William Williams, whose second wife Christian, was a Stoddard. Williams was a powerful personality and leader of an important and well-connected family group, not greatly in sympathy with the Edwards side of the family. This family rift was to have great effects later in Edwards' life, but it may well be seen as present, and as affecting his ministry from the outset. The old Solomon Stoddard had combined a rigorous assertion of the Puritan theology in preaching with a liberalized churchmanship. The Williams' family adhered to the more liberal church policy but followed Boston

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1. Jonathan Edwards by Perry Miller (The American Men of Letters Series) William Sloan Associates Inc. 1949 p.12.

and the Eastern part of the country in their muted theological tones. Harvard was the nursery of the moderate Puritanism of the East, Boston its parade ground. Benjamin Colman, with his Addisonian style his polite quotations, emulated by Harvard men and his sentimentality - "a rationalist who luxuriated in emotion"<sup>1</sup>; Nathaniel Appleton, Peter Clark, "Johnny" Barnard, Edward Holyoke, Ebenezer Gay and Charles Chauncy; these were the prominent ministers of the town. Chauncy had invited one who had influenced him much, Samuel Whittlesey of Wallingford, Conn. to preach in the April before Edwards was to lecture and the sermon on the eternal destruction of sinners was published just before Edwards came. Perhaps there may be seen in this a quiet assertion of the orthodoxy of Boston in advance.<sup>2</sup>

Jonathan Edwards' Sermon had a title that might seem to be a repetition of accepted orthodoxy, at first sight. But "God Glorified in the Work of Redemption, by the Greatness of Man's Dependence upon Him in the Whole of It" had its real point in the last five words. It was not without point, no doubt that the passage chosen (I. Cor. 1.29-31) should give opportunity to contrast the wisdom of men and the grace of God. The sermon elaborates that not only is

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1. Jonathan Edwards by Perry Miller p.18,19.

2. op.cit. p.26.

all saving grace and benefit derived from God, but also that it comes solely through God and his "arbitrary and sovereign good pleasure". To some extent this total dependence had become a euphemism<sup>1</sup> as pastoral concern and the problem of communication in preaching had subtly altered the traditional emphases in the changing American scene. Edwards' conclusion in this sermon threw down the gage to those whom he knew would be conscious of his criticism of them as deviationists when he said:-

"Hence those doctrines and schemes of divinity that are in any respect opposite to such an absolute and universal dependence on God, derogate from his glory, and thwart the design of our redemption. And such are those schemes that put the creature in God's stead, in any of the mentioned respects, that exalt man into the place of either Father, Son or Holy Ghost, in anything pertaining to our redemption. However they may allow of a dependence of the redeemed on God, yet they deny a dependence that is so absolute and universal. They own an entire dependence on God for some things, but not for others; they own that we depend on God for the gift and acceptance of a Redeemer, but deny so absolute a dependence on him for the obtaining of an interest in the Redeemer. They own an absolute dependence on the Father for giving his Son and on the Son for working out redemption, but not so entire a dependence on the Holy Ghost for conversion.....They own a dependence on God for means of grace but not absolutely for the benefit and success of those means.....They own a dependence on the free grace of God for a reception into his favour, so far as it is without any proper merit, but not as it is without being attracted, or moved with any excellency."<sup>2</sup>

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1. cf. Dwight Memoirs: (Works.vol i.) p. lxxxiii. "The subject was at that time novel".
  2. The Works of Jonathan Edwards A.M. ed. E.Hickman. Bohn London. 1871 vol ii. pp.6,7.



The sermon was published in the August. It was commended to the public by two assistant ministers in Boston, Thomas Cooper and William Prince who probably show therein a conscious re-action against the prevalent fashion in Boston and a link-up between East and West Massachusetts Puritanism. Edwards had begun his lifelong campaign against the "Arminianism" which he saw as the church's falsification of the Gospel in its vain attempts to stem the tide of contemporary indifference. In this campaign, his mind and outlook were fully formed from the outset. His is not the thought that can be divided into 'periods' but what had been his outlook from the beginning only strengthened and deepened with time. "He altered little from his adolescence at Yale to his death at Princeton".<sup>1</sup>

In these early days of his sole ministry in Northampton, it would appear that he addressed himself to the task of arousing a congregation that was wealthy and comfortable. A number of his sermons are undated and this indicates, according to the preface to the collection "Fifteen Sermons on Various Subjects" that those without date are prior to 1733 when he began to note the date of his sermons and apparently continued to do so afterwards.<sup>2</sup> One on

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1. Jonathan Edwards; Perry Miller, p.44.  
 2. Works. ii. p.51.

"Procrastination of the Sin and Folly of Depending on Future Time" openly applies the theme of the sermon to the existence of the two factions in the town and the resultant strife.<sup>1</sup> It searches the hopes of those who are landed and comfortably settled in life, as well as developing the recurrent theme of the ways of young people, which disturbed him.<sup>2</sup> The undated sermons, presumably of this period, suggest that Edwards was preaching a good deal along the lines of his grandfather in warning about eternal punishment and in dwelling much on the nature, foolishness and doom of the wicked.<sup>3</sup> These are probably the sort of sermons he would call "awakening", which indeed in his sermon of this time on "Self-Flatteries, or the Vain Self-flatteries of the Sinner" he mentions are losing their force.<sup>4</sup> There is therefore more to Edwards' reputation as a preacher of eternal destruction of the wicked in hell than the more recent American biographical opinion is prepared to concede. It is right that the term used of him "The Fiery Puritan" - should be corrected and balanced.<sup>5</sup> Yet at the same time it cannot be maintained that this reputation rests only upon

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1. op.cit. pp.237-242.

2. op.cit. p.240 Sect.V.3.5.

3. op.cit. p.68-71 (Sermon VI-Warnings of Scripture etc.); pp.110,111(Great Guilt no obstacle to Pardon etc.); pp.817-825; 832-835;851;871;880;888; (from undated sermons from "Seventeen Occasional Sermons").

4. op.cit. p.219, (Sec.III.2.)

5. Jonathan Edwards, The Fiery Puritan. by H.B. Parkes. New York 1930.

two printed papers.<sup>1</sup> There is more to it than that, even though it may still be true that, looking over the sermon notes that cover his whole ministry, they are not overwhelmingly given to this theme, and that many other subjects figure as largely, if not more so. O.E. Winslow's contention may be accepted that he was not 'fiery' - but not the contention that he was no Puritan!<sup>2</sup> He followed up his lecture in Boston in 1731 by asserting the sovereignty of God uncompromisingly at Northampton, and with this used the fear of hell and the hope of salvation to stir the lethargic souls ("sottish", he called them) of his prosperous congregation.<sup>3</sup> But his pulpit manner, standing perfectly still, except for turning the pages of manuscript book, reading his sermon with steady deliberateness in a low but distinct voice, gives little support to the popular idea of a revivalist.

In 1732 a noticeable moral improvement began in the town especially amongst the young, which continued on into the next year. In the latter part of 1733 an outstanding event was the ready agreement by young and old, after a special sermon by Edwards, to refrain from 'visiting and

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1. cf. Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758; A Biography. by O.E. Winslow, 1930 p.138.

2. ibid.

3. Sermon IV. Works vol. ii. p.849-854.  
cf. Sermon I and VII (Works); Vol. ii. pp.817-829; 878-888).

diversion' after the midweek lecture and on Sunday evenings, as leading to "disorders and immoralities". Two sermons of this time were published; 'The Christian Pilgrim', preached in September 1733, urges the path of holiness; and 'A Divine and Supernatural Light immediately imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God, shown to be both a Scriptural and Rational Doctrine', was preached in 1733 and published early 1734. The descriptions in the title 'Scriptural and Rational' indicate an approach that was conscious of a doubt if not a criticism of the new emphasis he was bringing into his ministry, of the total dependence of fallen man upon the arbitrary action of God in salvation. The sermon was published because of its arresting nature, but, possibly as a result of this sermon, a 'violent controversy' which was going on in New England generally over the subject of "Arminianism", began to influence Northampton. Edwards accordingly preached on the matter, contrary to the advice of many friends. Dwight supposed that he did so because the points at issue concerned "the great subject of salvation, and that mankind never can be so powerfully affected by any subject, as when their attention to it has been strongly excited".<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly this pastoral aspect of the action was part of Edwards' reason; but it is almost certain that he saw the situation as a call to enter the lists for the

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1. Works. vol.i.p.lxxxiv

deliverance of the church in New England from the spiritual situation it was in. Northampton had already been the place from which New England had been challenged by Stoddard; but there was a deeper malaise to which it must be aroused by Stoddard's successor. Edwards saw this situation while he was at Yale and he was to give himself to this task to the end of his days.

The subject of Edwards' two sermons at this time was Justification by faith alone.<sup>1</sup> They were published in an enlarged form in 1738 with four other discourses three of which were preached during the six months following (Pressing into the Kingdom of God; Ruth's Resolution: The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners) while the other The Excellency of Christ was given at another unspecified time.<sup>2</sup> The sermon on The Justice of God etc., unlike the other two preached at this time, makes no specific reference, as they do, to the experience of revival that took place. Indeed there are a number of places in the sermon where one might have expected a reference to any first signs of revival, for they would have strengthened its force and Edwards was prepared to

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1. op.cit. p.620.

2. The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards: A Bibliography. T.H. Johnson (Princeton U.P. 1940) item (49).

use the evidence of the revival later to strengthen his words. There was another sermon, preached in December 1734, The Preciousness of Time, which also makes no specific reference to revival.<sup>1</sup> Yet Dwight in his Memoir refers to the Sermon on The Justice of God etc. as representing several discourses under the one text ("That every mouth may be stopped" - Rom.iii.19) which Edwards decided early on in the revival to preach.<sup>2</sup> They were - "to urge repentance on every such sinner, as his immediate duty; to insist that God is under no manner of obligation to any unrenewed man; and that a man can challenge nothing, either in absolute justice, or by free promise, on account of anything he does before he repents and believes". Indeed he emphasised that "it would be just with God for ever to reject and cast off mere natural men". The theme contributed greatly to the revival's development. But there is another aspect to the sermon, no doubt of a secondary nature. The sermons on Justification produced a fierce controversy, and ridicule especially from Edwards' relatives, the Williams family of Hatfield, led now by his cousin, Israel Williams. "Their religious sentiments differed widely from his and their opposition to him in the course which he now pursued became direct and violent".<sup>3</sup> Possibly in his denunciation of

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1. Works vol.ii.p.233.

2. op.cit. vol. i. p.lxxxv.

3. ibid. Hickman's footnote.

God's judgment on sin in the sermon The Justice of God etc., Edwards was not unmindful of this opposition from the wealthy and influential, and the support for it in his own congregation.

"How some of you have risen up against God, and in the frame of your minds opposed him in his sovereign dispensations... You never would submit to God; never willingly comply, that God should have dominion over the world, that he should govern it for his own glory, according to his own wisdom."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless a more potent answer to his critics had already developed. In his preface to the published "Five Discourses on Important Subjects etc", Edwards says:-

"At that time, while I was greatly reproached for defending this doctrine (i.e. Justification) in the pulpit, and just upon my suffering a very open abuse for it, God's work wonderfully brake forth amongst us, and souls began to flock to Christ, as the Saviour in whose righteousness alone they hoped to be justified. So that this was the doctrine on which this work in its beginning was founded, as it evidently was in the whole progress of it."<sup>2</sup>

Comparing what he says here, and his account in the later story of the revival - "A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God, in the conversion of many hundred souls in Northampton etc.", it appears that he must have preached the sermons on Justification about November or early December 1734; for,

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1. op.cit. p.674.

2. op.cit. page 620.

"Then it was, in the latter part of December, that the Spirit of God began extraordinarily to set in, and wonderfully to work amongst us; and there were, very suddenly, one after another, five or six persons, who were to all appearances savingly converted, and some of them wrought upon in a very remarkable manner".<sup>1</sup>

Edwards' italics, included here, emphasise the coincidence of this practical and pastoral experience with the preaching, that led to the sort of revival New England pastors had long desired to see, by means of the preaching of a truth those same pastors had tended to forget or even reject. The result, as was very apparent throughout the whole population of Northampton at the opening of 1735, was "A deep and solemn interest in the great truths of religion... in all parts of the town and among all classes of people".<sup>2</sup> It was the main topic of conversation, and old and young almost to a man were concerned "about the great things of the eternal world". It brought the gayest or the most hostile to religion to be concerned about personal salvation. Edwards indeed reports that although normal business was not interrupted there was sufficient concern about religion to give rise to taunts elsewhere that in fact all daily work had stopped.<sup>3</sup> Presumably it was at this time early in 1735 that the sermons Pressing into the Kingdom of God and Ruth's Resolution were given, the latter urging all to join those who had already been converted, and thus to belong

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1. op.cit. p.348.

2. op.cit. (Dwight's Memoir) p.lxxxv.

3. op.cit. . . . p.348.



to a true spiritual community. Both of these sermons reflect the revival situation in their point and application. It was in March and April 1735 that the revival came to its height; for about five or six weeks people were being converted, so Edwards tells us, at the rate of about four a day or thirty a week.<sup>1</sup> "There was as much done in a day or two as at ordinary times, with all the endeavours that men can use, and with such a blessing as we commonly have, is done in a year." The report of this experience at Northampton was quickly spread around the neighbourhood by visitors to Northampton, who had come either on business or to see for themselves; and who themselves very frequently "were savingly wrought upon, and went home rejoicing in the forgiving love of Christ". Ten other towns in the same county of New Hampshire are mentioned as sharing in the revival at this time, while further afield in Connecticut, seventeen continued to receive similar visitations for some time after revival had abated in Northampton.

The revival began to subside in the end of May 1735, having continued in Northampton for about six months, though continuing on in other towns and villages for some considerable time later. At this time Edwards preached on

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1. op.cit. p.350.

I Thess. 2.16 - When the wicked shall have filled up the measure of their sin, wrath will come upon them to the uttermost in which he urged the example of the revival on those who continued unmoved.<sup>1</sup> Two other sermons, preached on the subject of The Folly of looking back in fleeing out of Sodom (Luke. xvii.32) refer to "such a time as this" as a warning to awaken and stimulate spiritual concern.

"The advantages which persons are under now for their salvation, are perhaps tenfold what they have been at such times as we have ordinarily lived in; and backsliding will be proportionably the the greater sin, and the more dangerous to the soul. You have seen God's glory and his wonders amongst us, in a most marvellous manner. - If therefore you look back after this, there will be great danger that God will swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest."<sup>2</sup>

During this time, in the spring and early summer, Edwards speaks of Northampton as "never so full of love, nor so full of joy, nor yet so full of distress, as it was then".<sup>3</sup> Edwards wrote a first report on the revival in a letter to Dr. Benjamin Colman, a minister of the Brattle Street Church in Boston on 30th May, 1735, who sent Edwards' report to London, to Isaac Watts and John Guyse for publication. Colman asked for a fuller report and accordingly Edwards wrote A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God... in Northampton in November 1736, and this was published by

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1. op.cit. vol. ii. p.122.
  2. op.cit. vol. ii. p.67.
  3. op.cit. vol. i. p.348.

Watts and Guyse in October 1737, in London. Looking back on the extraordinary six months, Edwards felt able to commit himself to some figures.

"I am far from pretending to be able to determine how many have lately been the subjects of such mercy; but if I may be allowed to declare anything that appears to me probable in a thing of this nature, I hope that more than 300 souls were savingly brought home to Christ, in this town, in the space of half a year, and about the same number of males as females"

Further in this account, he notes:-

"I suppose there were upwards of fifty persons converted in this town above forty years of age; more than twenty of them above fifty; about ten of them above sixty; and two of them above seventy years of age".<sup>1</sup>

As to the younger people he estimates:-

"I suppose, near thirty were, to all appearance, savingly wrought upon, between ten and fourteen years of age; two between nine and ten, and one of about four years of age".

While more generally:-

"Those of our young people who are on other accounts most considerable, are mostly, as I hope, truly pious and leading persons in the ways of religion. Those who were formerly loose young persons, are generally, to all appearance become true lovers of God and Christ and spiritual in their dispositions. I hope that by far the greater part of persons in this town, above sixteen years of age, are such as have the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ".<sup>2</sup>

All this had resulted in increased communicants, after a

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1. op.cit. vol. i. p.350.

2. op.cit. vol. i. p. 350.

profession of conversion. The sacrament of Holy Communion was held every eight weeks, and before one occasion Edwards received above a hundred new communicants, and about another sixty before the following one,

"...whose appearance, when they presented themselves together to make an open explicit profession of Christianity, was very affecting to the congregation.... and I had very sufficient evidence of the conversion of their souls, through divine grace....."<sup>1</sup>

As a result the communicant membership of the church numbered six hundred and twenty, which included almost the whole adult population. In all this, and even more from this time onwards, Edwards was forced to pronounce in some way on the reality of people's conversion and early "decided for himself the manner in which he was bound to treat awakened sinners".<sup>2</sup> At the end of "A Faithful Narrative" he concedes mistakes of judgment, and admits that there were those whose later conduct belied their profession. But on the whole he could say, after eighteen months;

"But as to those who have been thought converted at this time, they generally seem to have had an abiding change wrought on them".<sup>3</sup>

The subsiding of the revival was attributed to various

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1. ibid. 1708. . . .
  2. Memoir (Works).vol. i. p. lxxxv.
  3. Works vol. i.p. 364.

causes. Attention was diverted by a controversy which in the end attracted the concern of most of New England, over the appointment of a new minister to the parish of Springfield. Edwards was involved in the ministerial deliberations, although deploring the whole matter. He alludes to this event as a powerful antidote to the revival, on which Dwight, in agreement, comments,

"A revival of religion is nothing but the immediate result of an uncommon attention, on the part of a church and congregation, to the truth of God..... The only effectual way to put a stop to such a work of grace, is, therefore, to divert the attention of Christians and sinners from those truths which bear immediately on the work of salvation".<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Dwight also sees another force at work, less occasional and more inexorable than some unexpected event.

"One principal cause of this declension, is undoubtedly to be found in the fact, that in all these places, both among ministers and private christians, the physical excitement had been greater than the human constitution can, for a long period, endure. Nothing, it should be remembered, exhausts the strength and the animal spirits like feeling.....In revivals of religion as they have hitherto appeared, the nerves of whole man - of body mind and heart - are kept continually on the stretch, from month to month; until at length they are relaxed and become non-elastic; and then all feeling and energy of every kind, is gone. Another reason is undoubtedly to be found in the fact, that those, who had so long witnessed this remarkable work of God, without renouncing their sins, had at length become hardened and hopeless in their impenitence."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Memoir Works, vol. i. p. lxxxvi.

2. ibid.

No doubt Edwards shared the last opinion for in a sermon in June 1735 The Sole Consideration that God is God, Sufficient to still all Objections to His Sovereignty he selects for the application of the theme "a use of reproof to such under convictions of sin, and fears of hell, as are not still, but oppose the sovereignty of God in the disposals of His grace."<sup>1</sup> The concluding paragraph plainly shows that he has in mind the hardened and hopeless.

Nevertheless, although the experience of revival continued in other villages and parishes in the neighbourhood, at Northampton matters settled into a more usual parish routine. Edwards was increasingly called upon for lectures and preaching and even more for private consultation both by members of his own flock and also by people from elsewhere. His advice was sought by other ministers on pastoral counselling. And he was further occupied with writing and preparing for publication his Faithful Narrative of Surprising Conversions. There was also the necessity for building a new "Meeting House" as the old one, apart from other inconveniences, had shown its unsuitability in March 1737, when the gallery collapsed in a crowded service with seventy

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1. Works. vol. ii. pp. 109.110.

people pinned underneath. But so little injury was received that it formed an opportunity to remind the congregation of God's providential mercy, in a sermon Rebuke of God and a Loud Call to Repent. It may be that Edwards' "sermons dated between 1736 and 1740 show him struggling terribly to revive the spirit of 1735"<sup>1</sup> but of this one the effect was lost in the excitement and social comparisons involved in securing seating in the new church, which brought all spiritual activities to lapse until the committee of five had finally settled the matter.<sup>2</sup> But so far as the sermons published in his collected Works are concerned, Dr. Perry Miller's verdict is not entirely supported. In 1736 two sermons appear, God the Best Portion of the Christian<sup>3</sup> given in April; and Unbelievers Contemn the Glory and Excellency of Christ<sup>4</sup> preached in the May. In 1737 we have one sermon preached in September on Hosea ii. 15,<sup>5</sup> taking as its theme the necessity of being humbled by God, to deal with sin, both in the Christian and in the unbeliever, in order that God may give them hope and comfort at the end. In 1738 Edwards preached sixteen sermons of the general theme of Charity and Its Fruits.<sup>6</sup> Three others - Jesus Christ Gloriously Exalted above

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1. Jonathan Edwards by Perry Miller (1949) p. 130.
  2. Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758; A Biography. O.E. Winslow, 1930, p.170.
  3. Works, vol. ii. p.104.
  4. op.cit. p. 61.
  5. op.cit. p.838.
  6. ed. by Tyron Edwards (London; J. Nisbet. 1851).

all Evil in the Work of Redemption<sup>1</sup> (August 1738);

Joseph's Temptation and Deliverance<sup>2</sup>; and one on Hebrews

xiii. 8<sup>3</sup> are by no means weighted with revival urgency.

The last one certainly applies the theme "To those that have been heretofore under awakenings, but have now become senseless and careless"; and it reflects a situation in which reaction has brought about spiritual apathy. The town is reproved - "That we have exceedingly declined in religion" mainly because the complete preoccupation with spiritual concern when "The town seemed to be full of the praises of Christ" had given way to a more usual social situation. The sermon on Joseph's Deliverance from temptation has a moral and pastoral purpose particularly to the youth of the town, in connection with certain customs that had long caused concern. Edwards reminds them that in the recent revival the new spiritual impetus brought a cessation to these activities - "The Spirit of God abolished this custom for this reason, because if it had been kept up in the town, it would have had a direct tendency to hinder the work which the Spirit was about to do amongst us." It is noticeable here that not only does Edwards see the revival as stigmatizing the custom by causing it to cease; he sees that the renouncing of those ways before the revival had

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1. Works, vol. ii. p. 213.

2. op. cit. p. 226.

3. op. cit. p. 949.



actually prepared for it to come; a matter he had noticed previously in "A Faithful Narrative".<sup>1</sup> It is possible that he had hopes of a repetition of events in the outcome of this sermon. But of the few sermons here given, there is nothing for suggesting more than that Edwards kept the matter alive before the congregation. A similar attention to religion as had marked Northampton in 1735 continued from that time to influence other neighbouring villages and towns for all these following years; and indeed Dwight remarks that in Northampton -

"A great reformation in morals, as well as religion had been the consequence of the preceding revival of religion. Associations for prayer and social religion had been regularly kept up, and a few instances of awakening and conversion had all along been known".<sup>2</sup>

In 1739 Edwards commenced a series of sermons that were to compose a "History of the Work of Redemption" which was never in fact finished but thirty sermons were preached on the theme. Besides these in that year, the other published sermons are one at an excommunication<sup>3</sup> and one other, which, on the subject of The Eternity of Hell Torments<sup>4</sup> shows him calling on the imagination of his hearers to the full, to bring them to salvation through fear. Even so, it was not

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1. Works, vol. i. 347.

2. Memoir Works vol. i. p. xciv.

3. Works vol. ii. p. 118 cf. Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758; A Biography. O.E. Winslow, p. 148.

4. op. cit. p. 83.

till about a year later, in the spring of 1740, that the first signs began to appear of a new attention to godliness, again most remarkably amongst the young, so that the improper conduct that had previously been rebuked was given up, and they turned to Edwards for guidance in their own personal religious need. The sermons of the spring and summer of this year, that we have in published form, suggest a wide coverage of topics of pastoral concern, though always with an application that turns the issue to an evangelistic point. One in February, from Phil. iii.v.7 urges to a general spiritual zeal, after the example of St. Paul.<sup>1</sup> Others in June press the subject of private prayer under the title 'Hypocrites deficient in Prayer'<sup>2</sup> and has a side-reference to the religious decline after the revival, and a final appeal to the youth to compare their "company keeping" and "the round of diversions" with their own neglect of prayer. In July he preaches about Dishonesty in its widest ramifications, not neglecting the misbehaviour of country youth in pilfering from their neighbour's orchards and apparently justifying their behaviour by quoting Deut...xxiii.24!<sup>3</sup> Three more have been edited for publication under the title Man's Natural Blindness in the Things of

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1. op. cit. p. 855.

2. op.cit. pp. 71,74.

3. op.cit. vol. 2. p. 220.

Religion,<sup>1</sup> and are fairly general in treatment; but a September one on The Manner in which Salvation of the Soul is to be Sought<sup>2</sup> possibly reflects the new concern in the congregation as Edwards again returns to the theme of judgment in urging-

"I. There is a work or business which must be undertaken and accomplished by men, if they would be saved.

II. This business is a great undertaking.

III. Men should be willing to enter upon and go through this undertaking, though it be great, seeing it is for their own salvation".

The new concern was not so much shown in moral change for, as Edwards himself notes in a letter to a Boston minister -

"There has been vastly more religion kept up in the town among all sorts of persons, in religious exercises, and in common conversation; there has been a great alteration among the youth of the town, with respect to revelry, frolicking, profane and licentious conversation, and lewd songs; and there has also been a great alteration, amongst both old and young, with regard to tavern-haunting. I suppose the town has been in no measure so free from vice in these respects, for any long time together, for sixty years, as it has been these nine years past".<sup>3</sup>

and he repeats again the report of associations for prayer being kept up. But it was rather a change from "the decay of religious affections, and the engagedness of people's spirit in religion". The word "engagedness" marks the aim

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1. op. cit. p. 247.

2. op. cit. p. 51.

3. Memoir (Works. vol. i, p. xcix).

he sought.

In October 1740, George Whitefield arrived in Northampton from Boston and stayed a 'long week-end' from Friday 17th to Monday 20th with Edwards. He preached five times, "reproving the backslidings of some, the obstinate impenitence of others, and summoning all, by the mercies with which the town had been distinguished, to return to God".<sup>1</sup> In his Journal, Whitefield himself says -

"I found my heart drawn out to talk of scarce anything besides the consolations and privileges of saints, and the plentiful effusions of the Spirit upon the hearts of believers....I came to remind them of their former experiences".<sup>2</sup>

Edwards, in a letter, written later in 1743, agrees with this and he mentions the sermons -

"In a most moving and affecting manner making use of our great professions and great mercies, as arguments with us to return to God, from whom we had departed".<sup>3</sup>

Both Whitefield and Edwards mention the considerable weeping which took place at every sermon on this week-end, and an immediate return to being "more engaged in religion, showing a greater forwardness to make religion the subject of their conversation". Those mainly affected at first, Edwards notes,

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1. Dwight's Memoir (Works, vol. i. p. xciv).
  2. George Whitefield's Journals (Banner of Truth Trust, 1960). p. 476.
  3. Memoir (Works. vol. i.) p.xcix.

were those who had professed conversion previously; but it was not long before a number of young people were converted. For the next six weeks spiritual attention increased in the town both among those who had before professed conversion and in those who now came to Christian experience for the first time. Children were affected by mid-December, and by the spring of 1741 -

"an engagedness of spirit, about the things of religion, was become very general amongst young people and children, and religious subjects almost wholly took up their conversation when they were together".<sup>1</sup>

Two sermons in published form from this period can be seen; both dating from December; one, on Romans ii.10 which is concerned with the happiness of all good men (i.e. who "have been the subjects of a real thorough work of conversion") both in this life and the next;<sup>2</sup> the other is entitled, Sinners in Zion Tenderly Warned or The Fearfulness which will hereafter surprise sinners in Zion, Represented and Improved, from Isaiah xxxiii.14.<sup>3</sup> It is manifestly an "awakening" sermon directed at the members of the church who are expressly separated into the two categories of the "invisible church of true saints" and those who by outward "profession and external privileges" are members of the visible church but

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1. op.cit. p. c.

2. Works, vol. ii. p.888.

3. op.cit. p. 201-206.

only hypocritically. It uses all the resources of imagination to describe How fearfulness will hereafter surprise sinners in Zion; the death-bed of such is described in terrifying language, in which the growing certainty of death and its physical progress, producing panic and horror, forms the theme. But this leads on to the no less terrifying imaginings of the experience of perdition immediately after death -

"If we imagine to ourselves the feeling of a little child, that hath been pursued by a lion, when it is taken hold of, and sees the terrible creature open his devouring jaws to tear it in pieces.....yet we should have but a faint idea of what is felt in the departing soul of a sinner, when it falls into the hands of those cruel devils, those roaring lions which seize on it",

which is in fact nothing compared to the torment that remains for the day of judgment. Edwards uses all the well-known experiences of fire to illustrate and to stimulate the imaginations of the people as to the greater fires of hell; he takes the mind through known duration to enliven the sense of never-ending eternity. All this having been vividly "represented" is finally "improved" to exhort all to "improve the present opportunity". For

"Now God is pleased again to pour out his spirit upon us; and he is doing great things amongst us...the same God who so wonderfully appeared among us some years ago....and begins, as he did before, gloriously to manifest his mighty power.....Now, now, then, is the time, now is the blessed opportunity to escape those everlasting burnings.....A little while ago, it was

uncertain whether we should ever see such an opportunity again. If it had always continued as it hath been for some years past almost all of you would surely have gone to hell.....But in infinite mercy God gives another opportunity."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless Edwards sifts the secret thoughts of his hearers,

"It is an awful thing to think of, that there are now some persons in this very congregation, here and there, who will be the subjects of that very misery of which we have now heard, although it be so dreadful, although it be so intolerable, and although it be eternal.... who shall be seen, at the day of judgment, among the devils at the left hand of the judge, with frightened, ghastly countenances; wringing their hands, gnashing their teeth, shrieking and crying out....We have not the least reason to suppose any other than that some of you will hereafter see others entering into glory...while you, with dreadful horror, shall see the fire begin to kindle about you".<sup>2</sup>

But he knew his people;

"Tell them of hell as often as you will, and set it out in lively colours as you will, they will be slack and slothful; and they will never be likely to obtain heaven, while they are sleeping, and dreaming, and intending and hoping".<sup>3</sup>

These two sermons were certainly intended to paint the joys of heaven and the terrors of hell in "lively colours", that the work of God might be promoted in the revival. And since those first to be affected by the renewal of revival were those who had been affected in the previous one, special care was given to pointing out,

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1. Works vol. ii. p.205.
  2. op.cit. p.206.
  3. ibid.

"There were those who were guilty of backsliding, the last time of the revival of religion among us... they are left behind still; they are to this day in a miserable condemned state, in danger of the devouring fire...and God only knows what will become of them....<sup>1</sup>

"The Great Awakening" as this revival was to be called, reached new levels of intensity in 1741. By this time ministers of parishes were beginning the practice of preaching in other parishes whither they were invited. Dwight puts it, they "occasionally left their own congregations, and went forth as labourers into the common field to gather in the harvest."<sup>2</sup> The revival, since the time of 1734, had effected a difference in the style of preaching, making it "more direct and pungent, and more adapted to awaken the feelings and convince the conscience" while "the church at large seemed preparing for events of a more interesting nature, than any that had yet been witnessed"<sup>3</sup>. The word "interesting" here has significance for the subject of pastoral psychology.

In Northampton the revival spread generally among young and old, but after a sermon in a private house given in

- 
1. ibid.
  2. Works vol. i. p.xciv.
  3. op.cit. p. xciii.



May, there was a renewal of emotional effects that had been first evident when Whitfield had preached there, but now re-appeared with greater intensity, and spread to the whole group at the gathering. Edwards describes it in a letter.<sup>1</sup>

"One or two persons that were professors, were so greatly affected with a sense of the greatness and glory of divine things, and the infinite importance of the things of eternity, that they were not able to conceal it - the affection of their minds overcoming their strength, and having a visible effect upon their bodies. When the exercises were over, the young people that were present removed into the other room for religious conference; and particularly that they might have the opportunity to inquire of those that were thus affected, what apprehensions they had and what things they were that thus deeply impressed their minds; and there soon appeared a very great effect of their conversation; the affection was quickly propagated throughout the room; many of the young people and children that were professors appeared to be overcome with a sense of the greatness and glory of divine things.....and many others at the same time were overcome by distress, about their sinful and miserable estate and condition; so that the whole room was full of nothing but outcries, faintings and the like. Others soon heard of it in several parts of the town and came to them....many of them were overpowered in like manner, and it continued thus for some hours; the time being spent in prayer, singing, counselling, and conferring.....After this were meetings from time to time attended with like appearances".

Indeed, so likely was this to happen, that Edwards, apparently to promote this very state of things, tells us -

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1. op.cit. p.c.

"a little time after it, at the conclusion of the public exercises on the sabbath, I appointed the children that were under seventeen years of age, to go from the meeting-house to a neighbouring house, that I might there further enforce what they had heard in public, and might give in some counsels proper for their age. The children were there very generally and greatly affected....and many exceedingly overcome; and the room was filled with cries; and when they were dismissed, they almost all of them went home crying aloud through the streets, to all parts of the town".<sup>1</sup>

In all this ministry to the young, Edwards noticed that there was a difference to be made between "childish affections" that left the person very much the same after a day or two, and the emotional expression of deep convictions that remained constant. Examples of the one sort, the superficial, being replaced by the other were noted, the criterion being that the whole change in outlook and manner of life was permanent. Edwards continued this especial concentration upon the young of the parish through the summer of 1741, gathering together those aged between sixteen and twentysix, who were communicants. Again,

"Many seemed to be very greatly and most agreeably affected with those views which excited humility, self-condemnation, self-abhorrence, love and joy; many fainted under these affections."<sup>2</sup>

The only sermons preached at this time, which are published, are of the 'awakening' type; two on the text Ezek.xxii.14 are under the title, The Future Punishment of the Wicked

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1. Works. p.c.

2. ibid.

Unavoidable and intolerable.<sup>1</sup> They are on the theme that God will 'deal with the impenitent who refuse the message of their ministers. The first sermon explores the possible refuges of sinners and the way God will bring them to book; this is unavoidable. The second stimulates the imagination to conceive of how intolerable the torments of hell will be, once again using the image of fire and the infinite duration of time; and the application is almost an incantation, apostrophising the insensitive impenitent in terms laden with menace, ending:-

"It will not be long before you will be wonderfully changed. You who now hear of hell and the wrath of the great God, and sit here so easy and quiet and go away so careless; by and by will shake and tremble and cry out and shriek and gnash your teeth and will be thoroughly convinced of the vast weight and importance of these things which you now despise".<sup>2</sup>

Rather than this should happen, Edwards bent every effort that all the congregation should faint and be greatly affected in the meetings. And it was noted by him that "about that time that there first began to be cryings out in the meeting-house"<sup>3</sup> as well as in private houses at the same time.

The other sermon of this period is one by which Edwards

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1. Works. vol. ii. pp. 78-83.
  2. ibid.
  3. Works. p.c.

is probably best known, although it has the very slightest notice in Dwight's Memoirs. Like a number of other ministers, he accepted invitations to minister to different parishes, leaving his own in the charge of other ministers. It seems that in the July, Edwards was called upon at rather short notice to address the area conference at Enfield, which he was attending, and he used a sermon that he had preached at Northampton only a month before. The text was Deut. xxxii.35 and was entitled Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. According to B. Trumbull, History of Connecticut (Vol. ii. p. 112) the inhabitants of Enfield gave great concern to their neighbours because of their 'secure, loose and vain' outlook which was even apparent in the meeting-house on the day Edwards preached; for the "appearance of the assembly was thoughtless and vain."<sup>1</sup> The people hardly conducted themselves with common decency. We have no special mention of the effect the sermon had had when preached at Northampton, but as in that period there was considerable spiritual concern there anyhow, that may not be surprising. Certain it is that Edwards rightly judged that this congregation needed an especially "awakening" sermon, the matter of which would be such as to arouse even their unresponsive minds and feelings. Towards this he sharpened some of the most arresting passages in the sermon as it had

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1. History of Connecticut; B. Trumbull (New London, Conn. 1898) vol. ii. p. 112.

originally been given to make it more effective in Enfield.<sup>1</sup>

R.G. Turnbull compares the text of the sermon as it had been given previously with what was said in Enfield.

What originally was;-

"You are over the pit of hell in God's hand very much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire and 'tis nothing but for God to let you go and you fall in" -

now becomes in the Enfield sermon -

"The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire.....you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours.....and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment".<sup>2</sup>

They, as unconverted,

"walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen".<sup>3</sup>

And he does not scruple to make this particularly applicable to such as they are known to be:-

"Yea God is a great deal more angry.....doubtless with many in this congregation, who it may be are at ease,

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1. Jonathan Edwards the Preacher; R.G. Turnbull (Baker Book House Mich.1958) p. 101.
  2. Works, vol. ii. p.10.
  3. op.cit. p.8.

than he is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell."1

".....God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship."2

"You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it and burn it asunder;"3

Quoting Isaiah lxiii.3 he continues:-

"If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favour, that, instead of that, he will only tread you under foot. And though he will know that you cannot bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet, to be trodden down as the mire of the streets."4

Although nearly the whole sermon is in this vein, Edwards combines other concerns; he gave them hope, from the example of their neighbours in Suffield - "Where they are flocking from day to day to Christ". All this was delivered, in the manner he was wont to use, with a low voice, emphatic and distinct, and with economy of gesture. Before the sermon was

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1. op.cit. p. 8.
  2. op.cit. p. 10.
  3. ibid.
  4. ibid.

ended the assembly was obviously deeply impressed "and bowed down with an awful conviction of their sin and danger. There was such a breathing of distress and weeping that the preacher was obliged to speak to the people and desire silence that he might be heard."<sup>1</sup> Indeed the effect was overwhelming - tears, cries, faintings and convulsions; and with what became known as "bodily effects", the revival began there too.

The same continued in Northampton also during the late summer, August and September. Edwards in his letter commenting on this year, speaks of it being a "very frequent thing to see a house full of outcries, faintings, convulsions, and such like, both with distress and also with admiration and joy". This was both at night and day, the time making no difference to the occurrences. This new revival seemed to affect those who were too young to be affected by that of 1734 and it was most marked among the young. Edwards saw that those who had been previously affected now seemed either to be left untouched; or else, if "in the time of our declension (i.e. from mid-1735 to 1740) had fallen into decays, and had in a great measure left God, and gone after the world" (i.e. returning to a usual kind of existence)

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1. Trumbull op.cit. p. 112.

they became the subjects of what seemed a second conversion. The conviction of sin with greater distress; the striving after salvation, coming to fresh faith in Christ, with renewed desire for holiness, exceeded all their earlier experience. Indeed Edwards notes that the experiences of converts in this revival could almost be watched stage by stage, from conviction of sin to assurance and joy, by any looking on.<sup>1</sup> He could term them "apparent or visible conversions". In September Edwards noted some abatement, but there nevertheless continued something of this all the winter. But it renewed with even greater force in the spring of 1742 with the coming of a Mr. Buell from Yale, who took Edwards' place as minister while he was absent on a preaching tour. Buell spent most of his time preaching in public or private and was thronged by the people. Cries broke out in the public services which were capable of being prolonged for hours. "Almost the whole town seemed to be in a great and continual commotion, day and night". But Edwards seems to have had two minds about his colleague, though he did not openly suggest that his ministry was other than of the Spirit:-

"When I came home, I found the town in very extraordinary circumstances, such as, in some respects, I never saw it in before.....many in their religious

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1. Works vol. i. p. ci.



affections being raised far beyond what they had ever been before; and there were some instances of persons lying in a sort of trance, remaining perhaps for a whole twentyfour hours motionless and with their senses locked up;; but in the meantime under strong imaginations as though they went to heaven.....But when the people were raised to this height, Satan took the advantage, and his interposition, in many instances, soon became very apparent; and a great deal of caution and pains were found necessary, to keep the people, many of them, from running wild".<sup>1</sup>

Part of his method of preventing this 'running wild' was to introduce a new church covenant in March 1742 which laid down a pattern of New Testament ethics - honesty, justice, uprightness, neighbourly love, peacableness, no revenge but rather to make restitution, no ambitious or party spirit, no evil speaking or malice to be allowed, no unseemliness or unchastity, especially among the youth; rather to show love to parents and to be urgent in religion. The terms touched business, home, social and civic life.

But disturbances had really begun to show themselves in the middle of 1741, by a movement of lay preaching and ministry, often with a good deal of enthusiasm but with little knowledge, or discretion. By this time the revival was affecting not only New England, but New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, in over one hundred and fifty congregations.

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1. Works, vol. i. p. ci.

Whitefield had been involved at the outset, and had been followed by Gilbert Tennent of New Jersey, a burly, salty, downright man of no polish; and another revivalist, Davenport, who was seriously unbalanced mentally. Probably these amongst others are in DWIGHT's mind, when he refers to the revival's "worst enemies were found among its most zealous friends".<sup>1</sup> Tennent indeed had warned Edwards of lay enthusiasm in a letter apparently written in the autumn of 1741 in which he said, with some exaggeration "The churches in America and elsewhere are in great hazard of enthusiasm".<sup>2</sup> The problem was mainly twofold; firstly, the way revival was promoted by preaching; and secondly, the methods resorted to for assessing results.

The excesses involved in the form of "preaching" intended to promote revival, consisted in pulpit violence in matters and manner. All the preachers, Edwards included, used the fear of hell and damnation in their sermons. But the determined attempts to provoke emotional upheaval by the most extravagant phraseology were amplified still more by shouting, stamping and roaring; Davenport indeed would descend from the pulpit, strip off his outer garments, leap up and down in the seats, clapping his hands and yell instructions to the people to fall. He was arrested in 1742 and declared insane, but others only less extreme

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1. op.cit. p.cxi.

2. op.cit. p.xcvi/xcvii.

continued.<sup>1</sup> "Itinerants", some only country yokels, and, in addition, the inevitable charlatans, multiplied; orgies too fantastic to be credible mounted, with the recurrence, only too usual, of aspects of antinomianism.<sup>2</sup> All this was related to a quickly developing unhealthy regard for the value of "bodily effects" as proving conversion. Whitefield in a sermon on "Marks of a New Birth" (published 1740) laid down the signs as a spirit of supplication, aversion to sin, conquest over the world and love toward others. This in itself was unexceptional; but the successors,

"intending to take Mr. Whitefield as their model, travelled from place to place.....pronouncing definitively and unhesitatingly with respect to the piety of individuals".<sup>3</sup>

and most of all by the degree of "raptures and violent emotions of the affections, and a vehement zeal, and what they called boldness for Christ" they tended to estimate "attainments in grace and intimacy with heaven".<sup>4</sup> Once a principle of measuring spirituality by emotional expression was adopted, the gate was wide open for the promotion of excess, and the censorious comparison of spiritual

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1. O.E. Winslow, op.cit. p.189; Jonathan Edwards: Representative Selections and Notes Ed. C.H. Faust & T.H. Johnson (New York, American Book Co. 1935) p.xvii.
  2. Winslow, op.cit. p. 172.
  3. Works, vol. i, p.cxiii.
  4. op.cit. p.ciii.

experience. East and south-east Connecticut and central Massachusetts were chiefly affected by these perversions, and by the even more serious developments of separatism and schism among the congregations. The origination of this is regretfully but firmly laid upon Whitefield by Dwight.<sup>1</sup>

"His published journals show that he was accustomed to decide too authoritatively, whether others, particularly ministers, were converted; as well as to insist that churches ought to remove those, whom they regarded as unconverted ministers.

Hence his less restrained followers,

"Whenever they judged a minister, or a majority of his church, destitute of piety - which they usually did, not on account of their false principles or their irreligious life, but for their want of an ardour and zeal equal to their own - advised, in the one case, the whole church withdraw from the minister; and in the other, a minority to separate themselves from the majority and to form a distinct church and congregation."

This was indulged in not only by ordained men but by wandering lay exhorters, often young men, sometimes roving in bands, interrupting services, cross-questioning ministers, and too often taking the law into their own hands. Hence within the churches there was over-emphasis of the importance and lack of control of "outcries, falling down and swooning". Among the different congregations,

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1. Works. vol. i. p.cxiid.

"churches and congregations were torn asunder, many ministers were dismissed, churches of a separatist character were formed, the peace of society was permanently broken up and a revival of religion became extensively in the view of the community, another name for the prevalence of fanaticism, disorder and misrule." <sup>1</sup>

Edwards had done his best to prevent this at the beginning, taking Whitefield publicly to task and securing his admission of error. But clerical opposition to the revival began with the first manifestations of exaggeration in 1741, and was led by Dr. Charles Chauncy, minister of the First Church of Boston, in his writing "The New Creature" in June. Edwards was asked to preach the Yale (New Haven) Commencement sermon on September 10th and he took as his subject Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God, which was soon after published in expanded form in Boston. This was his second writing upon the subject of revival of any size. It is both a critique and a defence of the revival; a clear disassociation from the extravagant and false aspects, but a vindication of the essential spirituality and divine origin of the work. The Distinguishing Marks was written, of course, before the peak of the movement and before the excesses developed to their worst expressions, but the theme of the work is such that we may

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1. op.cit. p.cxiv.

see clearly that Edwards' judgment would not have been affected if he had written a year later. But it touched off a paper warfare that went on till 1745. Chauncy forcibly replied with a sermon on "Enthusiasm" at the Harvard Commencement, and rallied not only the "Arminian" X clergy but also the conservative Calvinists. Chauncy himself embodied the rationalist element in Puritanism that could become scholasticism. He reacted strongly to terrifying sermons; his motto was "An enlightened mind and not raised affections, ought always to be the guide"; passions were to be retained always within the restraints of reason. The pamphlet war was particularly promoted by the issue of Whitefield's journal of his itinerary in America. The criticisms of ministers by a young man in his middle twenties, and a visitor, provoked a reply like The Trial of Mr. Whitfield's Spirit by his opponents. Indeed in 1742-1745, fifty-nine books, often controversial, on the revival can be found listed in H.M. Dexter's The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years as seen in its Literature. (New York, 1880). Whitefield sadly misjudged the effect of his writings; they aroused angry opposition to the revival not only in Harvard but in Yale (New Haven). Edwards again took up the defence of the revival at the end of 1742 in Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion, published in Boston. Again

he was fighting on two fronts, yet he humbly but powerfully replies to the clergy everywhere, defending the revival in general terms but having to point out abuses and admit that it was not going along the right lines. But Edwards traced opposition not only to superficial causes, such as mediocre minds and jealous attitudes judging the revival; but also to a lack of Biblical insight and a wrong philosophy and religious psychology, separating feeling from will, that lay behind the basic antagonism. Chauncy also wrote again in early 1743 - The Late Religious Commotions in New England Considered and published anonymously. The revival was described as a delusion, "bodily effects" were manifestations of human weakness, not divine power, and the schismatic results were held up to condemnation as inevitable concomitants of the movement. Ministerial opinion was divided into two and hardened into faction in 1743; those opposed to the revival were the "Old Lights", while those who sided with Whitefield were the "New Lights". Edwards' attempt to arrive at a mediating and positive pastoral appraisal gained little acceptance between the two entrenched positions.

In Northampton, despite the mention of tendencies to "running wild", the situation was more under control. But Edwards mentions that,

"Our people hearing of, and some of them seeing,  
the work in other places, where there was a greater

visible commotion than here, and the outward appearances were more extraordinary, their eyes were dazzled with the high professions and great show that some made who came in hither from other places".<sup>1</sup>

Up till this time, Edwards considered the revival in the parish to be more pure than in the 1735-36 occasion.

"They were now better guarded, and their affections were not only stronger, but attended with greater solemnity, and greater humility and self-distrust, and greater engagedness after holy living and perseverance".<sup>2</sup>

And he listed various long-term results of revival in Northampton, writing in mid-December 1743, as

"A spirit of party has more extensively subsided.... that division of the town into two parties, which has long been our bane.....much more caution, and a greater guard on their spirit and their tongues, to avoid contention and unchristian heats, in town-meetings.....the people very lately came to an agreement and final issue with respect to their grand controversy relating to their common lands..... The people also seem.....to be more fully convinced of the necessity of forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forward and maintaining earnest labour, watchfulness and prayerfulness, as long as they live".<sup>3</sup>

By the end of 1744, the revival was over. It had "prevailed, to a greater or less degree, in more than one hundred and fifty congregations in New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania" and it had spread south to

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1. Works, vol. i, p.ciii.
  2. Works, vol. i, p.ciii
  3. op.cit. p.ciii/civ.



Maryland and Virginia in the last year, 1744. In 1743 about one hundred and sixty ministers published their attestations to this work, even though with regrets at the excesses that had developed in its course. But the 1743 Convention of Congregational ministers in the Province of Massachusetts Bay condemned it, and there followed a tightening of church administration in Connecticut. Chauncy returned to the attack with his published Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion, wherein he spoke of his observations at revival meetings which he had attended in accepting Edwards' challenge at New Haven, and which had involved him in three hundred miles of travel to gain eyewitness accounts. This literary report is "a massive, Johnsonian, indignant work; a source-book for American communal behaviour, learned and dignified, it is monumentally honest, scholarly to the point of pedantry, and formally Calvinist, it is a classic of hard headed, dogmatic rationalism".<sup>1</sup> Its four hundred pages argues that the revival is but "a mechanical impression of animal Nature". Whitefield returned in 1744 to a very different America, finding few friends and most pulpits closed to him.

During these difficult years of 1742 and 1743, Edwards

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1. Jonathan Edwards, Perry Miller pp.175,176.

investigated even more fully the significance of the revival in terms of veritable spiritual experience. The whole controversy and the unusual aspects of the revival had stimulated and extended the already wide and detailed knowledge he had gained from the commencement of his ministry under Stoddard if not earlier. He brought all this together in a series of sermons, under the text Peter i.8. preached during 1742 and 1743 and finally published in Boston 1746, under the title A Treatise concern- Religious Affections. He had had a period of quiet, in fact of apathy, in the years following 1744. Nobody applied for church membership till 1748. This period gave him the opportunity and time to think uninterruptedly and so to produce his mature and final work on the revival, standing away from the controversy and treating the whole subject in a more abstract manner. What he probably did not realise was that this lull was before a very different storm that came to full expression in 1749 and led to his dismissal in 1750 from Northampton. This part of his life story is not material to this thesis. Nor is the subsequent period of his ministry at Stockbridge except to note that in the little study, seven feet by three and a half, in the frontier mission-house, he wrote his great theoretical works, some published posthumously, in circumstances of

exasperation over intrigues by Indians and whites. Some of those works will throw light on to his writings on revival inasmuch as they lay bare the total pattern of his thought on which his pastoral practice was based. One more published sermon, preached at the New York Synod on September 28th 1752, from James ii.19., returns to the theme of true signs of spiritual experience combined with implicit warning and threatening, under the title True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils.<sup>1</sup>

In 1758 he was called to be President of Princeton; having held the office for five weeks, he died from small-pox, after an ineffective inoculation.

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1. Works vol. ii. p. 41.

Chronological List of the Published Writings of Jonathan Edwards

The following details are based upon the published Works in the two volume Bohn Edition, London 1871; and in addition The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758. A Bibliography by Thomas H. Johnson. Princeton University Press 1940.

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When preached or written.	Title	Text	Publica- tion Date
July 8 1731.	God Glorified in Man's Dependence.	I Cor.1. 29-31	Boston 1731
Undated and assumed to be before 1733 <sup>(1)</sup>	Scripture warnings the best means for awakening	Luke 16. v.31	Hartford 1780
ditto	Perpetuity & Change of the Sabbath	I Cor.16 v.1,2.	ditto
ditto	Great Guilt no Obstacle to Pardon	Ps.25;11	Edinburgh 1788
ditto	Procrastination	Prov.27.1.	Coll- ections <sup>2</sup>
ditto	Self-Flatteries of the sinner.	Ps.36.2	Ditto
ditto	Natural Man in a Dread- ful Condition	Ac.16.29, 30	ditto
ditto	God makes men sensible of misery	Hos.5.15	ditto
ditto	God's Sovereignty in Salvation	Rom.9.18	ditto

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1. of Works. Vol. ii p.51, note to preface, that Edwards began to date his sermons in 1733 after which all are dated.

2. Not published before the Collected works were begun.

When preached or written	Title	Text	Publication Date
Undated and assumed to be before 1733 <sup>1</sup>	Christ's Agony	Luke 22.44	Collections <sup>2</sup>
ditto	The Portion of the Wicked	Rom.2.8,9.	ditto
ditto	The Pure in heart	Mat.5.8.	ditto
ditto	Wicked Men inconsis- tent with themselves	Mat.11.16- 19.	ditto
ditto	Safety, fulness, & sweet Refreshment in Christ	Tsa. 32.2	ditto
ditto	Christians a chosen generation	I Pet.2.4.	ditto
ditto	The Excellency of Christ	Rev. 5.5,6.	Boston 1738
Sept. 1733	The Christian Pilgrim	Heb.11.13, 14	Collections
late 1733	A Divine & Supernatural Light immediately imparted etc.	Mat.16.17	Boston 1734
June 1734	Unreasonableness of Indetermination in Religion	I.Kings, 18. 21.	Hartford 1780
Nov. 1734	Praise, one of the chief employments of heaven	Rev.14.2	Collections
Dec. 1734	Preciousness of Time	Eph.5.16	ditto
Dec. 1734	Justification by faith alone	Rom. 4.5.	Boston 1738

1. cf Works. Vol. ii p.51, note to preface, that Edwards began to date his sermons in 1733 after which all are dated.

2. Not published before the Collected works were begun.

When Preached or written	Title	Text	Publication Date
1734/1735	Pressing into the Kingdom of God	Luke 16.16	Boston 1738
ditto	Ruth's Resolution	Ruth 1.16	ditto
ditto	Justice of God in the damnation of sinners	Rom. 3.19	ditto
Jan.8.1735	The Most High a Prayer Hearing God	Psa;65.2	Collections
May 1735	Wrath upon the Wicked to the uttermost.	I.Thess. 2.16	ditto
May 1735	Folly of Looking back (Two sermons)	Luke 17.32.	Hartford 1780
June 1735	Divine Sovereignty	Ps.46.10	Collections
April 1736	God the Best Portion of the Christian	Ps.73.25	ditto
May 1736	Unbelievers Contemn the Glory & Excellency of Christ.	Ac.4.11	Hartford 1780
1737	The Many Mansions	Jn.14.2	New York 1904
1737	<u>A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God etc.</u>		London 1737
Sept. 1737	Hope and Comfort after Humiliation	Hos.2.15	Collections
April 1738	Jesus Christ, the same etc.	Heb.13.8.	ditto
1738	Sixteen sermons on Charity and its fruits		New York 1852
Aug. 1738	Christ gloriously exalted	I.Cor.15 25,26	Boston 1765

When Preached or written	Title	Text	Publication date
Aug. 1738	Joseph's Temptation and deliverance	Gen.39. 12	Collections
April 1739	Eternity of Hell Tor- ments.	Mat. 25.46	Hartford 1780
1739? <sup>1</sup>	Nature and end of Excommunication	I Cor.5.11	Collections
Feb. 1740	Paul an example to Christians	Phil. 3.17	ditto
1740	Man's Natural Blindness in Religion <sup>2</sup>	Psa.36.2	Glasgow 1785
June 1740	Hypocrites deficient in Prayer (Two sermons)	Job 27.10	Hartford 1780
July 1740	Dishonesty	Ex.20.15	Collections
Sept.1740	How Salvation is to be sought	Gen.6.22	Hartford 1780
Dec. 1740	The portion of the Righteous	Rom.2.10	Collections
Dec. 1740	Sinners in Zion tenderly warned	Is. 36.14	ditto
April 1741	Future Punishment of the Wicked (Two sermons)	Ezk.22.14	Hartford 1780
July 8. 1741	Sinners in the hands of an Angry God (Enfield Sermon)	Deut.32. 35	Boston 1741
Sept.2.1741	Sorrows of the Bereaved spread before Jesus	Mat.14.12	Boston 1741
Sept.10.1741	<u>Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God</u>	I.Jn.4.1	Boston 1741

1. cf. Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758; A Biography. O.E. Winslow (New York 1940 p. 148)
2. Works ii.p.247 f.note refers to this as a posthumous resume of three unfinished sermon MSS. R.G. Turnbull (Jonathan Edwards the Preacher; Bakers 1958, p.157) puts <sup>it</sup> <sub>at</sub> 1740

When Preached or written	Title	Text	Publication date
1742	<u>Some Thoughts concerning the Present Revival etc.</u>		Boston 1742
1742-1743	Series of Sermons on Religious Affections	I.Pet. 1.8	cf. 1746
June 8.1743	The Great Concern of a Watch- men for souls		Boston 1743
July 1744	The Wicked useful in their destruction only	Ezk.15. 2-4	Collect- ions
Aug. 30.1744	True Excellency of a Gospel Minister	Jn.5.35	Boston 1744
Sept.16. 1746	The Church's marriage to her sons and to God	Is.62.4, 5	Boston 1746
1746	<u>Treatise concerning Relig- ious Affections</u>		Boston 1746
Oct. 12.1747	True Saints when absent from the body present with the Lord	II.Cor. 5.8	Boston 1747
1747	<u>An Humble Attempt to Promote Visible Union. etc.</u>		Boston 1747 (1748 NS)
June 26 1748	Withering of Strong Rods in a Community	Ezk.19. 12	Boston 1748
June 28 1749	Christ the Example of ministers	Jn.13. 15,16.	Boston 1750
1749	<u>Account of a Life of David Brainerd.</u>		Boston 1749
1749	<u>Humble Inquiry into the Rules... Concerning the Qualifications for Communion.</u>		Boston 1749
June 22 1750	Farewell Sermon	II Cor. 1.14	Boston 1751



When Preached or written	Title	Text	Publication date
August 1750	The Peace Christ Gives	Jn.14.27	Hartford 1780
Sept.28 1752	True Grace Distinguished from the experience of devils	Jas.2.19	New York 1753
	<u>Misrepresentations correct- ed</u>		Boston 1752
1754	<u>A Careful and Strict En- quiry into...that Freedom of the Will etc</u>		Boston 1754
1758	<u>The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended.</u>		Boston 1758
1758	The Unchangeableness of Christ <sup>1</sup>		

## POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATIONS.

<u>Dissertations on the End for which God created the world; and on the Nature of True Virtue</u>	Boston 1765
<u>History of the Work of Redemption</u>	Edinburgh & London 1774
<u>Miscellaneous Observations on Important Theological Subjects</u>	Edinburgh & London 1793
<u>Remarks on Important Theologi- cal Controversies.</u>	Edinburgh & London 1796

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1. R.G. Turnbull (Jonathan Edwards the Preacher) pp. 158.  
cf. Works vol. i. p.ccxx footnote. It was Edward's  
first sermon at Princeton.



## CHAPTER TWO

Fin de siecle - Old Paths and New  
Ways.

"In the year 1729, when Jonathan Edwards became full pastor of the church at Northampton, Mass., New England religion had already undergone a long process of decline. The theocratic ideal of the first settlers was disappearing, Calvinistic theology had become largely a matter of formality, and worldliness had been growing among the people. Calvinistic Christianity was being buried under a heavy coating of political and economic facts which had little relevance to its theology. It was not being effectively disputed, nor was it being openly discarded. It was being simply ignored as a matter of little consequence for practical living, by men who said one thing and did another".<sup>1</sup> This religious decline was not simply an increasing tepidity of religious concern among church members. As far back as 1652, a rapid decline in church membership itself set in, so that by 1670 it could be estimated that no more than twentyfive percent of the population were actual church members; and this could be attributed not to immigration but to a loss of interest on the part of the new generation born into the land.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult for those living three hundred years

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1. Piety versus Moralism. J. Haroutunian. New York 1932 p.xx.xxi.
  2. The Elizabethans and America. A.L. Rowse. London 1959. p.153.n.

after, to enter into the shock and dismay that increased in the minds of leading New Englanders, living towards the end of the seventeenth century, especially amongst those who were clergy and religious leaders. In the first place, the Puritan settlement in New England was a "Holy Experiment". Of the two main settlements from England, the Plymouth Pilgrims and the Massachusetts Bay Pilgrims, the latter openly separated themselves, not from the Church of England as such, but "from the corruptions of it; but we go to practise the positive part of Church reformation and propagate the gospel in America".<sup>1</sup> These Pilgrims regarded themselves as a Puritan congregation of the Church of England, setting an example of reformed church life, as a model for all the world to see- and especially for the church "at home". The purified religion of New England was to be indeed a "city set on a hill". The pattern of Israel's wandering towards the promised land was boldly adapted to the experience of the Pilgrims; they were the people of God going forth under His guidance; and the success of their venture would be the sign of heaven's blessing and approval, not merely on their venture of faith, but upon the whole theology and polity with which it was involved.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Rowse. op.cit. p.129. quote from The Colonial Period in American History. C.M. Andrews. vol. i. p. 377n.
  2. Literature and Theology in Colonial New England. K.B. Murdock. Harvard U.P. 1949. chapter 3.

To see the great work so soon deteriorate in the second generation presented a challenge to the whole conception of the enterprise.

But there was a second and most pressing embarrassment, of a very practical nature. The Plymouth Pilgrims, the first arrivals, had set the example of a congregational church polity; and although the later Massachusetts Bay Colony gradually increased in importance so as to absorb the Plymouth colony, the main church polity in New England was Congregationalist. In fact it presented the interesting spectacle of a Congregational established church. Church and state were led and governed by the religious aristocracy, the pastors and full church members. Nevertheless it was clearly essential for the healthy working of the community, and still more for its public expression to the world, that the 'visible saints' on whom the franchise was based should be the majority of the population. Even in the one hundred odd members of the 'Mayflower' pilgrims, some were to be found who were not going to America for pious purposes. Bradford indeed mentioned some who were 'profane'.<sup>1</sup> Any consistent decline in the spiritual content of the community, would

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1. Rowse op.cit. p. 134.

awaken the gravest apprehensions not only for the life of the church, by its loss of members, but also for the whole polity of the state. It could jeopardise the authority of the spirituality in the ordering of the community life, and bring about a situation, in which the secular element in the land could claim from England the right of majority to exercise the power of government. But to prevent this, by maintaining a constant superiority in numbers upon the part of church members, was the constantly pressing problem to a church based on Congregationalist principles. It is the purpose of this chapter to indicate the trends in the social development of the colony as they affect this issue and to note the methods adopted by different leaders at different times to deal with the perennial problem; and so to set out the situation in which the Great Awakening came about and the writings of Jonathan Edwards, which refer to the Awakening, take their shape.

If the New England pilgrims had taken with them a Presbyterian church polity instead of a congregational one, they would have been relieved of some of the most perplexing of their problems. At the same time, it is likely that they would have lost much of the spiritual and ecclesiastical vitality in response to the developing social conditions involved in the colony's political growth. Here was to be

seen set up, deliberately and authoritatively, what can only be called a contradiction in terms; the establishment as a state church of a sectarian ecclesiastical polity. As Rowse has pointed out, Plymouth provided the Congregational polity; Massachusetts Pilgrims wrote it into the authoritative assertion of the colony's way of life, to be the example and pattern of the ideal church-state. This ignored and over-ruled the fact that such a church polity was originally that of a separatist group, who went to America simply to be left alone to live out their faith in their own way. There, between the ocean and the wilderness frontier, in the small log-cabin settlements surrounded by the protecting stockades, the antinomies of a church polity which was both contractual and authoritarian were hardly discernible. In the zest and enthusiasm for the project, as well as in the immediate demands of self-preservation, it would be too much to expect such insight. The form of Puritanism, which both of the founding colonies represented, agreed in the view expressed by Governor Winthrop in his Journal: "The best part of a community is always the least and of the best part, the wiser is always the lesser".<sup>1</sup> In the small beginnings of the colony's life, the leadership would inevitably rest with those whose religious conviction had taken them there. They were the men with the authority and personal qualifications that made

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1. Quoted A.L. Rowse op.cit. p.131.

them the directors of the enterprise in England; and they would form the driving force and leaders of the settlement. In such circumstances, the practical workings of what was almost a desert-island situation, successfully concealed the latent contradictions of the theory. What is surprising, however, is that, despite challenges to the New England Way by such men as Roger Williams, who soon after its beginnings opposed its authoritarianism, the leading thinkers continued unaware of the real problem that it had embedded in its heart. No criticism or deviation either towards Quakerism or Anglicanism, seemed to shake the convictions of the leaders for a hundred years.

Probably the resistance to criticism about the authoritarianism of the regime was in proportion to the growing anxiety as to the contractual nature of the church. As has already been indicated, the successful maintenance of flourishing congregations was essential for the dominance of churchmen led by the clergy in New England society, in order that the politice-religious ideals of the colony might be continuously realized. American scholarship offers different interpretations of this fundamental problem of New England. H.W. Schneider attributes the strain evident in the years preceding the Great Awakening simply to this failure to keep up the preponderance of the "saints",<sup>1</sup> but

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1. The Puritan Mind H.W. Schneider (London 1931).



Perry Miller has not accepted this as by any means the whole story; while the social core of the "saints" held the power, the established theory of New England was secure.<sup>1</sup> Yet the whole trend of the evidence of his book, and in fact, his clear statements, emphasise that because the core was fast diminishing, many, including all the leaders, were calling for some kind of action. However much the established condition of things vested social, as well as ecclesiastical, authority in the hands of clergy and churchmen, it was easy enough to see that the whole experiment would founder if the vital spiritual element diminished to the point where its actual authority was negligible and its legal authority made to appear ridiculous. For the colony's congregational church polity meant an autonomous church, a gathered congregation, which deliberately excluded "the town", who nevertheless submitted to, and paid for, the rule of the church-folk. The delimiting basis of enfranchisement of the church was the doctrine of church-covenant, which formed part of a comprehensive federal theology. This doctrinal scheme was a systematisation of the Biblical promises of God and is particularly characteristic of English Puritan theology.<sup>2</sup> It was first taught by William Perkins, accepted and

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1. The New England Mind; from Colony to Province. Perry Miller (Harvard. U.P. 1953).
  2. cf. T.M. Lindsay: Covenant Theology (British & Foreign Evangelical Review: London & Edinburgh, 1879, Art. VII, pp. 521-536) who traces Federalism from Olevian, Rollock, Eglin to Cocceius, distinguished from the Covenant Theology of Ames.

assumed by early seventeenth century Puritan preachers and theologians especially by one of the most outstanding of them, William Ames. From him it was carried over to the continent in the teaching of his pupil, the Dutch professor, Cocceius.<sup>1</sup> Ames was also one of the leading teachers followed by New England, and the federal theology was fundamental to the whole of its ecclesiastical, social and political outlook and organization. Edwards himself expounds it:-

"The persons of the Trinity were, as it were, confederated in a design and a covenant of redemption. In this covenant the Father had appointed the Son, and the Son had undertaken the work; and all things to be accomplished in the work were stipulated and agreed".<sup>2</sup>

"The covenant of redemption, or the eternal covenant that was between the Father and the Son, wherein Christ undertook to stand as mediator with fallen man and was appointed thereto of the Father. In that covenant, all things concerning Christ's execution of his mediatorial office, were agreed between Christ and his Father, and established by them."<sup>3</sup>

"Christ does the work that God gave him to do in that covenant, and no other; he saves those, and those only, that the Father gave him in that covenant to save."<sup>4</sup>

"Another covenant that Christ has regard to in the execution of his mediatorial office, is that covenant of grace which God established with man....God does, as it were, make his promises which he makes to his creatures, his rule to act by; i.e. all his actions are in an exact conformity to his promises, and he

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1. The New England Mind. Perry Miller (New York. 1939)pp 365ff. Appendix B.502ff. History of Christian Doctrine G.P. Fisher (International Theological Library 1896) p.347,348.
  2. History of Redemption (Works; vol. i. p.534).
  3. Sermon XIV on Heb.xiii.8. (Works; vol. ii. p. 950).
  4. ibid.

never departs in the least degree from them. Yet it is not a rule to God in the same sense as a rule is to a created agent, which must be considered as something antecedent to the purposes of the agent, and that by which his purposes are regulated. But God's promises are consequent on his purpose, and are no other than the expressions of them. And the covenant of grace is not essentially different from the covenant of redemption; it is but an expression of it.....for all that was promised to men in the covenant of grace, was agreed on between the Father and the Son in the covenant of redemption.... There is the same covenant of grace in all ages of the world. The covenant is not essentially different now from what it was under the Old Testament, and even before the flood; and it always will remain the same."<sup>1</sup>

There was also another covenant, of Adam before the Fall; it was called, the covenant of works:-

"an agreement between God and Adam that if Adam obeyed God for a certain period of time, abstaining from eating certain forbidden fruit, he and his posterity would receive everlasting life. If he disobeyed, he and his posterity should be punished with eternal death."<sup>2</sup>

The Mosaic law occupied for Edwards a dual relationship to the covenant of grace and of law. In the History of Redemption he refers to it as "a new exhibition of the covenant of works" and also "as a rule of life, it is employed by the Redeemer.....as a directory to his people."<sup>3</sup>

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1. op.cit.

2. Steps to Salvation J.H. Gerstner (Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1960) p. 178/179.

3. Works vol. i. 547, 548.

But beyond the general scheme of the Covenants were the particular applications of the covenant of grace in the present. As the covenant of grace has ever been made with the people of God's eternal choice, so the expression of that covenant has been in the existence of the church and the faithful use of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Edwards again mentions it in a sermon on Heb. xiii.8.:-

"We are in general under the solemn bonds of our baptismal covenant; and that covenant that was sealed in our baptism, most of us have explicitly owned and expressly and solemnly promised to walk in, in a way of obedience to all the commands of God, as long as we live; and have, time after time, in the most solemn manner, sealed this covenant anew, by taking the body and blood of Christ upon it at the Lord's Supper"<sup>1</sup>.

This was implied in being a "covenant people", a group who have responded to the Biblical and evangelical covenant of grace by such acts of solemn contract; which indeed involve the whole community in dedication, even though the non-churchly part is thereby only externally related for the temporal benefits of God's common grace.<sup>2</sup> Thus was New England a covenant people, with a defined relationship between them and God.

The critical nexus between the two levels of this covenant community, the 'visible Saints' and the 'town' was not

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1. Works. vol. ii. 952.

2. The New England Mind; from Colony to Province P. Miller ch.1. Gerstner op.cit p.186.

baptism but conversion. Most of the second generation were baptised as children of converted parents and the need was for them, in their turn to 'own the covenant' by an open profession of conversion. But this, in fact, was not happening. By 1646 the churches were filled with baptised adults, the virtuous children of the founding fathers, who had not however made any profession of personal conversion, nor, of course, become communicants. For the Lord's Supper was only open to those who had made a profession of their experience of saving faith.<sup>1</sup> The main problem therefore, was not merely concerned with these who had held back from full church membership, but rather with the future status of and practice towards their children. Congregational polity was based on the covenant in Genesis 17; the children of converted parents can have the seal of baptism, the covenantal pledge of their own conversion yet to be, but this ought not to be extended to the children of those who had made no profession of conversion, and had not owned the church covenant. But if the children of those who had only been baptised were to be treated as the heathen Indians and only baptised as adults after a profession of conversion, what would happen to the New England Way?<sup>2</sup> It was a turn in events that had not occurred to the founders, in the light of their

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1. Genetic History of the New England Theology. F.H. Foster. (Chicago 1907) p. 37.
  2. Op.cit. p. 35. n. 46.

own enthusiasm for this great experiment, and their assurance as to the divine truth and way they were putting into effect. But this great assumption as to the progress of history, was soon to be disproved. If the children of the covenant showed no great response to its privileges, though sealed to it in their baptism, was it likely that they would show any more desire if all were reckoned as heathen until their conversion? Would the New England way fare any better as a Baptist polity rather than a Congregational one? The steady increase of 'the town' over against the congregation argued that it would not.

It is not evident that such other alternatives ever were considered by the leaders of church or state, for the federal theology which interpreted for them the will of God as given in Holy Scripture, made any such attitude impossible. Certainly they were the target for criticism from other forms of Calvinism both in Britain and on the continent. English independents like Thomas Goodwin and John Owen opposed their rigorous authoritarianism, an obvious inconsistency with their contractual ecclesiastical order; Presbyterians denounced the church covenant as a tenet read into Scripture, and with continental Calvinists detected the essential beginnings of the idea of a perfect church in the Congregational way.<sup>1</sup> So far was the New England pattern seen

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1. The New England Mind; from Colony to Province. P. Miller 68-74.

by its contemporaries from being, in Tawney's description, "that in which the social discipline of the Calvinist Church-State was carried to the furthest extreme".<sup>1</sup> In fact, for the above reasons, they would have held it to be inconsistent either with itself or with the best reformed order.

The New England situation illustrates clearly, however, the problems inherent in Calvinist soteriology. The election of God is a secret decree, dependent solely upon His sovereign will, and relating to a specific company of mankind who will be saved.<sup>2</sup> In practice and experience, it is evident that "The covenant of life is not preached equally to all, and among those to whom it is preached, does not always meet with the same reception".<sup>3</sup> Thus the pressing question arises, for the individual and for the church, how a man may be assured of his salvation. Good works are not only excluded as grounds for hope before conversion; they are also not the sole criteria after it, since (among other reasons), they are imperfect.<sup>4</sup> But in the circumstances of the Reformed congregation, the outward differences between the elect and non-elect, as shown in conversion and true

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1. Religion and the Rise of Capitalism. R.H. Tawney (Pelican), p. 106.

2. Inst. III.xxi.5,7; Reformed Dogmatics. H. Hepper; (London 1950). chs. 7,8.

3. Inst. III. xxi. 1.

4. Inst. III.xiv. 18.19.

holiness were difficult to discern. A man may have the assurance of his own conversion and election, but no one could know it with certainty of another.<sup>1</sup> The reprobate may receive

"many even supernatural things....as the propounding of the gospel, many other charisms, and illumination of the mind, and some improvement of the affections, or joy, and a taste of future benefits."<sup>2</sup>

There could be no room for injustice to the reprobate in God's electing will; hence He

"even frequently assures them a rich outward knowledge and, in passing, even inward assurance of salvation, so as thereby to deprive them of all excuses for their hardness of heart."<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the converted did not always strive after holiness with a constant zeal that would mark them off from the unregenerate.

Most Calvinist church polity accepted the position of a mixed church<sup>4</sup>. Since the individual's assurance consisted of inward signs in response to the means of grace, which rest on Christ, revealed and encountered in the Word of God in Scripture and in the Sacraments through the Holy Spirit, it would be clearly impossible to erect a church polity upon it.<sup>5</sup> The ascription of visibility and

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1. Heppe. ch. 8, 21. p. 175f.

2. op.cit. p. 185.

3. Heppe op.cit. 512. Inst. III. xxiv. 8.

4. Inst. IV. i. 2, 7.

5. Heppe 176-178. Inst. III. xxiv. 4,5.6.



invisibility to the church applies to the same community of regenerated and elect persons looked at from different aspects. The unbelievers and hypocrites who are found associated with the institutional life of the church are not regarded as members of the church - "although outwardly they represent the confession of the Church, participate in her sacraments, and fit outwardly into the church order".<sup>1</sup> But all, true believers and hypocrites alike, come, within the instituted life of the church, to be confronted with the Divine provision and call in the Gospel, through the sacraments and the preaching; for by these the grace of God is sealed, pledged and offered. But in <sup>the</sup> order for outward participation in these ordinances, no attempt could be made to attest to the church by any prescribed and certain method, that any one individual was in fact elect. Certainly there was church discipline for purifying the church "to unmask hypocrites so far as she can" and to recall believers who have fallen into defection. Certainly too, true faith manifested itself in outward practice. "Nevertheless, since hypocrites may imitate all these things for a time, no infallible judgment can be formed on these grounds alone concerning others" i.e. neither on the basis of confession of faith nor good works.<sup>2</sup> The order of the church therefore could only be that which would secure an outward profession of faith and obedience to the Gospel; to go further was to

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1. Heppep. 566.

2. Heppe. op.cit. p. 667.

attempt the impossible - to secure the perfect church visible here on earth. Yet within this order, the evangelic emphasis was possible, calling on those who professed Christianity to make sure that they had indeed a truly saving faith, and had the vital inward assurance. And such a church polity was consistent with some kind of establishment, while at the same time preserving its spiritual and evangelical thrust.

But in New England, because the Congregational order had been brought with the Plymouth settlers, who were true sectaries, and made an established church order by the Massachusetts Bay settlers who above all wanted to give an example to the established Church of England in the way of true reform, the leaders were faced with the problem of perfectionism, of discriminating between the truly elect and the hypocrites in the actual administration of the church's order. It was no wonder therefore that the outstanding New England divines like Thomas Hooker, who wrote The Soule's Preparation for Christ (1632) and The Unbeliever's Preparing for Christ (1636) were renowned for their psychologies of religious experience. This was true of many of them and for most of their writings during the seventeenth century. Indeed Milton's tutor, William Chappell, at Cambridge listed only New England writers in a list of treatises on true

conversion.<sup>1</sup> The nature of their church life shifted the 'articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae' from justification, to the practical one of conversion as evidence of regeneration and so membership of the church of the elect. All were concerned to know the signs and the pastors how to promote it, if it were possible. Despite the difficulty and mystery of the subject,<sup>2</sup> the imprecision of the testimony and the varieties of religious experience, scholarly divines and pastors attempted the assessment of genuine experience of salvation, fully knowing that Reformed theology did not support them in making definite assertions and decisions for others on an essentially individual matter. It was here that federal theology provided an assistance which sometimes appears like a verbal smoke-screen. "The Covenant of Grace is cloathed with Church-covenant in a political, visible Church-way"; but openly to affirm adherence to the church covenant might mean one of two things; either the evidence that God had been choosing, calling and converting; or a "federal grace" in which a willingness is shown to be bound by the church-covenant either as a true believer, or even as a hypocrite; so that the term 'visible church' meant all who were prepared to enter into the outward terms of church membership. It was a quiet trend towards Presbyterianism, brought about by being

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1. The New England Mind vol. i. P. Miller p. 27.
  2. cf. G. Nuttall The Holy Spirit in Puritan faith and Experience (Oxford) (1946) pp. 138.140.

the established church. But rather than become so openly, and open the church to all who were not public offenders, they continued to demand some basis of covenant membership - a profession of faith, some Christian knowledge, a reason for one's hope and no open sin.<sup>1</sup> The church and state problem therefore was two-fold; the practical one of maintaining a sufficiently large church-membership to uphold the 'rule of the saints'; and the fundamental and spiritual one, essential for the health of church and state, the revival of the spiritual vision and life of the church.

By 1650 the practical problem of maintaining a strong church membership meant first and foremost the question of how to deal with the many in the church who had gone no further than being baptised and living morally and respectably; and further, how to deal with their children. Synods gathered before this time showed a diversity of practice in the churches, related to diverse theories of the sacrament and of covenant relationship. It was enough for some if they were descended from covenanted ancestors; the baptised were clearly in the church, said others, therefore their children could be baptised.<sup>2</sup> As the population continued to increase at great pace and presented even more pressing baptismal needs, the

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1. The New England Mind; from Colony to Province. P. Miller pp. 72-76.

2. Perry Miller op.cit. p.90.91.

Synod of 1662 adopted what came to be known as 'The Half-Way Covenant'. It required that a baptised but unconverted person, when presenting his own child for baptism, must proclaim his assent to the covenant, renew his allegiance and so secure the privilege for his child by formal profession, that was theoretically only available for the elect and regenerate. Such parents who were thus 'half-way members' were not able to communicate nor have the vote. Hence the practice was defended against conservative opposition (mainly from the laity) by the arguments that it preserved the infants from becoming heathen; it preserved the New England Puritan society; it prevented an eventual lowering of standards in order to enable baptism to be extended; and kept the controlling power in the hands of true covenanters. It was of course a step which sundered the external and internal church covenant; no longer was the outward profession a sign of the inward conversion; the latter indeed was essential for coming to the Lord's Supper - and for the vote - but the total sacramental fellowship of the church begun in baptism was now no longer essentially related to the personal response of genuine faith; profession was made to be part of an outward pattern of behaviour, both ecclesiastical and civic. Despite the accusation that it was 'Presbyterian' (and some indeed began to look more kindly in that direction) the practice spread in the teeth of lay opposition; Boston in 1674 and by the

Connecticut General Court in 1684<sup>1</sup>. By 1700 each township was divided into three categories; the theoretical centre, of the descendants of the founders who had themselves professed conversion, and with them, those converted from outside; the half-way covenanters, "the congregation" who were either descended from a 'professor' or who had come from outside, to own the baptismal obligation in the external covenant for the benefit of their children; and 'the town' - the non-professors. But the full communicants were still dwindling for many were content with the half-way measure. Clearly the need was not just to trim church polity to meet emergencies, but to revive the spiritual life of the church itself.

The question naturally arises in connection with this situation, why were people encouraged to pledge their submission to an external covenant, and not summoned, in the light of their need and the call of the Gospel, to repent and to put their faith in Christ? Why was not the demand for infant baptism made the occasion and opportunity for pressing the command of the Gospel? Apart from any practical problems here, which can easily be imagined, there was the doctrinal one, of man's inability to exercise repentance or faith without the special action of the Holy Spirit. What is a transcendent truth about all genuine Spiritual experience, that it is of God's grace, became interpreted in such terms.

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1. op.cit. chap. 8. pp. 106.113.

that people were encouraged to a passive condition to await some special direct activity of the Holy Spirit in which the human spirit was acted upon towards conversion and the true pursuit of holiness.<sup>1</sup> This both inhibited the preacher from a real evangelistic approach, and also, through much insisting on human inability and passivity in salvation, brought the congregations to a quiescent condition. Instead of heeding the word of Calvin "Let preaching then have its free course, that it may lead men to faith",<sup>2</sup> they sought so to humble men and to uplift God that they succeeded in the end in depressing men and in obscuring the Gospel . F.H. Foster's list of sermons illustrating this aspect of church life is not sufficiently discriminating;<sup>3</sup> its value rather lies in illustrating that a change gradually came about in preaching comparable to the attempt to grapple with the decline in full church membership by means of the Half-Way covenant; and both are seen to commence about 1670. The emphasis on human inability, to the minimising of any confidence in personal faith, without some very exceptional experience of divine working in the heart, was characteristic of the church teaching, and attitude up to that time and of course it continued into the future. But just as new disciplinary methods were inaugurated, so a new approach began from then on to be manifest in significant ways in preaching.

1. A Genetic History of the New England Theology F.H. Foster. (Chicago 1907) p.31 Edwards himself notes this trend. (Works vol. i. p.ccxiii).

2. Inst. III. xxiii.13.cf14.

3. Foster op.cit. p.30 n.41.

One aspect of the new approach in preaching and teaching was to make more of an aspect of spiritual experience, discerned by New England theologians. While natural inability and the unaccountable nature of regenerating grace were emphasised manifesting the unknown election of God, nevertheless, it was possible to descry an initiating period before conversion. Truly, the Westminster Confession, to which successive Congregational platforms and Synods adhered, to a great extent, affirmed that "natural man is not able by his own strength to convert himself or to prepare himself thereto".<sup>1</sup> But by degrees, more was made of the preparatory period before the experience of saving grace. Perkins had originally mentioned it as a work by ministers as they reasoned with souls. Preston later spoke of a 'preparatory sorrow'; Hooker, Shepard and Peter Bulkeley intensified the interest and emphasised its importance.<sup>2</sup> It was easily correlated to federal theology, for although natural actions cannot effect the experience of grace, yet God, in his covenantal relation, works to an 'order' in the process of regeneration, and if a man can be found to be influenced by the remoter eddies of the current of divine grace there is reason to hope that he will be carried into the full tide. Such preliminaries might consist in meditation, discussion, in studying the nature of the covenants (as well as churchgoing

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1. Fisher. op.cit. p. 394.

2. P. Miller (The New England Mind; from Colony to Province) p. 56, 57.



and listening to sermons). Such a period, though not entirely of ourselves is not without ourselves. Indeed the Synod of 1637 could say - "The more wee endeavour, the more assistance and help wee find from him".<sup>1</sup> But as time went on, and the decline in spirituality became a pressing concern, the predestinarian limitations to endeavour became less and less prominent. It was essential to be "practical", and the idea of preparation became interpreted as within the scope of 'natural power! As with a Gnostic cosmology, it was not difficult in this view of saving grace to look on certain aspects of human action and worldly effort as sufficiently remote to be our own effort and yet not completely excluded from the divine activity, although many stages removed from the vital experience. Thus Increase Mather's sermons are significantly entitled - "The Greatest Sinners Exhorted and Encouraged to Come to Christ and that Now, without Delaying given in 1686; and Now or Never in 1713."<sup>2</sup> F.H. Foster comments on him 'Hard common-sense and practical tact out-weighted theory';<sup>3</sup> but in fact both of the Mathers represent those who were leaders both in church and state and in consequence particularly vulnerable to social, political as well as ecclesiastical and theological pressures.

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1. Perry Miller op.cit. p.56.

2. F.H. Foster op.cit. p.30, n.41.

3. op.cit. p.32.

This urging of human endeavour, to prove the beginnings of divine grace at work, was linked with more public occasions for spiritual stirring. From the first, the community responded to corporate experience of prosperity and adversity by days of thanksgiving or humiliation. As the community became more efficient, prosperous and less affected by external conditions, these public religious expressions became more closely connected with the community's spiritual and moral state. Professor Perry Miller identifies a special type of sermon for these occasions which he calls 'the jeremiad' for which there was an identifiable form. It lamented the condition of the times against the background of the covenanted position of the people; but significantly it did not paint a picture of immorality but a decline in godliness; it was directed at the spiritual apathy that would not go on to seek and find conversion. The trouble was with a bourgeois religion. So, in conjunction with this form of "stirring-up" sermon, there went a practice of a corporate renewal of the covenant; and these became occasions also for seeking baptism as expressing the use of natural ability towards the hope of regeneration.<sup>1</sup> But this also exposed those who were only baptised to another kind of preaching which Perry Miller claims can be precisely located as developing in the period 1690 to 1700; to threats of hell-fire in worse degrees for the baptised but unconverted

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1. Perry Miller op.cit. p.211, 214.

than for the 'ordinary' sinner.<sup>1</sup> This application of the doctrine of divine judgment was applied with a minute analysis of anticipated experience which is later exemplified in Jonathan Edwards' sermons. As a result there were 'reformat-ions' or 'revivals' in different places.

The passage of the seventeenth century therefore in New England sees a swing from a sectarian, separatist outlook able to inspire and support a small colony, necessarily rustic and agrarian in background, and soon asserted as a theocracy, under the comprehensive guidance of the Bible expounded by the minister - to a prosperous province with cultured urban life beside its established farming life, and with considerable commercial and trading developments. The sociological interpretation of the religious decline in New England has been explored by almost all writers upon the subject, not all of whom have sufficiently weighed the careful critique by R.H. Tawney<sup>2</sup> of Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism 1930 and Troeltsch's Protestantism and Progress and Die Soziallehren der Christlichen Kirchen. Thus Perry Miller cites William Ames teaching on 'Improve thy talent with due care' which sums up the Calvinist emphasis on bourgeois values; the result being a pious 'buying up the opportunity' in trading so that prosperity rewarded hard work and diligence and in the end undermined Calvinist spirituality by an insidious dependence on good works.<sup>3</sup>

1. op.cit. p. 210.212. 2. R.H. Tawney. Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (Pelican) p.247. 3. P.Miller op.cit. p.41-46.

The "jeremiad" condemned merchants and the influence of trade on religion but never condemned merchandise or trading; hence, the people were faced with an ambivalence of aim. Yet, in his earlier volume, he clearly pointed out, that the Puritan outlook was in fact more consistent than this. There was a life<sup>3</sup>affirming, positive attitude that saw the world of cities, natural processes, and activities as one that requires dutiful responsibility and proper enjoyment.<sup>1</sup> The wrong use came about by a sinful attitude where enjoyment becomes the prime aim; and involvement in the life of the world uncontrolled or undisciplined by a sufficient "deadheartedness" to it or "weaned affections", as the Puritans described the proper outlook. The Puritan in fact answered the perennial problem thus in a more adventurous and less cynical spirit than the medieval, who surrendered the whole problem as essentially insoluble; consigned true spirituality to the ascetics and monastics, and left the layman to practise, apart from conventional acknowledgements to unworldliness in Lent, with considerable latitude. The fact that in time, the proper attitude to the this-worldly concerns of daily existence which was inculcated in Sunday worship, became forgotten in Monday's preoccupations, is not due to any specific interaction between Calvinist

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1. P. Miller. The New England Mind (1939) p. 40-42.

theology and economics as such, but rather to an inescapable temptation to simplify the tension of eschatological existence as a Christian.<sup>1</sup>

The rising tide of prosperity, therefore, played a considerable part in the declining religious state in New England; not simply because it was Calvinist, with some particular ambivalence in its teaching, but because it was economically a successful country, because of its rich resources, its widespread opportunities for individual initiative and resourcefulness, which were in fact seized by incoming thousands, Calvinist or not. With the rise of wealthy merchants, and the increase of mercantilism and development of city life generally, there can be seen aspects of a social revolution that could not fail to effect the outlook of the community generally. Wealth, ease, refinement, culture have a fairly constant effect upon moral and religious life, in undermining rigorism, relaxing codes of behaviour and interpreting religious life in "liberalizing" and accommodating terms. The whole development of New England in the second half of the seventeenth century can be seen as involving different elements, political and social which united towards this end. Thus the question about the colony's charter, which was annulled in 1684, raised the issue of toleration in the colony, and opinion coalesced

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1. Cf. I. Cor. vii. 31. as against J. Haroutunian 'Piety versus Moralism' (New York 1932) pp. xiv. xv.

into a movement of specific moderation, which worked for a polity of freedom for minority groups on a basis of natural rights. It was true of course, that moderation found a set-back in James II's appointment of Sir Edmund Andros as Governor; to turn to England for assistance, as the Moderates had done, was to make alliance with a tyranny, that could also be looked upon as a popish plot after the accession of William III. A new charter had to be negotiated in 1690 that involved a measure of liberty of conscience to be permitted in New England, just as Dissenters were receiving it in England. This whole situation produced secularizing trends; the society in covenant relation to God was being made increasingly aware of the influence of "an unfederated Whitehall". The voice of the synod was less heeded and the rule of the clergy lost its grip. In the 1693 elections two secular parties were brought into being, to which the nominated representatives of the clergy were not elected.<sup>1</sup> The condition of the clergy was further imperilled after 1706 by the financial state of the country; for as luxury increased so also did the cost of living, which soon left behind stable clerical incomes fixed by bargaining in earlier days.<sup>2</sup> It is not surprising

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1. P. Miller. The New England Mind; from Colony to Province. P. 175.

2. op.cit. p. 305/6; 327/8.

that sermons against luxury were looked upon as oblique calls to give more to the minister, and calls for reformation and repentance in the midst of spiritual decline were sarcastically re-interpreted in terms of the material support of the clergy. Anti-clerical sentiments were aroused, and led to further relaxation in public morality especially in the towns of the Eastern sea-board. With the decline in the prestige of the clergy as civic as well as spiritual leaders, the religious interpretation of the state emphasised the divine institution of the civil power and the magistrate. But the quickening of the pace in political and social development meant that the rulers gave more thought to the concerns of this world and thought of their godliness more in terms of preserving the present benefits of freedom, law and order and public well-being.

Intellectually, the signs of change, or influences towards the loss of spiritual dynamic are not nearly so evident. Learning was encouraged from the first. One of the founders, Elder Brewster, took with him a small library;<sup>1</sup> and the foundation of Harvard was one of the earliest actions of the young colony. But the curriculum followed in New England based upon William Ames' theology and Alsted's

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1. Rowse. op.cit. p. 135.

and Wollebius' works varied little during the seventeenth century. By the end of the century, the majority of the learned were ex-Harvard men; but Schneider holds that learning was poor in the early years of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Perry Miller would agree that little fresh or dynamic thinking was taking place. The publication of Newton's Principia refreshed the already well-known pattern of exposition of doctrine, for Puritans were always interested in physical science and their system found nothing that challenged it in the scientific writings of the day. When Samuel Willard produced his Compleat Body of Divinity in the early part of the eighteenth century he did not more than produce a native exposition of the received orthodox divinity. But some shaking of the branches if not the roots had been taking place. In 1692 and 1693 there had occurred the extraordinary witchcraft scare and trials, with about twenty people executed by hanging, including one minister.<sup>2</sup> After the hysteria subsided, and local gossip, quarrels and suspicions had been seen as playing their part in the death of innocent people, some revulsion, expressed in public repentances, was clearly felt in the minds of all who took part. Many see in this event a significant if quiet challenge to much of the established thinking of the time.

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1. op.cit. p. 158.

2. The Devil in Massachusetts. M.L. Starkey. London 1952.



"During the witchcraft and to some extent through the witchcraft, thinking people in Massachusetts passed over the watershed that divides mystery and the magic of late medieval thinking, from the rational climate of opinion referred to as 'the Enlightenment'".<sup>1</sup> Perry Miller, while holding that "It had no effect on the ecclesiastical and political situation, it does not figure in the institutional or ideological development", nevertheless reckons that "In the end the irruption nearly wrecked the intellectual structure....in its deepest meaning".<sup>2</sup> The intellectual struggle is in fact shown in two publications by the two Mathers; Cotton Mather wrote Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions which attempted to support orthodoxy which he felt stood or fell with belief in witchcraft and the justice of its punishment; but his father, Increase Mather wrote "Cases of Conscience" which denounced the reasoning about witchcraft - even though he had to attach a postscript to it, that it did not reflect on the court.

Thus an examination of the various influences which shaped the development of New England into a province illuminates different aspects of an insoluble problem which the founders propounded and their successors perpetuated,

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1. ibid.

2. op.cit. p. 191, 192.

despite criticism and adverse influences, when they attempted to maintain a sectarian type of church as an established one to dominate society. However much old tradition and sentimental regard for the early settlers tended to preserve established patterns, such a situation was bound to produce attension and finally a more or less conscious abandonment of the old-established theory of the religious community, simply because the social psychology necessarily altered. The sectarian attitude of the early Plymouth settlers was due to personal bent, no doubt accentuated by being a persecuted minority in England. All they wanted was to get to some peaceful place to practice their religion as they wished. But this sectarian church life, taken into the whole pattern of the colony by the Massachusetts Bay colonists, involved the basing of a growing community upon a social psychology that was essentially introverted. K.B. Murdock has pointed out how much the first half of the seventeenth century in England was a time of development in psychological self-awareness in which the inner life became more and more a subject of scrutiny, and the external situation was just as strongly felt as a power moulding the life within as ever it was in the medieval period.<sup>1</sup> As has been noted earlier, this

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1. Literature and Theology in Colonial New England. K.B. Murdock Harvard U.P. 1949) ch. iv.

establishment of sectarianism accentuated this drive within the church life in the first decades of the colony, and produced some of its most typical and significant literature, which traced with pastoral care, the inner processes of the experience of grace.<sup>1</sup>

It was the very prosperity and growing assurance of the country that served to undermine its religious basis, because it imperceptibly changed the mental attitude of the growing society. Successful mercantilism, wealth, culture, urban life, the growing sense of security against want and enemy, either Indian or the French, gradually promoted a change of outlook, more activist, more assertive of human self-determination in practice if not much in theory, more extraverted. At the same time, the depth of feeling attaching to religious conviction lessened. The general scheme of Calvinist theology was not at first significantly questioned, either because of new scientific thinking or for theological reasons. But as the changing social outlook lessened the concern for inner religious experience, so the various attempts to produce this concern in order to make the Congregational polity effective, led to an emphasis upon human initiative in religious experience which in itself, reflected the growing spirit of

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1. cf. above pp. 78, 79 cf. also The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience. G.F. Nuttall (Oxford 1946) pp. 7, 8.

the age, the spirit of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Social development was enforcing modification in Congregational polity, at least by introducing half-measures; and one church in Boston, the Brattle Street church, ensured its popularity by putting away the necessity of requiring humble repentance and profession of faith before admission to the Holy Communion.<sup>2</sup> It was this inter-relation of social outlook, extraverted, confident in its sanity, culture and enlightened reason,<sup>3</sup> that affected religious life by way of relaxed and moderated ecclesiasticism. Churchmen might call themselves Calvinist, Puritan, Congregational, covenanted; but the old passion was sapped by the zeitgeist. Indeed the old passion itself became suspect and distasteful.<sup>4</sup> Those who were the opponents of the later Great Awakening were many of them admittedly Calvinistic in outlook. Part of the eighteenth century attitude was a dislike of the theological "distinctions", the "controversy and dispute" that Edwards later refers to;<sup>5</sup> and a preference for their 'plain, easy and natural account of things'. Instead of the old style of preaching, with sermons planned on doctrine, reasons, and uses, there

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1. cf. above pp. 84, 85.

2. The New England Mind; from Colony to Province. P. Miller, p.255.

3. Eighteenth Century Church and People. S.C. Carpenter (London 1959) p. 276.

4. c.f. From Puritanism to the Age of Reason G.R. Cragg. (C.U.P. 1950) p. 21-25.

5. Intro. to the Five Discourses (Works vol. i. p. 621.)

was an elegant reasoning of religion, briefer, less academic, and pietistically moralizing. Tillotson, and Addison were influential. The old characteristics of Puritanism were being left behind.<sup>1</sup>

It was this pervasive spirit within the church, not only in centres like Boston but also in western townships like Northampton, that was spoken of as 'Arminianism'. In 1726, Cotton Mather was apparently of the opinion that there was no 'Arminianism' in New England but by 1734 the followers of the Mathers referred to it as the great sin of the land. Perry Miller discerns the influence of English dissenting theology here, whose works were "the latest" to New England minds.<sup>2</sup> Among these were numbered the Discourses (1710) of Daniel Whitby, an Anglican with a Unitarian outlook and The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to a Free and Candid Examination (1738) by Dr. John Taylor of Norwich both of whom argued that Calvinist doctrine undermined morality. The writings of Isaac Watts too provide "a study in hesitant Calvinism" and were directly connected with the thought of New England.<sup>3</sup> He represents an eighteenth century mildness trying to make Calvinism more acceptable to its easy charity. The social forces, and

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1. cf. Thomas Shepard, The Sound Believer (London 1671) writing at the beginning of the decline; "O the wrath of God upon this God-glutted; Christ-glutted, gospel-glutted age" and "The old truths about the grace of Christ and the simplicity of the Gospel is as water in men's shoes. Ministers must preach novelties....or else their doctrines are too many as Almanacks out of date." (p.242)

2. Jonathan Edwards. P. Miller pp.109-112. 3. cf Freedom of the Will by Jonathan Edwards ed. p.Ramsay (Works of Jonathan Edwards ed. P. Miller Yale edition) p.81-118.

changed bent of mind in New England had been assimilating a good deal of this without openly acknowledging any radical departure from its past. The growing emphasis upon human effort within the covenantal process manifested in the church ordinances, the slackening off of demand for personal testimony to saving grace received, the efforts to promote profession of the covenant in many places or revivals in yet others, enabled an unconscious disloyalty to the Westminster Confession even while professing to adhere to it. Under the old orthodox language it was possible to promote inducements to faith; it was possible to explore to the fullest the advice of Augustine, quoted by Calvin - "Because we know not who belongs to the number of the predestinate, or does not belong, our desire ought to be that all may be saved".<sup>1</sup> Few were taking sides with the Remonstrants; many were sliding gently into Puritan latitudinarianism, eschewing the problems of predestination in favour of humanitarian practicality, moral and religious effort, and gracious living. Edwards saw the trend clearly, however much the leaders disliked open diagnosis. In the 1734 sermon on Justification, which he preached in direct opposition to the forbidding by the Williams family of Hatfield (and their later ridicule), he concludes with a

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1. Inst. III xxiii. 14.

paragraph that, while irenical shows that he understands the nature of the drift:

How far a wonderful and mysterious agency of God's spirit may so influence some men's hearts, that their practice in this regard may be contrary to their own principles, so that they shall not trust in their own righteousness, though they profess that men are justified by their own righteousness - or how far they may believe the doctrine of justification by men's own righteousness in general, and yet not believe it in a particular application to themselves - or how far that error which they may have been led into by education or cunning sophistry of others, may yet be indeed contrary to the prevailing disposition of their hearts, and contrary to their practice - or how far some may seem to maintain a doctrine contrary to this gospel-doctrine of justification, that really do not but only express themselves differently from others; or seem to oppose it through their misunderstanding of our expressions or we of theirs, when indeed our real sentiments are the same in the main - or may seem to differ more than they do, by using terms that are without a precisely fixed and determinate meaning - or to be wide in their sentiments from this doctrine for want of a distinct understanding of it; whose hearts at the same time, entirely agree with it, and if once it was clearly explained to their understandings, would immediately close with it and embrace it;- how far these things may be, I will not determine; but I am fully persuaded that great allowances are to be made on these and such like accounts, in innumerable instances; though it is manifest, from what has been said, that the teaching and propagating contrary doctrines and schemes, is of a pernicious and fatal tendency.<sup>1</sup>

The tendency was clearly exhibited in 1740 when Jonathan Mayhew openly denounced Calvinist theology in Boston.

In the parish of Northampton to which Edwards came, these social and ecclesiastical tendencies showed marked expression .

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1. Works. vol. 1, p. 654.

The town was of moderate size but it was prosperous, and had a high standard of gentility and morals. Solomon Stoddard, had been their pastor from 1669 and remained its pastor for sixty years. After his ordination in 1672, he at once instituted the Half-Way Covenant and kept to this two-fold church membership pattern for five years. But he refused to turn a blind eye to the problems of the church, and the spiritual deterioration of the town. He saw New England religion languishing while the leaders flogged the various expedients, or adapted their methods of preaching - 'jeremiads', hell-fire, or elegant, euphuistic piety - in the hope of reaching the masses and promoting a spiritual resurgence. He saw that Half-Way covenant members were not being converted; that men were placed in an inescapable dilemma by being baptised under it; they were under divine condemnation if they did not come on to the Holy Communion; yet they were eating and drinking damnation to themselves if they came unworthily; the teaching about the assurance of faith was undermined by the insistence in preaching that the externals of religion need be no more than the cloak of hypocrisy; and this included good works and religious attitudes. He saw all this as accentuating the division between the people, and undermining all genuine approach to faith, all genuine evangelism. Finally, he himself had been converted through coming to the Holy Communion.



So it was after five years he began the sweeping changes in pastoral practice which made him both a leader and an antagonist. He had established himself not only in the church but also as supreme in the town meeting. In 1677 he began to baptise every adult who assented to articles of faith, and to admit them to the Holy Communion. He rejected all the various church covenants as unscriptural and held to the one covenant of grace. Through the ensuing years he came to open debate in Synod with Increase Mather, but his own important positions on committees prevented the Boston leader from having any effective power of condemning him. Above all, his polity was closely reasoned from the most uncompromising Calvinist theology, and could not be seriously challenged without an appearance of disloyalty to the doctrine of New England Churches.

Among the works in which Stoddard argued his position, his Safety of Appearing on the Day of Judgment (1687) is probably outstanding.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Perry Miller refers to it as 'a powerful influence in the Great Awakening'. and as 'the only speculative treatise since the founders and before Edwards that makes any constructive contribution to New England theology....it is virtually the only work which since the Synod of 1637 endeavoured to call a halt to those

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1. cf. article on Stoddard by P. Miller; Harvard Theo. Review. xxxiv (1941) pp. 277-320.

tendencies that...we would call rationalistic'<sup>1</sup> It was one of the most widely read books for the next sixty years. Initially it treads the path of established federal theology. Since creation, God has dealt with man "in the way of covenant to the end that man may be encouraged to walk in the right way to the obtaining of good". God made a covenant of works with Adam, who was made the legal representative of posterity; and by his fall, his posterity was legally involved in the original sin of the head. Although God might have saved men out of his plenary power, He had in fact "tied his own hands" by His Law that men could not be saved without satisfaction; mercy must be purchased. But for this, God devised ("the contrivance of God Himself") the covenant of grace, in which satisfaction was made by God in the person of Christ, so that man is no longer required to fulfil the Law but to believe in the Saviour. "God engages himself by promise to give believers eternal life. He..... binds himself by his promise...God is bound by the covenant to give life unto believers". Grace alone could enable belief, but the explicit terms of the covenant meant that the way of salvation was clear to men as rational creatures; and the knowledge of the terms and methods by which mercy is bestowed meant that man had a standing, a guarantee, the promise of the Word of God.

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1. New England Mind; from Colony to Province, p. 232.

All this was fairly conventional theology. The change made by Stoddard was in the implications which he drew. The usual development had been to assess the signs of election by evidences and external manifestations carefully weighed and scrutinized. The divine guarantees and promises had led to rationalizing preparation and the use of "means" (like church going) became almost a claim on divine grace. This logic of the covenant Stoddard rejected. Salvation is a mystery, conversion a critical, undeniable experience. But all was beyond, in fact opposed to, the concepts of carnal reason. "The only reason why God sets his love on one man and not upon another is because he pleases". In this he was irreproachably orthodox; but orthodoxy had preferred to emphasise the more explicit terms of covenant. The outcome of Stoddard's insistence of the free sovereignty of God, meant that there was no point in looking for clues of election in individuals; the identification of saints from hypocrites and sinners was theologically inadmissible. Whatever inner assurance there could be, there was no outward standard - "it cannot be made evident by experience to the world, because the world cannot certainly know", for "the meer pleasure of God does decide it ". Hence, in practical churchmanship all could feel 'safe' in approaching God - even in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. For although the individual convert can know an inner

assurance - "you have no reason to be discouraged because you can find no reason in yourself of God's love". The hidden nature of divine decree implies that no man should decide who may come to the church ordinances and who not; therefore "We may safely venture our souls upon his word". His high Calvinism meant that "whosoever will may come". "The call is to every one that will...so that there is no bar to any man's way". Thus so long as men live lives that are not ignorant nor scandalous, they may approach all the external ordinances, because it is highly unreal to discriminate.

Stoddard's teaching and practice was a bomb-shell in the country; even more so were the "harvests" it seemed to produce. The years 1679 and 1683 witnessed particularly successful ministries to young people who in the contemporary circumstances were naturally objects of concern to the church. They were followed by other revivals in 1712 and 1718. He published in 1714 his Guide to Christ in which almost the whole of human activity was seen as a preparatory field for faith wherein men may do many things in order to believe; hence they must prepare. In these ways Stoddard released the teaching on conversion from the discouraging ways in which so many preachers had presented the mystery of election. He stimulated spiritual seeking by refusing to pronounce on people's states but inviting them all to approach God

in the mystery of His grace. But he coupled with this, hell-fire preaching in which he profoundly believed. In Guide to Christ (p. 39) he writes -

If men be thoroughly scared with the danger of damnation they will readily improve their possibility and not stand for assurance of success.<sup>1</sup>

For people are perishing and must be awakened; hence sermons must unite religion and experimental knowledge. So he became the pioneer revivalist of the eighteenth century.

Jonathan Edwards entered into this mixed inheritance in 1727 as Stoddard's colleague and successor; learning much from his grandfather's experience as a spiritual guide and preacher of reviving sermons, and a protagonist of the Puritan doctrines of grace untrammelled by nice considerations of the requirements of a gathered church polity. But Edwards was not convinced of Stoddard's sacramentalism and church polity; and in his return to an essentially idealist Congregational outlook, he involved himself in the problems of discriminating and pronouncing upon spiritual states. In the end this brought about his own expulsion from his parish, where no reviving experiences would dispose them to return to the necessities of giving personal testimony to grace received as a prelude to coming to the Communion. Out of this difference of outlook, however came his works of spiritual experience, and especially the Treatise on Religious Affections.

<sup>1</sup> Harvard Theol. Review on cit. p. 315 316

These were, like all Puritan accounts of spiritual experience, vindications of the theology of the preaching, of which these experiences were the result; they were proofs of where the Holy Spirit worked and what gospel He owned. They were also the final challenge to the decorous, hide-bound and fruitless 'Arminianism' that was pervasive in practice and eventually to be wrestled with in theory.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Edwards' Writings on Revival and Religious Experience

The two revivals, of 1734/5 and of 1740-1744, produced four works from Edwards' pen, which deal with the events and their significance, and which contribute to our understanding of him as a spiritual director, and to his views on spiritual experience. Three are related to the later revival, though no doubt with much in mind of what had gone on previously. The one mainly concerned with the first, the "Faithful Narrative", is quite different from those that followed in being a careful account of what actually happened in the revival; while the later works were more concerned to evaluate the spiritual experiences of the revivals, especially in the face of criticism. These culminate in the more abstract and detached work of the "Treatise concerning Religious Affections". They thus form a developing sequence; though it will be necessary to refer to sermons, one or two lesser known writings of Edwards on religious experience and spiritual guidance, as well as to his general theological and philosophical outlook in order to understand fully his approach as a director, which they reveal.

#### 1.

A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton and the Neighbouring Towns and Villages of New Hampshire in New

England; in a letter to the Rev. Dr. Colman, of Boston.

It was shown in the previous chapter that Northampton had been for some time a place of outstanding interest for the churches of New England, as a place of pastoral experiment allied to a thorough-going theological foundation, which had yielded impressive results in the response of the people over a number of years. When news of revival in the parish became known in Boston, Dr. Benjamin Colman of Brattle Street Church wrote to Edwards for particulars. The reply, dated May 30th 1735, was published by Colman as a letter in an eighteen page pamphlet in 1736, and this was sent to certain ministers in London, notably Isaac Watts and John Guyse, who made known the contents to a congregation gathered for one of their monthly services of prayer. They wrote to Colman asking for a fuller account, who passed on the request to Edwards through his uncle, William Williams of Hatfield. The revised account was published in London in October 1637 under the above title and with a long preface by Watts and Guyse.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Works. vol. i. 344/6. the preface suggest that the first pamphlet was the abridgement of the full work published later; but cf. Dwight's Memoir (op.cit. ch.VIII. p.xc); Jonathan Edwards; Representative selections with introductory bibliography and notes; (American Writer Series) C.M. Faust & T.H. Johnson 1935, p. 420, and The Printed Writings of Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758. T.H. Johnson item 4.



This preface is itself interesting, for it declares the importance that was attached to such revivals on both sides of the Atlantic. In the first place

"We may learn much of the way of the Spirit of God in his dealing with the souls of men, in order to convince sinners, and restore them to his favour and his image by Jesus Christ, His Son".

But the pastoral is never without its theological and ecclesiastical concerns,

"The work of conversion among men may be occasioned by the ministry which they sit under, whether it be of a more or less evangelical strain, whether it be more severe and affrighting, or more gentle and persuasive.....it is the common plain protestant doctrine of the Reformation, without stretching towards the antinomians on the one side, or the Arminians on the other, that the Spirit of God has been pleased to honour with such illustrious success"<sup>1</sup>

The two English editors also note that there were no pre-disposing causes in the shape of calamities to the revival; and comment with a certain ambivalence, that although "Such scenes have sometimes been made happily effectual to awaken sinners in Zion", yet in the outcome religious experience of this sort is often unsatisfactory, for when people "have been affrighted out of their present carelessness and stupidity by some astonishing terrors approaching them, those religious appearances have not been so durable". But in the present case "the persons who were divinely wrought upon in this season continue still to profess serious religion".

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1. Works. vol. 1, p. 345.

But reference to calamities brings a reference to the collapse of the gallery in Edwards' church in 1737 and the verbatim quotation of Edwards' description of it. He looked upon the event as evidence of "the care of Providence, in disposing the motions of every piece of timber and the precise place of safety where every one should sit"; and this the editors accepted, though calling it "a very surprising and threatening Providence" which "might have been construed by the unthinking world to be a signal token of God's displeasure". We are left in some doubt as to what Drs. Watts and Guyse would have construed if the event had occurred two years before, just before the revival began. The conclusions of their preface hints that, although the facts of "this glorious event" (the revival) are beyond doubt, there may be criticism of Edwards' style and inferences drawn and especially his selection of examples; indeed a certain condescension of attitude marks the final paragraphs, possibly due to an eighteenth century Englishman's view of "their American plantations":

"Upon the whole, whatever defects any reader may find or imagine in this narrative, we are well satisfied, that such an eminent work of God ought not to be concealed from the world.....it is very likely that this account .....may by the blessing of God have a happy effect upon the minds of men.....much more than any supposed imperfection in this representation of it can do injury".

The "Faithful Narrative" is divided into three sections, most of the third being added for the fuller story of this work, in addition to what had been in the first letter. The first section - "A general introductory statement"- describes Northampton for the benefit of those far away; its general size, social and ecclesiastical circumstances, in which Edwards comments on the remoteness, and consequent self-sufficiency of the town and its freedom particularly from the evils of the eastern sea-board. He refers to the previous ministry, particularly that of his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, and the results of his labours in the "harvests" that periodically took place in his sixty years of ministry. Edwards speaks highly of the moral and spiritual condition of the people-

"Take the town in general, and so far as I can judge, they are as rational and intelligent a people as most I have been acquainted with. Many of them have been noted for religion; and particularly remarkable for their distinct knowledge in things that relate to heart religion, and Christian experience.."1

and in advance, counters, any possible suggestion that the revival occurred to those who were ignorant backwoodsmen, naive enthusiasts or more or less uncultured, irreligious peasants. But despite the tradition of revival in the previous half-century, he notes that the closing years of

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 347.

Stoddard's time as minister were showing signs of degeneration, dulness in religion and relaxation in moral principles and parental authority. The contentiousness, ever latent in the community, was breaking out once more. Edwards saw this as partly due to Stoddard's failing powers; the ruler's weakening grasp showed in the rebellion of the two most vulnerable parts of the kingdom - the town's social life, and the habits of the youth.

But the new minister was worthy of his great predecessor. Edwards notes, without self-consciousness, that early in his own sole pastorate ("two or three years after Mr. Stoddard's death") matters improved, especially amongst the youth. It is noticeable that the spiritual temperature of the church and parish is measured to no small degree by Edwards, by the response shown by the young people from time to time. Hence another harbinger of the revival in 1733 is seen in the youth's ready response to a call to keep the Sunday evening more quietly even though it was then customary to reckon the actual sabbath from the Saturday evening up to the beginning of the Sunday evening. The effect upon the young of the death of two in April 1734, a young man and a young married woman, the first suddenly and the other after a death-bed conversion makes a further preparatory stage, bringing about, as it did, an advance among the young from a docile and restrained attitude to one of

'religious concern'. To promote this further, Edwards tells that he arranged for group discussion on religious matters among the young, which went on during the autumn of 1734 and was followed by the elders who imitated the example.

Edwards mentions hardly anything of his own preaching at this time as contributing to the growing spiritual concern; but the sermons known to have been preached at this time must have had their part, and especially in leading up to and entering into the controversy that was growing regarding 'Arminianism'. In 1726 Cotton Mather had asserted that there was no Arminianism in New England but in 1734 the supporters of the Mathers termed it the great sin in the land.<sup>1</sup> Edwards himself had been conscious of defection from the pure Calvinist theology of the Puritan fathers when he preached at the Harvard Commencement in 1727, discerning incipient Arminian tones in the modified expositions of Calvinist theology by those who would certainly not wish to be termed Arminian in the true definition of the term. Edwards was clear in his own mind that thus to trim the truth of God in the interests of evangelising a 'post-Christian' society was doomed to utter failure. It dishonoured the Lord, in trying to promote the religious

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1. Perry Miller; The New England Mind; from Colony to Province p. 462.

concern of people by recourse to suppression of that very truth of God that showed forth His true nature and glory. It has been suggested above (pp. . . , . . . ), that his sermon A Divine and Supernatural Light etc. published early 1734, may have led to the controversy becoming a local concern around Northampton. So Edwards notes in the "Faithful Narrative" that this "great noise" was the next preparatory stage for the revival of 1735; for

The friends of vital piety trembled for fear of the issue; but it seemed, contrary to their fear, strongly to be over-ruled for the promoting of religion. Many who looked on themselves as in a Christless condition, seemed to be awakened by it, with fear that God was about to withdraw from the land, and that we should be given up to heterodoxy and corrupt principles; and that then their opportunity for obtaining salvation would be past. Many who were brought a little to doubt about the truth of the doctrines they had hitherto been taught, seemed to have a kind of trembling fear with their doubts, lest they should be led into by-paths, to their eternal undoing; and they seemed with much concern and engagedness of mind, to enquire what was indeed the way in which they must come to be accepted with God.

Edwards did not stand away from this; indeed he challenged whoever were the ones making the 'great noise' and resisted critics who found fault "with meddling with the controversy in the pulpit, by such a person" by his sermons on justification by faith alone. The opponents to these sermons, and possibly the instigators of the "great noise" locally, were Edwards relatives, the Williams family of Hatfield. Strangely enough, William Williams his uncle

associated himself with the publication of the "Faithful Narrative" later, possibly because the practical results of revival left him no alternative. Edwards of course made no open allusion to the identity of his opponents. In the above quoted paragraph he is not clear as to whether the spiritual concern described anticipated, coincided with or followed the sermons on justification; but he next mentions that the sermons settled the theological doubts and promoted the seeking after salvation, so that it seems that the sermons may have both promoted and allayed spiritual concern by stirring minds to recognise the significance of the controversy and then directing them into the theological solution that related to spiritual peace. So Edwards notes the first fruits in December 1734 of five or six conversions. Of these he especially mentions the case of a young woman who had had no obvious preparation of being 'serious'.

Edwards confesses that the revival had given him anxious thoughts at first, as to its effect in hardening many and giving rise to some opposition; but the contrary was the case, especially in relation to the example of the young woman mentioned. The news of her conversion is recognised as especially beneficial to the youth of the town, and the revival influence quickly affected all ages. So great was the attention given to religious concerns that the

necessary duties of daily life were less attended to, so much so that scandal misrepresented the position as to a total cessation of business in the town. Edwards describes the revived spirit of worship and spiritual elevation in lyrical phraseology derived from the Psalms; but in view of his own later tests for true spiritual experience, one sentence is noteworthy here:

Our young people, when they met, were wont to spend the time in talking of the excellency and dying love of JESUS CHRIST the glory of the way of salvation, the wonderful, free and sovereign grace of God, his glorious work in the conversion of a soul, the truth and certainty of the great things of God, the sweetness of the views of his perfections etc.

There is here succinctly given essential elements of his view which the later Treatise upon Religious Affections would expand to considerable length. Hardly any example of spiritual need was left untouched or unhelped at this time. Those in doubt as to their spiritual state were assured by deeper experience of grace; the already converted were renewed; the careless and the opponents to evangelical religion were awakened - "all would eagerly lay hold of opportunities for their souls" - thronging to both public and private meetings under a concern for the kingdom of heaven and of fear of "dropping into hell". Even some who scoffed at the revival, including strangers to that part, were affected, so that the revival began to spread to other parts of the county. Edwards gives details of this extension in the various popu-



lation centres of the county,<sup>to</sup> other revival centres in Connecticut and the rest of New England, and even outside in New Jersey and New York. His comments are characteristically poetical and at the same time discriminatingly perceptive of the social psychology of the revival. Thus, of those who spread the revival elsewhere,

It might well be said at that time, in all parts of the county, who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?

While, of the results of the wide extension of the revival, he could note,

so our hearing of such a swift and extraordinary propagation and extent of this work, did doubtless for a time serve to uphold the work amongst us. The continual news kept alive the talk of religion and did greatly quicken and rejoice the hearts of God's people, and much awakened those who looked on themselves as still left behind, and made them the more earnest that they also might share in the great blessings that others had obtained.

Edwards is at pains to stress the universality of influence of the revival, beyond the usual experiences of previous occasions - the young people. He is prepared to render its results in Northampton statistically; three hundred converts are numbered, as many men as women, and he estimates that most of the people over sixteen years of age in the town 'have the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ'. He draws the contrast here with the past, when in previous experiences of this sort women were mainly affected; and further many have been affected past middle age, "heretofore rarely heard of", but now probably "upwards

of fifty persons converted in this town above forty years of age; more than twenty above fifty; ten of them above sixty; and two of them above seventy years of age". He notices a similar unusual phenomenon in the case of children, even to the case of one of four years of age.

Yet will all this precision, his actual phraseology that expresses his view of the spiritual condition of the people is studiously moderate, if not even hesitant. People were "to all appearance"...."savingly wrought upon". Two sentences from the heart of his enumeration of the effects upon members of the congregation show this ambivalence.

I had very sufficient evidence of the conversion of their souls, through divine grace, though it is not the custom here, as it is in many other churches in this country, to make a credible relation of their inward experiences.....

I am far from pretending to be able to determine how many have lately been the subjects of such mercy; but if I may be allowed to declare anything that appears to me probable in a thing of this nature, I hope that more than 300 souls were savingly brought home to Christ...<sup>1</sup>

With such guardedness of opinion go constant use of phrases such as "to all appearance", "as I hope", "I suppose", "we have reason to hope", "impressions that never wore off till they had hopefully a saving issue"; and of several converted negroes "who from what was seen in them then, and what is discernible in them since, appear to have been truly born

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 350.

again". Such an attitude may well be understood. There was the tendency of the time to verbal restraint with the design of contrasting with "enthusiasm".<sup>1</sup> There was the theological influence of Stoddard, as he had marshalled Puritan presuppositions to conclude that nobody could pronounce upon the spiritual condition of another. But Edwards also reveals the third and most consciously felt restraint; the prevailing climate of cool, critical religion.

I am very sensible, how apt many would be, if they should see the account I have here given, presently to think with themselves that I am very fond of making a great many converts, and of magnifying the matter; and to think that, for want of judgment, I take every religious pang, and enthusiastic conceit, for saving conversion.<sup>2</sup>

Edwards had no fear in challenging this religious situation on the ground of theology; but he sensed the strategic danger of challenging it by too great reliance upon the verdict of religious experience in such circumstances.

This tension between his theology - and his pastoral psychology, which the revival accentuated, is shown even more clearly in the second part of the Faithful Narrative. In this he analyses as though with case-book detail, the variety of religious experience in the revival. But the approach is not, as the American writers so often try to conclude,<sup>3</sup> entirely

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1. cf. Literature and Theology in Colonial New England by K.B. Murdock pp. 41, 42 quoting Helen C. White, English Devotional Literature 1600-1640 (1931).
  2. Works. vol. i. p. 350.
  3. Jonathan Edwards. Perry Miller (New York 1949) p. 139 "He was as empirical as Boyle or Huygens" (cf. D.J. Ellwood: The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards (Columbia 1960) p. 125.

empirical. The heading of the section should have warned them; The manner of conversion various, yet bearing a great analogy. Edwards as a Puritan theologian and the heir to a great pastoral tradition by no means came to deal with this surge of religious experience without a fairly well formed view of the ways of God with men. This part therefore, surveys the variety of spiritual experience under the main three stages in which Puritan pastoral psychology taught its ministers to expect it. Firstly there was the state of awakening in which fear and efforts to amend the life are mixed. Secondly there comes a calm under the sense of God's justice and humiliation before Him. Finally there come "gracious discoveries" bringing conversion. This pattern had been taught by Puritan preachers, exemplified by many published spiritual biographies against the background of the doctrines of election, vocation, justification, sanctification, glorification. "It became the pattern of the most profound experience of men through many generations".<sup>1</sup> Edwards refers to this common pattern of religious experience in the Treatise on Religious Affections (Part II Section 8):

Many persons seem to be prejudiced against affections and experiences that come in such a method as has been much insisted on by many divines; first, such awakenings fears, and awful apprehensions, followed with such legal humblings, in a sense of total sinfulness and helplessness, and then such and such light and comfort....and

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1. The Rise of Puritanism. W. Haller.p.93. cf. the whole of Chap.III. Note also the parallels in Methodism (S.G.Dimond. The Psychology of the Methodist Revival. Oxford 1926 Chapter X.

particularly if high affections of joy follow great distress and terror.....Surely it cannot be unreasonable to suppose that before God delivers persons from a state of sin and exposedness to eternal destruction, he should give them some considerable sense of the evil from which he delivers....As men that are saved are in two exceeding different states, first a state of condemnation, and then in a state of justification and blessedness; and as God, in the work of salvation, deals with them suitably to their intelligent nature; so it seems reasonable, and agreeable to God's wisdom, that men who are saved, should be in these two states sensibly; that they should be first sensible of their absolute extreme necessity, and afterwards of Christ's sufficiency and God's mercy through him.

And that it is God's manner of dealing with men, to 'lead them into a wilderness, before he speaks comfortably to them' and so to order it that they shall be brought into distress and made to see their own helplessness, and absolute dependence on his power and grace, before he appears to work any great deliverance for them is abundantly manifest by the Scripture..<sup>1</sup>

With this pattern or 'analogy' as Edwards calls it, he is able to describe the variety of ways each stage took with different people without becoming entangled in an inextricable confusion of experience. The first stage of awakening may be sudden or gradual with a set determination to use every means to arouse oneself. This would involve both moral reformation and religious practice with constant consultation of the minister. In this stage Edwards notes variation in degrees of fear; some being optimistic about their expectations, others so disturbed as to upset sleep and physical well-being. As

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1. Works. vol. i. p.252 cf. Thomas Shepard "The Sound Believer: A Treatise of Evangelical Conversion, Discovering the Work of Christ's Spirit in reconciling a Sinner to God: (London 1671) which is based on this pattern. An influential writer with Edwards.

the stage goes on, some find their anxieties increase while others become apparently senseless and despairing; and in dealing with this last case Edwards admitted to finding great difficulty:

One knows not how to deal with such persons; they turn everything that is said to them the wrong way, and most to their disadvantage.

Yet in the revival this mixture of spiritual concern and "melancholy humour" was not only less but those who had become seemingly fixed in this condition from previous "awakening" were now released; "convictions have wrought more kindly". Other manifestations in this period of 'legal convictions' or 'legal awakenings' <sup>were</sup> an overwhelming sense of God's wrath, so as to cry out; a wondering at God's patience with such 'guilty wretches' instead of instant consignment to hell; an immense sense of guilt; the further arousing of evil thoughts such as envy at the converted and complaints against God (despite the direst warnings from the minister); and a development from concern with evils of the outward life to concern about "heart-sins" (pride, unbelief, rejection of Christ, and obstinacy of will). The early attempts at reformation prove abortive and disappointing, and provoke both a despairing inclination to give up the struggle and at the same time increased fears of perishing. God is both blamed for their plight and blasphemed and then feared in case the unpardonable sin has been committed. In the

midst of these struggles, hope is renewed by some word of God's infinite mercy, which only sets them on to the whole fruitless effort of self-improvement again, as they endeavour to fit themselves for conversion. This whole process leads to the seemingly appalling state of being utterly desperate, and regarding oneself as hopeless, senseless and most far off from good, when in fact this condition presages their nearness to conversion.

They are as it were debilitated and broken, and subdued with legal humblings; in which God gives them a conviction of their own utter helplessness and insufficiency, and discovers the true remedy in a clearer knowledge of Christ and his Gospel.

When they begin to seek salvation, they are commonly profoundly ignorant of themselves; they are not sensible how blind they are, and how little they can do towards bringing themselves to see spiritual things aright....They are not sensible how remote they are from love to God...and how dead they are in sin... and they weary themselves in vain, till God shows them that it is in vain, and that their help is not where they sought it.<sup>1</sup>

The drift of the Spirit of God in his legal strivings with persons have seemed most evidently to be, to bring to a conviction of their absolute dependence on his sovereign power and grace, and an universal necessity of a mediator. This has been effected by leading them more and more to a sense of their exceeding wickedness and guiltiness in his sight...that they can in no wise help themselves and that God would be wholly just and righteous in rejecting them and all that they do, and in casting them off for ever"<sup>2</sup>

But

There is however, a vast variety, as to the manner and distinctness of such convictions

and Edwards is not so controlled by the established pattern

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1. Works. vol. i. p.352.

2. op.cit. p.351.

of conversion teaching as not to note that God

does not need to wait to have men convinced by long and often repeated fruitless trials; for in multitudes of instances he has made a shorter work of it.

Some indeed have felt more conviction of sin after conversion than before; and there is no proportional correspondence between preparatory struggles and subsequent experiences of grace. In this whole period of spiritual experience, the widest variety of situations were to be seen. As with Richard Baxter before him<sup>1</sup> Edwards saw that

God has appeared far from limiting himself to any certain method in his proceedings with sinners; under legal convictions,

and in this admission cut himself away from the rigid course that he had inherited from such writers as Thomas Hooker. Nevertheless, while he would not follow the earlier teachers in requiring long exercise in this condition, he was emphatic that, be it long or short, the sense of conviction must lead to one issue.

Whatever minister has a like occasion to deal with souls, in a flock under such circumstances....I cannot but think he will soon find himself under a necessity, greatly to insist upon it with them, that God is under no manner of obligation to show mercy to any natural man, whose heart is not turned to God; and that a man can challenge nothing either in absolute justice, or by free promise, from anything he does before he has believed in Jesus Christ, or has true repentance begun in him. It appears to me, that if I

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1. Reliquiae Baxterianae. I.7. (cf. How Shall They Hear? Papers read at the Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference 1959; 1960. p.20).



had taught those who came to me under trouble, any other doctrine....it would either have promoted self-flattery and carelessness, and so put an end to their awakenings; or cherished and established their contention and strife with God....and blocked up their way to that humiliation before the Sovereign Disposer of life and death, whereby God is wont to prepare them for his consolations.<sup>1</sup>

This humiliation was the second stage that must not be by-passed.<sup>2</sup>

Edwards describes the second stage as one of "calm, an unexpected quietness and composure", very noticeably succeeding the previous stage of mental and spiritual upheaval and struggle. From his description of the various individual attitudes in this condition, some regarded their stage predominantly in theological terms:

they saw God was sovereign and might receive others and reject them....God might justly cast them into hell at last, because all their labours, prayers, and tears cannot make an atonement for the least sin, nor merit any blessing at the hands of God....God may glorify himself in their damnation.....

Such an attitude was due to a long history of teaching by Puritan writers and preachers; humiliation, to be genuine must (as Thomas Shepard put it) "Not only cut it off from this self-confidence in duties but also so far forth as the soul may lye under God, to be disposed of as He pleaseth."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Works. vol. i. p.352.

2. cf. Thomas Shepard, The Sound Believer (London, 1671): "If the spirit begins thus with conviction of sin, then let all the Ministers of Christ co-work with Christ and begin with their people here" (p.37).

3. ibid. p. 126.

Others however are more concerned simply with their own moral depravity; they own the justice of their condemnation in the keen awareness of their own sinfulness and "corruption and wickedness of their hearts". Either way however they come,

to a conclusion within themselves, that they will lie at God's feet and wait His time.

Yet even in this state there is a difference. Edwards seeks to discriminate between two kinds of humiliation, "legal humblings" and "evangelical humiliation"; the latter not merely "forced by mere legal terrors and convictions; but rather from a high exercise of grace" which seems to be characterised by both "a complacency of soul, in the attribute of God's justice" so that "they see the glory of God would shine bright in their own condemnation" and be content to be damned to the glory of God; yet on the other hand there is "that great degree of hope and encouragement" despite a deep sense of their own depravity, which, Edwards holds, reflects the sense of "free and all-sufficient grace". Edwards is evidently recording expressions of attitude among the converts that reflect the pattern of some of the distinctive teaching of New England divines of past days; though in mentioning this expressed willingness to be damned, he adds,

though it must be owned that they had no clear and distinct ideas of damnation, nor does any word in the Bible require such self-denial as this.

We shall see later how important "clear and distinct ideas" were in Edwards' judgment, for true spirituality. A palliative however to this rather extreme attitude is given in the more acceptable expression that their humility thought of salvation as too good for those who had so affronted the majesty of God. An entirely different approach however might note that it was a common expression of good manners at the time firmly to reject some desirable benefits as too good for one, which one secretly had good hopes of securing, and which one might expect eventually to receive by the kindly overbearing of one's expressed opinions. Dickens, though writing from a later age, shows no anachronism in his numerous examples of this, for example in Mrs. Vardell in "Barnaby Rudge".

The time of this second stage varies, indeed is sometimes so short that it hardly seems to occur at all but leads immediately to "the gracious discoveries", the third stage of conversion in which "the first special comforts" of the gospel are received. The focus of attention here may be upon Christ alone or upon the Father's grace or power in Christ; some concentrate upon the truth or the promise or the invitation of the gospel; various aspects of salvation doctrine, such as the obedience or the love of Christ in the atonement are more thought of; or in others, Christ's divinity or excellence; or the general excellence of the way of salvation. We may note here in passing, Edwards' frequent

use of the word "excellence" in relation to spiritual objects of new understanding in conversion; it will be seen how important this is later.

Edwards describes in detail the different processes of conversion experience, sudden as a "sight or discovery" or gradual, a "lively or feeling sense of heart" (another significant term with him). Scripture in varying amounts or none is involved. Edwards refers to the need of pastoral counsel to interpret the experience to seekers. Firstly he mentions the need to make explicit what was implicit as to faith being in God's mercy through Christ alone. Then the new attitude in a person of entire devotion to God has to be interpreted to them as conversion having occurred, because "They expected I know not what kind of act of soul and perhaps they had no distinct idea of it themselves"<sup>1</sup>; indeed Edwards remarks with surprise,

they had very imperfect ideas of what conversion was. It is all new and strange, and what there was no clear conception of before....the expressions used to describe conversion, and the graces of God's Holy Spirit - such as 'a spiritual sight of Christ', "Faith in Christ", 'poverty of spirit', 'trust in God' etc. - did not convey those distinct ideas to their minds, which they were intended to signify".<sup>2</sup>

Yet this was in a town where "there has always been a great deal of talk about conversion and spiritual experiences" so

1. Works. vol. i. p. 354.

2. ibid.

that the majority had formed a notion in their own minds what these things were. But when it came to it, those who seemed most instructed in these things needed most guidance about their own case. Hence Edwards was forced to deal in "particular instructions" although the whole bent of his own ministry lay along this line. He found it necessary to counsel a number in order to confirm them in their faith and to bring them the clear assurance of their true conversion,

to lead them to an understanding of what we are taught in the word of God concerning the nature of grace, and to help them to apply it to themselves.

This practice of Edwards, he says, had exposed him to a good deal of misunderstanding and blame for expressing his views upon the spiritual condition of people either to themselves or to others. He defended himself by affirming that he had done this in only some instances and with great caution; yet at the same time, he felt that despite his immaturity and inexperience, he had to assist those who, through ignorance of their state, were

like trees in winter, or like seeds in the spring suppressed under a hard clod of earth.

But under instruction

so brought to allow of hope, this has awakened the gracious disposition of their hearts into life and vigour, as the warm beams of the sun in the spring have quickened the seeds....

Nothing could take from him the right thus to rejoice with those whose spiritual state had changed from distress to good

evidences of grace. Of this nothing for Edwards was more important than

a sense of the superlative excellency of divine things, with a spiritual taste and relish of them and an esteem of them as their highest happiness and best portion.

No single sentence could better sum up Edwards first test of true religion in phraseology that brings together his own various description of it. His second test was in "fruits brought forth". So much did he insist as Stoddard before him,

how unable man is to know another's heart and how unsafe it is to depend merely on the judgment of others....<sup>1</sup>

that apart from this, he warned his people, the greatest care must be exercised regarding all verbal professions; so much so that there had been not a few who were reluctant to have any hopes of themselves at all. Dr. A.V.G. Allen has said that Edwards referred little to morality as an effect of revival, and suggests that the reason was due to the fact that in his theology it only came under the head of 'common grace'.<sup>2</sup> He points out that he never expounds the second half of the decalogue but concentrates on duty to God, though at the same time he admits that the covenant that Edwards drew up for the people of Northampton, expressed their dedication to God in terms of New Testament morality.

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 355.

2. Jonathan Edwards A.V.G. Allen, (Edinburgh 1889), p. 155.

But Dr. Allen needs some correction here, both theologically and on matters of fact. Edwards would indeed follow the Puritan dogmaticians in holding that the fall left the moral law binding on man, not that he could fulfil it, but to awaken conscience and to make men seek divine grace.<sup>1</sup> Such a 'legal awakening' might only be in the order of 'common grace'; i.e. it might have no outcome in true conversion; but it might also be part of the special work of the Holy Spirit leading to regeneration. This has already been expressed in the discussion on the Faithful Narrative. Hence there are a good proportion of his sermons which, while not expounding the ten commandments as such, refer to the ways in which a community like the people of Northampton might still be indulging in evil-doing. It must be remembered that Northampton was rightly esteemed for its generally high level of moral and religious life, under the long and effective ministry of Stoddard. The fact that only one published sermon deals with such a subject as 'Dishonesty'<sup>2</sup> does not mean that Edwards was indifferent to the moral law, but rather that he saw that its significance for his congregation might be in more subtle aspects than just in the outward letter. Hence his application in such a sermon as A Warning to Professors was to the thought life rather than to outward actions; to secret imaginings of hidden activities.<sup>3</sup> Yet

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1. Heppe. op.cit. p. 316 (sect.15).cf p.599,401,cf Works vol.ii.

2. Works. vol. ii. p. 220.

3. Works. vol. ii. p. 185.

p. 354.

at the same time he refers here too to a wide range of evils of speech, malice, drunkenness, prayerlessness as countenanced by those who also worship God. The bent of his address is towards the outwardly religious and moral life that may conceal the permitted evils of secret sin. Further, to take up Dr. Allen's charge, Edwards would look on Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, but would also say with the Puritan teachers that the law "is incorporated in the covenant of grace, so far as it is an impulse to repentance and improvement, as well as the rule and plummet of a godly, virtuous and Christian life".<sup>1</sup> This only follows Calvin in his teaching that while the Christian is "free from the curse and compulsion of the law...(he is) bound to its inner content".<sup>2</sup> Thus, in an unpublished sermon, Edwards takes to task any incipient antinomianism (which was always a ghost needing to be laid)

there is no room left for any one to say that they have faith which justifies and that they need take no care about works and so give themselves a liberty in sinning because they ben't under the law but under grace; for tho' 'tis only faith that justifies, yet there is no faith that justifies but a working faith.<sup>3</sup>

Such working is that of love which is the fulfilling of the law; and Dr. Allen seems to forget that Edwards preached a whole series of sixteen sermons on Charity and its Fruits, apart from other references in sermons.

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1. Heppe. op.cit. pp. 401/2.

2. The Theology of Calvin. W.Niesel (London 1956) p.100.

3. Steps to Salvation. J.H. Gerstner (Philadelphia 1960).pp.150/



The Faithful Narrative suffers from a certain lack of order and this section is particularly marred by repetitiousness. The second half of this section takes up its theme of the variety of conversion experience and the many mistakes made about conversion experience by those influenced by the revival. Most of this has been already referred to the difference between sudden and gradual conversion; the more frequent correlation between 'legal terrors' and sudden conversion; the intuitive certainty about Christian truth in general or one particular doctrine, which however, can fade with the lessening of spiritual exaltation so as to admit later of doubts; the direct impression of Scripture passages on the mind, which at this point Edwards was prepared to concede as "an immediate influence of the Spirit of God" but which later he severely qualified. He refers to a problem that would particularly interest him, the relation of the rational and the spiritual in conversion; and he notes that

"in some God makes use of their own reason much more sensibly than in others",

even though the grounds for conviction must be just and rational. Nevertheless, some raised the problem that their experience, in review, appeared so rational that they were afraid "that they have no illumination above the natural force of their own faculties", a situation which, Puritan theology warned them, might be no more than a manifestation

of "common grace". Here again, the gain they have, is only recognizable when a worse situation ensued,

"when God withdraws, they find themselves as it were blind again, they for the present lose their realizing sense of those things that looked so plain to them, and, by all they can do, they cannot recover it, till God renews the influences of His Spirit".

This hints at one of the problems of the revival in the thought of Edwards; granted it was an "extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit" was the evidence in the widespread nature and effects, or in the quality of the experience as something different from usual evangelical experience? Edwards certainly held the former meaning for the extraordinary, but such remarks as this, and his longings for an indefinite continuance of revival conditions suggests that he held that only those conditions could be that life of the church in which genuine spiritual experience was possible. At this point Edwards seems not to have sifted his views sufficiently to distinguish whether, if heightened spiritual experience suggests an extraordinary ministry of the Holy Spirit, there might also be a level of spirituality, less vivid in its characteristics, yet fundamentally the same, which could be called the normal activity of grace. This may be attributable to the New England conditions in which the apathy of a covenanted church life could apparently only be roused to impressive religious expressions by such revivals. Normality of church life meant few conversions and half-way

covenant compromises. Eventually he was to call in question some of this spirituality, sifting out what was genuine; but never introducing Dwight's later consideration that,

One principal cause of this declension (i.e. in the number of conversions) is undoubtedly to be found in the fact, that in all these places, both among ministers and private christians, the physical excitement had been greater than the human constitution can, for a long period, endure. Nothing, it should be remembered exhausts the strength and the animal spirits, like feeling..... In revivals of religion, as they have hitherto appeared, the nerves of the whole man - of body, mind and heart,- are kept continually on the stretch, from month to month; until at length they are relaxed and become non-elastic; and then all feeling and energy of every kind is gone.<sup>1</sup>

Edwards never concedes this point, even though he is aware of other influences, such as local ecclesiastical controversy, as able to end revival by drawing man's attention away. The peculiar thing is that Edwards could counsel those that were surprised that after conversion "they found so much corruption remaining in their hearts" and "to be in dead and dull frames"; so as to argue

If God had, indeed done such great things for them, as they hoped, such ingratitude would be inconsistent with it.....

and so to conclude

that instead of becoming better, they are grown much worse, and make it an argument against the goodness of their state,

by showing to such that in reality this really indicates

that now they feel the pain of their own wound; they have a watchful eye upon their hearts, that they did

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1. Works. vol. i. p.lxxxvi.

not use to have. They take more notice of what sin is there, which is now more burdensome to them...<sup>1</sup>

He is accustomed to point out to them, that, although grace itself is greater than they imagined, yet their expectation of the degree commonly to be found in the godly is well in excess of actual experience; they have to learn that such doubts and fears are part of the experience of the converted, who are then unable to find assurance of grace by self-examination until "a return of the influences of the Spirit of God to revive the lively actings of grace". He seems to accept here, that there is more than one level upon which genuine experience of grace is known, qualitatively the same experience of grace, yet in some cases with heightened impressions of spiritual reality and consequent assurances thereof. It must be noted however that revival events, if nothing else, had led him dangerously near to testing religious experience by subjective feelings, and to explaining all conditions of feelings in the converted only in terms of the special presence or absence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> But the renewal of such faded experiences is occasioned by certain human activities; religious conversation, the relating of past experiences, the

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1. Works, vol. i. p. 358.

2. It is to be noted how Edwards later deplored his youth and inexperience at this time (cf. letter to the Rev. T. Gillespie, July 1751. Works, vol. i. p. clxxiv).

impression of Bible passages in their minds, some of which Edwards has previously noted as disposing towards conversion in the first place.

The final half-dozen or so paragraphs of this section refer to current criticism of the revival, based on misrepresentations and hearsay. Edwards rejects any allegations that people have claimed to have seen visions; despite some people too easily given to imagination, who had in fact been corrected, the expressions of religious experience (such as of a view of Christ crucified with His wounds bleeding) . were no more <sup>than</sup> "a lively idea", "lively pictures in the mind" and no more than "the natural result of the strong exercise of the mind, and the impression on the heart". This may well be stronger in some than in others and is due to "difference of constitution", or the sudden change from extreme terror to light and joy. Edwards clinches his point by referring to the "harvest" under the ministry of Stoddard. All who had seen the spiritual experience in his time would affirm that this revival was nothing different in nature from what happened then; and was also to be found paralleled in other parts, particularly in Connecticut.

Edwards was not without some misgivings even at this time. He mentioned that the Northampton folk often gave others offence through the practice of free conversation about their religious experiences. While he was prepared to admit that "indiscrete management" led to undesirable results yet in the practice itself nothing could be objected to. In fact,

it was only to be anticipated that what was supremely important to people should be uppermost in their minds and prominent in their conversation. But there were a residuum of instances of "impressions on persons' imaginations" which had baffled him. While these individuals showed

a greater sense of the spiritual excellency of divine things accompanying them; (i.e. the impressions) yet I have not been able well to satisfy myself, whether their imaginary ideas have been more than could naturally arise from their spiritual sense of things.<sup>1</sup>

He gives no details; he contents himself by telling us that he carefully cautioned such people to distinguish between the truly spiritual and the imaginary; to ground their hopes not at all upon any outward glory or external thing.

Section III, the last of the "Faithful Narrative" is an addition to the earlier draft and contains the spiritual experience of a woman, Abigail Hutchinson and a four-year-old child Phoebe Bartlet. All Puritans were interested in individual spiritual biography as a clear and easy way of teaching the relation of theology to religion, and in a reflex way authenticated the doctrine that so resulted in the experience.<sup>2</sup> Such examples "are to be held forth by God as Flags of Mercy before a Company of Rebels to win them in".<sup>3</sup> These case-histories were also valuable to the pastor for testing the spiritual experience of parishioners as they

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 358.

2. cf. Literature and Theology in Colonial New England, K. B. Murdock ch. iv.

3. cf. The Rise of Puritanism. W. Haller. p. 95, (quoting from T. Goodwin's Life by his son. Works. vol. V).

discussed them with him, in the context of "the plain protestant doctrine of the Reformation", that is, the doctrines of election, vocation, justification, assurance and sanctification. Edwards chose the woman, for the simple reason that she had died and it was therefore more possible to make public the aspects of her case, despite the obvious disadvantage of speaking from second-hand evidence. He carefully removes any suspicion of a tendency to enthusiasm - the ecclesiastical smear word of the period - or indeed any inclination "to be notional or fanciful". He traces her "awakening", first the effort of seeking, especially by Bible reading; then her sudden "extraordinary sense of her own sinfulness" which produced great terror of Divine wrath. This guilt was theological, related first to her view of original sin; but also to complaints at her ill-health and to wrong attitudes to her parents. Nothing could comfort her, nothing in the Bible or in religious practices; so she resolved to seek the advice of the minister, having meanwhile become very unwell in the course of half a week. But on the morning she was to go, she awoke with a different sense, of calm of mind, with Scripture promises that "accompanied with a lively sense of the excellency of Christ" and "a constant sweetness of soul". She referred to this as having "seen Christ" which Edwards renders in parenthesis as 'in realizing views by faith'. This continued for days and was further joined by a compass-

ionate love for "Christless persons" and an overwhelming sense of love and delight for other converted people almost to the point of fainting. Great themes of divine attributes, especially 'Truth' so affected her that she had to lie down. She was given to repeating various devotional words and phrases; and gave such an account of

the sense she once had, from day to day, of the glory of Christ and of God in his various attributes, that it seemed to me she dwelt for days together in a kind of beatific vision of God; and seemed to have, as I thought, as immediate an intercourse with him, as a child with a father.<sup>1</sup>

Yet she continued humble and teachable; she felt a special joy "to lie low before God, and the lower(says she)the better!" Nevertheless, her illness grew painfully, and with it her complete resignation to death; indeed she showed joy at the self-application of worms feeding on dead bodies read in the book of Job! This well-known eighteenth century outlook<sup>2</sup> coupled with the gratification she felt at self-identification with the dead at a funeral might suggest a tendency to manic-depressive states; but Edwards specifically rebutted any suggestion of "religious melancholy"...O.E. Winslow however dismisses the case as of a "morbid young woman"<sup>3</sup> without perhaps sufficiently recognising the widespread characteristics of this attitude. Matthew Sylvester, preaching at Baxter's funeral

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1. Works. vol. 1. p. 360.

2. cf. The Angel Makers G.R. Taylor 1958 ch.6. 'Ah, Lovely appearance of Death'.

3. op.cit. p. 167.



("Elisha's Cry after Elijah's God") mentions of Baxter that

He wondered to hear others speak of their so sensibly passionately strong desires to die, and of their transports of spirit when sensible of their approaching death".<sup>1</sup>

while he himself could not feel quite the same way. Nuttall mentions that to Sylvester's question "whether much of this was not to be resolved into Bodily Constitution?", Baxter had replied typically that "he thought it might be so". Edwards raised the same question in this instance but rejected it.

The details of Phebe Bartlet are more profuse in Edwards telling than the facts require, and suggest a somewhat fond attention to the case. The infant had been raised to a high degree of interest in religious matters by family conversation and instruction, which had certainly evoked an unusual result in her adult attention to private prayer, to calling upon God, and to showing distress and fear of hell for her sins by tears and writhing. Yet here too, the situation cleared into a condition of smiling ease, assurance gained from three passages of her catechism, and an unshakeable certainty of heaven. Here too, concern for others, love for the church, for worship, for the minister, were constant expressions of her experience; and she showed unusual attention to religious instruction and conversation,

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1. The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith & Experience.  
G.F. Nuttall, p. 137.

and a very acute consciousness of wrongdoing. Strangely enough, this tender babe was interrogated as to her readiness for death, and at times was able to reply satisfactorily in the affirmative. It is not surprising that her case was added to Cotton Mather's edition of Janeway's "Token for children, or some examples of children to whom the fear of God was remarkably budding before they died." published first in Boston 1700.

The last few paragraphs of the work tell of the decline of the revival. Edwards refers to various explanatory features; cases of attempted or actual suicide under religious depression; some deluded religious fanatics; and local politics - "the Springfield controversy" about the suitability of a new minister for his charge - and the building of a new meeting house. Edwards can say

we still remain a reformed people, and God has evidently made us a new people....  
in the main, there has been a great and marvellous work of conversion and sanctification among the people here.

The abiding results implied by these words are given by Edwards. Doctrinally, "new apprehensions and views of God, of the divine attributes of Jesus Christ, and the great things of the gospel". These "affect them in a new manner" - "a new sense of their truth"; "an inward ardour and burning of heart" aroused even by a reference to the name of Christ or to one of the divine perfections; "a new kind of inward labour and struggle of soul toward heaven and holiness".

The moral and practical results from this were; sweetening and softening of tempers (no unimportant achievement in Northampton); continuing religious conversation amongst all ages with frequent private religious meetings, besides more attention to public worship both on Sundays and at the Thursday lecture; continued rectitude among the young and readiness by all to be guided by the teaching of the pulpit.

The "Faithfull Narrative" is the only writing of its kind by Edwards, that is to say, an account of revival in the form of a parochial case-history. The other writings are more in the form of defence and drawing out of general principles upon the subject of evangelical experience. They also deal more with the later stage of revival, the Awakening of 1740-1744, while the Narrative related only to the 1735-1736 occasion. One thing is outstanding about the Faithful Narrative as a whole; Edwards writes the story with a clear idea of the relation of evangelical experience to a theology of conversion in mind - the manner of conversion various, yet bearing a great analogy - to quote the heading to Section II. The varieties of experience seem never to fall outside the pattern of development that Puritan theology had so often described. As has been noticed, Edwards had a wider recognition of the variations within the pattern<sup>1</sup> and would not tie his account by over-refined ideas of what conversion doctrine implied. He would gladly

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1. p. 124.

accept the support of a modern writer on this point;

The Christian doctrine of conversion does not begin by viewing the results of regeneration or by comparing a converted with an unconverted man, but it begins with the ultimate cause and then proceeds to trace the effect of regeneration on the human race.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, it also needs to be noted, that the report of conversion experience tends to be in terms of the particular kind of doctrine and theoretical explanation which form the background of the convert, so that it is not surprising that the data upon which Edwards worked in the experiences of his people should reflect and express the theology under which they had been converted. Here was the weakness in his logic that the revival experience authenticated his doctrine; in the circumstances of New England it may have seemed so, and that between 'Arminianism' and his own theology, revival justified him in the absence of any tertium quid. In fact, of course, it also verified the message of an Arminian evangelism in the work of Wesley in England. But England was far away.

## II

The renewal of the revival in 1740 brought about more enthusiastic scenes and more open and serious opposition,

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1. New Birth. B. Citron. Edinburgh Univ. Press. 1951, pp. 28, 29.

particularly from Dr. Charles Chauncy of Boston. Edwards' second writing was firstly a Commencement sermon at Yale (New Haven) in September 1741 and written certainly with Chauncy's critical book "The New Creature" in mind, published the previous June. The sermon was later published in Boston under the title

The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God applied to that uncommon operation that has lately appeared on the minds of many of the people of New England with a particular consideration of the extraordinary circumstances with which this work is attended.<sup>1</sup>

The Reverend William Cooper contributed a three-page preface from Boston, which briefly traces in Scripture the unfolding and extension of the blessings of divine grace, then adds to these the period of the Reformation as a further 'dispensation' and so paints the scene for the American position of 'a dead and barren time' (which however is extended in reference to all the churches of the Reformation) and so refers to the present revival. As to this, he emphasises that it has come about with a renewed preaching of Reformation doctrine - human corruption, guilt and impotence; supernatural regeneration by the Holy Spirit; free justification

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1. Works. vol. ii, pp. 257-277.

by faith in the righteousness of Christ; and the marks of the new birth. He dwells upon its wide influence both geographically and socially; and the character of the change produced is both religious and moral, individual and corporate; and this is by a uniform "method of the Spirit's operation on the minds of the people". Finally, he rebuts much of the criticism that has been aroused as of prejudice, misinformation, lack of experience or of spiritual sympathy because of Arminian views, for "these fruits do not grow on Arminian ground"; or even due to personal jealousy. But to the open minded, he holds that Edwards' arguments, "drawn from Scripture, reason and experience" will form a convincing vindication of "the work".

The critics of the revival, Chauncy leading them, had urged the threat of "enthusiasm" and antinomianism. In his book, Chauncy had dismissed many of the outward signs as naturally explicable, and had argued that the real test of "the new creature" was not the experiencing of terrors but manner of life; and indeed that many were to be found converted by the love of God rather than the terror of God. Trusting to feelings, he declared, led to spiritual pride; positive assurance of salvation was not often gained.<sup>1</sup> So Edwards writes his defence of the revival under the text I Jn. iv. 1. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God". For it was his

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1. Jonathan Edwards. p. Miller pp. 167-169.

intention neither to deny the presence of unworthy elements in the revival nor yet to write it off because they were there. In the first section therefore, he takes nine aspects of the revival, seized by its opponents, the presence of which did not thereby disprove the work as of the Holy Spirit. The sub-title was,

Negative Signs; or, what are no signs by which we are to judge of a work - and especially, what are no evidences that a work is not from the Spirit of God.

First; he argued that no reasonable criticism to the revival could be based on its unusual features, or that it departed from usual church uses, as long as nothing contrary to Biblical principles was followed. Particularly here, reference is made to the heightened experience of individuals, fear, sorrow, joy; the suddenness of change; the number of those affected; their age or youth. And he hints at the innate conservatism of the elderly as the cause of criticism here. The second aspect is similar and concerns "bodily effects" which were especially noticeable in the 1740-44 "Awakening" (and of course were having parallels in England under Wesley and Whitfield). Here again he holds that Scripture gives no rule one way or the other. Rather,

It is easily accounted for from the consideration of the nature of divine and eternal things, and the nature of man, and the laws of the union between soul and body, how a right influence, a true and proper sense of things, should have such effects on the body, even those that are of the most extraordinary kind, such as taking away the bodily strength, or throwing the body into great agonies, and extorting loud outcries.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Works. vol. ii. p. 261.

"A true and proper sense of things" would be fear of hell; and in terms closely parallel to those used in the "Enfield Sermon", he suggests the thoughts that would give rise to such fears -yet no more surprising than other manifestations of extreme agitation, as at the approach of enemies in wartime. But the sense of God's love is also a proper cause. His attempts to find supporting examples from Scripture on this are not very successful - the Philippian jailor, the disciples at Christ's walking on the water alone from the N.T.; and allegorical uses of Canticles, the Queen of Sheba and references in the Psalms in the Old; and he is aware that this is so. Yet his point is well made that it is not necessary - "Nobody supposes that there is any need of express scripture for every external, accidental manifestation of the inward motion of the mind". Nor will he allow that there is a dangerous likeness to Quakerism - "the root and course of things is to be looked at", and similar effects do not necessarily involve similar origins and nature. Happily for them all, the identification of Quakerism as the "left wing" of Puritanism had not been made and they could all look upon them as something apart.<sup>1</sup>

Continuing in this strain, the objections to the noise accompanying the revival did not in fact take note of human nature, to be stirred to great affects by great experiences. The next objection, too, that strong

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1. cf. The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience.  
G.F. Nuttall pp. 12-14.



imaginative impressions are involved, involves little understanding of the way men's minds work "that we cannot think of things invisible without a degree of imagination".

As God has given us such a faculty as the imagination, and so made us that we cannot think of things spiritual and invisible without some exercise of this faculty; so it appears to me, that such is our state and nature, that this faculty is really subservient and helpful to the other faculties of the mind, when a proper use is made of it; though oftentimes, when the imagination is too strong, and the other faculties weak, it overbears, and disturbs them in their exercise.<sup>1</sup>

And imagination is particularly useful with the ignorant.

Further, when experience reaches ecstasy, there is no need to resort to the work of the devil for understanding, nor yet to the example of prophets or St. Paul.

Human nature, under these intense exercises and affections, is all that need be brought into the account... Is it any wonder that, in such a case, the brain in particular, (especially in some constitutions) which we know is most especially affected by intense contemplations and exercises of mind, should be so affected, that its strength and spirits should for a reason be diverted and taken off from impressions made on the organs of external sense, and be wholly employed in a train of pleasing delightful imaginations, corresponding with the present frame of the mind.....

it appears to me that such things are evidently sometimes from the Spirit of God, though indirectly; that is, their sense of divine things which is the occasion of them is from his Spirit; and also as the mind continues in its holy frame and retains a divine sense of the excellency of spiritual things even in its rapture; which holy frame and sense is from the Spirit of God, though the imaginations that attend it are but accidental, and therefore there is commonly something or other in them that is confused, improper and false.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Works. vol. ii. p. 263.
  2. Works. vol. ii. p. 263.

It is in these particularly interesting remarks, that Edwards reveals the working out of his principles of pastoral psychology under the stress of the fever heat of revival in which most people were either violently against or indiscriminately accepting the whole affair. His was the first mind to evaluate the phenomena in terms that set right the misunderstandings of both parties. H.W. Schneider pays tribute to this when he remarks on

No greater proof of Edwards' intellectual ability than the cool, critical analysis written in the midst of a wave of religious frenzy for which the author himself was largely responsible.<sup>1</sup>

His careful correlation of the truly spiritual, the outcome of divine influence, with the human psychological apparatus in and through which it must work, deflated the criticisms of the opponents, by admitting the possibility of human elements entering in but not affecting the actual divine content of the experience; and at the same time warned the protagonists to sift more carefully the total variety of enthusiastic expressions.

In the same vein, he dismisses several other objections, such as that the revival had been spread by people imitating the example of others, which again only argues against the divine origin of an effect by pointing out that it occurs by

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1. The Puritan Mind H.W. Schneider (London 1931) p. 123. Although Schneider here refers to the next writing in time, Thoughts on the Revival, the view is apposite here.

some human means, and indeed argues against the normally highly esteemed instrument of example in the propagation of religious reality. Next the existence of "great imprudences and irregularities" is no final argument against the nature of the revival. Tersely, Edwards comments,

the end for which God pours out his Spirit, is to make men holy, and not to make them politicians.<sup>1</sup>

When consideration is given to the variety of types revived; that

there are but few that know how to conduct them under vehement affections of any kind...to do so requires a great deal of discretion, strength and steadiness of mind;<sup>2</sup>

and that in the best of men there remains much that is imperfect it is no final argument against the revival that even the leaders may act imprudently. In this Edwards apologises for the mistaken censoriousness of some, no doubt Whitefield among others whom he had rebuked for this very thing in the autumn of 1740. He knew that this had given great offence in places, especially as Whitefield's lieutenants had followed his example. Hence,

Lukewarmness in religion is abominable, and zeal an excellent grace; yet above all other christian virtues, this needs to be strictly watched and searched; for it is that with which corruption, and particularly pride and human passion is exceedingly apt to mix unobserved.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Works. vol. ii. p. 264.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.

Especially so, in time of a revival of zeal. Perhaps here we have the very echo of the brotherly cautions of the older revivalist to the twenty-five year old firebrand from England as they rode over to East Windsor on that autumn day. Not unrelated also to Whitefield's influence is Edwards rebuttal of another disfigurement of the revival - errors of judgment and delusions

by an aptness to lay too much weight on impulses and impressions, as if they were immediate revelations from God.

For this was the other matter on which Edwards had taken Whitefield to task on that October ride together. Again, since true religious experience was not attended usually with the added gift of infallibility, such a complaint of error was no valid argument. Nor indeed was the existence of cases of gross scandal a final condemnation, even among teachers and officers. He cites the New Testament as full of parallel cases, and for good measure instances also the cases of Gnosticism in the patristic period, the Schwärmerei of the Reformation, and the sectaries under Cromwell. None of these disproved the major movements in question.

The final objection dealt with concerned the nature of revival preaching - "ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God's holy law, and that with a great deal of pathos and earnestness". But he defends his use in this;

If there be really a hell of such dreadful and never-ending torments as is generally supposed....then why is it not proper for those who have the care of souls to take great pains to make men sensible of it?<sup>1</sup>

Is it not a reasonable thing to fright a person out of a house on fire? The word fright is commonly used for sudden, causeless fear, or groundless surprise; but surely a just fear, for which there is good reason is not to be spoken against....<sup>2</sup>

From this he carries his point into his opponents' country;

When ministers preach of hell, and warn sinners to avoid it, in a cold manner - though they may say in words that it is infinitely terrible - they contradict themselves... If a preacher's words represent the sinner's state as infinitely dreadful, while his behaviour and manner of speaking contradict it - showing that the preacher does not think so - he defeats his own purpose.<sup>3</sup>

Yet

there may be such a thing as an indecent boisterousness in a preacher, something besides what naturally arises from the nature of his subject.<sup>4</sup>

And there were already a number to whom this caveat only to well applied, and were admonished thereby. Moreover there was a balance;

The gospel is to be preached as well as the law, and the law is to be preached only to make way for the gospel, and in order that it may be preached more effectually. The main work of ministers is to preach the gospel.....a minister would miss it very much if he should insist so much on the terrors of the law, as to forget his Lord and neglect to preach the gospel; but yet the law is very much to be insisted on, and the preaching of the gospel is like to be in vain without it.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Works. vol. ii. p. 265.

2. op.cit. p. 266.

3. ibid.

4. ibid.

5. ibid.

Compared with the extended critique of the revival in his attention to its detractors, the positive "evidence of a work of the Spirit of God" in Section II are much less dwelt upon. Edwards bases this section upon the exposition of I John iv, the passage of his text, and lists five scripture evidences by which to test the revival. From I John iv. 2.3. the first evidence is the kind of esteem of Jesus Christ, that is not simply historical recognition but a credal belief in His divinity and saviourhood, and that as a personal testimony involving esteem and affection; even though (as Stoddard, of course, laid down),

However incapable we may be to determine, whether that conviction and affection be in that manner, or to that degree, as to be saving or not.<sup>1</sup>

And this spirit is far removed from "the spirit of Quakers".

From verses 4 and 5 of the chapter, he draws the next evidence

if persons have their hearts drawn off from the world and weaned from the objects of their worldly lusts and taken off from worldly pursuits, by the sense they have of the excellency of divine things, and the affection they have to these spiritual enjoyments of another world that are promised in the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

Such awakening of conscience cannot be the work of Satan for it directly opposes the purposes of evil, and furthers those of grace.

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1. Works. vol. ii. p. 266.

2. op.cit. p. 267.

The third evidence, from I John iv. 6, is found in a greater regard for Holy Scripture and its doctrine; and in this there is plain difference from real "enthusiasts" who depreciate the written word and set up inner light instead. The same verse suggests the further test, that people are led to being convinced of the truth; of God, His holiness and greatness; of life as short and uncertain; of the eternal world and of human destiny and divine judgment; of human sinfulness and inability. Finally, the following verses of the chapter lead to the fifth sign, the increase in the spirit of Christian love; to God and men. This involves "an admiring, delightful sense of the excellency of Jesus Christ", Edwards speaks with deep feeling here, from his own heart, of

the wonderful, free love of God in giving His only-begotten Son to die for us, and the wonderful dying love of Christ to us, who had no love to him.<sup>1</sup>

Such a spirit makes the truths of God and the gospel "delightful objects of contemplation" and causes the soul to long after communion with God and Christ, and conformity to them. So also it "quells contentions among men" brings peace and goodwill, acts of outward kindness, compassion for the unconverted and delight in "those that appear as the children of God". Contrasted with this, the love among enthusiasts

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1. Works. vol. ii. p. 268.

is a self-love based on the prizing of their own peculiarities. Edwards rather sharply compares it with the friendship of a company of pirates. But Christian love differs clearly from it also by its humility, before God and man; its annihilation of self and its Christlikeness.

In all these evidences Edwards has been constantly comparing the actual manifestations of the real "enthusiasm", of the Quakers, for example, which he admitted and disliked and wished in all things to distinguish the revival from; in this way to remove from his opponents the right to describe the revival by terms of "enthusiasm". But in the final paragraphs, of this section, he refers to an argument that the New Testament itself points to the possibility of Satanic counterfeit of the true thing, and so faces the question as to the sufficiency of the five evidences. To refute it, he lists examples of false virtues referred to in the N.T. and fails to see, that, in his honesty, he has built up the case here against himself and given little answer except to mention that in each case the pretended virtue was in fact false. But how it was so to be distinguished from the true, he says nothing. Indeed he complicates the matter in the final breath -

Besides such vain shows which may be from the devil, there are common influences of the Spirit, which are often mistaken for saving grace; but these are out of



the question, because, though they are not saving, yet are they the work of the true spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Between the counterfeits of Satan, the very similar but essentially different work of common grace, and the incomplete work of salvation, Edwards found it easier to say what matters were no objection to the revival, than what were the veritable signs of true spirituality. Stoddard's point remained, that no man could pronounce upon his neighbour's salvation.

In the third and final section of "Distinguishing Marks", he claims that the revival stands up to the only two possible tests of its divine origin; the facts of the case which can be known; and the rules, as set out in section II. The facts which are contained in innumerable and widespread examples, give the firmest possible basis for coming to a judgment upon the issue, as they are subjected to the Scriptural rules. He is prepared to give his own testimony to the genuine nature of the experience of the people with whom he has for long been in close touch. He returns to the discussion of revival experiences; first of all to note that the unusual exhibitions of terror have almost always been "in perfect exercise of their reason", and arise from the conviction of truth. Where "melancholy has evidently been mixed"

it is not truth only that distresses them, but many vain shadows and notions that will not give place either to Scripture or reason.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Works. vol. ii. p. 269.

2. op.cit. p. 270.

He also mentions other irrational terrors,

from some terrible outward appearance and noise, and a general notion thence arising. These apprehend, that there is something terrible, they know not what; without having in their minds any particular truth whatever.<sup>1</sup>

But instances of such sympathetic feeling were few. Edwards was conscious that with the prevalence of outward exhibition of feeling in the revival, people had not attempted to restrain themselves as they might otherwise have done, and indeed, he would say, they should try to do especially in church. Yet this did not involve much in the way of pretence; most who were so affected found it impossible to avoid. In that case, he held, it is unreasonable to criticise the revival as disorderly, for such compulsive activities must come from truly spiritual convictions.

Much of this section covers very similar ground as the Faithful Narrative in describing the religious expressions of many conversions in general, and need not be mentioned further. Edwards once again claims that it is essentially the same kind of experience as had been previously known in Stoddard's ministry. But he goes further to say that he believed

The work which has been carried on there (i.e. Northampton) this year, has been much purer than that which was wrought there six years before; it has seemed to be more purely spiritual; free from natural and corrupt mixtures, and anything savouring of enthusiastic wildness and extravagance. It has wrought more by deep humiliation and abasement before

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1. Works. p. 270.

God and men; and they have been much freer from imprudences and irregularities....whereas many before, in their comforts and rejoicings, did too much forget their distance from God, and were ready.....to talk with too much lightness; but now they...rejoice with a more solemn, reverential humble joy, as God directs (Ps. ii. 11).<sup>1</sup>

And always he is on his guard against what became a serious trouble of the revival; spiritual exhibitionism.

Not that I suppose the degree of the Spirit's influence is to be determined by the degree of effect on men's bodies; or, that those are always the best experiences which have the greatest influence on the body.<sup>2</sup>

He concludes the whole work with two warnings; the first to the opponents and the passive, especially "the silent ministers". A conclusion must be reached by them, and they must accept the responsibility of promoting the revival. Secondly, he warns the friends of the revival to be on their guard against all that would detract from the revival. As the revival grew to its peak and spread, his own people of Northampton were tempted to be 'one ahead' of the rest in spiritual manifestations and no doubt the warning here had them in mind. He exposes here the working of pride in one's spiritual experiences; censoriousness; the grasping after charismatic gifts in the belief that the last days of the Christian era were then present, when such might be expected; the despising of human learning and study; and the presumption

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1. Works. p. 272 though later, the earlier revival was preferred for its freedom from criticism (Thoughts on the Revival. Part IV Sect. IV)

2. op.cit. p. 271.

to pronounce upon the spiritual state of others from a little conversation. But

experience has taught me that this is an error. I once did not imagine that the heart of man had been so unsearchable as it is<sup>1</sup>

Rather, with Stoddard, he emphasised, that however all that a person manifests might suggest that they are "the precious children of God", yet Scripture must be followed in regarding all "belonging to the spiritual and divine life, as hidden". It is clear from these warnings that Edwards could already see the disruptive and excessive influences at work, which had been unfortunately stimulated by Whitefield, but which were taken further by unbalanced men thrust into places of undeserved leadership. He takes them to task for controversy and "angry zeal" and self-advertisement, (as "persecuted") and overthrowing the "stated method and form in the management of our religious affairs"; so that

I am afraid the wine is now running out in some part of this land, for want of attending to this rule.<sup>2</sup>

The Distinguishing Marks was written before the peak of the "Great Awakening" and it is clear that neither of these warnings was heeded. 1742 saw the growth of anarchy and abuse, with physical effects regarded as the hallmark of spirituality, and so leading to rivalry between the churches in their experiences along this line. Congregations were

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1. Works. vol. ii, p. 276.

2. ibid.

divided in loyalties to ministers, lay preachers who were leaders in perfervid religion indoctrinated the easily swayed people with highly individualistic tenets, contributing to widespread serious disorder. So in late 1742, Edwards again took up the theme of defence of the revival and correction of its abuses.

### III

Some Thoughts concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England, and the way it ought to be acknowledged and promoted; humbly offered to the public, in a Treatise on that Subject.<sup>1</sup>

Jonathan Edwards himself contributed a short preface, offering as excuse for his writings at all, by referring to the pamphlet war that was now under way about the revival. He owns that he would have preferred an elder minister to have undertaken the task as he admits

I think I have been made in some measure sensible, and much more of late than formerly, of my need of more wisdom than I have.

But nevertheless offers the work, humbly, as a responsible opinion on the subject.

The work is divided into five parts: The first, to show that the revival "is a glorious work of God"; part two, to show that all are obliged to acknowledge, rejoice in and

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1. Works. vol. i. pp. 366-430.

promote the work and the danger of the contrary; part three defends both subjects and promoters of the revival from wrongful blame; part four deals with the correction or avoidance of abuses; and part five shows what positive steps should be taken to promote it. It is noteworthy that the fourth part, on the correction or avoidance of abuses, is by far the longest section, taking up well over a third of the whole treatise. To a great extent it follows much of the course of Distinguishing Marks, but this shift of emphasis has been pointed out as indicative of a shift in his concern. Dr. Perry Miller notes that in 1741, in the Distinguishing Marks, Charles Chauncy (though unnamed) is the main target and the caution to revival followers is less marked; in 1742, Edwards addresses equally both Chauncy and his own extremist associates; in 1746, in the Treatise on Religious Affections Chauncy is hardly in sight, the work is turned towards those who have worked such harm in the revival.<sup>1</sup>

The first Part is divided into six sections, and quite clearly has in mind the sort of criticisms that had been raised by Chauncy as well as by the more "Arminian" opponents in Boston. He accuses them of coming with a priori judgments, in noting more how the revival began, the means used, and the persons ("instruments") involved; when instead judgment should be made according to the effects:

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1. Jonathan Edwards P. Miller. p. 178.

of the work, by whatever means God has been pleased to work. He claims that the relative youth and inexperience of ministers so used was

to chastise the deadness, negligence, earthly-mindedness and vanity found among ministers in the late times of declension and deadness.<sup>1</sup>

Rather the effects should be judged by Scripture; not by odd texts here and there, but by Scripture understood" as a whole". He castigates a mistaken psychology (referred to as "philosophy") used against the revival;

In their philosophy, the affections of the soul are something diverse from the will, and not appertaining to the noblest part of the soul. They are ranked among the meanest principles that belong to men as partaking of animal nature, and what he has in common with the brute creation, rather than anything whereby he is conformed to angels and pure spirits. And though they acknowledge that a good use may be made of the affections in religion, yet they suppose that the substantial part of religion does not consist in them.<sup>2</sup>

Here Edwards takes Chauncy's scholastic faculty psychology to task. For Chauncy the affections were one among separate, autonomous faculties of reason, imagination, will etc. in which reason exercised a controlling mandate over imagination and will and will over emotions. Therefore the reason must always be addressed, to affect the will, which then enlists the emotions in due measure.<sup>3</sup> His dictum was "An enlightened mind, not raised affections, ought always to be the guide of those who call themselves men". On this

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 366.

2. op.cit. p. 367.

3. Jonathan Edwards. P. Miller, p. 177.

Edwards conceded that there must be made a pastoral discrimination into the true nature of religious feeling;

There is a great deal of difference in high and raised affections, which must be distinguished by the skill of the observer.<sup>1</sup>

And proper allowance must be made for 'animal nature' and 'the constitution and frame of the body' But he roundly condemns as false philosophy the supposition that all religious affections are to be reckoned so; and wrong divinity to hold that they "do not appertain to the substance and essence of Christianity". Then he preposes his own view;

I humbly conceive that the affections of the soul are not properly distinguished from the will, as though they were two faculties. All acts of the affections are in some sense acts of the will, and all acts of the will are acts of the affections. All exercises of the will are, in some degree or other, exercises of the soul's appetite or aversion; or which is the same thing, of its love or hatred. The soul wills one thing rather than another, or chooses one thing rather than another, no otherwise than it loves one thing more than another.....though the exercises of the will do not obtain the name of passions, unless the will, either in its aversion or opposition, be exercised in a high degree, or in a vigorous and lively manner<sup>2</sup>.

Unfortunately, Edwards followed this insight, with one less cogent; that true holiness is reckoned by all to have its seat in the heart rather than the head; therefore the seat of true religion must be in the heart and consist in holy affections. It obviously assumed here what in fact was in dispute, by confusing the meaning of the heart in Biblical

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 367.

2. ibid.



terminology with the idea of the heart simply as the seat of the emotions. In actual fact Edwards used 'the heart' of an inward understanding coupled with value-judgment and feeling tone, which represents a total response of the person to an object, rather than the emotional centre, contrasted with the purely cognitive and rational acceptance of the object's existence and meaning. Hence,

The informing of the understanding is all in vain, any farther than it affects the heart, or, which is the same thing, has influence on the affections.<sup>1</sup>

The real discrimination to be practised with regard to the affections is whether they are false or true, not as to the degree of intensity and power. Indeed the stronger and more intense our love for God, the truer and better the religion of the soul. For this reason, there is less need to be

full of concern about the involuntary motions of the fluids and solids of men's bodies<sup>2</sup>

than to be sure of "the state of person's minds and their moral conduct".

If things are but kept right in these respects, our fears and suspicions arising from extraordinary bodily effects seem wholly groundless.<sup>3</sup>

And Edwards is prepared to say, that even in cases where such effects involved lasting physical or mental impairment,

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 367.

2. ibid. p. 368.

3. ibid.

yet if it meant greater spiritual good it would be worth while. Nevertheless, he notes that in the few cases where insanity has resulted it was in "persons of a weak, vaporous habit of body". He concludes this section in showing how these experiences have had parallels in previous occasions and different circumstances. On the other hand, the attempt to discredit the revival by comparison with extremists like the French prophets represents a purely captious judgment that resorted to superficialities.<sup>1</sup>

Section III returns to the point that critics expect a standard of perfection which is unfair to the revival and those affected by it. "We should distinguish the good from the bad, and not judge of the whole by the part". He rightly points out that while spiritual influence generally tends to inhibit evil,

yet there is nothing unreasonable in supposing that, at the same time that it weakens corruption in general, it may be an occasion of turning what is left into a new channel. There may be more of some kinds of the exercise of corruption than before....<sup>2</sup>

Edwards uses the analogy of dammed up water giving rise to new overflowing outlets, and instances spiritual pride as an example; the analogy is interesting and finds a parallel in the words of Evelyn Underhill;

the great spiritual sin of pride may be traced back

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1. See account in Enthusiasm R. A. Knox. (OUP. 1950) pp. 357-378. In 1742 an anti-revival pamphlet had appeared, telling of the Wonderful Narrative, or a Faithful Account of the French Prophets their agitations, extasies and inspirations" (cf. P. Miller; Jonathan Edwards p. 203-5).
  2. Works. vol. i. p. 371.

to a perverted expression of that self-regarding instinct without which we could hardly survive....Even the saints have known these revenges of natural instincts too violently denied.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently a good deal of confusion, uproar, extremism of different kinds is not to be taken as a proof that the revival is in fact no work of God. The rashness of converts' behaviour is but a natural error, not yet disciplined by sufficient teaching, after so unexpected and extraordinary an experience as the revival. And in any case God has not 'obliged Himself immediately to increase civil prudence in proportion to the degrees of spiritual light'.

Sections IV and VI lead to consider the work "in general"; Edwards is always trying to make people think comprehensively and not to fasten on details. "This work is very glorious". His review of the moral and religious effects under these need not detain us here; they follow previously noted effects given in the Faithful Narrative of the earlier revival, notably in the various manifestations of religious concern, attention and responsiveness; the alteration amongst young people's habits, the frivolous and pleasure-loving ways of the wealthy; and disuse of tavern-haunting, drinking and "profane conversation" amongst many. In both of these sections he hits out against the comparison with the French prophets, which apparently had nettled him, and as at the end of Distinguishing Marks he calls upon the hesitant and aloof to join in, in

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1. The Life of the Spirit and the Life of Today. (London 1924) p. 67/8.

paragraphs of urgent and compelling oratory.

An unusual element in this part is in section V. Edwards here discusses The Nature of the work in a particular instance; he describes in some detail the mystical experiences of someone who had continued in this way for some years. There is a rather hard edge to his descriptions, understandably enough considering the superficial vilification campaign he had had to face.

These things took place not in the giddy age of youth, not in a new convert or unexperienced Christian, but in one that was converted above twenty seven years ago; and neither converted nor educated in that enthusiastic town of Northampton (as some may be ready to call it) but in a town and family which none, that I know of, suspected of enthusiasm. And these effects were found in a Christian that has been long, in an uncommon manner growing in grace....<sup>1</sup>

The particular experiences had begun seven years ago,

when there was no such enthusiastical season in the land.....They arose from no distemper catched from Mr. Whitfield or Mr. Tennent, because they began before either of them came into the country.<sup>2</sup>

He instances uninterrupted periods, of five or six hours at a time, of spiritual vision of Christ's glory, "the amiableness of Christ's person", "the heavenly sweetness of his transcendent love". There was a sense as if the soul

did as it were, swim in the rays of Christ's love, like a little mote swimming in the beams of the sun that come in at a window.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 376.
  2. ibid.
  3. ibid.

There seemed to be a constant flowing and reflowing of love between the soul and Christ. Yet this experience of mind dwelling in pure delight was without any trance, or deprivation of bodily sense. The experience had been repeated over years and it had had 'bodily effect'.

Nature often sunk under the weight of divine discoveries, and the strength of the body was taken away. The person was deprived of all ability to stand or speak. Sometimes the hands were clinched, and the flesh cold, but the senses remaining. Animal nature was often in a great emotion and agitation and the soul was so overcome with admiration....as to cause the person, unavoidably, to leap with all the might, with joy and mighty exultation.<sup>1</sup>

But

These effects on the body did not arise from any bodily distemper or weakness, because the greatest of all have been in a good state of health.<sup>2</sup>

In fact these experiences had enabled the subject to overcome earlier tendencies to melancholy "through a vaporous habit of body". The further results had been a development in moral and spiritual excellencies of character and a conviction of the importance of "moral social duties"; and further the desire for the wider effects of evangelization. Yet with all the highest raptures, there was no leaning

to the opinion of being now perfectly free from sin (according to the notion of the Wesleys and their followers, and some other high pretenders to spirituality these days).<sup>3</sup>

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 376.

2. ibid.

3. op.cit. p. 378.

Nor was there any leaving of the means of grace or instruction nor any outward attention to special religious expressions by dress, looks and so forth. Naturally one wonders who this person was that Edwards knew so well, could refer to so fully and who was in some way his ideal example of the spiritual life, which the revival, properly understood and guided, served to promote. It was none other than his wife. It is too much to allege, with Dr. A.V.G. Allen<sup>1</sup> that Edwards staked the whole issue on his wife's experiences, for although he was glad to refer to "particular instances", as in the "Faithful Narrative - or more fully in The Life and Diary of the Rev. David Brainerd, - these were more in the way of valued supports. He thereby demonstrated the error of opponents' criticism by a corresponding reference from practical experience, which they used, to a general position already founded upon doctrine, history and Scripture. Nevertheless, to have had such a person of intimate acquaintance, developing in religious experience, understanding and character, even to involve mystical states, must have been no mean encouragement, strength and spiritual guide in his own work of promotion and defence of the revival.

The second part of the work needs little comment for this study as it is a prolonged exhortation to people, civil and religious leaders not to oppose or deride the revival, nor even to be passive towards it but to promote

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1. Jonathan Edwards. A.V.G. Allen. p. 203.

x it. It is coupled with Edwards' peculiar eschatological hopes of a great revival in the New World ushering in the final day of God, and the suggestion that the present revival might be its prelude. But Part III returns to the presentation of his own view of preaching in the light of his psychology, as he addresses those who have taken offence "beyond just bounds". First of all he deals with the complaint that preaching in the revival has been directed towards "the affections" rather than to the understanding. Edwards fully accepts the importance of enlightening the understanding in preaching; but

the objection made, of affections raised without enlightening the understanding is in a great measure built on a mistake.....All affections are raised either by the light in the understanding, or some error and delusion in the understanding; for all affections do certainly arise from some apprehension in the understanding.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently the matter to be decided is whether the emotions are excited by true apprehensions or by false. He points out here that an academic preaching is not the only way of enlightening understanding; it is possible to "set divine and eternal things in a right view" and more than that, to give hearers

such impressions on their hearts as are answerable to the real nature of things.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 391.

2. ibid.

Here Edwards, with his orthodox Calvinist theology, adopted for the presentation of his teaching the insight of a dynamic psychology which took human personality as a unity.<sup>1</sup> Logically he argued further, that "the manner of speaking has a great tendency to this". To preach with feeling has in view the end of making the truth felt; a "moderate, dull, indifferent way" does not. In fact, though that dull and learned way had become popular

I humbly conceive it has been for want of understanding or duly considering human nature, that such preaching has been thought to have the greatest tendency to answer the ends of preaching.....Men may abound in this sort of light and have no heat.<sup>2</sup>

And his succinct riposte to Chauncy's thesis on preaching<sup>3</sup> -

Our people do not so much need to have their heads stored, as to have their hearts touched; and they stand in the greatest need of that sort of preaching, which has the greatest tendency to do this.<sup>4</sup>

In similar fashion he rebuts the criticism that when people have been in terror and "under awakening" the revival ministers have continued to speak of the same things instead of trying to comfort them.

Comfort in one sense, is to be held forth to sinners under awakenings of conscience, i.e. comfort is to be offered them in Christ, on their fleeing from their present miserable state to him. But comfort is not to be administered to them in their present state, or while out of Christ.....A person who sees himself ready to sink into hell, is prone to strive, some

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1. cf. P. Miller. Jonathan Edwards. p. 178.
  2. Works. vol. i. p. 391.
  3. cf. p. 163.
  4. Works. vol. i. p. 391.



way or other, to lay God under some obligation to him; but he is to be beat off from every thing of that nature, though it greatly increases his terror, to see himself wholly destitute of any refuge....<sup>1</sup>

The only causes of distress that are to be removed are erroneous views. But when there is obvious opportunity, ministers must "strike while the iron is hot". Only in the case of melancholy will Edwards allow that the truth ought to be withheld towards those in distress of conscience, because of the tendency to use the truth falsely. But this does not apply to the congregation in which such a person might be, for otherwise the gospel in all the world could be held up for fear of some who might use the truth wrongfully. Later on in this part he refers to the controversy relating to "bodily effects" and after dismissing some objections and false accusations, such as that they were held by the revivalists to be the only signs of conversion, he gives his own view. He has come, he says, to understand the meaning of outcries, by experience, so that when they occur in the course of preaching he rejoices at it, much more than at "the appearance of a solemn attention and a show of affection by weeping". In fact,

To rejoice that the work of God is carried on calmly without much ado, is in effect to rejoice that it is carried on with less power, or that there is not so much of the influence of God's spirit.- For though the degree of influence of the Spirit of God on particular persons is by no means to be judged of by

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 392.

the degree of external appearance, because of the different constitutions, tempers and circumstances of men; yet, if there be a very powerful influence of the Spirit of God on a mixed multitude, it will cause some way or other a great visible commotion.<sup>1</sup>

It has been noticed before that Edwards did not resolve at this stage the ambiguity of external effects in the revival.<sup>2</sup> His firm attachment to them here, yet with the admission that they are not simply in proportion to the depth of spiritual experience when human temperament is taken into consideration shows him involved in an unresolved dilemma, when stated as in these terms. It was not until he came to writing the Treatise on Religious Affections, that he came to resolve the two issues in a more consistent assessment. Meanwhile, this part of the Thoughts closes with a defence of the practice of not removing those greatly affected from the presence of others, but rather allowing their presence and manifestations to influence others after the laudable principle of a good example. Further he supports the permitting of discussion of spiritual experiences, though with careful oversight, and indeed to foster "christian conversation" among lay people "speaking together of divine wonders, in various parts of a company" provided it is not dominated by one or another; but spontaneous, mutual, and united.

The longest part, Part IV, "Showing what things are to be corrected or avoided, in promoting this work", covers at much greater length many of the corrections pointed out

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 394.

2. cf. pp. 134-136 above.

in the Distinguishing Marks and, in addition, a number of points required through more recent developments. Yet all the time, in allowing that these matters needed rectification, Edwards strongly maintained the reputation of the revival in the teeth of criticism that would seize upon these aspects of it to denounce it. Indeed he would say that he is more aware of the disfiguring sides of the revival than many supporters because the critics have overstated their case too readily.

Many, who are zealous for this glorious work of God, are heartily sick of the great noise there is in the country about imprudences and disorders; they have heard it so often from the mouths of opposers, that they are prejudiced against the sound.<sup>1</sup>

And consequently the terms 'prudent' and 'regular' had become for them synonymous with coldness and deadness in religion.

They are therefore rather confirmed in any practice, than bought off from it, by the clamour they hear against it.<sup>2</sup>

From this Edwards goes on to show how easily the friends of the revival, in their false confidence that they are right, go on in error, despising correction from any source. It is these undiscerned errors, due to a lack of self-examination and care, through trusting too much to religious feelings, that he takes upon himself to expose with penetrating analysis in this section.

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 397.
  2. ibid.

It is therefore a great error and sin in some persons at this day, that they are fixed in some things which others count errors, and will not hearken to admonition and counsel, but are confident that they are in the right, because God is much with them.

I have known it in abundance of instances that the devil has come in very remarkably, even in the midst of the most excellent frames.<sup>1</sup>

Once again he singles out first of all, spiritual pride; with worldly-mindedness he sees it as the basic aspects of human corruption, with pride as the worst. It is, he says, the last thing in a sinner that is overborne by conviction, in order to conversion.....

and

the last thing over which he (the Christian) obtains a good degree of conquest.<sup>2</sup>

So that spiritual pride is both the worst and the most undiscerned error in a Christian. His pastoral experience fills out his description in almost poetic terms;

it is a sin that has, as it were, many lives, if you kill it, it will live still; if you mortify and suppress it in one shape, it rises in another; if you think it is all gone, yet it is there still....<sup>3</sup>

His penetrating insight can describe its manifestations clearly. He notes the affectation of spiritual superciliousness, an attitude of contempt and amusement in referring to those not given to "vital piety"; and this is coupled with a readiness to look for faults and deficiencies in others. In all this it contrasts with true Christian humility and

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 398.

2. op.cit. p. 399.

3. ibid.

spirituality. He sees other aspects of the same thing, in immoderate language in describing what they see amiss - "so that the words devil and hell are almost continually in their mouths" - not only in referring to wicked people but to other Christians and to ministers, and all under the plea of being "bold for Christ". Edwards has many a ranting lay preacher in mind, when he asks whether we "shall introduce the language of sailors among the followers of Christ"?

For If we proceed in such a manner....what a face will be introduced upon the church of Christ, the little beloved flock of that gentle Shepherd the Lamb of God! What a sound shall we bring into the house of God, into the family of his dear little children! How far off shall we soon banish that lovely appearance of humility, sweetness, gentleness, mutual honour, benevolence, complacence and an esteem for others above themselves, which ought to clothe the children of God all over.<sup>1</sup>

Edwards labours the point of Christian graciousness in very attractive terms after the manner of this quotation. And he further points out the love of singularity in speech or appearance that reveals spiritual pride; its tendency to stiffness in manner, a love of distinction, a great notice of opposition, an unsuitable absence of reverence before God; and a desire and readiness to be held as a pundit, so as to be even annoyed with those who do not defer to his "judicial and dogmatical air in conversation". In this section, no doubt, he has much in mind the "itinerant preachers" but it closes with a particular address to the

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 400.

ministry and its perils at the time.<sup>1</sup>

In the second section of this part in which Edwards criticised the friends of the revival, he exposes what he calls errors from "wrong principles"; chiefly, the exaggeration and disproportion of Christian attitudes and practices. He takes up, the constant issue of direct revelations, the typical puritan tendency to Quaker excess; guidance from Biblical sortilege (much practised in England by John Wesley), the belief that prayer must necessarily be "fulfilled as expected; or that individual inclination must necessarily be the will of God. Edwards is careful to point out throughout how easily spiritual principle and human weakness become intermixed to produce perversions; usually there is a good spiritual principle behind it, but imagination overstimulated or incautious drawing of inferences leads to indiscrete and wrongly directed actions. There is a need in the godly both for the logical correctness in drawing inferences from spiritual truth, and also for looking to the final consequences of actions. Edwards continually counsels "great caution and moderation" to avoid offences and prejudices. The desire to suffer for the sake of Christ could be itself overdone by "persons influenced by indiscreet zeal " who are "always in too much haste"; and he calls to his support the patient example of the apostles, of Luther in the Reformation, and of natural order

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 401.

in the agricultural experience of his readers.

Edwards further takes up the point of this mixture of influence in inward experience in the next section (III). He instances three corrupting elements in religious experience;

human or natural affections and passions; impressions on the imagination; and a degree of self-righteousness or spiritual pride.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, since

nature has a very great hand in those vehement motions and flights of the passions that appear....the same degrees of divine communications....have vastly different effects....in persons of different natural tempers.<sup>2</sup>

And the same difference is observable in the one individual at "different times and in different circumstances". Because in the Christian throughout all his life there is probably always a mixture of spiritual and natural - indeed "even that which is animal, what is in a great measure from the body" so "what true Christians feel of affections...all is not always purely holy and divine."<sup>3</sup> In love for God, or for His people, "self-love has a great hand"; penetratingly he remarks "yea, there may be a mixture of natural love to the opposite sex with christian and divine love". A similar mixed experience can be in sorrow for sin. Imagination also contributes to this ambiguity. In itself it is unavoidable and indeed beneficial; but "in too great a degree,

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 411.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.

it becomes an impure mixture that is prejudicial". It arises "from the constitution of the body" and tends to arouse the natural feelings referred to previously.

Edwards contrasts the differences between those having "high affections" by the way they speak;

Some insist much more in their talk, on what they behold in God and Christ, the glory of the divine perfections, Christ's beauty and excellency, and wonderful condescension and grace, and their own unworthiness, and the great and infinite obligations that they themselves and others are under to love and serve God; others insist almost wholly on their own high privileges, their assurance of God's love and favour, the weakness and wickedness of opposers, and how much they are above their reach.<sup>1</sup>

On this comparison, Edwards remarks; "The latter....do not appear to be so solid and unmixed as the former". Always he feels more satisfied with a spirituality that loves God "for His own sake, or for the excellency and beauty of His own perfections" and which has this primarily in mind. He also contrasts the manner of speaking; some with an earnestness arising from "the fulness of their hearts, and from the great sense they have of truth"; while the others from "human passion, and an undue and intemperate agitation of the spirits", being vehement and violent over matters great and small. These in a few extreme cases, went on to talk and cry out,

from an unaccountable kind of bodily pressure, without any extraordinary view of any thing in their minds, or sense of any thing upon their hearts.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 411.

2. op.cit. p. 412.



Confronted with abnormality at this point, his empirical approach gave him no help, and he naturally concluded "wherein probably there was the immediate hand of the devil".

Allied to this exposure of a disproportionate excess in religious experience, due to exaggeration that is caused by natural temperament, is his next target in this section; of defect or absence of a certain necessary aspect of Christian character. He is careful to differentiate this from hypocritical conditions, which were a case apart in New England pastoral theology. But Edwards points out that as God so reveals Himself as to promote in us both reverence and encouragement in proper balance and proportion, so there can be a defect of one or the other response so as to produce a disproportionate character either tending to presumption or to "sinful fearfulness and spirit of bondage". This is really looking at the previous error from another angle, which appears, when he shows that 'high experiences', accompanied by such disproportion due to a defect here, result in practice in the sort of things that show exaggeration of a virtue from another point of view, as referred to earlier...He instances unsuitable boldness, intemperate zeal and levity of manner. From this he concludes that religious experience that is pure or unsullied by merely human feelings, proportionate to divine truth, and raised to the highest degree of realiza-

tion, is, the best.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, there is yet a further warning; against the degeneration of experiences. By which he refers not to the gradual waning of their intensity, but their becoming increasingly marked by either or both of the above-mentioned drawbacks as "the spiritual part decreases". This is, again, simply the tendency to find satisfaction in the experience itself and not in God.

The love of true Christians is liable to degenerate, and to be more and more built on a supposition of being his (ie. God's) high and peculiar favourites, and less and less on an apprehension of the excellency of God's nature as he is in himself. So the joy of Christians, by reason of the mixture there is with spiritual joy, is liable to degenerate, and to become little else but joy in self, joy in a person's own supposed eminency.....

A wise word follows on the perils of allowing Christian fellowship so to be infected with "little else but fondness" and advises that meetings of young people of both sexes in the evening, even though at the present in a mood of real religious concern, should always be with a minister present, to beware

if not in any unsuitable behaviour while together in the meeting, yet, when they break up to go home, they may naturally consort together in couples, for other than religious purposes.

Once again Edwards shows his concern for youth, and particularly their 'company-keeping' whether in relation to the revival, the church, or general home life. The problem of

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1. Works. vol. i. p. 413.

the growing sexuality of the adolescent, his religious experience and growth in spiritual life, were not fully integrated in Edwards' religious psychology and pastoral teaching. In the end, this unresolved issue precipitated his departure from Northampton. His final point in this section warns against too high an ideal of holiness that attempts the impossible in seeking to be free from all natural inclinations altogether. The last three (IV. V. VI.) on criticism (censuring others), lay exhorting and disorders in religious singing, do not relate to this thesis.

The final Part, V, of the Thoughts is a sustained exhortation to advance the cause of what Edwards calls 'vital religion', in which he puts forward a number of practical suggestions. These call for a mutual confession of errors and amendment of ways; a waiting on God for His continuing revival; a uniting of ministers to meet and pray, a care for ordinands and the life of the colleges so that men for the ministry might be trained in "nurseries of piety", rather than places where youth was in "great danger of being infected as to his morals". Edwards takes to task those "somewhat inclining to Arminian principles" and challenges them to own both the revival and its theological background. He calls on the rich to give to the extension of the work, to distribute books, and he enters upon detailed arrangements in suggesting the day of special

fasting and prayer for the whole community - a well-used institution in Puritan society. This should culminate in (again an important Puritan rite), a solemn public renewal of covenant with God by all. This with an increased use of the Holy Communion, "every Lord's Day" and constant attention by all to practical righteousness, he hopes might well establish and increase the experience of genuine spirituality.

A people must be taken when they are in the mood, when considerable religious impressions prevail among them; otherwise innumerable will be their objections and cavils against it.<sup>1</sup>

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These three writings come from the storm-centre, as it were, of the two revivals, from one who was both the leader and the critic. Edwards certainly exulted in the visitations, not only for the spiritual life of his people but for the whole effect upon the doctrine, practice and churchmanship of New England which he believed it would, it must, produce. Although he is concerned to note the variety of detail in experience, he never forgets the pattern to which he expects the variety to conform as a whole and gives no evidence of having had this expectation greatly upset. With the later excesses of the "Great Awakening", he clearly shows a less readiness to dwell upon "experiences" as they became too much the object of attention among some, and to insist rather upon the contemplation of divine truth and

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1. Works. i. p. 429.

"excellency", and the humble, adoring delight in God Himself. This was central to his pastoral guidance from the first, and his desire was that this experience should be least mixed with purely human counterparts of spirituality, or distorted by unbalanced or disproportionate holding of Christian truth. But given this, experience could well be "raised to the highest degree"; it could then be as admirable as the example of this which he saw in his wife. From the first he noted with satisfaction how revival meant the improvement of private, domestic and public morals, and the serious fault of the excesses was that they served to create the opposite result. It could not be expected that he would view the disfiguring aspects of the revivals as manifestations of an underlying neurosis, due to the uncertain, warring, situation of a frontier community. D.J. Elwood has pointed out that throughout the late seventeenth century and much of the eighteenth century, raids and alarms were the constant prevailing atmosphere, and that there were long-established aspects of neurotic tendencies in the colony that the stresses of the Awakening were likely to make evident.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the witch scare and trials in Salem, Mass. in 1692 and 1693 serve to illustrate the kind of forces that were not far from the surface. But there were other forces, more conscious and less pathological at work. The high valuation given to extraordinary religious

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1. D.J. Elwood. The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards (Columbia U.P. 1960) p.192 n.82 where he also quotes A.A. Roback History of American Psychology.

effects tended to make Northampton, and no doubt other places, vie with one another to have the greatest attributes of religious experience; especially since Northampton had long enjoyed the reputation for its evangelical knowledge, as it came to bask in the reflected glory of its great minister, Solomon Stoddard.<sup>1</sup> Further, the anarchic activities were certainly given impetus from the fact that the revival happened within the life and discipline of an established church, under the guidance of ministers, yet with other ministers standing apart or in open criticism. Whitefield's influence, unwise in some respects as it was, would have a far more damaging result in New England than in Old England where the Methodist revival began and continued as a movement parallel to but outside of the actual membership of established church life and where all "revolutionary" tendency would find enough detachment from the prevailing church order, found ineffective in the light of the revival, to keep<sup>it</sup> sufficiently satisfied with the revival movement simply as it existed in that detachment. The manifest differences of the ecclesiastical aspect of the two revivals on each side of the Atlantic seem not to have been sufficiently noted as having their own influence upon the way the two revivals developed. When it comes to the "bodily effects"

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1. Edwards refers to this conscious piety in Northampton and Stoddard's almost divine estimation there in a letter to the Rev. T. Gillespie July 1. 1751. (Works. vol. i. p.clxxiii-clxxv).

however, the swoonings, cries, groans and collapses, there is so much in common between what happened in both areas, so different in many ways, that something more fundamental than a frontier situation must be looked to for explanation. Here we find Edwards pioneering into a pastoral psychology that would be neither detached from the great theological affirmations which he in fact saw exemplified in the revival; not yet so a priorist in his thinking that he would fail to note the important aspects of the human apparatus through which all religious experience must operate. He kept firm hold on all this by seeing that apparatus as part of the creation of God; so that the very human mental structure was both the God-given means for the highest spiritual experience and also the only too intrusive influence in its perversion and distortion.

APPENDIX

It would be valuable to include here the contents of an important manuscript of Edwards, entitled "Directions for Judging of Persons' Experiences".<sup>1</sup> The Reverend Alexander Grosart, the editor of the writing, is probably right when he says in his introduction that it "Evidently formed the Author's guide in his test-conversations with enquirers during the great Awakenings or Revivals". We give the complete contents of the MS. as Grosart published it.

## SEE TO IT

That the operation be much upon the Will or Heart, not on the Imagination, nor on the speculative understanding or motions of the mind, though they draw great affections after 'em as the consequence.

That the trouble of mind be reasonable, that the mind be troubled about those things that it has reason to be troubled about; and that the trouble seems mainly to operate in such a manner, with such a kind of trouble and exercise as is reasonable; founded on reasonable solid consideration; a solid sense and conviction of truth, as of things as they are indeed.

That it be because their state appears terrible on the account of those things wherein its dreadfulness indeed consists; and that their concern be solid, not operating very much by pangs and sudden passions, freaks and frights and a capriciousness of mind.

That under their seeming convictions, it be sin indeed; that they are convinced of their guilt in offending and affronting so great a God; One that so hates sin, and is so set against it to punish it etc.

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1. From Selections from the Unpublished Writings of Jonathan Edwards of America. Edited from the Original MSS with Facsimiles and an Introduction. by the Rev. Alexander B. Grosart (Edinburgh 1865) - one of three hundred copies printed for private circulation.



That they be convinced both of sins of heart and life; that their pretences of sin of heart be'n't without reflection on their wicked practise; and also that they are not only convinced of sin of practice but of sin of heart. And in both, that what troubles 'em be those things wherein their wretchedness has really chiefly consisted.

That they are convinced of their spiritual sins, consisting in their sinful defects, living without love to God, without accepting Christ, gratitude to Him etc.

That the convictions they have of the insufficiency and vanity of their own doings, be'n't only from some sense of wanderings of mind, and other sinful behaviour mixed; but from a conviction of the sinful defects of their duties, their not being done from the right principle; and so, as having no goodness at all mixed with the bad, but altogether corrupt.

That it is truly conviction of sin that convinces them of the Justice of God in their damnation, in rejecting their prayers, disregarding their sorrowful case, and all desires and endeavours after deliverance &c. and not merely any imagination or pang and melting of affection through some real or supposed instance of Divine Goodness.

That they be so convinced of sin as not in the inward thought and habit of their minds to excuse themselves, and impiedly quarrel with God, because of their impotency; for instance, that they don't excuse their slight of Christ and want of love to Him because they can't esteem and love Him.

That they don't evidently themselves look on their convictions (as) great, and be'n't taken with their own humiliation.

That which should chiefly be looked at should be evangelical. If this be sound, we have no warrant to insist on it, that there be manifest a remarkable work, purely legal, wherein was nothing of grace. So with regard to Convictions and Humiliation. Only seeing to it that the mind is indeed convinced of these things, and sees 'em (sees) that (which) many Divines insisted should be seen, under a purely legal work. And also seeing to it that the convictions there are, seem to be deep and fixed and to have a powerful governing influence on the temper of the mind, and a very direct respect to practice.

## SEE TO IT

That they have no only pretended convictions of sin; but a proper mourning for sin; And also that sin is burdensome to them, and that their hearts are tender and sensible with respect to it...the object of their care and dread.

That God and Divine things are admirable on account of the beauty of their moral perfection.

That there is to be discerned in their sense of the sufficiency of Christ, a sense of that Divine, supreme, and spiritual excellency of Christ, wherein this sufficiency fundamentally consists; and that the sight of this excellency is really the foundation of their satisfactions to His sufficiency.

That their conviction of the truth of Divine things be discerned to be truly some way or other primarily built on a sense of their Divine excellency.

That their discoveries and illuminations and experiences in general are not superficial pangs, flashes, imaginations, freaks, but solid, substantial, deep inwrought into the frame and temper of their minds, and discovered to have respect to practice.

That they long after HOLINESS and that all their experiences increase their longing.

Let 'em be inquired of concerning their disposition and willingness to bear the Cross, sell all for Christ, choosing their portion in heaven etc.

Whether their experiences have a respect to PRACTICE in these ways.

That their behaviour at present seems to be agreeable to such experiences

Whether it inclines 'em much to think of Practice, and more and more for past ill-practice.

Makes a disposition to ill practices dreadful.

Makes 'em long after perfect freedom from sin and after those things wherein Holiness consists; and by fixed and strong resolutions attended with fear and jealousy of their own hearts..

Whether, when they tell of experiences, it is not with such an air, that you, as it were, feel that they expect to be admired, and applauded, and (whether they) won't be disappointed if they fail of discerning in you something of that nature; and shocked and displeased if they discover the contrary.

Enquire whether their joy be truly and properly joy in God and in Christ; joy in Divine Good; or whether it be't wholly joy in themselves, joy in their experiences; what God has done from them or what He has promised He will do for them; and whether they be't affected with their own discoveries and affections.

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Some noteworthy points about this document are, first of all, its plan upon the dual character of the "analogy" which Edwards used to guide his whole pastoral psychology, as it referred especially to revival experience. The first part investigates the genuineness of the experience of repentance, leading to a state in which no excuse or subterfuge or extenuation is sought or relied upon. He will not be bound by previous schemes of required stages of conversion, and sits very easily as to the necessity of a "legal" conviction besides the much more essential "evangelical humiliation". The important thing was for the repentance to be centred in God and to be real and deep; and the evidence for this was when the person acknowledged no right to grace, and only a deep conviction of their rightly being condemned by God for what they are and for what they do.

The second half similarly explores the positive aspects of conversion, in true experience of grace. This too must be Christ-centred, not self-centred; not resting in the enjoyment of inward experience but in the vision of Divine "excellency". From this, all aspects of holy purpose and desire are explored and the practical outcome of conversion put to the test.

It is clear that much of this comes from the observations made by Edwards in the first revival of 1735/6 and recorded in the Faithful Narrative. It is impossible to say whether these items were all written at the same time or if they have been added to and altered from time to time. From internal evidence it would be hazardous to identify them with any particular stage of his ministry after that first revival. As in almost the whole of his outlook and thinking there is an architectonic unity from the earliest years<sup>1</sup> that subsequent experience only refined and pointed, so that in this as in other aspects of his thought it is well-nigh impossible to write of a "development".

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1. cf. his words "It is a subject on which my mind has been peculiarly intent, ever since I first entered on the study of divinity". (Intro. to Religious Affections.--Works.i.p.235)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A Treatise concerning religious affections:

#### In Three Parts.

- Part I. Concerning the Nature of the Affections, and their importance in religion.
- Part II. Showing what are no certain signs that religious affections are gracious, or that they are not.
- Part III. Showing what are distinguishing signs of truly gracious and holy affections.

As the "Great Awakening" spent itself, Edwards preached a series of sermons in 1742, 1743, which led on from what he had said in "Thoughts on the Revival", and summed up his final views on spiritual experience. 1744 and the years following were pastorally rather barren and uneventful but they enabled him to give much thought to the subject and in 1746 to publish the sermons in a book under the above title. He wrote, detached now from the pressure of the revival activities, though still conscious of "the dust and smoke of the present controversy"<sup>1</sup> for the pamphlet warfare went on. And he was also aware of the difficulty of being a mediating theologian "in so much approving some things and so much condemning others".<sup>2</sup> But this writing is hardly concerned with defending the revival any more. Rather it is a generalized and abstract sifting of the truth and error of spiritual

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1. Introduction to Religious Affections. (Works. 1.235)

2. ibid.

experience, to provide a manual for recognizing where the lowly attributes of human psychology affect the pure influences of the Holy Spirit and for setting forth the spiritual ideal in distinction from pretentious imitation. The result, remarks Dr. A.V.G. Allen, is "a beautiful and authoritative exposition of Christian experience"<sup>1</sup>; and what O.E. Winslow calls a permanent interpretation of the "beauty and amiableness" of true religion.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as Professor J.E. Smith of Yale points out, in his introduction to the recently published Yale edition of the work,

For some unexplained reason almost everyone who had anything to do with the reprinting of the Affections fell into the same pattern of thinking; the work is very important as an evangelical tract; it ought to be read by everyone; it is too subtle for the average reader; it must be rewritten.<sup>3</sup>

Usually it was abridged, especially where editors thought Edwards "too refined", and the parts that suffered most from this kind of surgery were the footnotes which were extensive. Edwards quoted widely from Stoddard, Thomas Shepard, Flavel, Perkins, Ames, Sibbes, Owen and others. True, it may be that they are not essential to his argument; they may be more "buttresses from without, rather than pillars within" the treatise. But they represent, for the student of Edwards,

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1. Jonathan Edwards p.219
  2. Jonathan Edwards 1705-1758 p.235
  3. Works of Jonathan Edwards. ed. P.Miller Vol.2. Religious Affections ed. by John E.Smith, Yale U.P. 1959. p.78.

valuable indications of writings which combined with his own thought to produce this classic work on Puritan pastoral psychology. No other work of his is so extensively foot-noted with such a wealth of quotation. Edwards has, in fact, gathered together the fruits of his wide and discriminating reading, his considerable pastoral experience, and his own penetrating and independent thought, to provide the clearest guide to genuine conversion, the work of divine grace distinguished from the many counterfeit or compromising religious experiences that prove to be superficial and temporary. All this was necessarily built upon the theological presuppositions of Calvinism. John Wesley would have made very different work of the subject; indeed the Affections were subjected by him to an abridgement with a theological twist, candidly indicated in his address "to the Reader". he believed that Edwards had written the work to argue away from the conclusion that a true believer could fall from grace; and so indulges in subtle distinctions to prove that they were not believers in the true sense at all.<sup>1</sup> The treatise, therefore, forms an important part of Edwards' theological and practical attack upon "Arminianism", which, although hardly noticing the evangelical, Wesleyan version, because of the deistical, latitudinarian type in New England,

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1. Religious Affections (Yale ed. edit. J.E. Smith) pp.79,80.

nevertheless faces an alternative account of spiritual experience from that source, as well as from more recent variations less entirely wedded to either. It needs to be read in the light of Edwards' subsequent treatises on the Freedom of the Will, Original Sin, True Virtue, On Grace. And, for good measure, much of what he writes in it, was supported by what he saw in the life of David Brainerd who came to live with him in May 1747 and who died at his house in the October from consumption. Edwards thought most highly of this young missionary to the Indians, edited his life and diary for the edification of all and contributed a number of Reflections and Observations upon the Memoirs in <sup>1</sup>1749. Nearly all of these reflections closely relate to points made in the Religious Affections. Brainerd himself wrote in a letter to his brother John, how much he valued the Religious Affections and urged him to use it to discern the falsity of much current religious experience. Edwards in a footnote to the published letter, remarks that he allowed this commendation to stand unedited, in order to use Brainerd's name to discourage "enthusiasm" and to "make that book more serviceable" amongst those who disliked it. <sup>2</sup> As Edwards had found in the case of his wife (whom he could not openly identify)

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1. Works. 11. pp. 313 - 458.

2. op.cit. p. 439.



nothing was "more serviceable" than to be able to point to a life - and a death - that had so amply supported the teaching of the Affections both by precept and example.

Dr. Paul Ramsey, writing in the introduction to Edwards' work on the Freedom of the Will in the present Yale edition, describes this treatise on Religious Affections as "without many peers among writings on the philosophy and psychology of religion"<sup>1</sup>. Edwards certainly embarks on a description of his psychological principles almost from the beginning of the first part (Concerning the nature of the affections and their importance in religion). His aim in this section is to develop from his text (I. Peter i.8) that "True Religion, in great part, consists in Holy Affections". We might note carefully here that Edwards was not arguing for religion consisting wholly in feeling, or affection. This guarded phrase recurs; and it is important to remember with Edwards that "he knew exactly what he wanted to say" and for that he "always sought the right word, the one that exactly expressed his intended meaning"<sup>2</sup>. But holy affections were, he contended, a great part of true religion, and he traced a clear parallel in the experience of believers in the Great Awakening with

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1. Jonathan Edwards; Freedom of the Will. ed. by P. Ramsey. (vol. 1. Works of Jonathan Edwards ed. Perry Miller) Yale. B.P. 1957. p.8.
  2. Religious Affections. (Yale ed.) p.8.

those described in the New Testament church. There was a clear uniformity in the phenomena and the passage chosen for this work speaks of Christians under trial exhibiting the pure and purified aspects of spirituality in love and joy.

But before he refers much to these characteristics specifically, Edwards seeks to associate with his scriptural justification of the treatise, a scientific one also. This is an initial description of the mind of man in the light of his own knowledge of contemporary psychological theory, guided by his reading in Locke, though not without his own individual slant thereon. We have previously noted the necessity he found to rebut the old-fashioned faculty psychology of Chauncy which had supported a low view of affections and the antagonism<sup>1</sup> shown to the revival by such as he who held to that view. Accordingly Edwards addresses himself to the exposition of the assertion: The affections are no other than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul.

God (says Edwards) has endued the soul with two principal faculties: The one that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns, and judges of things; which is called the understanding. The other is that by which the soul is in some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers; either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting. This faculty is called by various names; it is sometimes called the inclination

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1. cf. p. 163/above

and as it has respect to the actions that are determined and governed by it, the will: and the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the heart.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the soul or self may be referred to as "understanding" when acting intellectually and 'heart' when engaged in inclination and volition. Edwards develops his account of the volitional and affective aspect of the psyche. It acts of course, either positively or negatively regarding an object, and in so doing is exercised at different levels of feeling "beyond a state of perfect indifference". Such vigorous actions of the soul may become

with that strength, that (through the laws of the union which the Creator has fixed between soul and body) the motion of the blood and animal spirits begins to be sensibly altered: whence oftentimes arises some bodily sensation, especially about the heart and vitals, that are the fountain of the fluids of the body: whence it comes to pass that the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty..... is called the heart. And it is to be noted that they are these more vigorous and sensible exercises of this faculty which are called the affections.<sup>2</sup>

From this explanation he carefully points out in the face of current notions,

The will and the affections of the soul are not two faculties; the affections are not essentially distinct from the will, nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will and inclination, but only in the liveliness and sensibility of exercise.<sup>3</sup>

As to this theory, which he is establishing, Edwards is conscious that he is to a certain extent pioneering. In

1. Works vol.i. p.237. There are some verbal variations with the 1746 Edition. (see Yale edition). In this paragraph especially, the word "principal" is added by this edition.
2. ibid.
3. ibid.

this connection he points out

that language is here somewhat imperfect, the meaning of words in a considerable measure loose and unfixed, and not precisely<sup>1</sup> limited by custom which governs the use of language.

So that he continues to elaborate the point that the affections are not essentially different from the will and inclination, even though there are many volitions that are not commonly called "affections". The difference is in the degree of inclination, and the manner of its exercise. For every volition is an act of inclination to or from whatever is in view, and this kind of inclination is not, he says, essentially different from love or hate, which is the term for such an inclination raised to a higher degree of intensity. The same may be said of the approval or disapproval of an object which is involved in volition, and which also more intensively becomes joy or delight, or grief or sorrow.

Again, there is an organic connection between affections and the bodily constitution. Eighteenth century thought had to some extent taken up but revised the medieval and renaissance theory of "animal spirits" in the light of Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood.<sup>2</sup> The view obtaining in Edwards' time which he adopts, is that the

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1. Works. vol.1. p.237.

2. cf. Jonathan Edwards: Representative Selections with introductory bibliography and notes. C.H. Faust and T.H. Johnson (American Book Co. New York. 1935) pxxix.

brain secreted the animal spirits, which were airy, subtle substances, by separating them from the coarser elements of the blood. These spirits filled the brain and nerves, which were looked upon as hollow tubes extending to the whole body. All organic sensation set them in motion, and carried the sense impression along the nerves to the brain. Contrariwise all mental impulses agitated the spirits in the brain and were carried by the nerves to the organs of motion so as to stimulate the muscles to action. Sensory illusion or involuntary muscular movement could be caused by disturbing the spirits by intoxication, excitement or melancholia. With this background, Edwards is on unassailable ground when he argues,

there never is in any case whatsoever, any lively and vigorous exercise of the inclination, without some effect upon the body, in some alteration of the motion of its fluids, and especially of the animal spirits. And on the other hand, from the same laws of union, over the constitution of the body, and the motion of 1 its fluids, may promote the exercise of its affections.

But he at once carefully distinguished between the bodily effect and the affection.

Nor are these motions of the animal spirits, and fluids of the body, any thing properly belonging to the nature of the affections; though they always accompany them... but are only affects or concomitants of the affections, which are entirely distinct from the affections themselves, and in no way essential to them. 2

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1. Works vol.1. p.237.

2. ibid.

This last assertion he would clinch by the further one that  
 an unbodied spirit may be as capable of love and hatred  
 joy or sorrow, hope or fear or other affections as one  
 that is united to a body.<sup>1</sup>

In these passages, Edwards is manifestly clearing the ground  
 for his settled verdict on the Great Awakening and on the  
 highest degrees of spiritual experience. He is preventing  
 any objection to spiritual experience on the ground that it  
 affected the body; he is pointing out the psychological  
 justification for bodily manifestations of 'raised' spiritual  
 experience. But at the same time he is guarding himself  
 against being quoted for identifying all religious extrava-  
 gance with true spirituality. To this end he developed his  
 account of the affections in dealing with passions. The  
 difference was thus;

Affection is a word that in its ordinary significance  
 seems to be something more extensive than passion, being  
 used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or  
 inclination; but passion is used for those that are  
 more sudden and whose effects on the animal spirits are  
 more violent, the mind being more overpowered, and less  
 in its own command.<sup>2</sup>

Professor J.E. Smith refers to this paragraph as "pivotal"  
 in importance because it enabled him "to criticise and reject  
 a great many revival phenomena" especially those which were  
 pathological and hysterical, and not after the heart religion  
 he advocated.<sup>3</sup> In actual fact it was not so much to disown

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1. Works vol.1. p.237

2. Works vol.1. p.237. cf. Calv. Inst. i. xv. 6

3. Works Yale ed. vol.11. p.14.

"bodily effects" that Edwards made this point, for in the previous one he was advancing a well-established psychology to justify them under great spiritual experience. But his aim was to justify his further contention that such outward and overwhelming effects should not be the ground of hope, the assurance of true spirituality. To say that true spirituality, the reality of religious affection might well issue in outward effects of an unusual nature, was not a principle that might just as easily be read backwards. To mistake Edwards' point in this introductory psychological section would be to mistake his whole mediating verdict on the revival.

In fact, this introductory section was aiming as much at establishing the affections as essential elements in experience as in giving safeguards against their misunderstanding. Thus, Edwards' involves the affections under the conative aspect of the psyche as one of its "faculties" with the cognitive. In this he had behind him the reduction of the functions of the psyche into two by seventeenth century dogmaticians<sup>1</sup>, who followed Calvin's summarising of his discussion on human nature in the words,

Here we only wish to observe, that the soul does not possess any faculty which may not be duly referred to one or the other of these members.(ie. intellect and will).<sup>2</sup>

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1. Reformed Dogmatics. (Heppe). p.224.

2. Inst.I. xv.7.

Thus also one of Edwards' favourite authors, Thomas Shepard, holds that,

in the Gospel, not only divine truth is propounded to the mind to assent unto; but an infinite and eternal good is offered to the heart and will of man to embrace.<sup>1</sup>

But his problem was to include within these, or rather within volition the dignity of the highest aspect of the personality. Puritan psychology had been content to accept what had been distilled from Augustinian and medieval teaching by such handbooks as Alsted's Encyclopaedia and Physica Harmonica.<sup>2</sup>

Augustine had included sensory knowledge under a faculty of sense, connected with external sensation and the 'internal senses' of commonsense, imagination and memory; and different from the faculties of spirit, the will, understanding and intellectual memory. Through the popular compendia, something of Aristotelian faculty psychology, particularly as embodied in Aquinas, had been absorbed into Puritan thought, with the result that sensory desire which inclined to perceived or imagined objects, thus giving rise to passions or emotions, was separated from rational desire or will, which itself is regulated by knowledge. From all these sources, the approach to spiritual experience was overwhelmingly intellectualist. "The intellect governs the will", Calvin had said and further went on to describe the psychological reflex;

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1. The Sound Believer. (London 1671) p.182.

2. The New England Mind. P. Miller (New York) 1939 p.244.



God has provided the soul of man with intellect, by which he might discern good from evil... reason going before with her lamp..... To this he has joined will to which choice belongs..... Thereafter choice was added to direct the appetites and temper all the organic motions; the will being thus perfectly submissive to the authority of reason. <sup>1</sup>

This description is of unfallen man. But to man in his sin "it appears that one of the essential properties of our nature is reason" <sup>2</sup> but it is "one kind of intelligence of earthly things, and another of heavenly things" <sup>3</sup>. In the case of heavenly things men "are blinder than moles" until enlightened by grace. There is, too a moral consciousness, but utterly weakened in following its knowledge of general moral principle; and the will also is enslaved "by depraved lusts as to be incapable of one righteous desire" but, as inseparable from the nature of man, has not perished. <sup>4</sup> Man does not naturally choose rationally and persevere after his true good. "He does not admit reason to his counsel, nor exert his intellect; but... follows the bent of his nature" <sup>5</sup>. It is a question of fact that man does not choose what right reason points out as good. But here Calvin makes a distinction; the desire for good in the natural man is a "natural inclination" after pleasant circumstances and this is "not properly a movement of the will" <sup>6</sup>. It may be that in this he is thinking of the

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1. Inst.I xv.7.8.
  2. Inst.II.ii.17.
  3. Inst.II.ii.13.
  4. Inst.II.ii.2.
  5. II.ii.26.
  6. ibid.

difference he quotes earlier from "philosophers generally" that

intellect, sense, and appetite or will (the latter being the term in ordinary use) are seated in the soul, they maintain that the intellect is endued with reason... the inferior movement, which is termed sense, and by which the mind is led away to error and delusion... To the will, moreover they give an intermediate place, between reason and sense....<sup>1</sup>

but of course he utterly repudiates the moral sufficiency that is ascribed to each faculty from this source. But while he makes a difference between the will and this natural inclination toward the pleasant, he thoroughly involves the will in the movement of the human passions towards evil.<sup>2</sup> Finally, in the movement of grace, in which the evil will is changed into the good, he comments with approval on Augustine "that by means of the same grace, the heart being impressed with a feeling of delight, is trained to persevere".<sup>3</sup> Here is a source of Edwards' viewpoint. Indeed in a later passage on a similar theme, Edwards' own phraseology is anticipated; for in speaking of faith Calvin says it

is the special gift of God in both ways, - in purifying the mind so as to give it a relish for divine truth....<sup>4</sup>

The psycho-spiritual process, as it were, of conversion is thus described by Calvin;

For the soul, when illumined by him (the Holy Spirit) receives as it were a new eye, enabling it to contemplate heavenly mysteries.... And thus, indeed, it is only

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1. II.ii.2.
  2. II.iii.5.
  3. II.iii.14.
  4. III.ii.33.

when the human intellect is irradiated by the light of the Holy Spirit that it begins to have a taste of those things which pertain to the kingdom of God. Hence our Saviour, when clearly declaring the mysteries of the kingdom to the two disciples, makes no impression till he opens their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke xxiv.27,45). Hence also, though he had taught the Apostles with his own divine lips, it was still necessary to send the Spirit of truth to instil into their minds the same doctrine.....<sup>1</sup>

The next necessary thing is, that what the mind has imbibed be transferred into the heart. The word is not received in faith when it merely flutters in the brain, but when it has taken deep root in the heart.... But if the illumination of the Spirit is the true source of understanding in the intellect, much more manifest is his agency in the confirmation of the heart.<sup>2</sup>

In the seventeenth century understanding of the process, the sources of past teaching on religious psychology had been combined to provide an ideal reflex. Experience followed the order of an object having its replica in the sensations of the mind (called a 'phantasm') which was taken by animal spirits to common sense in the brain for apprehension and distinction; it was relayed to imagination (in the front of the brain) and to recollection for memorising in the back. Reason, associated with the top of the brain summonses phantasms from imagination or memory and determines their truth or rightness, sending the verdict by means of the animal spirits along the nerves to the will (in the heart), which thus commands the 'sensitive appetite' (otherwise, the

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1. Inst. III. 11.34.

2. Inst. III. 11.36.

affections and passions) and so effects muscular action. While there were arguments and disputes about this process, and the accounts would vary in details, this is the line that was taken by such an orthodox summary of accepted teaching as Samuel Willard's, Compleat Body of Divinity (1726). All<sup>1</sup> responses of men, natural or spiritual followed this course.

Thus in this view, sensation supplies through the appropriate organ of sense, all manner of data to the "phansie" or imagination; on this, reason acts, though without being bound to do so by the data provided; and so it furnishes the will, otherwise "blind", with the path to which to assent. And this was also the way of faith, which is founded in reason's assent and thus the will's response to the assent of reason. The sensations of seeing the words of the Bible or hearing the message of the preacher became the "phantasms" on which the reason and will and feelings in due order made their response. But since all parts of the mental life suffer the results of the Fall, none could act savingly except by divine grace at every step. God used the "means" of the psychological apparatus He had created, and consequently logical proof, apologetic, persuasions and appeals by preachers were implic-<sup>2</sup>ates of the divine order of grace. It seems that the influence of Descartes was hardly felt in New England except

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1. The New England Mind. vol.i. Perry Miller. pp.240-242.
  2. The New England Mind. vol.i. P. Miller. pp.247,248; 259-270; 280-290.

as in a subtle support for the acceptance of the inherent moral sense, even though corrupted, in fallen man. There was no scepticism about the reliability of sense perceptions, nor about the epistemological discontinuity of thing-in-itself and its image.

But Edwards was not only writing with the normal Puritan psychology, combining Aristotelian and Calvin (as well as other sources) in mind. In 1717 at Wethersfield, only fourteen years of age, he had read Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding

enjoying a far higher pleasure in the perusal of its pages "than the most greedy miser finds, when gathering up handfuls of silver and gold, from some newly discovered treasure".<sup>1</sup>

Here too, the actions of the mind were found under two heads;

The power of thinking is called the Understanding and the power of volition is called the Will and these two powers or abilities of the mind are denominated faculties.<sup>2</sup>

But Edwards obtained more than this from Locke. These two aspects of reflection - "simple ideas" in Locke - are in one of four classes, and the fourth class

convey themselves into the mind by all the ways of sensation and reflection; viz., pleasure or delight, and its opposite, pain or uneasiness; power; existence; unity.<sup>3</sup>

In this Locke was not referring to physical feelings but to

1. Works. vol.1. p.lix.

2. Essay Book II. ch.6.

3. Essay Book II. ch.7. sec.1. Edwards probably read both first and second editions at Yale:(cf. Yale edn.Freedom of the Will; ed.P.Ramsey; pp.47-65).

the nature of experience as necessarily accompanied by some kind of appreciative valuation. When it is seen that in the Essay, delight or its opposite "join themselves to almost all our ideas both of sensation and reflection",<sup>1</sup> while at the same time, the modes of the simple ideas of reflection include knowing, judging, believing, we are within sight of Edwards new departure for his time, in uniting feeling with the immediate response of the personality to experience as something that is proper to the nature of human beings, and combining with rational perception and will. Locke also explains that will is itself a kind of preference and may here be leading Edwards to his own description of it as 'inclination'.

It is noteworthy that feeling is associated by Edwards with volition, and that he speaks more of the will in this section than of cognition. This was no doubt because the rational side of spiritual experience was in no danger of being minimised. But there was a more radical purpose still. In the second section of this first part of the Religious Affections he advances the importance of feeling further. Not only is it his contention that "wherever true religion is, there are vigorous exercises of the inclination and will

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1. Essay Book II. ch.7. sec.2.

towards divine objects" but,

The Author of our nature has not only given us affections but has made them the very spring of actions..... Such is man's nature, that he is very inactive, any otherwise than he is influenced by either love or hatred, desire, hope, fear, or some other affection. These affections we see to be the moving springs in all the affairs of life..<sup>1</sup>

Edwards illustrates his thesis from different common exercises of what he traces to affection in its unspiritual sense, as in covetousness, ambition and greed; but this does not cause him to distinguish as essentially different the same drive within the personality in religious matters.

And as in worldly things, worldly affections are very much the spring of men's motion and action; so in religious matters, the spring of their actions are very much religious affections: he that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only without affection, never is engaged in the business of religion.<sup>2</sup>

Here Edwards relates the place and power of the affections to one of his evaluative terms about true religious experience; engaged-ness. And here and in the next paragraph (3) he argues that the actual hearing about great spiritual and evangelical themes manifestly did not alone move men.

There are multitudes who often hear the word of God, of things infinitely great and important, and which most nearly concern them, yet all seems to be wholly ineffectual upon them... the reason is they are not affected by what they hear.<sup>3</sup>

Hence the deduction is made, not simply that the psychological

1. Works. vol.i. p.238. cf. Works Vol.i. p.cclxiv Notes on the Mind (16) Consciousness - "The mind feels when it thinks".
2. Works. vol.i. p.238
3. ibid.

reflex from sensation to cognition, rational acceptance, volition and so to affection must complete the circuit; but rather, it would seem, that sensation and cognition get no further except by the response of the affections there and then.

I am bold to assert, that there never was any considerable change wrought in the mind or conversation of any person, by any thing of a religious nature that he ever read,<sup>1</sup> heard or saw, who has not had his affections moved.

And at once Edwards sees the relevance of this to his theology.

Never was a natural man engaged earnestly to seek his salvation.... from any thing that he ever heard or imagined... while his heart remained unaffected.<sup>2</sup>

For since the sensations cognized evidently did not and could not produce religious affection, it was a work only of God in redemption, with man "dependent upon Him in the whole of it". (as his first published sermon had laid down).

In a section on the Biblical emphasis on religious feeling such as fear, hope, love, hatred (of sin) desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion and zeal, Edwards takes the meaning of fear as having but one connotation, of anxious dread, and not also of awed worship, though he looks on religious fear in the Christian as coupled with hope. But he speaks of love as in Scripture "the chief of the affections and the fountain of all others".<sup>3</sup>

1. Works. vol.1. p.238
2. ibid.
3. Works. vol.1. p.240.



It is

the greatest thing in religion, as the essence and soul of it. <sup>1</sup>

and in referring to it as *ἀγάπη*, he describes it thus,

the whole of a sincerely benevolent propensity of the soul towards God and man..... when in sensible and vigorous exercise, becomes affection, and is no other than affectionate love.

It cannot be supposed...., that hereby is meant the act, exclusively of the habit, or that the exercise of the understanding is excluded, which is implied in all reasonable affection. But.... that the essence of all true religion lies in holy love; and that in this divine affection - and habitual disposition to it, that light which is the foundation to it, and those things which are its fruits - consists the whole of religion. <sup>2</sup>

In this final sentence Edwards briefly correlates religious feeling with its acquired sentiment and its overt characteristics in practice, with "that light" which he speaks about very forcibly in his early and important sermon - A Divine and Supernatural Light, immediately imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God etc. (1734) which forms the supernatural cognitive element, in and above the results of sensation, in the true religious experience.

Although, as we have seen, Edwards justifies his emphasis upon the importance of affection, by appeal to the power of natural affection in all sorts of people, he is not prepared to leave the account of it thus; it is no merely re-directed

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1. Works. vol.1. p.240.

2. ibid.

psycho-physical drive, a sublimated libido. Under point 8 of this section, he discusses the reference to the joy and love of heaven as that "the religion of heaven consists very much in affection" and takes up the point denying that "animal spirits, and fluids of the body (are) anything properly belonging to the nature of the affections".<sup>1</sup> In heaven, where religion is seen in its perfection, there is love and joy, yet the "saints in heaven are not united to flesh and blood, and have no animal fluids". From this arises the alternative, that the joys and love of heaven are no affection or that affections in themselves are independent of the physical aspects which accompany them in earthly natures. Edwards scouts the first suggestion;

It is true we do not experimentally know what love and joy are in a soul out of a body, or in a glorified body; i.e. we have not had experience of love and joy in a soul in these circumstances; but the saints on earth do know what divine love and joy in the soul are, and they know that love and joy are of the same kind with the love and joy which are in heaven, in separate souls there. The love and joy of the saints on earth is the beginning and dawning of the light, life and blessedness of heaven and is like their love and joy there; or rather the same in nature, though not the same in degree and circumstances. It is unreasonable therefore to suppose that the love and joy of the saints in heaven differ ... in nature, so that they are no affections; and merely because they have no blood and animal spirits to be set in motion by them.<sup>2</sup>

The physical aspects of feeling, emotion, and the affections

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1. Works. vol.1. p.237
  2. op.cit. p.241.

are to be regarded as the effect not the essence of them -

although by their reaction they may make some circumstantial difference in the sensation of the mind. <sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the essential experience is not to be identified;

There is a sensation of the mind which loves and rejoices, antecedent to any effects on the fluids of the body; and therefore does not depend on these motions in the body .... And wherever there are the exercises of love and joy, there is that sensation of the mind, whether it be in the body or out; and that inward sensation, or kind of spiritual feeling, is what is called affection. <sup>2</sup>

This sensation of the mind, accompanied by feeling and antecedent to physical feeling, corresponds to Locke's fourth class of simple ideas <sup>3</sup>, "which convey themselves into the mind by all the ways of sensation and reflection" and number amongst them, delight. In our present earthly state, such experience is easily confused with other sensations of a physical nature and in fact "(through the laws of union of soul and body)" do inter-relate. But the heavenly conditions represent the perfection of what is here only partial, even though identical in principle. It is unthinkable, contends Edwards, that there is such a discontinuity of experience and essential being in the regenerate, between their earthly and heavenly life, that what is called love and joy on earth bears no relation whatever to love and joy in heaven. That

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1. Works vol.i. p.242.

2. op.cit. p.242.

3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Essay. Bk.II.ch.7.sec.1.

being the case, religious affection which accompanies the beatific vision, according to Scripture, is in principle one with the affection of the regenerate in spiritual experience in this life. It is the dynamic of the response awakened by the supernatural revelation to the soul by God; a response which, by supernatural grace, is both because of supernatural enlightenment and of its accompanying affection. In the present life, the "religion in the hearts of the truly godly" is never "in exact proportion to the degree of affection and present emotion in the mind". Hence Edwards establishes his Scylla and Charybdis, the extremes and errors, against which his writings at this time were warning; either (like Chauncy) those,

who are for discarding all religious affections as having nothing solid or substantial in them.<sup>1</sup>

or, like too many unwise friends of revival, having

a disposition to look upon all high religious affections as eminent exercises of true grace, without much inquiry into the nature and source of those affections, and the manner in which they arose.<sup>2</sup>

So he concludes the first part of the Treatise with the dictum;

As there is no true religion where there is nothing else but affection, so there is no true religion where there is no religious affection. As on the one hand, there must be light in the understanding, as well as an affected fervent heart ....<sup>3</sup>

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1. Works. vol.1. p.243
  2. op.cit. p.243.
  3. ibid.

and elaborates his favourite epigram - "Neither light without heat, nor heat without light". But it is here that, in deploring the contemporary lack of affection in religion, he returns to a previous assertion made about the affections;

God has given to mankind affections, for the same purpose as that for which he has given all the faculties and principles of the human soul, viz. that they might be subservient to man's chief end and the great business for which God has created him, that is the business of religion.

If we ought ever to exercise our affections at all, and if the Creator has not unwisely constituted the human nature in making these principles a part of it, then they ought to be exercised about those objects which are most worthy of them.

So has God disposed things in the affair of our redemption.... as though everything were purposely contrived in such a manner, as to have the greatest possible tendency to reach our hearts.... and move our affections. <sup>1</sup>

Man's nature therefore, by virtue of his creation by God, has been endowed with the inherent principle that all mental states combine both understanding or cognition, and feeling tone about the object, and it is this feeling-tone (affection) that gives the vitality to all response to what is cognized. If the sensations of sights or sounds do not arouse the kind of understanding that carries with it this aroused feeling, then there will be no effect upon the practical life. Strong experiences of this feeling-tone link in with physical

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1. Works vol.1. p.244.

effects as well, which in their turn react sympathetically and with intensifying effect on the mental affection; but they are not to be confused with it, no more than are the muscular or 'bodily' effects, unusual though they may be in external appearance. It is this mental process of cognition and feeling about an object sensed that is the ground<sup>1</sup> of genuine spiritual experience to Edwards. It is this that is enabled by grace to respond to God's approach in the Gospel in such a way that the enhanced cognition of the meaning of the Gospel and the aroused feeling about it, combine to produce an "engagedness" in religion, a "relish" for spiritual matters, and an establishment in a pattern of Christian life that represents a genuine conversion.

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1. "The point almost invariably missed is that in Edwards view, the inclination (the faculty initially distinguished from the understanding) involves both the will and the mind". The affections "are thus the expressions of inclination through the mind. They stand in a necessary relation to the ideas of the understanding, and are also the springs of action commonly ascribed to the will. Inclination is not a blind affair, since it is based on an apprehension of the idea, the doctrine or the object which the self is attempting to judge" (J.E. Smith. Intro. to the Treatise on Rel. Aff. (Yale edn. pp. 13.14. cf. n.2) On this cf. P. Miller (Jonathan Edwards 1949; p.45) that Edwards always exalted experience above reason; and from Locke believed that Christian oratory must force sensations and their annexed ideas on passive minds to produce revival (p.56). Edwards would say that the natural faculties "are the subject of this light (ie. from God) and in such a manner that they are not merely passive but active in it. God.... makes use of his rational faculties" (Sermon on Divine and Supernatural Light; Works. vol. ii. p.15) also "Reason's work is to perceive truth and not excellency... it (excellency) depends on the sense of the heart" (ibid. p.17).

But having thus established the place of the affections in the forefront of the psychology of religion, thus giving the rationalist opponents of the revival a philosophical and scientific rebuttal, Edwards turns in the second part of the Treatise to deal with the mistakes of unwise friends or misled converts of the revival. Here he aimed at Showing what are no certain signs that religious affections are truly gracious or that they are not. He aimed at correcting the mistakes in the minds of friends of the revival, in assuming that certain aspects of religious experience necessarily carried with them the assurance of being genuinely the work of the Holy Spirit. He lists twelve such ambiguous "signs" as follows.

1. It is no sign of the genuineness of religious affections that they are very great or raised very high.
2. It is no sign.... that they have great effects on the body.
3. It is no sign.... that they cause those who have them to be fluent, fervent and abundant, in talking of the things of religion.
4. It is no sign.... that persons did not make them themselves, or excite them of their own contrivance, and by their own strength.
5. It is no sign.... that they come to the mind in a remarkable manner with texts of Scripture.

6. It is no sign.... that there is an appearance of love in them.
7. Persons having religious affections of many kinds, accompanying one another, is not sufficient to determine whether they have any gracious affections or no.
8. Nothing can certainly be determined concerning the nature of affections, that comforts and joys seem to follow in a certain order.
9. It is no certain sign.... that they dispose persons to spend much time in religion, and to be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship.
10. Nothing can be certainly known of the nature of religious affections, that they much dispose persons with their mouths to praise and glorify God.
11. It is no sign... that they make persons exceeding confident.
12. Nothing can be certainly concluded.... that the relations persons give of them, are very affecting.

Over the course of time, since writing "Distinguishing Marks" Edwards had been clarifying in his mind the evidences of real spirituality, and there is an obvious development in his identification of the specific proofs that became attached to revival experience but which were in fact of doubtful nature.



This list brings to a precision of statement much of Part IV of the Thoughts on the Revival<sup>1</sup> as the passage of time had produced queries as to the genuineness of religion in professors of conversion. Edwards had written to the Rev. Mr. Erskine in June, 1751,

I cannot say, that the greater part of supposed converts give reason, by their conversation, to suppose that they are true converts<sup>2</sup>

In this list the emphasis falls on those mistakes about spiritual experience which arise from a confusion between what Edwards discriminates as purely spiritual and natural feelings. Only two (numbers three and eleven) really refer to the influence of spiritual pride, which in his previous writings he listed as a separate cause of false spirituality. It is because there is an outward similarity possible between the expressions of great feeling with or without true piety that ambiguity arises.

It is unnecessary to discuss in detail all of these negative signs, for what is written here contributes little more to what Edwards has previously said. The first three are of this nature; it is simply interesting to note that in No. 2 Edwards argues far more for bodily effects being the result of real spiritual experience than for his contention that this is not a certain evidence; while the conclusion of

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1. cf. p. 184 ff. above.

2. Works vol. i. p. clxxii.

No.3. would leave us with the impression that Edwards had come to prefer quietness in religion, in the words,

False affections, if they are equally strong, are much more forward to declare themselves, than true...

and his quotation from Richard Flavel's Touchstone of Sincerity Non est religio, ubi omnia patent. But he had said much the same at the end of Distinguishing Marks.<sup>1</sup>

But this will not permit the further deduction that persons affected by the working of the Holy Spirit should be unaware of it. The opponents of the revival are not to be allowed so to generalize from certain quiet influences of the Spirit. The fourth negative sign deals with the ambiguity here. The situation is seen by Edwards to be complicated from a fourfold source which we have before noted as making his pastoral practice difficult. There is the true effect of grace; or there is the "common" influence of the Spirit, where seemingly religious expressions are found yet with what suggests doubts as to saving grace. There is the counterfeit work of Satan; or there is the "weak and vapoury habit of body", "the brain weak and easily susceptible of impressions", which result in "strange apprehensions and imaginations" - a purely physical or psychological element. Numbers five and six add little to what he has given before except to suggest

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1. cf.p.160. above.

that the delusive possibilities of counterfeit or natural love and humility involves a far greater pastoral difficulty than Edwards seems to be aware of by the argument here given, which is one of the shortest of the twelve. He had in fact dealt more usefully with this point in Thoughts on the Revival and the Biblical argument here given is extremely thin.

In fact, in citing the situation amongst St. Paul's Galatian converts, Edwards leaves the whole issue of deciding between the failing Christian and the self-deceived hypocrite entirely in the air. This problem is apparently accentuated by the seventh, when he lays down the statement,

Commonly when false affections are raised high, many of them attend each other;

and by the hypothetical case of a person in fear of hell and full of despair being led to a false hope of pardon by Satan suggesting, possibly with Bible verses, that God had pardoned,

though there was no preceding acceptance of Christ or closing of the heart with Him.

Doubts arise perhaps whether any such person has existed apart from Edwards own supposition; until the terms in which he describes the illusion of divine favour recall some of the descriptions retailed in earlier writings of what revival converts have professed. The test in Edwards' thinking comes out in such phrases as

Is it any wonder that..... for a while, he should think and speak of scarce anything else.....

and while the warmth of his affections last, that he should be might forward to take pains....

While

It is thus, in some measure at least, oftentimes between saints and hypocrites. There is sometimes a very great similitude between true and false experience..

But the test is in the outcome; like the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker, there was similarity; but one with the other was quite contrary in its issue.

The test of true spiritual love is perseverance.

The eighth negative sign relates once more to Edwards' pastoral tradition derived from much Puritan attention to religious experience. From the Faithful Narrative onwards he has noted that the established dogma of an ordo salutis in personal experience was not in fact always borne out in all the details that the pundits had so carefully expounded in the treatises.<sup>1</sup> He here notes that even where there has seemed to be a recapitulation of the "steps to salvation" in the approved manner, it was no guarantee that the experience was certainly genuine because of what seemed to be a succession of states according to plan. Professor J.E. Smith in the editorial introduction to the Yale edition of Religious Affections<sup>2</sup> remarks,

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1. cf. pp. 120, 121. above

2. op.cit. p. 19

His argument at this point is apt to be confusing because he speaks of both the nature of the states in the soul and their order. The argument begins by emphasizing the order of events in the soul, but we soon discover that their nature is involved as well. The fact is, one aspect cannot be separated from the other.

On this it must be said that there was certainly no confusion in Edwards' mind. He knew that the accepted order of spiritual experience which had been taught as the way of God with men had been evaluated as an apparently genuine expression of true religious experience and was also a reasonable trend of experience..

As God, in the work of salvation deals with (men) suitably to their intelligent nature; so it seems reasonable and agreeable to God's wisdom, that men who are saved, should be in these two states sensibly; that they should be first sensible of their absolute extreme necessity, and afterward of Christ's sufficiency and God's mercy through him. <sup>1</sup>

This was the "certain analogy" referred to in the Faithful Narrative. But at the same time Edwards was also quite clear that, while genuine experience usually followed a certain line of development, it did not follow that certain successive states of mind thereby validated the persons condition as "gracious".

It is no evidence that comforts and joys are right <sup>2</sup> because they succeed great terrors and amazing fears of hell. <sup>2</sup>

Once again he is concerned to point beyond the "affection"

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1. Works. vol.I. p.252.

2. op.cit. p.253.

to the basis, the real cause of the affection.

For though convictions of conscience often cause terror; yet they do not consist in it; and terrors often arise from other causes. <sup>1</sup>

On this point he goes on to elaborate, real convictions,

convictions of conscience, through the influences of God's Spirit, consist in conviction of sinfulness in heart and practice, and of the dreadfulfulness of sin. <sup>2</sup>

But in their circumstances, "terrors" could arise from "frightful apprehensions of hell" (possibly through having not rightly followed an "awakening" sermon). Or come about through improper speculation about some aspects of Calvinist theology such as reprobation, or the passing of "their day" of opportunity. Or result from a "particular constitution and temper" either through having a vivid imagination that raises their affection to a "vast height", or (quoting from William Perkins) because of "melancholic passions" which "usually come on a sudden". Edwards is aware that people may have all the jargon of the converted without the reality, and only close enquiry can expose the true position.

They tell of a dreadful load and sink of sin, a heap of black and loathsome filthiness within them; when if the matter be carefully enquired into, they have not in view any thing wherein the corruption of nature does truly consist. <sup>3</sup>

There are in fact no limits to the counterfeits of grace, so far as the outward evidences are concerned. He calls

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1. op.cit. p.253.
  2. op.cit. p.253.
  3. op.cit. p.253.

Stoddard to witness from his long experience in pastoral matters of this sort,

that converted and unconverted men cannot be certainly distinguished by the account they give of their experiences; the same relation of experiences being common to both. <sup>1</sup>

(Though it is to be noted that the two pastors reacted from this in opposite directions; Stoddard gave up discriminating; Edwards sought to improve the means of assessing experience.) Every stage of the accepted order can be testified to, but spuriously; such people

have only exchanged some ways of trusting in their own righteousness, for others that are more secret and subtle. <sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, conversion is not always according to the accepted pattern:

As this distinctness, as to method, is no certain sign that a person is converted; so, being without it is no evidence that a person is not converted. <sup>3</sup>

Although the essential inward convictions of sin and helplessness and condemnation must be implied,

yet nothing proves it to be necessary, that all those things which are implied or presupposed in an act of faith in Christ, must be plainly and distinctly wrought in the soul, in so many successive and separate works of the Spirit, that shall be each one manifest in all who are truly converted. <sup>4</sup>

He calls one of his favourite authorities, Thomas Shepard, to witness that

1. op.cit. p.254n.

2,3,4. op.cit. p.254.

sometimes the change made in a saint, at first work, is like a confused chaos; so that the saints know not what to make of it. The manner of the Spirit's proceeding in them that are born of the Spirit, is often exceeding mysterious and unsearchable. <sup>1</sup>

Indeed he acknowledges,

We have no certain rule to determine how far God's own Spirit may go in those operations and convictions which in themselves are not spiritual and saving. <sup>2</sup>

In this he refers to the religious activities involved in "preparation" whereby New England theologians had encouraged church-people uncertain of their conversion and therefore of their election, to do all that lay in their power to put themselves in the way of converting influences; they would reckon that this was possible by the "common grace" of the Holy Spirit. But where it could be discerned as transferring to saving grace was the problem; and Edwards confessed that "there is no necessary connexion in the nature of things" and also that

there is no revealed certain connexion between a state of salvation and any thing that a natural man can be the subject of, before he believes in Christ. <sup>3</sup>

Scripture he says, only points to "gracious operations and effects" as "certain signs of grace"; tests of order, or methods, are rather men's "philosophy, and experiences, and conjectures". It will be seen later in the treatise what are the definite "gracious operations and effects" that he

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1,2,3. op.cit. p.254.



would seek to discriminate. Meanwhile, he himself is open (and this needs to be well noted) to a wide variety of religious experience - a true predecessor in this point of William James - while at the same time he penetratingly notes that

A scheme of what is necessary, and according to a rule already received and established by common opinion, has a vast, though to many a very insensible, influence in forming men's notions of the steps and method of their own experiences..... What they have experienced is insensibly strained to bring all to an exact conformity to the scheme established. <sup>1</sup>

Edwards' acute mind was certainly in no confusion between the conventional "order" and the essential nature. This whole section is given up to discriminating the two, and certainly Edwards would not agree that "one aspect cannot be separated from the other." <sup>2</sup> His closing words in the section are emphatic.

We are often in Scripture expressly directed to try ourselves by the nature of the fruits; but no where by the Spirit's method of producing them.

The eleventh negative sign contributes another important issue to be mentioned; that of evangelical assurance.

Edwards denounces (and trounces) the view of some that this

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1. op.cit. pp.254.255.

2. Jonathan Edwards; Religious Affections (ed.J.E.Smith.Works of Jonathan Edwards. ed.by Perry Miller.Yale U.P. 1959). p.19. Prof.Smith has misread this section somewhat; he paraphrases Edwards - "Satan can exactly imitate the order of affections but not their nature". Edwards held that the outward appearance of religious affections, even if not exactly their nature could be simulated. The issue is more than a matter of the order.

is not to be expected as part of God's design in His covenantal promise and provision in Jesus Christ. But, as may be expected, he is far from thus supporting all kinds of professed religious assurance. Here again, his authors had already taught him, and the footnotes quote Stoddard and Flavel, Shepard and Ames. The Puritan teachers, while glorying in the assurance of salvation, had ever taught that godly fear and humble self-doubting were the marks of a Christian. Edwards took to task the spiritual pride that found vent through revival experiences and which seemed to produce a self-conscious religiousness, exhibitionism and confidence in conforming to the pattern of revival religion. He quotes Shepard to describe the two kinds of hypocrites; "legal" or the nominal churchpeople "deceived with their outward morality and external religion"; and "evangelical" deceived with false discoveries and elevations. The latter are strongly entrenched in a confidence composed of "impulses and supposed revelations" and Edwards notes that this confidence is not in the least shaken by sin. Edwards sees the danger attached to the improper way of presenting some truths; of living by faith, not by sight; of trusting God in the dark; of "not making their good frames the foundation of their faith". This rightly understood is part of the implication of

Christian faith. But Edwards saw that it was used to give a spurious confidence to some

without spiritual light; even although they are in a dark, dead frame, and for the present have no spiritual experiences or discoveries.

On these he comments that it is their duty to come out of darkness and to believe.

But that they should confidently believe and trust, while they yet remain without spiritual light or sight, is an antisciptural and absurd doctrine.

That faith, which is without spiritual light, is not the faith of the children of light and of the day; but the presumption of the children of darkness.

Men not only cannot exercise faith without some spiritual light, but they can exercise faith only just in such proportion as they have spiritual light. Men will trust in God no further than they know him... Nor can they have the exercise of trust in God, any further than they are in a gracious frame..... to exhort men confidently to trust in God, and so to hold up their hope and peace though they are not in a gracious frame, and continue still to be so, is the same thing in effect to exhort them confidently to trust in God, but not with a gracious trust..... to be in the lively exercises of grace, without the exercises of grace.<sup>1</sup>

This does not mean however that Edwards is blind to the genuine experience of the Christian, in what, in other traditions may be referred to as "The Dark Night of the Soul" - at least, in some aspects. Edwards would probably have had much to question in the teaching of contemplative theology, on this as on other subjects; for the Puritan teaching that considers

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1. Works. vol.1.pp.258,259.

spiritual experience as focussed in the cross, in terms of justification by faith, understands its varieties in terms of that watershed within them.<sup>1</sup> Such a view completely re-interprets spiritual experience, placing some aspects of the mystical way under the terms of "common grace" or of preparatory grace before the regenerating experience of Christ in the heart. Thus the 'ladder of creation' would be associated with what precedes conversion;<sup>2</sup> again, Hubert Northcote, for example would say

Something of that sense of desolation, of being abandoned by God, seems to be a necessary ingredient in the purification<sup>3</sup> of the saints, at some stage or other in their life.

And goes on to mention that some,

thought that perhaps it was God's will that they should be deprived for ever of His presence, and therefore said that they were willing to be damned eternally if it were His will.<sup>4</sup>

Edwards would have placed such an experience as an attitude before the revelation of saving grace in Christ. Indeed it is noteworthy that Northcote remarks of the mystical theology of the pseudo-Dionysius that

His scheme was so compact that it scarcely left room for the saving work of Christ on the Cross.<sup>5</sup>

Although the writer may be excused on the grounds that

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1. cf. Puritan Devotion: G.S.Wakefield. (London 1957) p.127.
  2. cf. The Venture of Prayer by H. Northcote. SPCK London 1950. p.246.
  3. op.cit. p.253.
  4. ibid.
  5. op.cit. p.250.

They were writing in a milieu and for a public where <sup>1</sup> this was taken for granted as the very basis of life.

Yet it must be noted that it was also a milieu in which Neo-Platonic influences were strongly at work, interpreting and guiding religious experience; and as this teaching was accepted and applied later it led to further and widespread acceptance of the via negativa and of the whole mystic way, which one like Edwards, with his strong sense of the redemption in Christ, would have seen as much confused in its estimate of spiritual experience. Yet a meeting of the two views can be seen in the comparison of two passages;

Even in the midst of its sorest trials a deep peace subsists within the soul, and it enjoys an almost continual contemplation of God, dark though it be. It is this peace and eager abandonment to the divine will which distinguishes this state from a similar one caused by accidie or deliberate sin. <sup>2</sup>

And Edwards;

It is true that it is the duty of God's people to trust him when in darkness.... in one sense, viz. when the aspects of his providence are dark, and look as though God had forsaken them and did not hear their prayers... All circumstances seem to render the promise of God difficult to be fulfilled, but he must be trusted out of sight, i.e. when we cannot see which way it is possible for him to fulfil his word....

so there is such a thing as the saints trusting in God and also knowing their good estate, when they are destitute of some kinds of experience. For instance, they may have clear views of God's all-sufficiency and faithfulness, and so may confidently trust in him, and know they are his children; and yet not have those clear and sweet ideas of his love as at other times.... <sup>3</sup>

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1. op.cit. p.248

2. op.cit. p.258

3. Works. vol.i. p.259.

Thus together, there is an understanding of genuine Christian spiritual trials, even of dereliction, for both can point to the experience of Christ on the cross; and yet at the same time emphasise that there is a deep spiritual assurance which makes it a different situation from the one occasioned by persistent sin or false assurance. It is also different, Edwards would also say, from the person whose

doubts arise... from unbelief, as they arise from want of a sufficient sense of and reliance on, the infinite riches of God's grace and the sufficiency of Christ for the chief of sinners <sup>1</sup>

which is a culpable condition but rightly issues in doubt of one's condition.

False assurance is, in fact, a believing in one's own "good estate", to doubt which is to be guilty of profound unbelief. This, says Edwards, is in the last analysis, believing that one believes, having faith in one's faith. Stoddard has a word of support here, that he quotes; "Men do not know they are godly, by believing they are godly". But to suggest that "a gracious frame" is necessary for confident faith (i.e. assurance) opens him to the charge that this is "to forsake Christ and live on their experiences". He has no difficulty, however, in dealing with this objection. To live on experiences is to have them as the ground of

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1. ibid.

assurance instead of "keeping their eye on God's glory, and Christ's excellency", wherein is the true reason for assurance.

But this is a far different thing from improving experiences as evidences of an interest in a glorious Redeemer. <sup>1</sup>

It may be said however, that it was probably the exigencies of the argument and of the situation, that prevented Edwards from noting that one use of experiences could easily slide into the other. Nevertheless, he makes a point at greater length which is of value. The Christian is open to two feelings or principles as he calls them; fear and love. Either of these two alone make men conscientious and as one grows the other decreases. In the Christian, there is the principle of childlike love for God, which if it is maintained brings hope and confidence. But if love for God decreases and sinful desires and practices result, then fear arises in the heart. Thus has God wisely "contrived"; and this is normal except for the influences of melancholy, doctrinal ignorance, wrong instruction, false principles, prejudices of education, or peculiar temptations. It was this pastoral thesis that supported Edwards in his most terrible "awakening" sermons, and in the analysis of true spirituality, of Christian love, in the second half of

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1. Works. vol.i. p.260

### Religious Affections.

This eleventh negative sign produced an interesting controversy with Thomas Gillespie, minister of Carnock in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> Edwards' own replies to Mr. Gillespie were considered important enough to the understanding of the treatise to be printed as an appendix to it in the Dwight edition 1830, although both Gillespie's and Edwards' letters had appeared in Dwight's Life of Edwards at the beginning;<sup>2</sup> and before that in the Leeds edition vol.4 (1808) as an appendix to the treatise though not mentioned in the Memoir in the collection by Hopkins. The correspondence was first published in the Edinburgh Quarterly Magazine and can be found in Vol.I (1798). According to Professor J.E. Smith, the correspondence was edited by Dwight rather freely. He has therefore edited the correspondence with reference to the above-mentioned magazine and to the Andover Collection of Edwards MSS; quotations here will be made from the Yale edition.<sup>3</sup>

Gillespie is sufficiently important as a person to have had a bicentenary celebration in 1952 as one of the founders of the "Presbytery of relief" in protest against Scottish patronage system. He was one of a group in close touch with

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1. op.cit. pp.cxxvi; cxxvii; cxxix, cxxx; cxxxvii-cxl; clii - clv.
  2. op.cit. pp.336-343.
  3. The Religious Affections. ed. J.E.Smith Yale Edition 1959. pp.465,466.



Edwards in the Scottish Church. His correspondence with Edwards amounts to two long letters with two equally long replies from Edwards between November 24th 1746 and April 2nd 1750. Gillespie was worried about Edwards' assertion that it is absurd to counsel someone to have a confident faith in God while at the same time they are "without spiritual light or sight". First of all it roused the issue of the approach to the unconverted; are they not under obligation to believe the Gospel, even if they have as yet no spiritual illumination, just as much as they are responsible to obey all other divine commandments? On this Edwards of course, agreed; it was common ground between them that there would be no reason for the condemnation of unbelief, unless men were duty bound to believe, and should make all efforts to put themselves in the way of coming to true faith. Of this Edwards at once assured him in his first reply.

But it was in the application of this in the case of professed Christian people that the problem came to the fore. The issue was complicated by the fact that both men were thinking of it in the light of totally different situations. Gillespie was not unaware of this, for he mentions,

I am apt to believe the grounds upon which you proceeded in the whole paragraph I have mentioned is, that you have with you, real Antinomians, who teach things about

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faith and believing, subversive of new obedience and gospel-holiness... <sup>1</sup>

And Edwards in his second letter mentions this perspective of his emphasis, when he refers to some of the distressing aspects of the revival;

We have had, and have to this day, multitudes of such strong believers, whose bold, proud and stupid confidence, attended with a very wicked behaviour, has given the greatest wound to the cause of truth and vital religion that ever it suffered in America. <sup>2</sup>

But Gillespie had his own situation also to consider; he refers to those who desire a greater insistence "upon doing, and less upon believing" and expects "a mighty clamour by the Seceders, if the book shall fall into their hands".

But more deeply was he concerned with the general pastoral problem;

It is, I own, no small difficulty to steer the middle course betwixt affording hypocrites ground unwarrantably to presume on the one hand, and wounding the Lord's dear children on the other; and all the little knowledge of the Scriptures I would hope the Lord has given me, makes me think Mr. Shepherd <sup>3</sup>, good and great man as he was, verged not a little to the last extreme, with whom, if I mistake not, Mr. Stoddard symbolizes... <sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, he was raising the problem of the failing, the back-sliding Christian, a point which we have previously noted Edwards gives too little attention to. He wants to raise

The consideration, that indwelling sin sometimes certainly gets such ascendant, that the new creature is,

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1. op.cit. p.474
  2. op.cit. p.502.
  3. i.e. Thomas Shepard.
  4. op.cit. p.475.

for the time the Lord sees meet, as fire burned under ashes, undiscerned and inactive....<sup>1</sup>

In such circumstances, he holds, against Edwards that

The Christian is bound to trust the divine faithfulness plighted in the promise for needful blessings, be his case with respect to light or darkness, sight etc. what it will.....<sup>2</sup>

He urges that Christians in such times may mistake their condition, and following Edwards advice would conclude that it would be presumptuous to go on believing, and so would forsake God. Yet as all orthodox teaching held, it was the exercise of faith by which deliverance was to be obtained, for the dictum was

not our ability or fitness, but the Lord's command, is the rule of duty. etc. It merits consideration whether the believer should ever doubt of his state on any account whatever.<sup>3</sup>

Gillespie raises the possibility that by "believing" Edwards really meant "belief of the goodness of one's state that he is a saint" in the assertion in question, even though it would be an unscriptural use of the word. He also concedes that there is truth in saying "To press and urge them to believe without any spiritual light" tends to spiritual delusion, if thereby is meant "believe the Lord was their God, when going on a course of sin".<sup>4</sup> Now this was really what Edwards was really at pains to correct in this eleventh

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1. op.cit. p.475
  2. op.cit. p.473
  3. op.cit. p.474
  4. op.cit. p.473.

negative sign. His real emphasis was that it was absurd for people, never having been truly brought to "spiritual light or sight" that they should confidently believe and trust in God. And so Gillespie agreed in his second letter<sup>1</sup> that no person who is.... without spiritual light or sight, is bound... to conclude he is really partaker of the faith of God's elect.

Unfortunately Edwards did not stress this side of false confidence in his first reply, and fell back on verbal distinctions that while true enough in themselves, did not really touch the point. He distinguishes between the duty of all to believe in obedience to God's command; and the rightness of urging people to make an act of faith without the spiritual illumination which alone could make it possible, and so to be confident that one believed. He points out that Gillespie is affirming the over-all duty of belief; but he is showing that the act of belief without spiritual light is impossible and should therefore not be urged. He explains that "without light" means a "dead, stupid, carnal and unchristian frame", and not the kind of Christian experience of God's "hiding of his face". It is more plainly shown in his second letter to Gillespie, when he again makes plain the difference; on the one hand, nobody

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1. op.cit. p.491

has any excuse not to believe,

or rather renders it not sinful in him that he is at that same moment without such a faith and love; <sup>1</sup>

for the commandment of God to repent and believe the gospel is incumbent on all. But on the other hand, he has before him the spectacle in America, of those who urge to "a sort of strong faith or great confidence" called "believing" in the dark" which was "attended with a very wicked behaviour" which has nothing to do with the Christian experience of spiritual dryness, or of Christian temptation or trial. The introductory note of Professor J.E. Smith hardly seems to grasp this issue about which the two writers were at cross-purposes, and suggests that Edwards is in fact in a cleft stick because of the presuppositions of his Calvinist theology; thus that,

the more one stresses.... the doctrine that God not only bestows grace in justification and sanctification, but further provides all the conditions for grasping and receiving this grace, the more difficult it becomes to understand that can be meant by saying that a man has a duty to do this and that in connection with believing in God. <sup>2</sup>

But in fact this problem is not at all at issue between the two men; they agree on the fact of man's duty to believe in God, even "without spiritual light" as yet. And both have Calvinist presuppositions about this. Professor Smith

1. op.cit. p.502.

2. op.cit. p.469.

inaccurately suggests that Gillespie was raising this problem, for he has not seen that Gillespie's concern is for the Christian under trial and in difficulties, who may in a right sense, have to "trust in the dark"; while Edwards' is faced with a wrong application of this (which he acknowledges, has a right sense) and with a false confidence in God, unmatched by any concern for holy living. It seems gratuitous to read into this argument an issue which was not a real one in the terms of the discussion.

Two other main questions are raised by the Gillespie correspondence; one on the relation of assurance to true faith; the other on the discrimination of a state of backsliding and the way of recovery from it. At this point we need but consider the first of these as the second will come up again through what Edwards writes later in the Treatise. The problem of a believer's assurance arises, of course, from the issue that has been the subject of the previous discussion. Edwards had made a conclusion,

The Scripture represents faith as that by which men are brought into a good estate; and therefore it can't be the same thing as believing that they are already in a good estate. To suppose that faith consists in persons believing that they are in a good estate, is in effect the same thing, as to suppose that faith consists in a person's believing that he has faith, or in believing that he believes. <sup>1</sup>

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1. op.cit. p.178.

Gillespie's reading of the whole of this part must have been rather superficial, and Edwards almost hints as much when he wishes that his correspondent had "read the book through" before making his objections. Gillespie supposes that Edwards is condemning, not "trusting the Lord", but "belief of the goodness of one's state that he is a saint", and wishes that he had said so, as this is not what is usually meant by "faith" in Scripture. Now it is true that Edwards does use the term "believing" in a sense different from what he would believe to be its true and Biblical sense, because that is what was being done currently in New England. But as the above passage quoted shows, he makes this clear. But it is interesting to note, that Gillespie, while emphasising the difference between faith in God and his promises, and faith in the fact that one has believed, one of which is Scriptural, the other not, is found from the first tending towards the view that, assurance being part of faith, belief and assurance that one has faith is in fact part of Biblical faith. It begins with a negative proposition;

It merits consideration whether the believer should ever doubt of his state on any account whatever; because doubting, as opposed to believing, is absolutely sinful.<sup>1</sup>

Edwards took him upon this in his reply, and Gillespie, once again acknowledging the difference between faith and believing

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1. op.cit. p.474.

as to one's having believed, can yet go on to say,

I own, as it is a believer's duty to expect salvation through Christ, which in other words is to believe his good estate.... doubting of it must be his sin... and thus the proper opposite of faith, considered in its full compass and latitude. <sup>1</sup>

So he goes on that "believing in the Lord" thus "comprehends or supposes his being confident of his good estate". On the one hand he agrees with Edwards that "faith, and persons believing that they have faith, are not the same", yet wants to urge that "being confident of one's good estate" is ultimately "one way in which faith is acted". <sup>2</sup>

Edwards in his first reply to Gillespie simply rejected any identification between faith and assurance. But as the other persisted in his second letter, he answers him more in detail. First of all, he points out that to believe in one's good estate, if it means believing that one believes in Christ etc. is not of the nature of faith "for it depends on our own immediate sensation or consciousness". He then clarifies the syllogism of assurance. The major is the promise of God; Whosoever believes shall be saved; the minor is, I believe; and the consequent, therefore I shall be saved. Now, faith attaches only to the major, which has divine testimony, not to the minor, which has the testimony only "of my own heart or inward consciousness".

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1. op.cit. p.491.

2. op.cit. p.492.



"Evangelical faith has the gospel of Christ for its foundation; but that I love Christ is a proposition not contained in the gospel of Christ." <sup>1</sup>

All this and what follows is an elaboration of the basically agreed fundamental distinction made between assurance which is the hope drawn from trusting in divine promise; and hope drawn from examination of one's own present spiritual state. But Edwards completes his correction of Gillespie's view of assurance being part of faith by pointing out,

But till a man has already all that belongs to the essence of saving faith, that proposition, that he is in a good estate is not as yet true.<sup>2</sup>

Saving faith must be complete in a person before he can have the assurance of it; as it is therefore complete, the consequent assurance cannot be part of it, neither as branch nor ingredient. It is an effect of faith; and doubt of it may be an effect of unbelief. As an effect of faith it is not essential to it, though

I do not say it can be without having this immediate effect.. <sup>3</sup>

And to be without it may be the result of unbelief and will be so but it does not partake of the nature of unbelief nor of sin necessarily. The sort of doubt, of this sort, Edwards would say, is where a person really trusts in Christ, but has doubt of final glory; this would be in itself a

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1. op.cit. p.503
  2. op.cit. p.505.
  3. ibid.

sinful doubt, for it doubts the promise of God. But to doubt whether I have this or that principle within or experience of faith is not in itself a denial of divine testimony but a query about my present consciousness. This may be a doubt of the work of God but not His Word. Such doubts in careless Christians may be indirectly sinful as due to spiritual sloth and low concern for grace within them; and as long as this persists such persons sinfully deprive themselves of the blessing. <sup>1</sup>

Presumably this satisfied Gillespie, for there is no record of any further correspondence on these matters between them.

The twelfth negative sign, that nothing can be concluded from the way the godly approve of the outward profession and relation of religious experience given by people, is pure Stoddardism. Edwards' grandfather is quoted at the outset, from his Appeal to the Learned, to the conclusion that,

All visible signs are common to converted and unconverted men; and a relation of experiences among the rest.

Edwards cites the possible experience of "great awakenings and conviction of conscience", and "great appearances of a work of humiliation". Love and joy may seem to be shown;

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1. op.cit. pp.505-507.

tears, much talk, fervency and fluency; texts in the mind and praises in the mouth; "the external duties of religion" and the upholding of orthodox doctrines";

and yet nothing more than the common influences of the Spirit of God, joined with the delusions of Satan and a wicked and deceitful heart..

To all this may be added,

a sweet natural temper, a good doctrinal knowledge of religion, a long acquaintance with the saints' way of expressing their affections and experiences and a natural ability and subtlety in accommodating their expressions and manner of speaking to the dispositions and notions of the hearers, with a taking decency of expression and behaviour, formed by a good education. <sup>1</sup>

From all these doubtful criteria of genuine regeneration, Edwards concludes on a note worthy of his grandfather;

What an indecent self-exaltation and arrogance it is, in poor fallible dark mortals, to pretend that they can determine and know, who are really sincere and upright before God and who are not. <sup>2</sup>

One of his favourite authors, John Flavel, supports him in a quotation from his book Husbandry Spiritualized (1669)

all saving graces in the saints have their counterfeits in hypocrites.

Hence there is but one direction for "judging of others' sincerity", given by Christ; that we should judge of a tree chiefly by its fruit. <sup>3</sup> At once this looks like an anticipation of another attempt; different, yet in principle the same,

1. Works. vol.i. p.261

2. ibid.

3. ibid.

to do the very thing he had been condemning; to observe certain outward signs and so draw firm conclusions about the spiritual state of others. Such a possible and evident criticism did not escape Edwards' own keen mind and he takes up the point in the introductory remarks to the third part of the Religious Affections - "Showing What are Distinguishing signs of Truly Gracious and Holy Affections". He says here,

I am far from undertaking to give such signs of gracious affections, as shall be sufficient to enable any certainly to distinguish true affections from false in others; or to determine positively which of their neighbours are true professors and which are hypocrites.<sup>1</sup>

He is in principle attempting no more than he did in writing earlier Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God. It is somewhat astonishing on this that Professor J.E. Smith in the Yale edition <sup>2</sup> remarks

As Edwards had occasion to point out, the Affections is directly concerned only with those operations that are saving, as compared with the Distinguishing Marks, which paid more attention to the common workings of God.

What Edwards "pointed out" in his preface to the Religious Affections, about the Distinguishing Marks was certainly, as reference to the resumé of that writing given above will show,<sup>3</sup> that he was just as much talking about saving operations there as in the Religious Affections; and

1. Works. vol.1. pp.262,263

2. p.22.

3. pp.145-160. especially p. 157,above

he makes precisely the same distinction when he remarks:

If he (the Holy Spirit) seems to beget in them higher and more honourable thoughts of him (Christ) than they used to have, and to incline their affections more unto him; it is a sure sign that it is the true and right Spirit; however incapable we may be to determine, whether that conviction and affection be in that manner, or to that degree as to be saving or not. <sup>1</sup>

In the Distinguishing Marks Edwards was talking about the aspects of the revival as a whole; but those aspects concerned the saving work of the Spirit. And here again in the Religious Affections, his identification of twelve signs of what is truly gracious, was under the same limitation imposed, that they are general rules to preserve individuals from false teaching; and to guide pastors in spiritual counselling; but not for identifying finally the sheep and goats.

And therefore no such distinguishing signs as shall enable Christian or ministers to do this, are ever to be expected to the world's end. <sup>2</sup>

But, in this introductory section he also mentions that the signs he is about to describe are not finally determinative to the individual Christian himself. The defect lies not in the sign which is "certain and infallible" but in the person himself. In the first place, if the experience of grace is small, it is not so easy to discriminate it, as of a different quality, from other religious expressions. This is only God's way of stirring them to concern about themselves;

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1. Works. vol.ii. p.266

2. Works. vol.i. p.263.

the richer spiritual experience is, the more sure one may be and vice versa. In developing this point, it seems probable that Edwards goes beyond his general view of true spiritual experience at one point; for he would say that,

grace being very small, cannot be clearly and certainly discerned....<sup>1</sup>

and illustrates this further from the similarity of appearance of different ~~emphases~~ <sup>experiences</sup> at first conception. But this quantitative evaluation is itself essentially a different estimate of the qualitative difference that he posits as between true and false religious experience in e.g. the sermon Divine and Supernatural light etc. He goes on to firmer ground when he suggests that this relation between lack of assurance and small though genuine spiritual experience is also due to the mixture of spirituality and unspirituality clouding the vision, Consequently, assurance can only come by growth in grace.

It is not God's design that men should obtain assurance any other way, than by mortifying corruption, increasing in grace, and obtaining the lively exercises of it. <sup>2</sup>

This is good, consistent Puritan teaching. He goes on to point out further that compared with this, self-examination, although not to be neglected, is not the principal means for assurance.

Assurance is not to be obtained so much by self-examination, as by action.<sup>3</sup>

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1. ibid.
  2. ibid.
  3. ibid

Thus, the twelve signs may help to convince hypocrites, though hardly those who have "settled in false confidence" and to help genuine believers in removing needless scruples, and detecting "false affections" mingled with the true.

The twelve signs of right religious affections are thus:

1. Affections that are truly spiritual and gracious, arise from those influences and operations on the heart which are spiritual, supernatural and divine.
2. The first objective ground of gracious affections, is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves; and not in any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest.
3. Those affections that are truly holy, are primarily founded on the moral excellency of divine things. Or, a love to divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency, is the spring of all holy affections.
4. Gracious affections arise from the mind being enlightened rightly and spiritually to apprehend divine things.
5. Truly gracious affections are attended with a conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things.
6. Gracious affections are attended with evangelical humiliation.
7. Another thing, wherein gracious affections are distinguished from others is, that they are attended with a change of nature.
8. Truly gracious affections differ from those that are false and delusive, in that they naturally beget and promote such a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy, as appeared in Christ.
9. Gracious affections soften the heart, and are attended with a christian tenderness of spirit.

10. Another thing wherein those affections that are truly gracious and holy differ from those that are false is beautiful symmetry and proportion.
11. Another great and very distinguishing difference is, that the higher gracious affections are raised, the more is a spiritual appetite and longing of soul after spiritual attainments increased: on the contrary, false affections rest satisfied in themselves.
12. Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in christian practice.  
(Under which is to be taken a development in two sub-sections entitled Section XIII :-  
Christian practice or holy life, is a manifestation and sign of the sincerity of a professing Christian, to the eye of his neighbours and brethren,  
And Section XIV:-  
Christian practice is a distinguishing and sure evidence of grace to persons' own consciences).

Professor J.E. Smith discusses the signs together <sup>1</sup> and makes some observations about them. "A sign", he says, "must be understood as the very presence of the Spirit, since it is the working of divine grace in the heart of the believer"; thus "they are viewed by us as pointing to or announcing the presence of the Spirit". But he finds some uncertainty here; "not all signs make this point equally evident". In one sense they point to the presence of the Spirit, in another sense they are that presence. "While signs perform a common service in critical judgement, they differ on the material side". <sup>2</sup> In fact, he holds, Edwards leaves the relationship between sign and the presence of grace 'vague'; a sign may

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1. Yale edition, introduction pp.23.24.

2. ibid.



be a cause, a ground, a quality, even a whole life, of grace. Hence they may point to the inner nature of affections, or to their results or manifestations. But perhaps the clue to this assessment is provided by Professor Smith's remark that

Edwards nowhere considers the relations between the signs, whether they imply each other, whether some are more basic than others and similar questions. The signs have, to be sure, a natural affinity as belonging to the one integral religious life, but Edwards has not yet told us whether genuine piety must exhibit all the signs or whether perhaps one or more might be taken as a sufficient basis for judgement.<sup>1</sup>

It would be the contention of this thesis, that Professor Smith here shows himself to be insufficiently aware of Edwards' whole view or approach in these twelve signs, and that is chiefly due to the fact that he regards them as separate signs. Had he followed up the admission that they relate to the "one integral religious life"; and a further remark -

All signs as positive indications of gracious affections point back to the saving operation; if this indwelling fails to take place, no genuine signs can appear at all, he might well have seen what truly lies behind Edwards' description of the signs. In any case, Edwards does in fact consider the relation of the signs, and in his dealing with the later ones he specifically relates them to the former, as will be seen later when they are studied. Edwards looks upon the signs as a sequence, and if the signs are compared

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1. ibid.

one after another it is clear that Edwards is tracing an ideal reflex of spiritual experience; not of course the reflex that was psychologically discredited in his eyes, and which he thought of as a mistaken philosophy, but a reflex in which understand<sup>ing</sup> and emotion, the unity of cognition and conation was enabled by the Holy Spirit to have a true apprehension of God, whereby a new spiritual sense is created. From this there is developed in his view, which corresponds to genuine spirituality in experience, the characteristics of a new nature that manifests itself in life. But these are not merely correlated signs; they are an emergent spiritual reflex that finds its source in the inner supernatural psycho-spiritual event, when the soul by the grace of the Spirit sees and tastes the "transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things as they are in themselves". It is the description of the origin, rise and true manifestation of religion, or truly religious affections, in the life of the regenerate. To see this is to explain what Professor Smith finds somewhat baffling in the relationship of the signs. Edwards is in fact elucidating the spiritual reflex in terms parallel to his own modern psychology, which he had thought out under the guidance of Locke's doctrine of 'simple ideas'. Or indeed, he would say that the true understanding of the mind and of the working of the soul, gained through such

assistance as Locke had afforded him, enables us to see how the Holy Spirit in saving action, illuminates and renews the mind to see and to 'relish' the glory and beauty of God, and so to be changed in nature and manner of life. The First part of the Treatise explained his approach to the psychology of religious experience and this part thoroughly applies and describes how the Spirit truly acts in the mind and life, effecting a coherent sequence of spirituality from within to outward expression, which thus becomes the truest test of its reality.

Hence the order of the signs and the importance of the first. It should be compared with the Treatise on Grace, which was not published in Edwards' lifetime, though no doubt, it was intended for publication.<sup>1</sup> To isolate and identify the first element in true spirituality, the primary action of the Spirit, he begins with the Biblical difference between "psychikoi" and "pneumatikoi". There may be gifts of the Spirit in 'natural' men but their lack of true sanctity is seen by their not having the virtues, which are the fruit of the Spirit. They differ from the truly spiritual persons by the Holy Spirit "moving and occasionally influencing" them, in contrast to the Spirit indwelling the saints

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1. A.B. Grosart; Selections from the Unpublished Writings of Jonathan Edwards (Edinburgh 1865). Intro. p. 12.

to influence their hearts, as a principle of new nature, or as a divine supernatural spring of life and action.. as being there so united to the faculties of the soul, that he becomes there a principle or spring of a new nature and life. <sup>1</sup>

The influence of the Spirit upon 'natural' men in 'common' grace is not a communication of grace to them as an indwelling principle; there is no union.

The Spirit of God acting upon the soul only, without communicating itself to be an active principle in it, cannot denominate it spiritual. <sup>2</sup>

Again, in the true believer the Spirit communicates his own nature of holiness; they have his grace which is of the same nature as the divine holiness "though infinitely less in degree"; not, he hastens to add, that believers partake of the divine essence but

of God's spiritual beauty and happiness, according to the measure and capacity of a creature. <sup>3</sup>

In an important passage Edwards further defines what he understands by the new Spiritual sense in the regenerate;

This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions that attend it, are no new faculties, but new principles of nature: I use the word principles for want of a word of a more determinate signification. By a principle of nature in this place, I mean that foundation which is laid in nature, either old or new, for any particular manner or kind of exercise of the faculties of the soul; or a natural habit, or foundation for action, giving a person ability and disposition to exert the faculties in exercises of such a certain kind; so that to exert the faculties in that kind of exercises, may be said to be his nature. So this new spiritual sense

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1. Works. vol.i. p.265.
  2. ibid.
  3. ibid.

is not a new faculty of understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding. So that the new holy disposition of heart that attends this new sense, is not a new faculty of will, but a foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of will.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to this, he sees the action of the Holy Spirit upon natural men as that which,

only moves, impresses, assists, improves or some way upon natural principles; but gives no new spiritual principle.<sup>2</sup>

Thus he may assist men's natural abilities in political affairs, and give moral courage; or greatly assist their reasoning even about religious doctrines; He may assist conscience "which is a natural principle" to bring "awakenings and convictions which natural men have"; by assisting it to suggest in a greater degree the connection between right and wrong and final retribution.

But after all, it is no more than nature moved, acted and improved; here is nothing supernatural and divine.<sup>3</sup>

Edwards will recognize still more that the natural man,

may have religious apprehensions and affections, which may be, in many respects, very new and surprising to him. .... His affections may be very new, in a very new degree, with a great many new circumstances, a new co-operation of natural affections and a new composition of ideas.<sup>4</sup>

Whether this is by the Spirit or,

from some extraordinary powerful influence of Satan and some great delusion,<sup>5</sup>

1. Works. vol.i. p.266.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.

4. op.cit. p.267.

5. ibid.

this is nothing more than "nature extraordinarily acted".

This clear-cut differentiation between the common and saving grace of the Holy Spirit is the subject of the first chapter in the treatise on Grace which is headed -

that common and saving grace differ not only in degree but in nature and in kind.

In this Edwards again drives this essential distinction between the saving experience of the Holy Spirit's work from within, and the "common grace" of the Spirit from without. This work of the Spirit, he points out in the second chapter, is one and the same in principle in all the converted, whatever may be the varieties of their experience. In the third chapter of the treatise (p.41) he enunciates the same point as in this sign, that what is called spiritual in scripture is because it is derived from the Holy Spirit; and not merely as being from the Spirit but of the nature of the Spirit of God. Common grace is from the Spirit, but saving grace is "the Spirit Himself" who imparts the divine love of God to the believer by His indwelling; and by that indwelling Christ is also said to indwell the believer (pp.45,46). This involves the inference, expounded in the first chapter and recalling what he says in the Sermon A Divine and Supernatural Light immediately imparted to the Soul etc., that saving grace, as different essentially from the state before

it, must come suddenly to the soul in conversion. Edwards would say that although there may be a process of preparatory knowledge, reformation and conviction before, and a gradual growth in grace after, the imparting of saving grace is an instantaneous act of the Holy Spirit. The same sermon moreover, illuminates Edwards' distinction between the common and saving activity of the Spirit of God;

He acts upon the mind of an unregenerate person as an extrinsic, occasional agent; for in acting upon them he doth not unite himself to them..... But he unites himself with the mind of a saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new supernatural principle of life and action.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious here, how sharply Edwards challenged the dominant trends of thought in New England throughout his ministry at Northampton - and indeed until his death. Not only was the Arminian tendency rejected but also that synergism that had gradually laid hold upon the church as it sought to surmount its problems by recourse to half-way covenant procedures and Federal theology rationalizations. Yet at the same time, he would not over-state his doctrine for he knew that there was revivalist extremism also to be exposed, with its superficial means of assessing true conversion. Thus, while he has emphasised the distinctness of the Holy Spirit's work in conversion, he nevertheless takes care to point out that,

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1. Works. vol.ii. p.13.

not everything which appertains to spiritual affections, is new and entirely different from what natural men experience; some things are common to gracious affections with other affections.<sup>1</sup>

Amongst many possibilities he mentions love, which he emphasises as the sign of the gracious activity of the Spirit in conversion beyond any other characteristic. This caution is not however a contradiction to his assertion as to the newness of the spiritual sense in conversion. Indeed it harmonises entirely with his point that no new faculty is created; rather a new "principle of nature" which results in new exercises of the different faculties would presumably have the same relation to affections, including love. So because of that new principle Edwards could go on to say -

But yet, that idea which the saint has of the loveliness of God, and the kind of delight he has in that view, which is as it were the marrow and quintessence of his love, is peculiar, and entirely diverse from anything that a natural man has....<sup>2</sup>

One further way in which Edwards expounded the newness of the Holy Spirit's gracious work was to term it "a new inward perception or sensation of their minds".<sup>3</sup> The analogy of light is, of course, a frequent Biblical use, and it is not simply an Augustinian inheritance that leads Edwards here as Professor J.E. Smith would suggest.<sup>4</sup> Although Protestant

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1. op.cit. p.267.

2. ibid.

3. op.cit. p.266

4. Yale edition p. 25. n.6.



theology had naturally used this analogy fully, Edwards was not entirely restricted to it, but freely uses the parable of taste, anticipated in Sibbes and Owen earlier, and of the word "relish", for spiritual apprehension.<sup>1</sup> But this inward sensation is a concept that had affected his thinking for probably all his ministry and is anticipated again in the sermon on Divine and Supernatural Light, where however, the light from God is said to give a new sense of the heart;<sup>2</sup> and this is carefully contrasted with speculative or rational (ie. ratiocinative knowledge and perception of truth) processes. The sense of the heart however makes a direct perception of one attribute of value; the example he gives is beauty or amiability; and this perception is immediate. So here Edwards reveals the other important ingredient in his thinking when he says,

There is what some metaphysicians call a new simple idea.<sup>3</sup>

Edwards was always the master of his sources and utilised them as it appeared possible for the purpose of advancing Biblical and evangelical religion. The simple idea of Locke is of course, one "which contains in it nothing but one uniform appearance or conception of the mind and is not distinguishable into different ideas" and in receiving these simple

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1. cf. The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience.  
G.F.Nuttall. (OUP.1946) p.39.

2. Works. vol.11.pp.16,17.

3. Works. vol.1. p.266. cf. Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding. II.ch.11.iii.

ideas, the mind, for Locke, was wholly passive. Edwards certainly held to the passivity of the mind; he early accepted the sensationalism of Locke as he read the Essay, as is shown in the note that raises questions on sensation to be dealt with in his Notes on the Mind:

there never can be any idea, thought or act of the mind, unless the mind first received some ideas from Sensation, or some other way equivalent, wherein the mind is wholly passive in receiving them.<sup>1</sup>

Although the note is early, written during his college days, the thought of Edwards never changed on the point; and in the Treatise under this first sign, he speaks of representations being painted on the brain. This must not be taken literally as his view but echoes Locke's view of the mind as a 'tabula rasa'. Edwards does not follow up this reference to the simple idea, no doubt for the good reason that for all that he had learnt of Locke, he certainly did not subscribe to all his views, certainly not to his basic dualism.

Furthermore, there were resources in Scripture and in Puritan theology to elucidate the immediate, intuitive, apprehension of divine beauty, combining self-evident certainty and delighted appreciation,<sup>2</sup> while he found in his favourite author Petrus van Maestricht one who was congenial to his own thinking (amongst several) and who led him in it.<sup>3</sup>

1. Works. vol.1. p.cclvii (although in passive reception it results in activation cf.ref. p.217 n.)

2. cf. Nuttall op.cit. p.39

3. cf. D.J.Elwood op.cit. p.121.

Three "false affections" are dealt with in the remainder of this sign, which arise in this case from misguided revivalist teaching. They have to some extent been dealt with before but he brings them together here for thorough exposure. The three are;

that impressions which some have on their imagination - their imaginary ideas of God, or Christ, or heaven, or any thing appertaining to religion - have nothing in them that is spiritual, or of the nature of true grace.

that the immediate suggesting of the words of Scripture to the mind, has nothing in it which is spiritual.

that what many persons call the witness of the Spirit, that they are the children of God, has nothing in it spiritual and divine.

The first of these Edwards deals with psychologically; the second principally by logical reason; the third mainly by Biblical exposition.

His psychological argument that deals with the first examines the meaning of the term 'imagination', which, he says,

is that power of the mind whereby it can have a conception, or idea, of external things, or objects of the outward senses, when those things are not present, and therefore not perceived by the senses.... When these ideas are impressed with liveliness..... this is to have an impression on the imagination. <sup>1</sup>

Edwards deals with the possible ways in which "external" objects known through the five senses, can also be represented

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1. Works. vol.i. p.267

by ideas in the imagination; this is no spiritual process in itself. So also, in the case of those who claim to have 'lively ideas' of 'some external shape' having a Christian character—for example, Christ on the cross—is not thereby to be reckoned a spiritual experience; nor the idea of hearing spiritual words within.

As to these external ideas, though the way of their coming into the mind is sometimes unusual, yet the ideas in themselves are not the better for that; they still are of no different sort from what men have by their senses. <sup>1</sup>

Edwards calls on experience to prove both that "not the advancing or perfecting of human nature", but "the weakness of body and mind" make people prone to strong imaginary ideas in the brain".<sup>2</sup> These differ from spiritual sensation, which is not only different in its manner of coming into the mind, but is itself "totally diverse from all that men have.... in a state of nature". External ideas may usually accompany spiritual experience but only as attendant circumstances and not as part of the essential experience itself. Here again, once the nature of imagination and its precise part in human experience is noted, Edwards pressed the logic of testing what was fundamental to experience of God and what as accidental. It may be observed here that his attitude to the part played by imagination in religious

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1. Works. vol.1. p.268

2. op.cit. p.268,269.

experience was far less accommodating than when he was defending the revival in The Distinguishing Marks etc. (cf. p. 106<sup>?</sup> above).

On the prevalent emphasis upon the spiritual assurance gained from the immediate suggestion of words of Scripture to the mind, he simply drives home the logical demonstration that the way or manner by which Scripture comes is no foundation for assuming that genuine spiritual experience of saving grace is thereby indicated. It fails at the test, taken by itself,

In those things which are spiritual... not only the manner of producing the effect, but the effect wrought is divine.<sup>1</sup>

Here again he discriminates between what is fundamental and what is accidental to spiritual experience.

When he turns to the misunderstanding of some, who had spiritual assurance through what they termed "the witness of the spirit", he was in fact, dealing with a trend in Protestantism that sought evidential authority from internal states, inward revelations, mystical experiences or 'inner light'; it was yet another facet of the controversy with the earlier Anabaptists and the later Quakers. They were wrong in their use of the term;

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1. op.cit. p.272

That which many call the witness of the Spirit, is no other than an immediate suggestion and impression of that fact otherwise secret, that they are made the children of God, and so that their sins are pardoned and that God has given them a title to heaven.<sup>1</sup>

They mean by this word "witness", not

any work of the Spirit upon the heart, giving evidence from whence men may argue that they are the children of God, but an inward immediate suggestion.... a kind of secret voice, or impression.<sup>2</sup>

Edwards argues from Scripture passages that "witness" means holding forth evidence in proof of a truth, and he further links this to the phrase, "the seal of the Spirit" to conclude,

That is the evidence by which they are known to be God's children; they have the image of their Father<sup>3</sup> stamped upon their hearts by the Spirit of adoption.<sup>3</sup>

This work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, His sanctifying work, is evidential as it is "fair and plain to the eye of conscience". The work of the Spirit is grace in the heart, "the more excellent thing, Charity that never faileth"; and particularly (referring to Romans viii.16).

the disposition and temper of children, appearing in sweet child-like love to God..... The strong and lively exercises of evangelical, humble love to God, give clear evidence of the soul's relation to God, as his child; which very greatly and directly satisfies the soul.

Love, the bond of union is seen intuitively; the saint sees and feels plainly the union between his soul and God; it is so strong and lively, that he

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1. op.cit. p.272
  2. op.cit. p.273.
  3. ibid.

cannot doubt of it. And hence he is assured that he is a child.

The Spirit of God gives the evidence, by infusing and shedding abroad the love of God, the spirit of a child, in the heart; and our spirit, or our conscience,<sup>1</sup> receives and declares this evidence for our rejoicing.

A modern writer on the teaching of Calvin on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, rightly emphasises that for him, its meaning was essentially,

that the confidence of the Christian in the divine origin and authority of Scripture, and the revelatory nature of its contents is of distinctively supernatural origin, is God-wrought.

With reference to Romans viii.16,

he conceived it as a co-witness along with the witness of our spirit indeed, but on that very account distinguishable.... his conception is therefore that this double testimony runs confluent into one.... In its essence, the act of the Spirit in delivering his testimony, terminates on our nature, or faculties, quickening them so that we feel, judge and act differently than we otherwise should. In this sense the testimony of the Spirit coalesces with our consciousness. We cannot separate it out as a factor in our conclusions, judgments, feelings, actions, consciously experienced as coming from without. But we function differently from before; we recognize God where before we did not perceive Him; we trust and love Him where before we feared and hated Him; we firmly embrace Him in His Word where before we turned indifferently away.<sup>2</sup>

In all this it is the emphasis on the Godward turn of the soul, the trust, love and delight in Him, that links this writer with Edwards in this recognition of the inner work of the Spirit. Both portray the inner illumination as

1. op.cit. 274

2. B.B. Warfield - "Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God" in Calvin and the Reformation. (Fleming H. Revell Co. and Princeton U.P. 1909 p.199,200.)

evidenced by this genuine reorientation of the whole personality in God. The people Edwards was correcting were in fact following up a Calvinist emphasis, of the divinely impressed Word of God upon the consciousness, but had completely misunderstood the doctrine. They believed that it consisted in a revelation to them of their own individual spiritual state, instead of God's self-revelation in Christ to them individually, bringing about a change of relationship with Himself, so that from the change so wrought they might have hopeful assurance..

The first sign had introduced the essential nature of the work of grace as a divine work of the Holy Spirit, divinely attested by the new spiritual marks in the individuals consciousness and life, particularly characterized by true spiritual love for God. It is the purpose of the second sign to elucidate this point further. Edwards is concerned here to clarify the essential nature of the saints' love for God and particularly to distinguish it from the preoccupation with individualistic assurances which he discerned as vitiating elements in revival experiences. So he propounds,

the divine excellency of God, and of Jesus Christ, the word of God, his works, ways etc. is the primary reason why a true saint loves these things; and not any supposed interest he has in them, or any conceived benefit that he has received or shall receive from them.



Edwards allows that the

relation which divine things bear to themselves (i.e. the saints) and their own particular interest....<sup>1</sup>

may have a 'secondary and consequential influence' but it is not primary.

It is important here to understand what Edwards means by "love for God", the essentially gracious affections in the saints. It is shown in a discussion as to whether all love arises from self-love, a controversy that had exercised moral philosophy in which Edwards had himself done some reading and which served to sharpen his own views here. A more complete discussion was written by him after completing this Treatise, entitled The Nature of True Virtue (published posthumously in 1765) and which many claim as one of his most permanent contributions. Edwards had read Francis Hutcheson's An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (London 1725) and also the third Earl of Shaftesbury's Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times. first published as a whole in 1711 but some portions had been published separately earlier.<sup>2</sup> Hutcheson had written of

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1. Works. vol.1. p.274,275.

2. Works. vol.1. pp.122-142. cf. C.H. Faust & T.H. Johnson - Jonathan Edwards; Representative Selections and Notes. (1935) pp. lxxv lxxviii-lxxx. W.R. Sorley - A History of English Philosophy. (CUP. 1920. p.159).

an immediate natural good in the actions call'd Virtuous; that is, that we are determined to perceive some Beauty in the actions of others, and to love the Agent even without reflecting upon any advantage, which can any way redound to us from the Actions. <sup>1</sup>

He set out to prove a moral sense in man based on the pleasure found in contemplating harmony, and so pleasure in the presence of moral beauty; hence virtue is to be pursued not for its use or value but because it is beautiful. Such a moral sense is independent of self-love. On this Shaftesbury concurred. Edwards was, as usual no mere disciple of these writers. In the first place love was primarily due to be directed towards God, and also it was not to be looked upon as a natural virtue. Natural men only love in terms of self-love; the larger part of the work on True Virtue is given up to contrasting the self-love that is characteristic of the natural man with the disinterested benevolence of man as he should be. <sup>2</sup>

In this second sign therefore, the love of the saint is set forth as essentially different from the love of the natural man. The matter may have "a natural principle of self-love" leading to "great affections towards God and Christ, without seeing any thing of the beauty and glory of

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1. Faust & Johnson op.cit. p lxxviii-lxxx.

2. ibid. It is not necessary to derive Edwards' view as due to the influence of Hobbes and Mandeville. (cf. op.cit. lxxxviii). Protestant theology is enough.

the divine nature". Here we see Edwards' view of the nature of the saint's love for God; it is a perception of beauty and glory; it is an intense appreciation of God,

whereby he is in himself lovely, or worthy to be loved, or the supreme loveliness of His nature...his excellency. This infinite excellency of the divine nature, as it is in itself, is the true ground of all that is good in God in any respect; but how can a man truly love God without loving him for that excellency....They whose affection to God is founded first on his profitableness to them, begin at the wrong end...They have no respect to that infinite glory of God's nature, which is the original good....<sup>1</sup>

It stands out in contrast to what is possible in the unregenerate

of great affections towards God and Christ without seeing any thing of the beauty and glory of the divine nature.<sup>2</sup>

This is because such affections are based on self-love - a kind of gratitude for mercies; or where men have an easy attitude towards God, thinking of Him in terms of goodness and kindness and not of holiness and judgment as well; or because they are basically concerned with the spiritual benefits of redemption to themselves, esteeming God for what He is for them as individuals, and not basically for what He is in Himself. This is to invert the right order, for it means that God is only glorious to them because of their benefits gained from Him.

1. Works. vol.i. p.275.

2. op.cit. p.275.

It is easy for them to own Christ to be a lovely person, and the best in the world, when they are first firm in the notion, that he, though Lord of the universe, is captivated with love to them, has his heart swallowed up in them, prizes them far beyond most of their neighbours, has loved them from eternity.....<sup>1</sup>

And this essentially perverted view can says Edwards, arise "after awakenings and distress, through fears of hell", what seemed to be in fact, a following of the established process of conversion. But only from a superficial view; this is followed by what he calls "a notion", "some impression upon their imagination", or an "immediate suggestion" that God loves them. And, he says, so they go on

on this foundation of self-love, and a conceit of God's love to them.

In concluding his remarks on this false view Edwards roundly describes the situation;

Selfish, proud man calls that lovely which greatly contributes to his interest, and gratifies his ambition.<sup>2</sup>

In the rest of his remarks on this sign, Edwards describes once more the nature of "true and holy love in the saints" as arising primarily from the loveliness and excellency of God in Christ, and only derivitavely from God's love to them. Thence arises true gratitude "the gracious stirrings of grateful affection to God....always are from a stock of love already in the heart..<sup>3</sup> Even self-love

1. op.cit.p.276

2. ibid.

3. ibid.

is not excluded from a gracious gratitude.... But something else is included; another love prepares the way, and lays the foundation for these grateful affections.<sup>1</sup>

Gracious gratitude therefore is an affective perception of all God's redeeming activity in Christ as part of His moral perfection and beauty of His nature. It is a gracious thankfulness aroused by the vision of God, objective and transcendent; and of His work as a whole, and, though understood necessarily as related to mankind, without any necessary reference to oneself- which in the usual terms of predestinarian doctrine was in any case not to be assumed, i.e. as to God being gracious towards one. Only out of this, what Edwards calls "the chief objective ground" of gracious affections, will he permit the derived affection at the realization of that divine goodness being for oneself, and such a sense may both be occasion for attending to the objective ground more, and so heightening the basic affection.

Edwards has to defend this view against an objection based upon I.John.iv.19 - We love him, because he first loved us. Edwards points out that read in its context, this simply magnifies God's love in that it was revealed before and without reference to human response. The text itself says that the revelation of God's love in redeeming sinful

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1. op.cit. p, 277.

men through Christ manifests His moral perfection, and this is further manifested to an individual in his conversion. Such love the saints have for God is His gift and arises further out of His eternal love which effects their whole salvation. The text thus ascribes the possibility of love in the Christian to the prior revelation of God but has no support for any view that would suggest that love for God in the Christian is only derived from the personal benefit he conceives himself to have had from divine salvation. Professor Smith<sup>1</sup> seems not to have caught the drift of Edwards here, when he says,

The difficulty with JE's reply is that it refers to a time when we had no love to God; the problem is what meaning can be attached to that state in the case of the saints and on the doctrine of election that undergirds it.

The answer to this must surely be that it is because Edwards conceives the second part of the verse to refer to the eternal electing love of God as primarily revealing God in his perfection and making possible the love of man towards him; that the verse has objective meaning and is no argument for love for God derived out of subjective experience; so it has coherence with his argument and is consistent with his theology.

Thus Edwards extends his elaboration of the differences

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1. Religious Affections Yale edition 1959. p.28.n.5.

between false and true experience under this sign, and he well describes how fancied religious experience, based on some imagined testimony from God to oneself can lead to self-excitement over the "discovery" so that people can be "affected with their affections" in which both thought and talk refers only to themselves and their experiences.

They take more comfort in their discoveries than in Christ discovered. This is the true notion of living upon experiences and frames; and not our using them as an evidence of our good estate. <sup>1</sup>

Against such a psychologised basis for genuine religion, Edwards affirms what can only be described as an intellectual love of God, which although not Spinozist, could have about it very significant parallels to a description of what Spinoza meant;

a union of thought and emotion..... true thought combined with joy in the apprehension of truth. <sup>2</sup>

Thus the third sign, that true religious affections,

are primarily founded on the moral excellency of divine things,

is obviously a continuation of the second and shows Edwards' emphasis upon the importance of this spiritual fundamental. And it presents a closer analysis of the second sign's point about the loveliness and beauty of the divine excellence, which is itself the true ground for gracious affections.

1. Works. vol.i.p.278.

2. History of Western Philosophy; B.Russell (London 1948) p.598.

This third sign does not add a "further foundation" to the fact of God's "amiableness" in the second; <sup>1</sup> for that sign hardly speaks of "amiableness" in God after the introductory heading, but much more of His loveliness, beauty and glory. So Edwards continues in this sign to draw out in what this loveliness and beauty consists. Hence, <sup>3</sup> in the heading to the sign,

a love to divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency is the spring of all holy affections

indicates the further element in the excellency of God that rightly gives rise to true spiritual affection. Again, in the second sign, there was a good deal of emphasis upon the contrast drawn between affections based on the divine excellency in itself, and those that are suspect because they arise from the personal benefit thought to accrue to oneself from them. Indeed the drawing out of this contrast takes up most the discussion of the sign. But in this third sign, the argument is mainly an exposition of the nature of this divine excellency, with less polemical content.

Edwards is quite explicit about the relation between the signs two and three;

It has already been shown, under the former head, that the first objective ground of all holy affections is

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1. Professor J.E. Smith, Yale Edn. p.29.



the supreme excellency of divine things as they are in their own nature. I now proceed further, and say more particularly that the kind of excellency, which is the first objective ground of all holy affections is their holiness. <sup>1</sup>

Thus the "moral excellency of divine things" is to be further defined in terms of God's holiness; His glory and beauty and loveliness consists in His holiness. First of all, Edwards makes clear that in referring to the moral excellency of God he is not speaking in terms of conformity to law or duty; not of "moral" as opposed to "spiritual", but rather as contrasted with "natural"; the moral excellency of God consists "in those attributes which God exercises as a moral agent..... in a word his holiness" and by the natural perfections of God he means "those attributes wherein his greatness consists", (his power, knowledge, omnipresence, etc.). The holiness of God, says Edwards, is identical with the moral excellency of the divine nature,<sup>2</sup>

comprehending all his moral perfections, his righteousness faithfulness and goodness.... the kindness and mercy of God belong to his holiness.<sup>2</sup>

It is holiness, moral excellency, that is the beauty of natural perfections; indeed natural qualifications are excellent only because joined with moral perfections. Thus in God, holiness "renders all his other attributes glorious and lovely". Hence the love a man has for God must needs

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1. Works. vol.1. p.279.

2. ibid.

arise first of all with a delight in His holiness, from which all His other attributes are seen to be lovely.

What is true of God is also derivatively true of the godly. There is a twofold image in man, says Edwards, God's natural image, i.e. reason, natural ability, dominion; and God moral or spiritual image, lost at the fall, and consisting in holiness. Holy affections begin with love for God's moral beauty and excellence, his holiness, and from there, love for all the attributes of God arise. From there also comes love for the way of salvation through Christ, as a holy way; for heaven, for the Bible, the doctrines of the Gospel, indeed all that partakes of the holiness of God. It is at once apparent here however that Edwards has used the term "image" in a double sense unconsciously. When referring to God's natural image in man, the meaning implied is that man manifests in himself some attributes that imitate the divine; but in referring at length to the holiness of the saints, Edwards does not here make any mention of moral or spiritual quality of life but of their love for the holiness of divine things, their holy affections; here the 'image' refers to the relation of a reflection to its object. Edwards would in fact want to say that spiritual holiness also consists in a different quality of character, and later

in the Treatise deals with this; but he is here so determined to emphasise the quality of true spiritual affection as arising from this primary concern with and appreciation of the essential excellence of God that it leads him to use the term 'image' in this twofold way.

In developing this relation between the Christian and God in terms of spiritual affection, Edwards draws out the theme that Professor J.E. Smith calls "the unique contribution of the Affections".<sup>1</sup> This is the "distinguishing characteristic", that there

is given to the regenerated a new spiritual sense, a certain divine spiritual taste.... diverse from any former kinds of sensation of the mind..... something is perceived by a true saint in the exercise of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things, as entirely different from anything that is perceived in them by natural men..... this kind of beauty (of holiness) is the quality that is the immediate object of this spiritual sense.<sup>2</sup>

By this all may try their affections; especially as to the sense of God's grace and love.

The grace of God may appear lovely two ways; either as bonum utile, a profitable good to me.... or as bonum formosum, a beautiful good in itself and part of the moral and spiritual excellency of the divine nature.<sup>3</sup>

Without this true affection, it matters not that men may have a great sense of the natural perfections of God, with

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1. Yale Edition. p.30.

2. Works. vol.1. p.280

3. op.cit. p.281.

elevated senses of joy or praise. Experience, Scripture and reason, declares Edwards, combine to prove that such religion, has

been very far from a christian spirit and temper in any proportion, or fruits in practice in any wise agreeable. <sup>1</sup>

Only grace, the working of the Holy Spirit, can provide this new spiritual sense whereby men can see with true affection, the beauty of God's holiness.

It is evident that in this discussion by Edwards of the divine holiness and the responsive spiritual sense of the godly, that he separates attributes in God which modern Biblical study would associate more closely. <sup>2</sup> For in separating the 'natural' from the 'moral' in this way, the whole dimension of Biblical holiness in God which is described in terms of "otherness" and of the numinous, would be ascribed by Edwards to the category of "natural" attributes. It is noteworthy here also that Otto would carry further his own discussion on these attributes of the divine with that upon the "faculty of divination", the insight into or of "the Holy". <sup>3</sup> This will later lead us to a discussion of Edwards and his clear-cut theology of nature and grace. Sufficient here to note the fact.

1. ibid.

2. cf. N. Snaith. Distinctive Ideas of the O.T. chaps.ii.iii. (London 1953). R. Otto. Idea of the Holy. OUP 1923.

3. Otto. chaps.16-18.

The fourth and fifth signs also belong together and in them Edwards turns from emphasising the only genuine perspective of religious affections, to a further clarification of the perceptive process, already suggested in sign three under the terms of the new spiritual sense. Here again, Edwards is pursuing a third way, neither yielding to Chauncy's oversimplified opposition of head to heart (by which he meant just emotionalism), nor accepting the equally superficial revivalist view that religious "discoveries", vivid experiences and extraordinary feelings raised the subject above the necessity of intelligent understanding. First of all, in sign four, Edwards rejects as unspiritual "affections which do not arise from any light in the understanding", such as may be due to "lively ideas", which he calls "external" impressions which however carry in them "nothing of the nature of instruction".

Persons by these external ideas have no further acquaintance with God, as to any of the attributes or perfections of his nature; nor have they any further understanding of his word, his ways, his works...

affections arising from texts of Scripture coming to the mind, are vain when no instruction received in the understanding from those texts..... is the ground of the affection.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand,

Holy affections are not heat without light; but evermore arise from some information of the understanding, some spiritual instruction that the mind receives....<sup>2</sup>

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1. Works.vol.1. p.282.

2. op.cit. 281.

Edwards again calls attention to the fact that ignorance may be mistaking for spiritual experience what in fact is due to "bodily sensation" which affects the mind, just as the mind in its turn affects the body - "putting all nature, both body and mind, into a mighty ruffle".

But this is not to succumb to the rationalists, like Chauncy. The light of instruction is not sufficient to lead to gracious affections unless it is spiritual. There is indeed a form of being "mightily affected" by merely human teaching, as in the case of philosophic discovery in mathematics or science, which, with

that kind of understanding of religious matters which they have by the ordinary exercises and improvement of their own faculties, <sup>1</sup>

Edwards ascribes to "the common illuminations of the Spirit of God". Rather, the Scriptures show (cf. I.Cor.ii.14.: Col.1.9)

that there is an understanding of divine things, which in its nature and kind is wholly different from all knowledge that natural men have...  
There is.... a spiritual, supernatural understanding of divine things.. <sup>2</sup>

Further this is "a kind of seeing" as well as knowing,

a kind of perception, which is in its nature perfectly diverse from all that natural men can have, it must

1. op.cit. p.282.

2. op.cit. p.283.

consist in their having a certain kind of ideas, or sensations of mind, which are simply diverse from all that can be in the minds of natural men.... it consists in the sensations of a new spiritual sense.... which the saints have given them in regeneration. <sup>1</sup>

So Edwards concludes,

spiritual understanding..... consists in a cordial sense of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness of moral perfection of divine things, together with all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, that depends and flows from such a sense; <sup>2</sup>

and by "cordial" Edwards explains that he means "a sense of heart", a phrase, as has been previously noted, that Edwards had found most apt to express the inner change whereby men are enabled by the Holy Spirit to know and love the essential truth and beauty of God in His Grace..... Such a spiritual understanding, again, is distinguished from "speculation" or "notional understanding". Edwards emphasises the Latin root of the verb here by equating 'speculate' with 'behold', as opposed to feeling and relishing. He contrasts knowledge of 'mere intellect' of a mathematical figure, with the "sensible perception" of something having either sensory or aesthetic value ("sweetness" or "amiableness"). Of this latter kind of perception,

the heart is the proper subject of it, or the soul, as a being that not only beholds, but has inclination and is pleased or displeased. And yet there is the nature of instruction in it; as he that has perceived the sweet taste of honey, knows much more about it, than he who has only looked upon and felt it.

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1. ibid.

2. ibid.

Of this sense of the heart, Edwards points out,

nor can there be a clear distinction made between the two faculties of understanding and will, as acting distinctly and separately in this matter. <sup>1</sup>

The perception of the object in terms not only of its existence but of its value and meaning, implies the appreciation - "a sensibleness of delight" - of the object. Although Edwards does not use the term, he is speaking of personal as opposed to impersonal relations ~~as~~

or an effect and impression of the soul of a substance possessed of taste, inclination and will... <sup>2</sup>

This is further expressed when the rather abstract phraseology, "this sense of the moral beauty of divine things" is equated with "the discovery of beauty in the moral perfection of Christ" which is, again, "the knowledge of the excellency of his person". This "sense or taste of the moral beauty of divine things" which is the primary meaning of spiritual understanding and can further be equated with the personal knowledge of the excellency of Christ himself, leads on to

that discerning and knowledge of religious things, which depends upon and flows from such a sense.

Here is the Augustinian credo ut intellegam; and Edwards expounds it fully that the meaning of Christ as Mediator can only be seen in the light of the knowledge of the excellency of Christ's person. But unfortunately in this exposition,

1. ibid.

2. ibid.



Edwards goes on to apply the vision of holiness to various aspects of Christianity until he comes to abstract it from God;

he that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good sees the greatest and most important thing in the world, which is the fulness of all things; <sup>1</sup>

so that it can at least in theory be contrasted with God Himself

This is the beauty of the Godhead, the divinity of divinity, (if I may so speak), the good of the fountain of good. Without this, God himself (if that were possible) would be an infinite evil.....<sup>2</sup>

and as that by which God Himself is thus judged. But this lapse into moral speculation is not important to the argument, even though it may be seen as a comment upon Edwards' restriction of the holiness of God to His "moral attributes".

In the rest of Edwards' discussion under this sign, he contrasts this spiritual sense with others frequently found in the religious and often confused with it. On most of these he has already made comment in previous references. In order to evaluate spiritual experience, Edwards contrasts it with the capacities of men under 'common grace', which, as being no more than the assistance of ordinary activity of the mind, never brings the 'sense' that truly perceives the divine glory. It may issue in an aroused conscience,

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1. op.cit. p.284.

2. ibid.

with a sense of guilt; or in a recognition of the good inherent in the Christian religion both as to its truth and its influence; but underlying it is the appreciation of it for the self-benefit. Edwards dismisses any suggestion that spiritual understanding involves any new doctrine, any mystical interpretations of Scripture, any special inward suggestions of duty; rather it brings men to see what is in Scripture but which they are blind to at first; but not to give new interpretation to Scripture. (cf. Calvin.Inst.I.ix.1) He turns with added warmth against the confusion of spiritual sense and experience in 'enthusiasm' which several times he calls "this bastard religion", a delusion of Satan, operating by the imagination or the "phantasy" -

that power of the soul by which it receives and is the subject of the species, or ideas of outward and sensible things. <sup>1</sup>

Here Edwards interjects a short discussion that reveals a trend in his thinking as relating to the place and valuation of imagination in spiritual experience, by which two problems at least seemed to have been solved for him. Earlier, when writing the Distinguishing Marks, he had referred to imagination as a God-given faculty, necessary even for thinking of things invisible and spiritual. While it must be used

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1. Works. vol.1. p.287

properly, its service to the mind is most valuable, and the revival experiences were not to be dismissed as 'mere imagination'<sup>1</sup>. Later, writing in Thought on the Revival, Edwards concedes that a good deal of ambiguity in religious experience can be traced to the influence of imagination, especially if it is too strong.<sup>2</sup> Again, in his Directions for Judging of Persons' Experiences, he cautions the reader to make sure that the operation "be much upon the Will or Heart, not on the Imagination".<sup>3</sup> In the fourth negative sign of the Affections he had seen the imagination as combining with Satanic influence, bodily weakness, and common grace to provide ambiguous verdicts on spiritual manifestations.<sup>4</sup> But it is here that the imagination is roundly declared to be the "devil's grand lurking place". He here joined Satanic influence with the imagination, so that it is looked upon as "the very nest of foul and delusive spirits" - more than simply the avenue of Satanic temptation. However, in his discussion here this is really what he means, for he debates whether in fact Satan can approach man's soul by any other way. As has been previously described, sense-data were supplied to the imagination (or the "phansie", or 'phantasy') by the help of "animal spirits", and so the

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1. cf. above p. 149.

2. cf. above. p. 179.

3. cf. above p. 188.

4. cf. above p. 221 and under the first gracious sign pp. 262/263.

reason judged them. Edwards here refers to the 'phantasy' in these terms. He goes on to suppose that Satan must follow the normal approach to the human mind via sensation -

by some motion of the animal spirits, or by causing some motion or alteration in something that appertains to the body..... that the devil cannot produce thoughts in the soul any other way than by the medium of the body. <sup>1</sup>

Edwards suggests that it is unlikely that the devil can affect the mind in an immediate way, since the thoughts of man are only known to God, and it is unlikely that the devil can produce an effect on something out of his immediate view without some intermediary agency. Hence if the Satanic approach is by the body and animal spirits, it is by exciting 'external ideas' in the imagination. This also explains for him the way melancholic personalities are open to Satanic temptation; for

that being a disease which peculiarly affects the animal spirits and is attended with weakness of that part of the body which is their fountain, even the brain, which is, as it were, the seat of the phantasy. It is by impressions made on the brain, that any ideas are excited in the mind, by the motion of the animal spirits, or any changes made in the body. The Brain being thus weakened and diseased, it is less under the command of the higher faculties of the soul and yields the more easily to extrinsic impressions, and is overpowered by the disordered motions of the animal spirits; and so the devil has greater advantage to affect the mind by working on the imagination. <sup>2</sup>

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1. Works. vol.1. p.288.

2. ibid.

And the same is true of non-melancholics too. Edwards quotes here in support, the English Puritan Anthony Burgess, whose work on Original Sin (1659) has a section headed "How prone it (the imagination) is to receive the Devil's Impressions and Suggestions".<sup>1</sup> Actually Burgess also follows the older idea of the corrupt nature of the affections, equating them with the passions, but as we have seen, Edwards had struck out on a new line here, in correcting the intellectualist strain of men like Chauncy. The restriction of the devil from immediately working upon "the rational soul" Edwards finds taught in Francis Turretin's Institutio Theologiae Elencticae (1680-1683). It cannot be said that he has clarified the psychology of Satanic temptation here however, for he still leaves uncertain how suggestions, words or ideas are in fact presented to the imagination by sensation. He could have gone further to suggest either that bodily excitement was aroused demonically to result in illusions, or that the sights and sounds of others in revival were so used. But he refers rather to

inward whispers, and immediate suggestions of facts and events, pleasant voices, beautiful images, and other impressions on the imagination.<sup>2</sup>

This leaves the explanation still in the air. And notwithstanding the view of the imagination here outlined, he still

1. Yale edition. p.71.

2. Works. vol.i. p.208.cf. God and the Unconscious: V.White O.P.(Fontana) on Aquinas'view of the power of angels to approach men only by exciting animal spirits (p.144f.)

returns to his earlier point that

I am far from determining that no affections are spiritual which are attended with imaginary ideas.

But the distinction must be borne in mind between

lively imaginations arising from strong affections and strong affections arising from lively imaginations. <sup>1</sup>

The perceptive process involved in spiritual illumination carries within itself an inherent conviction and certainty. This is the theme of the fifth sign but it has already been anticipated, particularly in the fourth where Edwards discusses the spiritual sense under the analogy of taste, based on its definition in Chamber's Dictionary ('a late great philosopher of our nation writes thus upon it')<sup>2</sup>. In this, taste is associated with judgment, but with the difference that judgment results from reflection, but taste is an immediate decision, sure of what it thinks immediately, even if later its secret reasons are discovered. Edwards therefore reasons that there is a divine taste, given by the Holy Spirit which distinguishes what is holy action; yet this is not apart from Biblical teaching; for this taste is subject to the rules of Scripture and by a harmony between this disposition of the mind and the teaching of Scripture which has been meditated upon, a sure understanding

1. Works. vol.i. p.268.

2. op.cit. p.286.

of right conduct is gained. But by the same view of the spiritual sense, anticipating the judgment of conduct appropriate for the Christian, the faith of a true believer has this inherent conviction of the truth of the gospel. The unseen and spiritual matters of the gospel have such an effectual conviction in them, that true believers 'venture their all upon their truth'; they 'rule in their affections, and govern them'.<sup>1</sup> Edwards compares this "realizing conviction" with merely 'forward assent'.<sup>2</sup> A true conviction is not at all the strong notion of "one's own good estate"; it is directed towards the great truths of the gospel, and must be a first-hand reasonable persuasion, not a result of ones "education and the opinion of others"; not yet is this of itself enough. The Reformed theologians, Turretine amongst them, would have called this simply "historical faith" or "bare assent to truth revealed and apprehended".<sup>3</sup> As Edwards defines what this realizing conviction is, besides referring to the spiritual understanding or sense, he says,

He that truly sees the divine, transcendent supreme glory of those things which are divine, does as it were know their divinity intuitively; he not only argues, but sees.

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1. op.cit. p.288.

2. op.cit. p.289.

3. cf. Heppe. Reformed Dogmatics. p.528.

Thus a soul may have a kind of intuitive knowledge of the divinity of the things exhibited in the gospel; not that he judges.... without any argument or deduction at all; but it is without any long chain of arguments; the argument is but one and the evidence direct; the mind ascends to the truth of the gospel but by one step.<sup>1</sup>

It is the divine glory, the spiritual excellency that is the objective reality that gives rise to the real experience of knowing with deep, affective appreciation, that is not contrary to, but part of a profound conviction of the whole mind; this spiritual sense, that so appreciates the glory is itself a work of God the Holy Spirit. And in this manifestation of spiritual glory, the apprehension at once brings its own evidence and assurance to the whole person. Edwards can call it even a ravishing; and he links the senses of sight and taste to express both the instant perception and concurrent evaluation.

There is no doubt that what Edwards writes here had already been to some extent anticipated in his own experience. He speaks of his conviction of spiritual truth having been deepened by another sense, "a delightful conviction";

The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, I.Tim.1.17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. As I read the words there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it,

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1. Works. vol.1. p.290.



a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. .... I thought with myself how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven; and be as it were swallowed up in him for ever. I kept saying, and as it were singing over these words of Scripture to myself..... and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do, with a new sort of affection. <sup>1</sup>

And later on,

The sense I had of divine things, would often of a sudden kindle up, as it were, a sweet burning in my heart, an ardour of soul, that I know not how to express. <sup>2</sup>

This vision of the divine excellency and glory carried with it a conviction of the truths of the gospel in their inter-relation one with another.

A sense of true divine beauty being given, the soul discerns the beauty of every part of the gospel scheme. <sup>3</sup>

This includes the truths of Scripture concerning experimental religion, which, as now experienced, are proved from within.

Edwards, rightly points out that this conviction must be arrived at in some other way than by learned argument, for otherwise the vast majority of men, as unable to follow learned discourse are for ever prevented from having faith. Hence Christian experience is upheld by the reasonableness of God having provided more than probable evidence of the truth of the Gospel.

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1. op.cit. p.lv

2. ibid.

3. op.cit. p.291.

The gospel of the blessed God does not go abroad a 1  
begging for its evidence, as much as some think.

Although indeed argument may serve to the begetting of a saving faith, but in the final issue, it is the spiritual apprehension that convinces the mind of spiritual truth. Yet as the argument has been outlined above it is clear that Professor Perry Miller has not put the matter correctly when he says of Edwards that he always exalted experience above reason.<sup>2</sup> In fact Edwards had refused to accept (with Chauncy) the opposition of reason to other experience; he would not contrast head and heart. Rather he had expounded a psychology of faith, and of religious conviction, that was based on the unitary action of the whole self which is elicited in the true response to divine reality. Consequently he saw it also as a life-changing conviction; the "realizing conviction" has influence and power and as a result, people live differently. This will link with a later sign that Edwards will come to (sign 7) but in fact he turns to the manifestations of this new sense, this "realizing conviction" of the divine glory in the sixth sign.

Edwards here stresses the true sense of humility - "evangelical humiliation", and his definition of it is so

1. op.cit. p.293.

2. cf. Jonathan Edwards (1949) p.45.

fixed in his mind that he uses almost exactly the same terms in describing its evidence in David Brainerd.<sup>1</sup> It is a sense of one's

own utter insufficiency, despicableness and odiousness, with an answering frame of heart.

It is different from "legal humiliation", a distinction which all Puritan writers made. Theologically the difference was that "legal humiliation" was a work of common grace assisting the natural conscience to estimate the natural perfections of God so that men are aware of their condemnation before so great and terrible a God, so that they are forced to despair of themselves, even as men will under final judgement. This condition of mind "is useful as a means in order to evangelical" (humility). But it is not true humility, it does not arise from the spiritual appreciation of God's holiness to see the sinfulness of sin. Evangelical humility brings about a voluntary self-denial and renunciation so as "sweetly to yield and freely and with delight to prostrate themselves at the feet of God"; it is "attended with a mortification of a disposition to exalt" oneself. Edwards here is basing his teaching on standard Reformation truth, that the opus alienum Christi, the teaching of the Law, led to a contrition which was insufficient unless followed by

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1. Works. vol.ii. (Reflections and observations on the Memoirs III) p. 449.

true penitence and mortification.<sup>1</sup> Edwards here characteristically referred mortification to the sin of pride. Thus most of the rest of this sign is composed of a thorough exposure of spiritual pride, which seems, he says, to have the nature "to make men conceited and ostentatious of their humility", while the true saint becomes more and more conscious of his spiritual poverty. So the true saint will be aware of his experience of grace; but he will not easily think of himself as especially saintly; self-conscious sanctity is a self-contradiction, and Edwards spares no pains in pointing this out forcibly to those who look upon themselves as eminent examples of revival spirituality. It has already been noted under Edwards' Directions for Judging of Persons' Experiences that he had written,

See to it that they don't evidently look on their convictions (as) great, and be'nt taken with their own humiliation.

Edwards notes that true humiliation in repentance is parallel to true conviction of sin in the respect that in both cases true humiliation and true conviction seems to be inadequate to the penitent. For the one who is truly experiencing grace has such a keen awareness of his sin, and of his abased condition before God that however great may be his sense of

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1. Calvin Inst. III.iii.5-8 cf. Citron. New Birth p.99.

sin or his sense of lowliness, it seems to him at the time to be quite superficial compared to the reason for which he ought to feel himself to be convicted and humbled. His own pastoral experience here combines with the guidance of his favourite writers, van Mastricht and Thomas Shepard; humility is, says the former, "a kind of holy pusillanimity". The contrast between evangelical and spurious humility says Edwards, in a fine passage, is that

under the former, the person continues still a poor beggar at God's gates, exceedingly empty and needy; but the latter make men appear to themselves rich and increased with goods and not very necessitous; they have a great stock in their own imagination for their subsistence. <sup>1</sup>

A truly Christian love, either to God or men, is an humble broken-hearted love.... and their joy.... is an humble broken-hearted joy, leaving the Christian more poor in spirit, more like a little child....<sup>2</sup>

Edwards penetratingly unmaskes the various ways of pretending to humility by outward appearances; and in a direct approach to the reader gives a clear indication of the way he would investigate every profession of self-abasement, that no spirit of inverted pride in being humble can be left.

That the sign of a changed life should appear seventh on the list is not so "curious" as Professor J.E. Smith regards it,<sup>3</sup> unless too little attention has been paid to the

- 
1. Works. vol.1. p.301.
  2. op.cit. p.302.
  3. Yale edition. p.36.

order of Edwards' arranged development of his theme under these twelve signs. As we have seen, this order is based upon a subtle use of Lockean psychology applied to the Puritan pattern of conversion experience. It could not be, on this pre-supposition, that the manifestations of true religious experience could be dealt with before the inner nature had been clarified. Edwards shows quite clearly this logic of his thought in the first sentence of this section;

All gracious affections arise from a spiritual understanding in which the soul has the excellency and glory of divine things discovered to it.... But all spiritual discoveries are also transforming.<sup>1</sup>

So in this sign he speaks of conversion, to which he attaches an unusual list of Biblical terms including "being born again" "becoming new creatures", "Being renewed in the spirit of the mind" "putting off the old man and putting on the new man". The list may be termed unusual because it seems to collate together, terms that might well be attributed either to regeneration or sanctification. In fact, Edwards is keeping closely to Calvin here, who equates conversion with repentance "consisting in the mortification of our flesh and the old man, and the quickening of the Spirit" and also a transformation not only in external works, but in the

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1. Works. vol.i. p.302.

soul itself, which is able only after it has put off its old habits to bring forth fruits conformable to its renovation.<sup>1</sup>

Thus he can refer to conversion as

a great and universal change of the man, turning him from sin to God.... his very heart and nature is turned from it unto holiness.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore it is only seen to be a change in nature by the fact that it is a permanent alteration - "for nature is an abiding thing". Does this suggest such a change as to involve Edwards in a form of perfectionism? He at once safeguards himself here, for

Allowances, indeed, must be made for the natural temper which conversion does not entirely eradicate... yet conversion will make a great alteration even with respect to those sins.<sup>3</sup>

What then in the presence of admitted imperfection in the Christian, can be seen to be the effects of converting grace? First, Edwards points out that it corrects sinful tendencies; the old temptations though still dangerous "shall no longer have dominion over him"; they will in fact become 'out of character' with him. Secondly, Edwards says conversion is a universal change; it cannot consist with a condition that

forsakes other sins but preserves the iniquity to which he is chiefly inclined.<sup>4</sup>

Edwards speaks of the manner in which new life and a new

1. Inst. III.iii.5.6.
2. Works. vol.i.p.302.
3. ibid.
4. op.cit. p.303.

nature are given;

not from him (Christ) as a living agent moves and stirs what is without life and which yet remains lifeless. The soul has life communicated to it, so as through Christ's power to have inherent in itself a vital nature.

He gives his Spirit to be united to the faculties of the soul and to dwell there after the manner of a principle of nature. <sup>1</sup>

The process of transformation goes on through life, so that conversion can be said to be continuous.

The various aspects of the changed life are expounded in signs eight and nine by a series of virtues; love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy, and tenderness of spirit. Here Edwards shows his qualities as a teacher of Christian ethics, basing his approach especially upon the imitatio Christi, but with the especially evangelical insight that this is no mere self-effort after an objective model; nor even this coupled with prayer for divine assistance: the place of the imitatio is put within the spiritually dynamic relation established between God and man in Christ. The true believer is united with his Divine Exemplar by His being also his Redeemer and Saviour. Thus it is not enough to say,

Whereas all the other signs (with the exception of the tenth which has an aesthetic turn) define the

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1. ibid.

2. ibid.



religious relationship, these express the moral aspects of Christian faith, <sup>1</sup>

unless it is also pointed out that for Edwards the moral aspect is itself closely integrated within the religious relationship itself. Thus Edwards says,

There is a special agreeableness with those virtues which were so wonderfully exercised by Jesus Christ towards us in that affair (ie. the work of redemption) and the blessed example he hath therein set us. And they are peculiarly agreeable to the special drift and design of the work of redemption, the benefits we thereby receive and the relation that it brings us into, to God and one another. <sup>2</sup>

These virtues together, as listed above are especially "the christian spirit or temper"; and Edwards reinforces the points by applying the favourite analogy of childlikeness, as well as a typical eighteenth century application of Christ as a "Lamb, ie. as gentle."<sup>3</sup> Again he is careful to point out the possibility of inconsistency in the Christian; yet no permission is thereby granted for a Christian to be "of a sordid, selfish, cross and contentious spirit".

Nothing can be a greater absurdity than a morose, hard, close, high-spirited, spiteful, true Christian. <sup>4</sup>

In fact in the ninth sign Edwards begins by a close analysis of

1. Yale edition. p.38.

2. Works. vol.i. p.304.

3. cf. William Blake "The Lamb" (Songs of Innocence).

He is called by thy name

For He calls himself a Lamb

He is meek and He is mild;

4. Works. vol.i.p.307.

the way false confidence in religion has a tendency to harden the heart. It stupifies the mind, removing conscientiousness as to sin, leads to careless behaviour, and neglect of duty; and he develops under this head a fine exposition of godly fear. Every Christian is marked by this, which is not of terror through alienation, nor of servility; but it is of reverence, "contrition, penitent shame, and confusion of face, for conversion never puts an end to conviction of sin; in relieving the fear of final judgment, it increases the fear of God's displeasure itself, and of sin itself. This is the Christian's "tenderness of Spirit".<sup>1</sup>

The discrimination between true and false affections in sign ten by what seems to be an aesthetic principle of symmetry and proportion in the case of the genuine, is not thereby to be taken as a change in the drift of Edwards' reasoning. As we have seen under the second sign, Edwards' integrated beauty, with goodness and truth in God and in the enlightened, perceptive and appreciative believer, so that the proportion and harmony of the divine, seen and delighted in by the true Christian, becomes also reflected in his own life and character.<sup>2</sup> The proportion is a manifestation

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1. op.cit. pp.308,309.cf. p.212 above.

2. cf. above pp.269,272.

that their whole person is sanctified by the indwelling of the whole Christ. Even though, as he is careful to note at the beginning, the harmony and proportion is not perfect in this life, yet

there is something of the same beautiful proportion in the image, which is in the original; there is feature for feature, and member for member. <sup>1</sup>

Underlying this use of the term 'Image' is more than the Biblical term; there is the pattern of experience in the mind, when it perceives and appreciates an object. And true virtue is such a perception of the beautiful in the highest sense -

the union or propensity of minds to mental or spiritual existence.... being the proper and peculiar beauty of spiritual and moral beings... <sup>2</sup>

It is a consent of intelligent beings to the highest being, to being in general, ie. to intelligent being in general, that is to say, to God. This is Edwards' basic point in his Dissertation concerning the Nature of True Virtue. And it has been the argument of these signs that the new spiritual sense given by the Spirit of God at once recognises, appreciates and is greatly affected by the vision of the divine holiness. It receives the impress upon the soul, so that it is changed to the same likeness and this change

1. Works. vol.i. p.309

2. True Virtue (Works. vol.i. p.127.))

affects the whole person, even if imperfectly in degree. But there are other imperfections which, Edwards holds, raise questions as to the veritable experience of grace; he calls them "monstrous disproportions" and gives wide range of examples of unbalance, of religious expression along restricted or partial lines, of oscillating and vacillating types,

like comets that appear for a while with a mighty blaze; but are very unsteady and irregular in their motion

whereas the true saint is like a fixed star and "shine with a constant light".<sup>1</sup> Above all, in all this, Edwards would agree that what a man is in his solitariness is the truth about him;

so that if persons appear greatly engaged in social religion, and but little in the religion of the closet, and are often highly affected when with others, and but little moved when they have none but God and Christ to converse with, it looks very darkly upon their religion.<sup>2</sup>

To some considerable extent, the theme of the sign eleven has been anticipated in six, viz. that true affections do not rest content in their experiences of God but rather, the more they are "raised" the more they realise the need of yet richer experience. This paradox of grace, that the

1. Works. vol.1. p.311

2. op.cit. p.312<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

more the Christian is satisfied, the more he cries out for greater satisfaction; and that the nearer he comes to God the further he seems to be from him, is an experience hidden from superficial religion. Edwards answers a query as to the explanation of this by an analysis of the soul-satisfying nature of spiritual experience. First of all they are adapted to the need of man's soul, so that he has no desire of any other kind of satisfaction; but he does desire more. Secondly, they answer the expectation of spiritual desire and never disappoint; and thirdly, they are permanent. Lastly, they are satisfying because they have an inexhaustible sufficiency for all. Thus he leaves open the difference between the knowledge of what is wanted in essence, and the degree of its experience. Edwards presses forward his exposure of hypocrisy here too; for he holds out the warning that it is possible to entertain an appetite after holiness in order to be more satisfied rather than in order to love God more; or for fear that unless they do so long it may "be a dark sign upon them". God and His holiness is not for such, the goal, but instead, the subtle desire "for present comfort of the discovery" or some token thereby of God's love to them; self-satisfaction in religion, self-love, is still the operative element, and in consequence, there is not even the beginning of gracious spirituality.

The twelfth and final sign is the longest of all; in the two-volume edition it is divided into a thirteenth and fourteenth section so that number twelve speaks of gracious affections having their "exercise and fruit in christian practice", thirteen points out that this practice "is a manifestation and sign of the sincerity of a professing Christian to the eye of his neighbours and brethren"; while fourteen declares it to be "a distinguishing and sure evidence of grace to persons' own consciences". Edwards lays down at the commencement, that such practice should conform to christian rules, and such a practice of religion be the principal occupation and business of the whole life to the end. It must be positive as well as negative and be able to surmount trials and temptations. This opens up the question of backsliding and the Gillespie correspondence <sup>1</sup> again. Edwards accepted the fact that the true Christian can fall into even "great sins", yet not

so as to grow weary of religion and the service of God, and habitually to dislike and neglect it.... They can never backslide so as to continue no longer in a way of universal obedience.... or so that it should become their way and manner to serve something else more than God. <sup>2</sup>

Such a falling away proves that there was never any true conversion - even if the fall is a change from falling to

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1. cf. above pp. 235-245.

2. Works. vol. i. p. 316.

"sins of the publicans and harlots to those of the Pharisees". Here Edwards quotes with approval Stoddard's sermon The Way to Know Sincerity and Hypocrisy (1719) which was bound together with A Treatise Concerning Conversion (1719). Stoddard, says Professor J.E. Smith, held "that hypocrisy is revealed in a 'course of life' whereas sincerity can be known only in 'particular acts' ". <sup>1</sup> Edwards indeed would not hold to this distinction; but his quotation from Stoddard did not raise this question, for it simply asserted that to accept the necessity for sinning under pressure from difficult circumstances argues an absence of saving grace. Thus,

One way of sin is exception enough against men's salvation, though their temptations be great.....

If a man be willing to serve God in ordinary cases, but excuses himself when there be great difficulties he is not godly. <sup>2</sup>

The emphasis of both Edwards and Stoddard is upon the pursuit of a way of disobedience, a settled course of practice that denies God. In the light of this and of the above quotations from Edwards, Professor J.E. Smith's verdict that Edwards contended that "genuine saints can be guilty of backsliding both in kind and degree" is based upon an insufficient examination of his writing. Edwards in fact wrote

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1. Yale edition. pp.58,59.
  2. Works. vol.i. p.316 note.

True saints may be guilty of some kinds and degrees <sup>1</sup>  
of backsliding.

By which he means that they may sin in various ways and to different degrees; but to be able to backslide 'in kind' i.e. so as to apostatise, is to declare, in Edwards' view, that such a person was never a genuine Christian at all; and throughout the treatise he has been expounding this as one of the marks of "false affections".

We have already referred to Gillespie's charge against Edwards, (and also Shepard and Stoddard) as being too harsh and extreme in assessing certain kinds of backsliding as indicating an unconverted state.<sup>2</sup> He cites Edwards' words,

Nor can a true saint ever fall away so that ordinarily there shall be no remarkable difference in his walk and behaviour since his conversion from what he was before.<sup>3</sup>

What of the case, asks Gillespie, of a man who before conversion was of such a religious and virtuous upbringing and good disposition, that in a backsliding case after conversion may seem very much of the same sort. Edwards answer is brief and rather dry;

I should have known better what to have said further about it, if you had briefly shown how the passages of Scripture which I mention, and the arguments which I deduce from them are insufficient....<sup>4</sup>

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1. my italics.
  2. cf. above. p.237f.
  3. Works. vol.i. p.cxxvii.
  4. op.cit. p.cxxx.



Edwards refuses to discuss principles in terms of cases, but only in terms of Scripture; he will adduce cases ("experience") to support principles arrived at by other means; to this extent his empiricism is basically qualified. Here as elsewhere, he builds up and argues his case on massive Biblical evidence, giving to its phraseology no watered-down significance but exploring to the full the theological and religious implications of the text.

At the same time this final sign is the drawing out and application to practice of all that has gone before in signs one to eleven. Edwards complained that Gillespie had not given sufficient care to the reading of the book and from various remarks from time to time he clearly connected the signs in an orderly sequence. So once again in this last section he draws attention to the fact that it is the practical outcome of all that has gone before;

gracious affections have their exercise and fruit in christian practice. The reason why gracious affections have such a tendency and effect appears from many things that have already been observed in the preceding part of this discourse. <sup>1</sup>

Thus the converse follows;

Christian practice, or a holy life, is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace. But I may go further, and assert, that it is the chief of all the signs of grace.... the principal sign by which

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1. op.cit. p.316

Christian are to judge, both of their own and others' sincerity of godliness.<sup>1</sup>

Edwards labours this point of visible works, especially in contrast to words and testimony of mouth, in tones that approach the sardonic at times;

Godliness is more easily feigned in words than in actions..... Hypocrites may much more easily be brought to talk like saints than to act like saints.<sup>2</sup>

He is not however dismissing the need of open profession, but only accepts it as a pre-supposition for the more certain proof of sincerity by life. Such a profession shall not only be necessarily credal and orthodox but also evangelical and sacramental. Edwards emphasises here a point that reversed Stoddards parochial practice, for he asserts the principle that profession ought to be taken to involve experience of what is professed as to fact (although, as always, he rejects the need for professing one particular manner or sequence of religious experience). Hence open testimony does afford an "advantage to others in forming a judgment of their state" especially as to the sincerity of the profession and not the mere formality; the circumstances of it should preclude "customary compliance", "lax and ambiguous manner" and be agreeable to the practice of the testifier. Thus Edwards re-instates the practice of

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1. op.cit. p.320.

2. o p.cit. p.322.

requiring a public testimony for church membership, which later brought him into head-on collision with the supporters of Stoddard's practice. The reversal of Stoddard's pastoral policy here is however made to be consistent with his principle, for says Edwards,

Nothing that appears to them in their neighbour, can be sufficient to beget an absolute certainty concerning the state of his soul.<sup>1</sup>

For ecclesiastical or social needs, however,

they are sufficient to give as great satisfaction concerning them as ever is needful.

Similarly, the practice of Christian good works is a great testimony to oneself, for it must carry with it an inward attitude of purpose and intention, which is open to one's inner consciousness and which is essentially related to the outward act. Such an inward consciousness of purpose and attitude, manifested in conformable activity, is "the chief of all the evidences of a saving sincerity in religion", and is even to be preferred to having been through a typical conversion pattern -

the method of the first convictions, enlightenings and comforts in conversion,<sup>2</sup>

and still more, to inner spiritual experience alone -

1. op.cit. p.324.

2. op.cit. p.326.

any immanent discoveries or exercises of grace whatsoever, that begin and end in contemplation.<sup>1</sup>

Grace is active, and the whole reflex of spiritual experience described in the treatise leads inevitably to the conclusion of practical godliness. Godliness in intention is not in itself sufficient;

The main and most proper proof of a man having a heart to any thing, concerning which he is at liberty to follow his own inclinations, is his doing it.<sup>2</sup>

And faith itself is

the encouragement of a person's mind, to run some venture in practice, or in something that he does, on the credit of another's sufficiency and faithfulness.<sup>3</sup>

so that the venturing is the evidence. Here Edwards suggests an interpretation of faith that produces two objections, which together suggest one of the important issues raised by this section. One objection is, that spiritual experiences are the main evidences of true grace; or, as Edwards refers to current divinity,

there are no sure evidences of grace but the acts of grace.<sup>4</sup>

Edwards turns the point of this objection by arguing that this is not inconsistent with those inward experiences manifesting themselves in practice, There can be, he owns, christian experience not expressed in practice, related to

1. op.cit. p.326.

2. ibid.

3. op.cit. p.332.

4. op.cit. p.334.

contemplation. But that does not exclude christian practice from being christian experience; it is in fact one part and the most important. He agrees that

the witness or seal of the Spirit consists of the effect of the Spirit of God in the heart.... and is beyond doubt ..... the highest kind of evidence of the saints' adoption.<sup>1</sup>

But this is most clearly seen by its practical evidences. In the same way, he rebuts the objection that his emphasis on the evidence of good works is contrary to justification by faith alone. Here he rightly says that to exclude works from justifying the sinner is not to exclude them altogether, else all religion would be excluded; justification would have no fruit in life.

Yet in countering these objections it is not apparent that Edwards has succeeded entirely in extricating himself from the problems of this section. In showing that godly practice is such an important testimony to one's own conscience Edwards makes works and holiness such a ground of assurance as to suggest that faith itself is proved only in terms of such a practical venturing. The issue raised is one which in fact enters into Puritan theology as a whole. Faith is no longer "fiducia" alone but is supplemented by the

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1. ibid.

sylogismus practicus, which brings it very close to "fides caritate formata". We will return to this later; but meanwhile this (and, incidentally, the quotations Edwards gives in his footnotes from Preston, Shepard and Stoddard) qualifies the suggestion of Professor J.E. Smith that Edwards took a new step away from tradition with its "emphasis upon the inner working of the Spirit and upon the primacy of faith" and the Puritan direction that made religion an affair of the interior life.<sup>1</sup> Not only is this historically a great simplification but it does not grasp what is happening in the development of Puritan Theology, and in Edwards teaching. Faith for Puritanism had had to deal with antinomianism and Quaker tendencies and with its strong pastoral bent, typical of much theology of the seventeenth century, had been to some extent re-interpreted; and in the same problems and under similar pressures, Edwards follows in his teaching.

Hence his concluding words warn against

discoveries and the method of the immanent exercises of conscience and grace in contemplation.

Especially he reminds everyone of the various influences that may play a part in religious experience, many wholly natural. The test of Scripture is the safest; to let one's light shine before men by their seeing good works and so glorifying the Father.

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1. Yale edition. p. 42.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Spiritual Sense of Divine Excellency.

In this final section of this study, Edwards' teaching on pastoral psychology will be associated with his general philosophical and theological outlook and an assessment made of his total view on religious experience. His fellow Americans are once again awakening to the fact that in him they have one of the outstanding intellects of their whole history. For not only did he anticipate Berkeley's teaching in New England, but his penetrating intelligence saw the implications of Locke and Newton for his own age, applied what he had learned from them to the pastoral requirements of preaching and evangelism; directed a great spiritual movement; re-interpreted and defended Calvinist doctrine against the weightiest opponents and further wrote some non-polemical works of great merit, all of which became canalized not only into a new school of theology but very forcibly into the burgeoning life of the young United States.<sup>1</sup> An indication of the new recognition accorded to this man who combined into so unusual a unity the persons of philosopher, Biblical theologian, preacher and evangelist, and pastor and guide of

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1. cf. History of Christian Doctrine. G.P. Fisher (International Theological Library. Edinburgh. 1896) pp.394-445.

souls, is given in the steady output of works from the University presses of the United States, to which the new Yale edition of his works is giving a worthy lead. As has been mentioned before in this thesis, Edwards came to his mature view at an early age, while he was at Yale, and while still a youth was thinking far ahead of the most learned of his elder contemporaries. After he started his pastoral work, he did, no doubt, trim and clarify here and there, and added to his supporting references from his wide reading.<sup>1</sup> But his whole thought and life, his work and ministry made an integrated whole; and we shall need to observe particularly in this section just how his pastoral psychology was involved in an epistemology and a philosophical and Biblical theology, which cannot be divorced from it. Indeed, only by some understanding of Edwards' total view can a full appreciation of his pastoral psychology be made. Also in this part of the study, it will be necessary to estimate Edwards views and his counselling in the light of subsequent understanding of the human mind and of spiritual experience.

#### I. Edwards' understanding of the Revival.

In our examination of Edwards' writings on the two

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1. cf. Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758. by O.E. Winslow pp. 119, 120. Jonathan Edwards the Preacher. R.G. Turnbull. pp. 29-41. and Evangelical Quarterly No. 2. 1958. pp. 68ff.; T.H. Johnson. Pub. of Colon. Soc. of Mass. xxviii. Dec. 1931. pp. 193-222. His Will refers to 336 books, 536 pamphlets; but he borrowed widely. cf. his 'Catalogue' of 600 titles.



revivals, he has shown himself as one who has been able to stand away from the movement of which in a very real sense, he was part. He is able to resist both the point of view that would dismiss the whole thing as overheated emotionalism, and also the too fervent attitude of support, in which nothing associated with the revival could be deemed mistaken. He was much aware of the mixture in spirituality, the defects which either marred or counterfeited the genuine experience in those affected by the revivals. Between the first account in the Faithful Narrative and the final work of Religious Affections, the main trend to be seen is his turning from a main purpose of upholding the new religious manifestations against attack, despite the numerous defects, to a final separation of the vital spiritual sequence away from its deceptive accretions. But this did not involve any change of opinion as to what the vital essence of true spirituality involved. In late 1733, before the first revival, Edwards had made quite clear in the sermon on Divine and Supernatural Light Immediately Imparted to the Soul the essentials of what would be later expounded at length in Religious Affections with linking references through the other revival writings. There is a close and continuing relationship between Edwards' description of the 'spiritual and divine light' in the 1733 sermon in such words as,

A true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption and the ways and works of God revealed in the Gospel. There is a divine and supernatural glory in these things.... He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He does not merely rationally believe, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart, <sup>1</sup>

with later remarks.<sup>2</sup> The twelve positive signs in the Religious Affections simply examined the aspects of this new orientation of the soul to God in terms of a close-knit sequence issuing in a changed and godly life. It is at least as important to note this clarification and explication of Edwards' central theme, as it is, with Professor Perry Miller, to emphasise Edwards' development of those religious manifestations which are spiritually ambiguous.<sup>3</sup> Indeed it would be the view of this thesis that Edwards was not pushed by the degeneration of the "Awakening" into a concentration upon the ambiguities of religious experience, but rather through his writings while firmly exposing what were uncertain, self-regarding, religious tendencies, concentrated all the while in pointing out the nature of true spiritual vision. This, of course, is begun in the Faithful Narrative with reference to the "analogy". In the Distinguishing Marks

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1. Works. vol.ii.p.14.

2. cf. pp.116-130 above.

3. Jonathan Edwards. P. Miller p.180.

his positive teaching on genuine spirituality is first of all through a defence of the revival with all its accompanying emotional upheaval and the following section on the signs of the working of the Holy Spirit drawn from a consideration of I John iv. In Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival four out of five parts are upholding the positive evidences of spiritual experience in the "Awakening" and developing the thesis that affections are not the "meanest principles" as the opponents of it alleged through wrong philosophy; but indeed united with the whole personal attitude, of mind, understanding and will. So in the Religious Affections Edwards makes clear what he has had in mind all along when he is referring to the 'sense of the heart', the 'relish' for divine things, the qualitatively different view and sense of the excellency of divine grace and glory.

Edwards firmly believed that the revival was a work of God in grace, a special activity of the Holy Spirit. There had been revivals before of a limited sort under Stoddard but in this there was the difference that it was not just an affair of the churches; everybody was concerned, even pre-occupied, with the salvation of his soul. As this situation as a whole is reviewed, it is fairly easy to see how religion in New England had deteriorated; the ecclesiastical pressures

of an established sectarianism, the expedients to maintain church domination in society, the subtle influences of a rising standard of living, with all the implications of a growing humanist culture upon Puritan beliefs and mores, the inability of the learned to relate their theological convictions with a changing world view except by giving to their theology a progressively reduced content; all these are obvious elements in the situation with others derived therefrom. Suggestions can be made also to explain why revival should have come then and there in the way it did. Frontier life fears and deep anxiety; the repressions and neuroses suggested by the Salem witchcraft trials of 1696; the hollowness of much religion, with problems of discrepancy between an accepted pattern of truth, and another pattern, uneasily accepted, of maintaining that truth, may indeed support the description - "It was a parched land, crying out for deliverance from the hold of ideas that had served their purpose and died", but it is not nearly so clear that it merited the description of a "time-bomb".<sup>1</sup> And still less is it apparent that the solution would have been in terms of a religious revival. It is likely that a wide survey of Christian history<sup>2</sup> may result in discerning an ebb and flow

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1. The New England Mind; from Colony to Province. P. Miller. p.484.
  2. cf. Revivals; their Laws and Leaders. J.Burns.London 1909. pp.1-56. and K.S. Latourette; Hist.of the Expansion of Christianity.

process at work, with a certain advance all the time; it may be that times of advance occur at times of wider transition in the world. But while common traits are clearly to be seen, associated with each time of Christian renewal, it is hardly possible to develop a theory of revival that makes it the simple precipitate of a number of psychological and sociological conditions. No more is it possible to note that because at the centre of such spiritual advances there is always a special individual, it can thus be concluded that he 'gets up' the revival; nor that the situation "produces" him, in so many terms, to touch itself off. Yet at the same time there were in this situation in New England, elements that are to be seen at times of religious awakening at other times in the church's history; it was a time of political, intellectual, social and economic change, and of ecclesiastical decision. It was a time when laxity and dulness in religion was challenged; and this came to expression in a deepened sense of sin and failure. It was a time when the movement spread with extraordinary rapidity and power, resulting in a new religious fervour and a new moral purpose. Religion that had become formal and powerless now had transforming effects. And the content of the message of the pulpit in the revival was, as so often, the message

of God's mercy and grace in Christ, justifying the sinner freely, and in a work of sovereign power giving a different realization to the individual as to the true meaning of Christian experience. Furthermore, there was at the centre of this awakening, such a noteworthy leader as Jonathan Edwards. But whatever insights on this or any other revival may be gained from historical, sociological or psychological studies, we are still brought to recognize, as Edwards forced his own generation to recognize, that in all the varied human element, there is to be discerned the work of God Himself.

## II. Edwards' Approach to New England.

As we have seen, the seventeenth century, especially in New England had worked over the path of spiritual experience through conversion, and had arrived at a fairly clear-cut picture of the ideal pattern. Edwards however was not entirely satisfied with what was being presented in the pulpits even by those who were loyally trying to succeed to the Puritan tradition, and of course still less by the "Arminian" section who were steadily veering towards a Latitudinarian rationalism in religion. But a great deal of Puritanism in the eastern half of New England, where Stoddard's

influence was little felt, was rationalizing. The Mathers, Increase and his son Cotton, were assiduous by attempting in their writings to uphold and foster conformity to the established church, and were not always discriminating as to the principles which they adopted in doing so. They upheld the covenantal theology, but were influenced by the Halle school to concentrate on pietistic spirituality, mainly because the times had changed and individual impression, not social ordering was within their range of influence. The individual must be the one through whom society is influenced, not, as heretofore, the one influenced by the pattern of society. Hence Cotton Mather's books - Essays to do Good (1710) and Vital Christianity (1725) asserted an emotionalising and moralizing of religion, that could however go hand in hand with another contribution of his to "The Man of Reason" (1709) drawing on the Cartesian doctrine of innate ideas, for inherent moral inspiration; and later, in Manducatio ad Ministerium (1726) which taught innate reason as supporting a preference for Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Such a pietism, directed by innate ideas, was not incompatible with the scheme of church covenant which encouraged all to make the most of their opportunities for grace by using the means of the church ministry. "Arminians"

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1. The New England Mind; from Colony to Province. P. Miller pp. 403-434.

might lead men to think that grace comes in the use of a moderate church life; Calvinists might teach that such a church life would place men in the position in which grace might suddenly reach them; the whole thing either way was reasonable and common-sense in the terms of common-law contract or legal validity, and above all, was compatible with the desire for respectability and gentility of a mercantile middle-class becoming fashionable.<sup>1</sup> Religion in these circumstances is prone towards sentimentality, but not so much to deep conviction; it might be self-satisfied but would know little or nothing of evangelical assurance. Always it was open to the slow death through insipidity or the sudden shock of meaninglessness.

On the other hand, in the West where Stoddard had had vast influence, men were given a sceptical estimate of all church ordinances for final salvation. All might come to all ordinances, for nobody could pronounce as to his neighbours spiritual state. Grace cannot be rationalized, held Stoddard; God's arbitrary act of sovereign mercy cannot be given conditions, but comes, in a flash. Nothing therefore is to be barred from the approach of the individual, as he

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1. In The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation. 1570-1640. (Princeton U.P. 1961) the authors C.H. and K. George criticise Dr. Perry Miller for alleging this legal twist to covenant theology, out of common law concepts. But their point is based on English Puritan views before 1640. (vide p. 51. n. 64). cf. p. 69, n. 2. above



puts himself in the way of grace. Stoddard's book- The Safety of Appearing at the Day of Judgment<sup>1</sup> laid down covenant terms of salvation, for men "as rational creatures" are not left to guess at the way of salvation but can know the terms on which God bestows mercy. But the sole assurance of grace is God's promise, about the fulfilment of which God is absolutely free and sovereign according to his good pleasure. It is not for a man to worry about his election; God promises and assures that whoever will may come. This made Stoddard the first great revivalist of the later type. He believed profoundly in the Calvinist doctrine of election but he handled it in such a way as not to discourage the individual; and in making all ordinances open, he both swept away compromise measures in religion and stimulated the urge towards conversion.

Edwards thus looked out on a pastoral task that posed the question, how to preach the truth so as to promote the salvation of souls? He thought of the task of ministers as

to be lights to the souls of men in this respect, as they are to be the means of imparting divine truth to them, and bringing in to their view the most glorious and excellent objects.... they are to be the means of bringing men out of darkness into God's marvellous

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1. cf. Solomon Stoddard 1643-1729 by P. Miller in Harvard Theol. Review xxxiv 1941. pp. 277-320.

light.... they are set to instruct men and impart to them that knowledge by which they may know God and Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal. <sup>1</sup>

And to this end combine both light and heat in their ministry. But he saw the possibility of 'light without heat' in the pulpit and there was part of the country where such ministry,

entertains his auditory with learned discourses, without a savour of the power of godliness

and so

gratify itching ears and fill the heads of his people with empty notions.

On the other hand he feared the 'intemperate zeal' without light, that served only to 'kindle the like unhallowed flame in his people'. <sup>2</sup> The choice was already to a great extent decided by his experience under Stoddard, which influenced him greatly; yet even so, that influence built upon what had already come to be present in his thinking and outlook in a considerable degree of maturity. Edwards' favourite writers that exercised a great influence upon his thought from early days were John Owen, Richard Sibbes, Thomas Shepard and the great systematiser Pieter van Mastricht. This last writer had produced a thirteen hundred page Theoretico-practica Theologia with the whole of Christian

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1. Works. vol.ii.p.596 (Ordination sermon; The True Excellency of a Gospel minister).
  2. op.cit. p.958.

theology and practice methodically expounded under Scripture texts. In 1746 Edwards owned that he held the book as "better than Turretine or any other book in the world, excepting the Bible!" Mastricht taught the same view as Edwards on the immediate divine light in the souls of those who were converted and with strong anti-Cartesian bias, stressed the primacy of will over intellect, and equated the will with the "heart" or affections. Mastricht again emphasised much on grace and freedom that finds reflection in Edwards.<sup>1</sup> But with him the influence of Sibbes and Owen must be reckoned. Sibbes had been one who had emphasised the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in a devotional way,<sup>2</sup> and both he and Owen, among other Puritan writers had spoken of a spiritual sense in the Christian. Sibbes called it "Knowledge per modum gustus" and Owen "a Taste of the things themselves upon the mind, Heart and Conscience".<sup>3</sup> Here already was the guiding idea to such a mind as Edwards', away from the dry rationality of the Boston side of New England and the teaching and outlook of such men as Chauncy.

Edwards was far more concerned to know what contemporary writers were saying than to explore the resources of the past

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1. The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards. D.J. Elwood. pp. 187 cf. 121.
  2. The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience. G.F. Nuttall. p.14.
  3. op.cit. p.39.

so that there is little direct reference to the Reformers nor to their writings. Of Calvin and his teaching, he declares, in the preface to his important work An Inquiry.... of that Freedom of the Will etc.

I should not take it at all amiss, to be called a Calvinist, for distinctions sake; though I utterly disclaim a dependence on Calvin, or believing the doctrines which I hold, because he believed and taught them; and cannot justly be charged with believing in every thing just as he taught. <sup>1</sup>

Of course, it is patently obvious that Edwards is in closest agreement with Calvin's teaching, but it is also <sup>true</sup> that he deals with the main issues of Reformed doctrine on new lines. D.J. Elwood <sup>2</sup> tends to think that he was influenced by Cambridge Platonism either directly or indirectly. Reference is made to Cudworth's True Intellectual System of the Universe in his early 'Notes on the Mind', <sup>3</sup> while Norris' Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World (1701) was in Yale Library from 1714 as part of a collection of books sent from England by the college's agent, Dummer. Thus Edwards was in touch with the thought of Malebranche and his Catalogue indicates that he read Malebranche's Recherche de la Vérité published in English in 1694. <sup>4</sup>

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1. Works. vol.1.p.3

2. op.cit. p.30.

3. Works. vol.1. pp. cclx.cclxi.

4. The Puritan Mind. H.W. Schneider. p.158. cf. D.J.Elwood op.cit. p.170. M.H. Carre Phases of Thought in England (O.U.P. 1944). pp. 271.272.

Nevertheless, American thought is tending to agree that "further discussion of the sources of Edwards' thought now seem superfluous" <sup>1</sup>, simply because every study only goes to show how independent Edwards was of any one author, and that although he was happy to use insights and suggestions from others, he always stood away from them, and took only what enabled him to develop his own clear line of thought. This applies to Locke, whom we have seen, <sup>2</sup> Edwards read avidly as a student, no doubt because he saw in this latest thinker, one who was helping him to clarify and shape his own thinking, so as to be the better fitted not only for parish ministry but even more to assert the great themes of his theology in his own 'modern world'. But one thing is clear and needs to be asserted in the discussion of Edwards' literary resources; he was supremely a Biblical theologian. He could handle his Greek Testament and Hebrew Bible with ability and his use of Scripture was balanced, judicious and integrated. Occasionally he uses some allegorisation, and it certainly cannot be called foreign to his outlook. But in cases where this is used, he is never found basing an argument on such an allegorising method; it is in support of an already well-founded view. He is a consummate expounder of Scripture

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1. D.J. Elwood op.cit. quoting from H.W. Schneider History of American Philosophy (Columbia U.P. 1947) p.31.
  2. cf. p.209 above.

passages, not only in bringing out the implications of a passage but even more by associating passages together to indicate the teaching of Scripture, so as to produce a Biblical theology. It is, of course, evident that Edwards' great intellectual resources, which provided him with outstanding philosophical acumen, were also serviceable in his handling of Scripture. Much of his argument in the writings of the revival has been by the amassing of Scripture, and it is interesting and impressive to recognise how far a modern Biblical scholarship would have to go with him, in his exegesis and application of the text.

### III. Epistemology and the Knowledge of God.

The theme that Edwards was drawing out in his writings on the revival, and which found full expression in Religious Affections, is that of the true knowledge of God. He wanted to explore what was the particular and peculiar nature of true spiritual knowledge, and he was therefore drawn into an examination of spiritual knowledge compared with ordinary knowledge. Puritan theology had always drawn a distinction here, but the issue was complicated by the influence of Descartes upon philosophy in general, and upon Reformed and Puritan theology as well. Locke's criticism of Descartes,

and his positive philosophical contribution in the realm of epistemology was not only "the latest knowledge" in Edwards time, but also recognised by him to be of immediate service to theology. But Locke was not the only modern influence to his thought, Edwards had read Newton's Principia and even if his mathematics were not entirely sufficient for complete understanding, it is clear that his "Notes on Science" were under the influence of Newton and indicate a recognition of the universe as one now re-interpreted to throw fresh light upon the doctrines of nature and grace. Thus Locke influenced the epistemological and psychological 'Notes on the Mind', just as Newton influenced his Notes on Science. Together they reveal Edwards as constructing a theology upon a philosophy of Being that interpreted the new mechanism of Newton in idealist terms, and paved the way for reasserting his thoroughgoing application of the doctrine of grace, both common and saving. For this reason the assertion of C.H. Faust and T.H. Johnson, requires qualification,

He reared a carefully proportioned and buttressed if not completely consistent structure composed both of notions inherited from the Calvinist tradition and of materials boldly seized from the philosophical systems current in his day. At its base he laid the psychological theories announced in the time of the Great Awakening and proclaimed in his controversies over the freedom of the will. Upon these he erected solidly his doctrine of depravity and his doctrine of virtue..<sup>1</sup> at the apex of the whole he set his doctrine of grace.

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1. Jonathan Edwards. Representative Selections with Introduction Bibliography and Notes. C.H. Faust & T.H. Johnson. 1935 p.xcv.

Apart from the anachronism of starting Edwards' theology with the psychology of the writings of the Great Awakening, the building simile here completely misrepresents the structure, of his thought. It would be truer to say that the doctrine of grace, allied to a philosophy of being lay at the foundation of his thought, out of which arises a view of evil; then a doctrine of grace which is allied to the whole meaning of being but now associated with a view of human psychology; and finally a teaching on religious experience with which he associated his moral philosophy, on the nature of true virtue.

Edwards' was essentially an architectonic mind; in his private note-books he had prepared for a later work to be called A Rational Account of the Principles and Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion in which he hopes to "show how all arts and sciences, the more they are perfected, the more they issue in divinity". He saw that some were responding theologically to a Newtonian universe in terms of Deism, which Locke's rationalistic philosophy did nothing to discourage. But he made the answer, not of head-on opposition to new thought but of accepting and using their ideas for Christian theology. Instead of banishing God to the 'edge' of the Universe, Edwards boldly affirmed that all that was exhibited of natural law and mechanical causation was nothing less



than the continued immediate efficiency of God. In his Treatise on Grace he remarks, "It is a strange disposition... to thrust God out of the world", <sup>1</sup> and so deny His immediate communication. The latest science only explained more empirically the omnipresent being of God, not just his will exerted from afar. But all this was possible because he had early come to understand the world as an ideal whole. <sup>2</sup> His early Notes on the Mind had anticipated Berkeley <sup>3</sup> when he wrote,

the Substance of all Bodies is the infinitely exact and precise and perfectly stable Idea in God's mind, together with His stable will, that the same shall gradually be communicated to us and to other minds according to certain fixed and exact established Methods and Laws; or in somewhat different language, the infinitely exact and precise Divine Idea, together with an answerable, perfectly exact precise and stable will with respect to correspondent communications to Created minds and effects on their minds. <sup>4</sup>

Dr. D.J. Elwood has described Edwards' philosophical theology not as pantheism (though this charge has been made), but as panentheism or mystical realism. <sup>5</sup> It is to be able to say "God is all" and yet "God is other". Both substance and causality find a unifying concept in this way;

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1. Treatise on Grace, ed. A.B. Grosart. p.40.

2. Works. vol.i. p.cclix.

3. cf. Elwood op.cit. p.169. But Yale students were warned against Berkeley in 1714, so that Edwards may not have dared to own his debt. (A.V.G.Allen, G.P. Fisher, W.R. Sorley think that Edwards knew of Berkeley's views).

4. Works. vol.i. cclxi.

5. Elwood. op.cit. pp.57,58.

all see at first sight that the properties of bodies are such as need some Cause, that shall every moment have influence to their continuance, as well as a cause of their first existence. All therefore agree that there is Something that is there, and upholds these properties.....but that Something is He "by whom all things consist" <sup>1</sup>

All this disposes of material substance, mechanical cause, a deism which makes God into a first cause, that separates Him from the world, and then leaves Him empty of significance, or a pantheism such as Spinoza's which assumes God into the substance of the universe, so as to be dependent upon it. Such a panentheism might well derive from Malebranche's vision of "all things in God" and Newton's view of infinite space as God's "sensorium", whereby, being omnipresent, He perceives everything without the need of intermediary, and so interpenetrates all in creative activity as to hold all created things in their relative individual entity.<sup>2</sup>

Thus in his Treatise on Original Sin (Pt. IV.ch.iii)<sup>3</sup> Edwards, in asserting that the constitution of man as body and soul, as a continuing being with consciousness and memory, depends on the efficient agency of God, goes on to point out that all created substance is a dependant upon not only the primal creation of God, but also the continual preservation by Him.

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1. Works. vol.1. cclxii.
  2. Elwood op.cit. p.40.
  3. Works. vol.1. p.223.

Therefore the existence of created substances, in each successive moment must be the effect of the immediate agency, will and power of God.

The causal sequence of the order of nature is "nothing, separate from the agency of God!" The whole fabric of natural laws and course of nature is

nothing but the continued immediate efficiency of God according to a constitution that he has been pleased to establish.

The conclusion of this therefore follows,

that God's preserving of created things in being, is perfectly equivalent to a continued creation, or his creating those things out of nothing at each moment of their existence.... those things would drop into nothing upon the ceasing of the present moment, without a new exertion of divine power to cause them to exist in the following moment.

All dependent existence whatsoever is in a constant flux, ever passing and returning; renewed every moment .... all is constantly proceeding from God. <sup>1</sup>

This of course involves all aspects of existence-light sound, gravity, thought or consciousness, man in his physical composition and in his mental states, cognitive, conative and appetitive.

On these principles of an ideal universe, existing through the mind and will of God, Whose immediate agency

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1. op.cit. p.224.

maintains all in being by continuous moment by moment creation, Edwards bridged the dualism of subject and object inherent in the philosophy of his time. Although for all practical purposes, he maintained the objectivity of the external world, just as he referred to the inner working of men's minds in the usual terms, yet not only was it ultimately to be recognized as a great pulsating ideal whole, emanating from the Divine existence moment by moment, but that involved God as being in and through the whole, so that in the case of human consciousness, God is on both sides of the subject-object relationship. The analogia entis is radically at the foundation of analogia fidei and all existence is potentially sacramental of "divine things"; <sup>1</sup> for everything has symbolic coherence with the divine as smoke is symbolic of fire. But the aseity of God was not compromised by such an account of the universe; for the whole universe is ultimately to be understood as stemming from God, and is a system of ideas existing in the mind of God and being held in constant order by Him. To the scientist of that time (and perhaps this) such an account might seem to be a resort to the supernatural without sufficient attention to the very real realm of empirical scientific law and mechanical process. Edwards

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1. cf. Images and Shadows of Divine Things. by Jonathan Edwards edited by Perry Miller.

would not have demurred at any desire for a delimitation of spheres of working, in which scientific description and explanation have their proper significance within that limit, as well as religious ones within their own as well. But he would not have allowed that it was good and proper to leave the two spheres in polite if rather uncertain juxtaposition, without any further conception of how the total universe of experience is to be seen as one. Nor could he be content to have a final explanation in terms of a "God-of-the-gaps" as Newton tended to do. From his reading of both Newton and Locke Edwards abandoned the idea of efficient causation, as Hume also did, yet at the same time believed in a certainty of connection between events in a sequence, because they are so sustained by God's continuous creative will. <sup>1</sup>

In determining such a total view of God and the universe, Edwards had before him a constant goal that was fully practical. It was no bent or constraint of a philosophical intellect; neither had it especially an apologetic aim. Edwards gave little attention to the problem of the existence of God, for God was so much a presupposition that the problems of the world found their explanation in terms of the divine, rather than God being vouched for by arguments from cosmology.

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1. see Jonathan Edwards. Perry Miller. p.79,86. cf. Edwards and Hume and Leibnitz. Jonathan Edwards; Freedom of the Will. P.Ramsey. (Yale U.P. 1957) pp. 34-37.

Edwards' own allusions to an ontological approach by way of an argument for necessary being are scattered in his writings<sup>1</sup> but he himself balanced this with one of his Miscellaneous Observations on Important Theological Subjects which read - "The insufficiency of reason as a substitute for revelation".<sup>2</sup> But as he harnessed the deliverances of the latest science and philosophy to his especial purposes, he provided for his theology a unity that had implicit within it an apparently unassailable epistemology and moreover a philosophic obverse to a complete theology of grace in which the manifestations of evangelical experience were recognisable implicates and thoroughly correlated to God's activity in nature and in grace.

The epistemological implications of Edwards' view of the relation of God to the cosmos is drawn out in one of his many Notes which had, up till just recently, remained unpublished among the Edwards manuscripts in Yale University Library, but was edited by Dr. Perry Miller and published in the Harvard Theological Review XLI (1948). It was number 782 of Edwards' Miscellanies,<sup>3</sup> and entitled Ideas, Sense of the Heart, Spiritual Knowledge, or Conviction, Faith.

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1. e.g. Freedom of the Will; Part I. sect.iii. (Works. vol.i. p.8,9.)
  2. Works. vol.ii. p.479.
  3. 1200 of these notes are in MSS, some of which have been published-Miscellaneous Observations on Important Theological Subjects (1793) and Remarks on Important Theological Controversies (1796)- mainly polemical selections.

It originates in Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding Book III, in which it is argued that the mind first receives ideas by sensation, after which it provides a name, a word, for the idea, and thus can recall the idea by means of the word, even if the object is not sensed.<sup>1</sup> In this way, Locke dismissed the theory of innate ideas, since it was not able to be shown that something in the mind had had a word attached to it, or made a word significant, before there had been experience of the thing the word connoted. Edwards believed that this view of Locke had been established, and Dr. Perry Miller has suggested that Edwards' early enthusiasm for Locke may have been because he saw that the current Protestant opinion was fluctuating upon the theory of innate ideas, as witness the seventeenth century theses of Harvard, despite the continuing liberal arts tradition that derived all that was in the mind from the senses. The attraction of the doctrine of innate ideas for theology was, apart from Augustinian support, its value for the scholastic ontological proof for the existence of God and also, in combination with Descartes' other welcome assertion of a realm of incorporeal substance side by side with the empirical universe of motion and extension, its ascription to fallen man of a persistent innate religious sense that needed awakening rather than creating.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Locke. Essay etc. Book III. ch.1. par.1. ch.2. par.6.  
 2<sup>1</sup> cf. M.H. Carre op.cit. pp.254,284.

Edwards welcomed Locke's sensationalism, since, for one thing, it illuminated what had happened in New England when the terms of religion and of God seemed to have so little real influence in the community. They were simply vague and general terms that spoke of a reality not experienced; community jargon, dead and deadly, repeated endlessly from pulpit to pew, pew to pulpit as a dead language, a 'historical' knowledge, inherited as a vocabulary never associated with the objective reality, because the church's discourse about God, was that of a memory, not of an encounter. <sup>1</sup>

Thus, in this note, Edwards distinguishes between an "actual idea" and its sign, which, as a word, can be substituted in the mind for the actual idea. An "actual idea" is itself a constellation of all the properties relative to a true definition or description of an object, and Edwards emphasises that for full understanding of an object there is involved both cognition and also all the various subjective implicates of the thing. But in the organization of thought, in order to cope with the swiftly moving continuum of experience, signs and words have to do duty for "actual ideas" as in the mental activities of generalization and reflection, wherein, on the whole, the present sense of the matters dwelt

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1. cf. Sociology of Religion. J. Wach. (London 1947) p.161.



upon, or the object related to that mental activity, is not awakened or recalled at all. Instead, the mind deals with substitutes for the real thing, such as names, words, parts of the object, such as its sensible image or its effect. This results in the use of dim, transient, not distinct ideas. In this mental activity, the most effectively lost part of the object is its spiritual content. The actual idea is clear and distinct; the sign is but a 'notion'.<sup>1</sup> Thus Edwards distinguishes two kinds of knowledge; speculative, which is cognitive without the true apprehension that includes true ideation carrying with it an inner identification with the object; it is therefore indirect and detached. The other is a genuine apprehension by direct perception, of the actual idea which will be both ratiocinative and also emotional or volitional, and carries with it a sense of good or evil connected with the idea. This second kind of knowledge he called "sensible"; it has "a sense of the heart" an "inward tasting" coupled with the ideal apprehension. In this, as we have seen above,<sup>2</sup> Edwards was following up what he had learned from Locke; but he went further than Locke for instead of holding that ideas represented reality, Edwards held that ideation meant to become identified with

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1. cf. Berkeley view of the self as not an idea, but a notion.

2. vide. pp.209,210 above; cf.pp.163-165.

the object, to be in immediate relation with the object.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, sensible knowledge itself admits of two levels apparently.<sup>2</sup> There is a sensible knowledge which is come by naturally, ie. by the natural laws or processes of sensation, memory and reflection and that have the natural connotations of good or evil, of agreement with human ideals or not. This knowledge may involve a sensible knowledge of religion but not a considerable sense. Beyond this, however, there is a special sense and knowledge, in which there is an exciting sense of eternal things, which are marked by a sense of spiritual good or evil, particularly the moral beauty, the excellency of divine things for which this sense or knowledge brings a relish, a deep delight. In this experience, or form of knowledge, natural ability is transcended as it cannot of itself come by it; Edwards would say that it is not in fact related to natural principles but is entirely a work of the Holy Spirit, Who not merely assists natural principles but infuses something above nature special to the experience. Yet at the same time there is a connection between these two forms of sensible knowledge. Sensible knowledge by "natural" means brings an apprehension of reality that recognizes God's perfections in His works and

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1. cf. D.J. Elwood op.cit. pp.128.

2. cf. Harvard. Theol.Review. XLI as quoted. pp.138-142.

words, realizes the heinousness of sin and its implicit certainty of judgment. It produces a conviction generally about religion and its value, as well as of the certainty of its truth in general and coherence with "the nature of things". This is preparatory for the higher "spiritual sense", which actually depends upon this "natural" sensibility, but in itself has a sense of spiritual excellency, which involves a spiritual conviction of truth towards a saving faith. In the distinctions Edwards draws by examples in his note, what in fact is being compared is God in His Providence and God in His Saving acts and faith towards Him in these two aspects. Thus Edwards goes on to say that the 'common' conviction (ie. the sensible apprehension of what is true in religion from "natural" means) leads on to a saving conviction of Gospel truth by being prepared to seek and find a Saviour and to see the suitableness and congruity of the scheme of salvation. There is a sensible conviction of the mind finally, that the way of salvation in the Gospel is so proper and reasonable and suitable in its tendency towards the needful goal, and moreover so agreeable to nature, that it is clearly a contrivance of God. <sup>1</sup>

It would be a mistake however, to conclude from this

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1. "contrivance" like "method" and "anatomy" were favourite Puritan words.

that Edwards distinguished between 'natural' sensible knowledge and 'spiritual' sensible knowledge on the basis of a difference of theological content, a difference between a recognition of God's providential work and an understanding of His saving activity. Edwards specifically says in his early sermon on Divine and Supernatural Light,

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. <sup>1</sup>

This implies that the totality of God's self-revelation is the object of either kind of knowledge. Yet, it is not surprising, that the spiritual knowledge which Edwards refers to is associated more with

a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

But as has been shown right throughout the writings of Edwards on the revival, culminating in the Religious Affections, there can be, in his view, a knowledge of the facts and truths of the gospel which he would not describe as "spiritual". Rather, the "spiritual" knowledge, the "sense of the heart" is itself different in quality; it is an intuitive knowledge, gained by immediate apprehension, corresponding to a self-

1. Works. vol.ii. p.14.

2. ibid.

evident truth,<sup>1</sup> Edwards clearly states this in one of his  
Notes on the Mind,

Things that we know by immediate sensation, we know intuitively; and they are properly self-evident truths; as Grass is green; the Sun shines; honey is sweet.<sup>2</sup>

For Edwards, it must be remembered, sense data come to the mind not as bare facts needing interpretation, but charged with full meaning because of the pre-established harmony in the mind and purpose of God. Perception of real or actual ideas is the immediate perception of facts charged with their meaning and the spiritual sense receives the whole in one act of inclusive perception, independent of the stages of argument.<sup>3</sup> It brings a "new simple idea" -

"new in the sense that it is not derived from any past activities of the mind; simple in that it is not a synthesis of ordinary physical sensation; idea in the sense of an immediate consciousness, or intuition of the reality and beauty of God and of godliness, accompanied by a profound emotion embracing the intuited object".<sup>4</sup>

As Professor Paul Ramsey notes in his introduction to the Yale Edition of Edwards' Inquiry.. as to the Freedom of the Will<sup>5</sup> Edwards stands away from Locke's system, simply having

1. Religious Affections. III.v.(Works. vol.i. p.290. cf. Divine and Super.Light. vol.ii. p.14.
2. Works. vol.i. p.cclxvii
3. vide above p.291,292
4. cf. Elwood op.cit. pp.136,137.cf.p.260 above
5. Yale edition vol.I. p.43n. cf. p.846. ibid.

used his philosophical approach and statements to refurbish his own theology derived from Puritan and reformed origins. Here quite manifestly, Edwards has used the whole idealist philosophy to restate the doctrine of divine sovereignty in providence and grace, and also its especial application in terms of divine illumination by the activity of the Holy Spirit, in which the Protestant tradition has always endeavoured to distinguish between divine grace in the heart of man and the activity of natural causes. It was this separation that contemporary "Arminianism" was trying to bridge in New England, by improving what is possible from natural powers to become a claim or a stage upon the way to spiritual knowledge.

The two levels of "sensible" knowledge are thus new ways of describing "common" and "saving" grace in the normal Protestant theological scheme, otherwise stated as the common and special work of the Holy Spirit. We have noted before <sup>1</sup> how Edwards describes this work in the sermon on Divine and Supernatural Light and in his Treatise on Grace. In the work of common grace Edwards describes it as an 'extrinsic' work 'upon' the mind of the natural man, assisting 'natural principles' but not imparting nor infusing new or higher principles; it assists conscience, which Edwards calls a natural principle,

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1. vide. above pp.257,258.

and gives conviction of right and wrong and a knowledge of Christian truth in a 'speculative' or 'notional' way. Saving grace and the work of the Spirit uses natural principles, reason and outward means, but only as a subject not as secondary causes, for the action of the Spirit is immediate. The notions that form the subject-matter of divine knowledge may be conveyed to the mind by Scripture, but the sense of the heart which is itself the very grace of God is an immediate, direct gift. So also this view consists with Luther's teaching,

The thought of the new life as a break through of natural forces is far from Luther. It is a creation of God, which takes place in one moment, while man behaves quite passively. <sup>1</sup>

Calvin also has parallel teaching -

And thus indeed, it is only when the human intellect is irradiated by the light of the Holy Spirit that it begins to have a taste of those things which pertain to the kingdom of God; previously it was too stupid and senseless to have any relish for them. <sup>2</sup>

And more directly guiding Edwards' view of the content of the 'spiritual sense',

we feel a divine energy living and breathing in it - an energy by which we are drawn and animated to obey it

1. cf. B.Citron. New Birth p.110 quoting Seebarg, Die Lehren Luthers p.99.
2. Inst.III. ii.34.

(ie. Scriptural truth) willingly indeed and knowingly but more vividly and effectively than could be done by human will or knowledge.....

Such then is a conviction (persuasio) which asks not for reasons; such a knowledge (notitia) which accords with the highest reason, namely knowledge in which the mind rests more firmly and securely than in any reasons; such, in fine, the conviction (sensus) which revelation from heaven alone can produce. <sup>1</sup>

On this B.B. Warfield comments,

we have planted in us by the creative action of the Holy Spirit a sense for the divine, and its verdict too is immediate and final: the spiritual man discerneth all things. <sup>2</sup>

The new sense is, as we have seen in Edwards teaching, a "new foundation laid in the nature of the soul for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding" and of the "faculty of the will".<sup>3</sup> Although he regarded understanding and will as twin aspects of functioning of the mind, of a person's one disposition, he still referred to them as 'faculties' just as did Locke; and in fact, a new faculty psychology followed their own eventually. <sup>4</sup> Both writers were forced to use a phraseology inimical to their view in this.

In his introduction to the Yale edition of Religious

1. Inst.I.vii.5.

2. Calvin and the Reformation. p.174.

3. vide. above. p.255,256.

4. cf. Jonathan Edwards P. Miller. pp.181,182.



Affections, Professor J.E. Smith has pointed to three basic contributions to the modern situation made by Edwards.<sup>1</sup> First of all, his doctrine of the new sense of the heart, and of the new nature, prevents the reduction of religion to something other than itself. Secondly, he shows how understanding in religious terms can involve properly both rationality and direct spiritual experience and not be thought of as simply a dry theoretical light. Thirdly he has given indications of how fervent religious devotion itself can have some assessment as to its genuineness. It is of course an impressive fact about Edwards' teaching, that although he knew little or nothing about sub-conscious factors in modern terms, yet his recognition of psycho-somatic unity, and his forceful affirmation of the affections as "the very spring of actions" confirms Perry Miller's remark - "It would have taken him about an hour's reading in William James and two hours in Freud to catch up completely".<sup>2</sup> But at this point, we need to ask one or two questions about Edwards' idealist epistemology. Dr. Perry Miller has described Edwards as still Puritan in thinking of mental operations in logical abstraction;<sup>3</sup> and although the contrast Perry Miller draws between Edwards' "abstraction" and a sense of the other important elements of

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1. p.44.

2. Jonathan Edwards. p.183.

3. op.cit. p.182.

sub-conscious self-interest in thought, is not altogether justified in the light of Edwards' own reference to these 34 elements, nevertheless, it needs to be asked whether the logically consistent view of the ideal universe does not gain its consistency at the expense of other important considerations. The importance for Edwards of such a philosophic scheme, raises at once the question as to whether his Biblical theology itself may not be subtly manipulated by a philosophic system which tilts still more unsatisfactorily in its restatement, the previous attempts at logical completeness in scholastic systems devised in the seventeenth century, themselves of course, based upon theologies of Reformed Protestantism although including individual elements.

Edwards, as we have seen, used idealist philosophy to restate Puritan theology. Augustinian and Neo-Platonic elements are also discerned in his presentation.<sup>1</sup> But his idealism had already had anticipation in Zwingli's teaching, that God is in reality "the only active Being in the universe. He is not merely the first cause but the only cause. All activity is his activity; evil as well as good is his work".<sup>2</sup> As such He is ex lex and cannot be questioned as to His works

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1. Elwood. op.cit. p.30.

2. Protestant thought before Kant. A.C. McGiffert. (London 1911). p.68.

and ways. This latter principle had the practical effect of removing the problems inherent in Reformed statements from questioning as well. Calvin's doctrine, under the influence of Bucer spoke of God in more personal terms, and by presenting the whole activity of God as disposing to His glory alone, made his teaching a theology rather than a philosophy. But Edwards, by using idealist concepts, in effect returned to the consistency of Zwingli's philosophic view of God as the only real Being, "the all-pervading energy and the immanent cause of all things".<sup>1</sup> Elwood's attempt therefore to suggest that Edwards here has a more 'dynamic and passionate conception of divine self-movement'<sup>2</sup> in terms of unconditional Being, compared with Calvin who stresses the going forther of divine will and decree, described as "static and frigid", may be turning a blind eye to the equally potent danger of discounting the important element of personal relations, which seems to haunt idealism and which manifests itself in another direction in the problem of evil and sin. Since, in Edwards' philosophic view, every individual is a constellation of ideas, correlated together and so held in the mind of God,<sup>3</sup> it becomes increasingly impossible to understand what is the meaning of individual responsibility in any significant terms at all. We are in fact faced with

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1.. McGiffert op.cit. p. 87.

2. Elwood, op.cit. p. 58.

3. Works. vol. i. p.cclx.

a theological behaviourism, which comes out as a clear-cut picture in the treatise Inquiry...as to the Freedom of the Will. Edwards is quite specific in his thorough-going idealism that everything is the moment-by-moment emanation from the creative activity of the all-pervasive Being, with the result that nothing can be other than what He is bringing into being thus; it is impossible in these terms to see the totality of existence so conceived as to be other than a subtle mechanism in which what happens in the inorganic and organic levels of the universe is in principle at one with the activities and responses of the animal and human. So when he defines Truth

after the most strict and metaphysical manner, The consistency and agreement of our ideas with the ideas of God;<sup>1</sup>

and therefore with "existence"; in strict, metaphysical terms of his own the words "agreement" and "consistency", it must be recognised to mean something quite different from its normal connotation; for in Edwards' terms of its meaning it simply means "whatever is, is" for as ideas all emanate from the divine mind, they must all in some way "agree" and "consist" with that existence which is the totality of divine ideas.

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1. Works. vol.i. p.cclxvii.

In this way, as with all forms of behaviourism, truth according to reason is the first and fundamental casualty, for there is no other consistency possible than what is; one can only compare one idea with another, but as each and all are ideas in the divine mind, they each and all have that same degree of authentication. This is, of course, only one aspect of the whole question of evil, error, sin and wrong, which is never properly reconciled in idealist world-views. In a similar critique of Archbishop William Temple's Nature Man and God, Leonard Hodgson asks,

What is the ground of the influence exercised by this type of philosophy over so many minds? It is surely due to the fact that this type alone seems to meet the demand for a reality which shall be shown to be logically self-consistent and self-authenticating in goodness..... but another demand equally essential is the demand that our conception of reality shall be able to interpret and not to distort or dissolve away the actual facts of our experienced universe. <sup>1</sup>

As far as Edwards was concerned, the question of evil was contained within the total interpretation of the universe in accordance with the mechanical uniformity which the

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1. The Grace of God in Faith and Philosophy. L. Hodgson. London 1936 p.111.

science of the day seemed to imply.<sup>1</sup> In the light of what we have seen of this view of things, Elwood's description of Edwards' view of evil raises difficulties here;

Sin is not a metaphysical hiatus but a moral rupture in the harmony of minds..... So much in fact are individual minds interdependent and organically dependent on the 'All-comprehending Mind' that 'if any created being were of a temper to oppose Being-in-general' Edwards remarks, 'that would infer the most universal and greatest possible discord'.<sup>2</sup>

It would surely seem to be involved by this quotation, that as sin is not a metaphysical hiatus, it is problematical as to its being a moral rupture; for all ideas, as part of universal harmony compel a creature, though "moral", never to oppose "Being-in-General". It is not surprising therefore that Elwood later tells us that Edwards did in fact accept

1. cf. also P. Tillich. The Courage to Be. pp. 98,99 referring to Renaissance Stoicism's courage expressed in active wrestling with existence, which took on a philosophic outlook of man being the microcosm in which the cosmic forces that produced him continue their conative drive and produce the self-conscious transformation of nature through him. Such men as Shaftesbury in the 17th century (whom Edwards had read), were inspired, with a combined rational and emotional enthusiasm similar to Edwards, in seeing themselves part of the universal creative process. They found a new courage to be themselves by accepting the courage to be a part of the new scientifically discovered universe, and so transcended the lost feeling of being in a cosmic ocean that otherwise would have removed individual meaning. Although this had very little other representation in American Protestant thought of the period, Edwards both integrated it with his theology and anticipated other romantic expressions later in the century.
2. Elwood. op.cit. p.66.

the implication that God is the cause of moral evil in the negative sense that He intentionally withdraws his qualitative presence, thus leaving the heart empty and the will impotent. <sup>1</sup>

Yet even here, the attempt is made to turn the point of this by ascribing to God the 'ultimate cause' for the existence of sin in "a world of such variegation and multiformity" that it "presents to the mind of man the occasion for moral decision".<sup>2</sup> Implicit in this sentence is a deistic separation of God from the manifold of human existence, leaving Him in the background, as it were, as 'ultimate cause', so that His responsibility for each idea in the mind of man is lightened at the cost of denying what Edwards has actually laid down as the relationship of all activity and thought and will to the divine constant creativity. Edwards was content to explain God's responsibility for evil and sin by his withholding His power for good; just as the absence of the sun results in darkness, yet darkness is not therefore considered to be derived from the sun, nor an attribute of it. <sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy that Edwards resorts to physical, non-moral analogies here; it does not occur to him that the sun is not morally responsible for either light or darkness. Elwood's comment here is particularly lacking in depth.

1. op.cit. p. 74.

2. Ibid.,

3. Freedom of the Will. Pt.IV.sect.ix. (Works. vol.i. p.74)

While this position is beset with difficulties, the only logical alternative is the Zoroastrian view that evil is a rival force over which God has uncertain control.<sup>1</sup>

Before accepting such an 'either-or', some examination of what sin is, and the significance of the word "force", would be worth-while, in which the view of evil as either deprivation or absence of good on the one hand, or a dualistic 'force' on the other might be found but two, and not very satisfactory ones at that, of more fruitful possibilities.

All this leads us to ask whether Edwards had managed to preserve his basic theology of nature and grace with the idealistic philosophy in which he was stating it. The description of the Spirit's two ways of working in the mind of man, as extrinsic and intrinsic ways, along the lines of assisting natural principles alone or by importing a special immediate sense, expresses simply what had been held in Protestant thought and referred to what was seen in the churches and known from many testimonies and biographies of spiritual experience. Edwards had shown that the special work of the Spirit was not apart from the uses of natural faculties and powers of the human mind. Yet he found

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1. Elwood. op.cit. p. 77.



himself faced with the problem, that while he held to a special immediate work of the Spirit in regeneration, that work could not be so surely discerned by another as to be certain that it was not a hypocritical imitation or a diabolical deception. Edwards in fact had two ways of describing the activity of God in the soul; one was of the Spirit's external and internal activity. This sounds somewhat of a popular way of speaking compared with the idealistic epistemology that would speak of true apprehension of the 'actual idea' of God, by having a new super-natural principle in the soul, which truly perceives God with delight. Yet it is correlative, as Edwards speaks of the Spirit infusing this new sense of the heart, or simply assisting the notional ideas as far as they may go. The perceiving of the actual idea is the result of the Spirit of God working, and the work of the Spirit is traceable by the presence of divine love, for as Edwards lays down in the Treatise on Grace, the Spirit is the Divine Love, and the presence of that love in the heart is the evidence of the Spirit 'infusing' it and uniting Himself with the soul of the regenerate. Edwards puts little emphasis upon God's gift of an objective personal revelation;<sup>1</sup> rather it is the subjective gift of vision

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1. Mastricht: "Spiritual Light is rather held up to view , than conveyed to the soul" of the natural man. (Elwood op.cit. p.179. n.24).

with love to what has been perhaps only understood "naturally" in the Scriptures hitherto. On the other hand to this description of God's activity in the soul, there is the idealist representation of the whole man as a constellation of ideas in the mind of God, conforming to the pattern which the constantly instantaneous creativity of God makes possible. While the former description makes intelligible the differentiation of God's influences as of 'nature' or of 'grace' it is difficult to see that there is any essential difference in the working of God in the latter description. It turns of course upon the issue as to how far such a description of divine activity allows for any qualitative description to the activity at all; it has been seen to take away any significance for the meaning of evil, error, and wrong; it leaves us with a verdict that simply what is, is.

Returning, however to Edwards' psychology of spiritual experience it is clear that the main ways of telling the genuineness of spiritual experience consist, according to the Religious Affections in knowing that the inner attitude to God is of the sort described in the twelve positive signs, and if one perseveres in Christian life to the end. The work of the Spirit is so open to corrupt imitation, or is by the Spirit Himself so imitated in the amazing similarities

of hypocrites, that Edwards pared away everything that might be doubtful. The outcome was to offer

marks of grace and signs of salvation... so meticulous .... that assurance became a relatively rare thing... almost out of reach of the most earnest.<sup>1</sup>

One can sympathise with Edwards' problems in the face of revival excesses, and of half-way covenant and "Arminian" laxity. He had been deceived and disappointed during the revival, and was driven by pastoral pressure, no doubt, to sharpen the deliverances of his theology to the utmost. Yet had he felt able to explore still further his clear insights into human nature, and to provide a pastoral psychology related to sanctification and Christian growth he might well have relieved his teaching relating to conversion of some of the difficulties of alleging that the Holy Spirit provides a hypocritical counterpart to true grace.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation must follow a doctrine of divine grace, in which the activity of grace is understood in subtly mechanistic terms, operating upon a passive human soul. Only a complete re-understanding of the relation of God and man in grace, different from the theological idealism that held sway from Zwingli up to Edwards, in which coherence was achieved, even if in mechanical terms; and a fresh beginning to explore the Biblical

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1. Steps to Salvation. J.H. Gerstner. p.192.

2. vide above p.299

material in fully personal terms, could point some way away from this hard road. Edwards never realised that the basic despair of the dualistic philosophy of perception that seemed to cohere so well in some ways with Christian terms of spiritual illumination and vision, led him to formulate a philosophy of being, that so far from providing the wholly desirable obverse of a doctrine of grace, in fact, in its essential meaning destroyed the very meaning of the term.

#### IV. Conversion; The Spiritual reflex and the Ordo S~~a~~ utis.

Edwards' psychology was almost exclusively geared towards the understanding of conversion. This is not surprising for it was the continuous tradition of New England spiritual writers to concentrate upon this aspect of religious experience. As we have seen, it was part of the total situation in New England that caused the theologians to map the path of spiritual experience in the matter of conversion and men like Thomas Hooker enjoyed a wide reputation for being the most profound writer on the subject. The need to provoke the congregations of New England to that fervent owning of the covenant, while at the same time to expose 'the hypocrisy' that the church situation allowed and in a sense encouraged, meant that much was required to provide each man with self-

understanding, as well as the ministry for its task of promoting the spiritual urge upon congregations fast becoming too easy both in theology and in manner of life. Edwards of course came directly into this inheritance from his grandfather Stoddard, whose work and writings had been particularly influential on the whole matter of conversion. The writers of New England may well be compared with those of Old England who, while themselves being no mean exponents of Puritan conversion understanding, also taught a good deal on sanctification. This element is much weaker in Edwards writings although as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> he used terms about conversion that suggest he may have given it a wider connotation than what it is taken to mean today.

At the same time, Edwards was not unaware of the dangers of this very concentration on conversion. Writing to the Rev. Thomas Gillespie of Carnock after he had left Northampton, he found a reason for the difficulty he encountered among them to be caused very largely by their very concentration upon conversion.

The people had got so established in certain wrong notions and ways in religion, which I found them in, and could never beat them out of. Particularly it was too much their method to lay almost all the stress

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1. vide. p.298 above.

of their hopes in religion on the particular shape and method of their first work, i.e. the first work of the Spirit of God on their hearts, in their conviction and conversion.<sup>1</sup>

On this they would continue to talk, reflect and testify, with not particularly edifying results and indeed with the seeds of spiritual disaster latent therein. Yet this was the result of one of the most successful ministries of New England. And one cannot but wonder whether in fact, Stoddard's own personal life was so orientated, with results that suggest a lack of concern for 'that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord'. For Edwards at the same time refers to him and his influence in Northampton, as

though an eminently holy man, was naturally of a dogmatical temper; and the people being brought up under him, and with a high veneration for him, were naturally led to imitate him.

Clearly here Stoddard's forceful personality and long ministry in this closely-knit community, well away from the relaxing influences of the sea-board, had made him that father-figure which gave corporate expression and reinforcement to the strong super-ego in the minds of members of a Puritan society; the result was enhanced by his individualism, shown in his

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1. Works. vol.i. clxxiv.
  2. ibid.

different church polity, and his fear-engendering hell-fire preaching. Those converted concentrated on the actual experience that they might ever assure themselves that they were indeed regenerate. Such ego-centric 'conversions' were probably in many cases "quasi" or false conversions,<sup>1</sup> simply concentrating on escaping fears, particularly of not pleasing and belonging to the Father-figure, not only of Stoddard but the one whom Stoddard represented, God Himself. But the response was on a fundamentally infantile level, which when feeling that they had a saving faith resulted in a self-satisfaction with their state. Seeing this as a proof of their election, their ego-consciousness was strengthened and so resulted in the spiritual pride which Edwards here complains of in them, and the frivolous attitude nevertheless in their religious conversation.

What is especially noticeable in this sequence of ministry is that Edwards experienced the same results in a large degree, in his own ministry in Northampton. This is shown by the fact that in the writings that comment upon the revival he had to warn people constantly against these very disfigurements. In our examination of Edwards' teaching and assessment upon conversion, we shall be asking ourselves what

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1. cf. Psychology, Psychotherapy and Evangelicalism.  
J.G. McKenzie (London 1940) ch.v.

led to this situation, so that in the end, he came to his admittedly magnificent, but rarified indication of the nature of true spirituality in terms of the spiritual reflex described in the twelve positive signs of the Religious Affections.

But at this point it is necessary to note that he embodies a tradition upon the subject, much wider than in New England; his work is part of a response to a challenge in the Protestant world, which was constituted by the situation in the mother country of moribund Latitudinarianism, and something of the same trend in New England, but with the added concern provided by the dangers to its individual type of establishment. Hence the Puritans of New England, who thought of their original journey to America as their pilgrimage to an earthly Promised Land, gradually applied the pilgrimage concept to the sinner's struggle through to the assurance of conversion. Native Puritanism in England thought of the "Pilgrim's Progress" as from "this world" to the "Heavenly City"; but in New England, certainly in the thought of Jonathan Edwards, eschatological hopes operated differently. For him the original idea of the Americas as a Promised Land, and the new community there to be set up, as an ideal Zion, made heavenly hope to associate with an anticipated earthly glory in which America might be the scene of new glories as



the older part of the world had been the scene of the first revelation of Christ. Edwards thought of revival as the God-given means of achieving this "latter glory", and in a sense, everyone who pressed into the Kingdom through the experience of conversion was a first-fruit, a pledge and part of this longed-for final unveiling of the complete salvation of God. Here again is perhaps the reason for the stress upon conversion and less upon the continuing aspects of Christian life; if the heavenly Zion truly comes to earth, even to American earth, in the ever-widening development of continuous revival, the implication would obviously be to promote revival by evangelistic preaching, and the tendency would be to give less specific attention to the cultivation of Christian life.<sup>1</sup> Edwards was not unconcerned about sanctity of life; he did not concentrate upon evangelism to the exclusion of the other aspects of spiritual life. Yet while in his preaching, he could devote a whole series of sermons to I. Corinthians xiii, the real bent of his mind in this direction is indicated by the way he refers to conversion as such a spiritual experience of God, that Christian holiness and growth is almost necessarily implied,<sup>2</sup> as a spontaneous

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1. cf. Letter to Erskine. Works vol.i.p.cxxliii, cxxix. Humble Attempt to promote extraordinary Prayer etc.esp. Part III section iv-vi. (Works vol.ii. pp.302-312).
  2. cf. Signs.8,9. vide above pp. 300,301. where the 'imitatio Christi' is taken to be implied in the regenerative experience.

flowing forth from the real sense of the heart, the apprehension by the Spirit of Divine excellency. In these terms, the whole pattern of Christian sanctity is inherent in the transforming experience of conversion itself.

We have already noted <sup>1</sup> the wide variety of terms applied by Edwards to conversion; some that are usually taken to refer to regeneration such as "being born again"; some that older Puritans would have referred to 'mortification' and 'vivification' in the ups and downs of spiritual life, such as "dying to sin and living unto righteousness." But Edwards thinks of

the progress of the work of grace in the hearts of the saints, is represented in Scripture as a continued conversion and renovation of nature, <sup>2</sup>

in which are included

all subsequent illuminations and affections of that kind; ie. the same as those of the first conversion. This "transformation of nature"

is continued and carried on by them to the end of life.

All this evidences the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whose

1. vide above pp. 298, 299.

2. Works. vol. 1. p. 303.

presence is the new principle or foundation of a different disposition in nature that thereafter uses the "faculties" or unites with them to effect a new manner of life. Elwood<sup>1</sup> oddly remarks that

To maintain the vision requires intellectual discipline in coordinating the cognitive and aesthetic functions.. of the mind;

but Edwards never talks of spiritual experience needing any intellectual discipline for all the activity of the awakened mind is the result of the working of the Spirit; and this awareness is specifically possible among those not intellectually strong.<sup>2</sup> Edwards is definite in his emphasis on moral effect, however, for, as we have noted above,<sup>3</sup> while "grace, while imperfect, does not root out an evil temper", it acts with a steady corrective influence, which goes on thereafter.

Yet if conversion is so regarded as a continuous process, it is not because Edwards sees nothing critical in its incidence. Rather, in his Treatise on Grace (ch.i.) he draws out the inference, that if saving grace is different in its nature and quality, then it must be sudden; for what went before it was not the experience of saving grace; and from this he

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1. op.cit. p.24.

2. Religious Affections. Part III. sect.v.

3. vide. above p.299.

goes on to infer also that conversion is wrought at once. Therefore it is sometimes denoted a 'vocation' (Romans viii. 28-30). The explanation of this seeming discrepancy may be traced to the different strands of Reformation doctrine in which Luther had emphasised the watershed of faith, while Calvin had described conversion in more comprehensive terms of life-changing repentance.<sup>1</sup> Theologians of the subsequent era had schematised the processes of faith, repentance and regeneration into series of three steps each which might themselves be seen in parallel. The process of faith was in the recovery from unbelief before the light of the truth, beginning with Notitia (Edwards refers to a 'notional' belief)<sup>2</sup> but referring simply to a cognition of truths; this passes on to assensus (Edwards also refers to 'common assent' within the capacity of the unregenerate)<sup>3</sup> and so to fiducia. Luther would not be prepared to grant any saving efficacy to any aspect of this process until fiducia is reached. But Reformed theologians kept in mind the other two sequences; for repentance could be analysed into contritio, poenitentia, and mortificatio; and the process of regeneration into preparatio, Vocatio, Certitudo.<sup>4</sup> We have noted that Calvin took the whole process up to mortificatio into conversion,

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1. vide. refs.above. p.299. and Citron. New Birth. p.90.
  2. Divine & Supernatural Light (Works. vol.1. p.14).
  3. ibid.
  4. Citron. op.cit. pp.91-99.

while above Edwards is noted as referring to conversion as vocatio; he would most certainly have considered certitudo (assurance) as a fruit of faith and conversion in the instantaneous sense, as is clearly seen in the Gillespie correspondence.<sup>1</sup> Yet while presumably he would agree with Luther in not accepting faith as converting until it could be described as fiducia, he followed Reformed theology in seeing conversion occur at the moment of vocatio in what Citron calls 'the process of regeneration'. Of course this vocatio, is the vocatio interna as opposed to the vocatio externa.<sup>2</sup> Heppe sums this up;

By regeneration then, man's sin-corrupted nature is so transformed, that in virtue of the new divine life imparted, the old sinful kind dies out in him; and this takes place the moment the Holy Spirit by His effectual calling implants a man in Christ..... Undoubtedly regeneration takes place in a moment.

Mastricht is quoted here to show that in the elect (the truly called) "spiritual life is restored by regeneration" which issues in action in Conversion, evidenced in faith in God, abandonment of sin, and concern for good works.<sup>3</sup> It is probable that Edwards would have preferred to trace the order of regeneration rather differently from Citron (who gives little evidence from Protestant and Reformed sources for

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1. vide above. pp.241-245.

2. Reformed Dogmatics H. Heppe. p.513.

3. op.cit. pp. 518,519.

making Certitudo the final term of the series) and would have put Sanctificatio as the outcome. Yet even so, the three series would not altogether fit Edwards' view for somewhere between assensus and fiducia he would want to put his "sense of the heart" which "is included in saving faith". What is clear here is that the conversion experience can be seen either as a crisis within, a watershed of experience that creates all the real change in a person's life; or a process that has a critical moment within it. Edwards' Treatise on Grace emphasises the Reformed tenet of instantaneous regeneration and conversion just as Stoddard had done. But his specific revival writings, under the constraint of the errors that needed correction, stressed the whole new life of changed character and attitudes, persisted in and enriched continually.

R.H. Thouless has described<sup>1</sup> three kinds of religious experience, which "resemble one another in being of the nature of a relief from a painful mental state". It is interesting to note that they correspond closely to the three sequences just referred to:- the sense of forgiveness of sins, which could compare with the sequence as to repentance; the sense of felt certainty in belief, which would correspond to the sequence of faith; and the sense of

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1. An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion. (C.U.P. 1923). p.66.

permanence and stability in the divine, which is closely parallel to the series on regeneration. It might be noted in passing, that Thouless places certainty at the outcome of the state that resolves intellectual uncertainty, while Citron puts it as the outcome of regeneration, a place actually within that sequence. We have already noted some doubt as to Edwards' acceptance of this. In Evangelical conversion such as Edwards' deals with, the three kinds of religious experience fuse into one; the sense of forgiveness; the attainment of trust; the knowledge of union with God. And these themselves, with their painful states from which they emerge are involved in the further pattern which Edwards inherited from his predecessors and which he refers to from time to time; the pattern we have referred to as the "analogy" from its mention in the Faithful Narrative.<sup>1</sup> This pattern is itself derived from looking upon religious experience solely in terms of the conversion of St. Paul and later examples like St. Augustine of Hippo and a host of others in the Protestant spiritual tradition. It hinges upon conversion as a crisis, however much it is also seen within a process. The Puritans had in their private diaries, anxiously followed the progress of religion in their souls; and others, either

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1. vide. above pp. 119-129

at funerals or later had produced spiritual biographies all of which tended to uphold this accepted pattern. There was the time of godlessness, of awakening, of seeing oneself as a sinner, of struggle to amend and to approve oneself to God, of being brought down by seeing that the law gave no hope of self-amendment ("legal humbling") of coming to the point where the whole self was brought to be cast entirely upon the mercy of God, ("evangelical humbling") and so to await and to receive the personal revelation of His Grace and acceptance through an enlightened realization of His promise in Christ; with results of comfort and peace of heart and new powers and desires ever to serve God and to have nothing further to do with the life of sin. The Puritans stressed the necessity for contrition and for humiliation with the sense of human desert <sup>1</sup> but there were those, notably Thomas Hooker and Thomas Shepard, both New England writers, who tended to crystallize the whole experience into a rigidity that suggested that men could only be converted in one clearly defined pattern. In their exposition of this path they further went to the extreme of holding that evangelical humiliation required that men should come to the point of acknowledging themselves content to be damned for the glory of God. In Great Britain,

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1. cf. Puritan Devotion. G.S. Wakefield (London 1957). pp. 73, 74.



men like Baxter opposed this trend in their work, partly because they recognized that it was leading to morbidity and to discouragement.

Edwards also, while recognizing the general validity of this pattern, was not prepared to be tied to its details. His Rules for Judging<sup>1</sup> refer to specific evidence for "legal humbling" as not to be insisted on; and in the eighth negative sign in the Religious Affections he holds that it is possible to appear to have followed the established order, yet without real conversion. Edwards very clearly recognized, what more recent psychology has pointed out, that the tradition within which a person is reared provides a strong stimulus of suggestion towards some generally accepted pattern of behaviour, and this applies to the pattern of religious experience.<sup>2</sup> Edwards could see that many in the revival had all the jargon, describing themselves in the proper manner as a 'sink of sin' and a 'heap of black and loathsome filthiness', yet having no real sense of sin.<sup>3</sup> His discriminating mind recognized both the help and also the problems occasioned by the social stimulus in religion; there could be the stimulation to share in the revival by hearing of its influence, but there could

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1. vide above p.189.

2. Thouless. op.cit. ch.2.

3. cf. p225. above.

also be an unconscious readiness to conform to the pattern of religious experience which the revival was making so relevant.

A scheme of what is necessary and according to a rule already received..., has a vast, though to many, a very insensible influence in forming men's notions of the steps and method of their own experiences. <sup>1</sup>

On the other hand Edwards was sufficiently an empiricist to be prepared to accept that all conversion experience would not and did not give evidence of the usual pattern at all; he accepted that to be without it was no evidence of being unconverted;

the manner of the Spirit's proceeding in them that are born of the Spirit is often exceedingly mysterious and unsearchable. <sup>2</sup>

Not that it seems likely that Edwards would have been able to accept the description of the "once-born" or of "unconscious conversion". Broadly speaking the analogy held good for him in all cases; he would say that as God deals with men according to their nature, it seems reasonable that men should be conscious both of their need and of God's mercy to them through Christ. He would look upon these steady church people probably as those "hypocrites" in whom the common

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1. vide p. 1173. above. cf. vol. i. pp. 254, 255 (Works).  
 2. ibid vide. above pp. 227, 228.

grace of the Spirit had been imparted to such an extent, coupled with a "natural temper" that disposes to an appearance of godliness, and the influence upon them of an evangelical background.<sup>1</sup> This is how he regarded many in Northampton, whose life morally and religiously would be regarded by many as exemplary. Most other types of conscious conversion<sup>2</sup> Edwards would have recognised as being covered by the general pattern of the 'analogy'.

In this he is supported by a very widespread testimony, voiced by H.R. Mackintosh:

if the universal experience of believers is any guide, it looks like God's intention that we should first make trial of our moral independence, and, failing utterly, should learn that righteousness and holiness belong to God only..... We must come with empty hands content to owe every thing to God, though it seems more than nature can bear thus to take all and earn nothing.<sup>3</sup>

Coming himself from the background in which the Westminster Confession and Shorter Catechism were providing a tradition similar to Edwards' own he too can speak of an ordo salutis in similar terms;

Probably there will be different stages to recall. One of the earliest, it may well be, is the dull, heavy

1. vide. above p.246.
2. cf. The Battle for the Soul. O. Brandon (London 1960) pp. 28-34. The Psychology of the Methodist Revival S.G. Dimond (O.U.P. 1926) pp. 160-206. Faithful Narrative (Works vol.i. p.355).
3. Christian Doctrine of Forgiveness (Fontana 1961)p. 199.

virtually irresistible and automatically registered consciousness that we are answerable for all we have done and have become; and this may be accompanied by a sombre gloom. On this..... there often supervenes an acute feeling of compunction, of the past as that which we can no longer bear and which must be got rid of..... If thereafter we are confronted with Jesus Christ, if in Him we discover how awful goodness is and how great is the love we have violated, two kinds of change occur in the consciousness of guilt we are considering: first, its gravity is painfully increased by the perception of our sin as antagonism to utter goodness, but along with this comes a joyful and wondering knowledge that none the less His great love is receiving us, and that the estranging power of guilt has been abolished.

Then he stresses the point which is faithful to all that Edwards, his forebears and successors emphasise;

Only, be it noted, between these two last points.... there is no logical road. No kind of analysis theoretically dissecting the first, will produce the second... It is revelation alone that can bridge the distance..... in response to the impression of God which Jesus makes there is a leap of the soul to the triumphant certainty that sin has no longer power to separate us from the Father. <sup>1</sup>

In similar, though in more trenchant terms, Professor Otto Hallesby writes in his book on Conscience, very closely indeed to what Edwards himself would write;

in every spiritual awakening there are some who attain peace and joy with comparative ease. In their case it all takes place not only within a comparatively brief space of time but also without very much of a struggle. <sup>2</sup>

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1. op.cit. p.70.

2. Conscience. O.Hallesby. (IVF. 1962) p.43.

But he goes on to describe the awakening of conscience, which at first speaks of obvious wrong-doing but goes on eventually to reveal the whole person, in attitude and motive as sinful and with no love for God; yet with no true penitence but merely an egoistical fearful distress at sin's final consequences. With this also goes the sense of condemnation in the presence of the grace of God and a possible period of hardening of heart as hope of forgiveness seems impossible. There is an ambivalence: believing that mercy is past and yet thinking of nothing but the possibility of salvation. Hallesby calls this "the most difficult work that God has to accomplish within us". He is breaking down not only sinfulness and wilfulness but also

that confidence which I have in myself, in my own understanding of spiritual things, in my own will, in my own religion and morality, that confidence in myself with which I always oppose God and which is the real hindrance to my being saved....  
He breaks our old self-life by driving it to exhaustion to a point where it has spent all its energies and lies at His feet, surrendered and crushed.<sup>1</sup>

In this condition it is likely that despair will grip the individual; all attempts at improvement in order to deserve forgiveness have failed, and it seems as if he is further from God than ever; in fact the opposite is the case.

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1. op.cit. p.55. cf.ch. vii passim.

Yet in this case, not daring to believe that such a one can have a promise of God, and yet not turning from God, he centres his whole self on God, believing that He is right in all He does, despite the darkness of soul.<sup>1</sup> As he stands, as it were, in the way of God, He is free to impart His saving grace "as to a little child".<sup>2</sup> This theme of the paradox of saving grace, echoes in Hallesby's book what Luther wrote in his ninety-five theses;

God works by contraries so that a man feels himself to be lost in the very moment when he is on the point of being saved. When God is about to justify a man, he damns him. Whom he would make alive he must first kill. God's favour is so communicated in the form of wrath that it seems farthest when it is at hand. Man must first cry out that there is no health in him. He must be consumed with horror.....In this disturbance, salvation begins. When a man believes himself to be utterly lost, light breaks. Peace comes in the word of Christ through faith.<sup>3</sup>

Edwards agrees with it not only in theory; he has himself watched the process working out in the conversion of individuals in the revivals.<sup>4</sup> Yet (and this needs emphasis), Edwards maintains this outline of spiritual process, with the proviso that it does not mean that conversion must happen always and invariably this way, so that without going through this method, a man cannot be converted; and further that it

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1. op.cit. pp. 59,71.

2. op.cit. p.72.

3. Here I Stand. R.Bainton (London 1951) p.82.

4. vide. above. p.44.

is possible to have given some evidence of having had religious experience closely resembling all this and yet not be a truly converted person. In this, as in all else God is sovereign and may work how He pleases. But there will always be that moment of illumination, in which will come the "sense of the heart" and the new view of divine things. Thus the spiritual reflex, in the positive signs of the Religious Affections issuing in the changed life, stands inviolate.<sup>1</sup>

This whole stereotype of conversion, however has been subjected to considerable criticism, whether from a basic lack of true sympathy for the approach, as in Gabriel Hebert's story of the two pastors in Fundamentalism and the Church of God or from a fresh approach to the whole experience of conversion by a deeply sympathetic and understanding pastoral and theological mind as in Owen Brandon's Battle for the Soul. In the latter, the "plan of salvation" applied by a modern evangelist, though in itself far more superficial than Edwards' analogy, is held up for inspection, not because it was superficial, but because it was a set pattern, universally applied, in what necessarily became a rather mechanical fashion, having whatever meaning it had simply because it

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1. G.H. Gerstner's book Steps to Salvation (Philadelphia 1960) suffers by omitting reference to Edwards' flexibility as to the 'analogy'.

was related to those who had had a good deal of previous conditioning in their church life.<sup>1</sup> Brandon would not accept Edwards' presupposition upon the universal necessity for conversion, in the usual sense at least, and would require that unconscious conversion should be recognized more widely. Indeed the whole experience of conversion must be understood in wider terms;

Conversion may not always mean a guilt-conscious sinner seeking the forgiveness of a holy but loving Saviour.<sup>2</sup>

It may mean a much wider variety of attitudes, resolving all manner of inner fears, conflicts and feelings. It requires the combination of psychological insight as well as Biblical and theological grasp. It may be said, that it was in fact the degree of very real psychological insight, and this very empirical attitude in Edwards, though coupled with his theological and pastoral training, that made him able to take the flexible attitude to the whole matter of the ordo salutis - even though he held it to be generally valid.

It has been left however to one right out of the midst of the Protestant church to call in question the whole evangelistic approach of the church in relating the meaning

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1. op.cit. p.65.

2. op.cit. p.92,93.



of God and Christ to man in his sins. Dietrich Bonhoeffer has described the modern church's predicament in its failing attempts to deal with modern man,

God thus became the answer to life's problems, the solution of its distresses and conflicts. As a result, if anyone had no such difficulties, if he refused to identify himself in sympathy with those who had, it was no good trying to win him for God. The only way of getting at him was to show that he had all these problems, needs and conflicts without being aware of it, or owning up to it..... If however it does not come off, if a man won't see that his happiness is really damnation his health sickness, his vigour and vitality despair; if he won't call them what they really are, the theologian is at his wits' end. He must be a hardened sinner of a particularly vicious type. If not, he is a case of bourgeois complacency, and one is as far from salvation as the other.<sup>1</sup>

Bonhoeffer goes on to point out that Jesus did not call men into their sins, but out of them; He did not make them into sinners before He blessed them. He did not "throw any doubt on a man's health, vigour or fortune, regarded in themselves, or look upon them as evil fruits. By contrast, theology thinks that a man can only be addressed as a sinner, after his weaknesses have been exposed; and that his most urgent need, where God's help is required is in his 'inner self'.<sup>2</sup> All this of course, is but part of a bigger theme, and even in this part it is clear that the thesis of Bonhoeffer

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1. Letters and Papers from Prison. (Fontana 1959) pp. 114,115.
  2. op.cit. pp. 117,118.

is not yet on safe Biblical ground. The point is well made that the sin of man to be noticed is not his rather ordinary intimate weaknesses, but his strong sins, qualitative of him and his class. And the relevance of God's grace to man is not just to be represented in terms of first-aid for the incapable, hand in hand with psychotherapy. Much of this has been more adequately and positively dealt with by Brandon, who, while recognising that 'conviction of sin' is "an almost universal factor in Christian development" <sup>1</sup> which the majority of Christian people pass through at some time in their life, yet points out that conversion, if conscious, may be orientated to Christ as Ideal, as Leader or Friend, rather than at first, at all events, as Saviour from sin. It is probable that the traditional background of theology may again be at work here. Bonhoeffer's own church's attitude to the unchurched masses may still have a single track approach evangelistically, much as was the case in New England under Edwards. But even Edwards was manifesting a more pragmatic approach, which has been more than ever possible within the multi-traditional religious situation in modern Britain, as Brandon represents it.

But Bonhoeffer's sweeping rejection of the theological and psychological ministry to men, while it has point, is still

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1. op.cit. p.39.

self-contradictory and would seem to require the substitution of sociological orientation to evangelism rather than psychological. This is not in fact an "either/or" so beloved of some theologians but a clear case of "both/and". We have already seen that Edwards had room for all these in his mind - Gerstner rightly calls him "a 'both/and' theologian" <sup>1</sup> - and his own example for modern pastoral work would lead certainly in this direction. It calls for some assessment thereof of the "analogy" and its application generally, which he believed in. To some extent, the sociological aspects have been referred to, noting it as part of a tradition that was refurbished to deal with pressing ecclesiastical needs, especially among Latitudinarian Protestantism, yet at the same time revealing a permanence of meaning for the present time - even if on finer points most would agree with Mackintosh - "the infinite variety of life scouts all such prescriptions". <sup>2</sup>

All studies in religious psychology have to note and recognise the validity of most of the aspects of the analogy, even if they also go on to point out that it is not sufficiently comprehensive to cover other genuine aspects of spiritual experience. It is here that Edwards also exhibits his own power of spiritual insight in that through and beyond the "analogy" he brings to light the elements that make up the

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1. op.cit. p.14.

2. op.cit. p.202.

spiritual reflex of the twelve positive signs of the Religious Affections. The entirely God-centred adoring view of the believer so delineated, with the spiritual vision charged with the feeling that takes in the whole outgoing self, which concentrates not on the feelings themselves but on the intellectual, moral and spiritual nature of the vision of God, can find interpretation of conversion in terms of the orientation of true love in its understanding, feeling and dedication.<sup>1</sup> Edwards had seen this exemplified among others by his wife, as well as by David Brainerd and earlier by Abigail Hutchinson; but these would not be the only ones even though undoubtedly such close examples were of great help and guidance. We can see an intellectual-mystical state in Mrs. Edwards that seems to correspond closely to St. Theresa's Spiritual Marriage state; a state of contemplation combined with practical activity, a permanent intellectual vision of God with a constant desire to serve Him.<sup>2</sup> It is in fact doubtful whether either Edwards or his wife had an experience of conversion that approximated to the usual stages of the "analogy"<sup>3</sup> even though he accepted it as the normal pattern against which to judge experience.

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1. Brandon op.cit. p.23. cf. C.S. Hall, quoted in S.G.Dimond The Psychology of the Methodist Revival, p.175 - "True piety is earthly love transcendentalised, and the true saint is the lover purified, refined and perfected".
  2. Thoulless, op.cit. pp.232,233. cf. Personal Narrative (Works vol.1. pp.lxv-lxxviii).
  3. vide. quotation above. pp.292,293.

But while the "analogy" or the ordo salutis is upheld, particularly by those who still find their religious life within the tradition in which this pattern of experience has been the accepted way of conversion, it is clear that there would be a desire to interpret it generally more freely than is done by Edwards in the revival writings. Hallesby's book, that reads very much like a modern transcript of seventeenth century pastoral dealing, takes to task this looser approach, that tries to short-circuit the whole spiritual struggle and in the end harms the conversion experience. Is this relaxation of the terms of the ordo a true insight, or is it a deterioration of spiritual and pastoral understanding? We have already noted Thouless' description of religious experience under three kinds, which themselves correspond to three sequences of Reformed teaching upon conversion; Tillich has also identified three kinds of anxiety<sup>1</sup> which accord with the denial of something in existence, and it may well be possible to correlate these meaningfully. The following table, with some corrective suggestions of this thesis, would explain:

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1. Courage to Be. pp. 38ff.

Tillich.	Reformed.	Thouless.
Anxiety as to:-	Conversion, involving:-	A sense of:-
1. <u>Death</u> ; as against ontic self-affirm- ation.	<u>Regeneration</u> (Prepar- atio, Vocatio, Sanc- tificatio).	<u>Permanence</u> and <u>Stability</u> in God.
2. <u>Meaninglessness</u> cf. with spiritual self-affirmation.	<u>Faith</u> . (Notitia, Assensus Fiducia /Certitudo/)	<u>Felt Certainty</u> in belief.
3. <u>Guilt &amp; Condemna- tion</u> . cf. with moral self-affirm- ation.	<u>Repentance</u> (Contritio, Poenitentia, Mortific- atio).	<u>Forgiveness</u> of sins.

Tillich goes further and relates these three kinds of anxiety with three stages of history, one of which predominates in each; thus the ancient world was mainly dominated by ontic anxiety, the medieval by moral anxiety, and the modern world by the spiritual anxiety of meaninglessness. But at the same time he is careful to point out that these three anxieties are related, just as are their respective self-affirmations. As we have noted in Edwards' world, there was the concern to affirm man 'spiritually' in a world that was losing its old meaningfulness in the face of developing science and culture; and theology was hard at work doing so in various directions. Yet at the same time, there was also a sense of losing one's destiny in this meaninglessness, and the whole ontic self-

affirmation of man is called into doubt. Reaction in such circumstances can be to affirm ever more desperately the established pattern, as did the Mathers in New England, while bolstering and plugging in various directions: or, as Stoddard, to reject the developing situation and reaffirm an authoritarianism in theology - the arbitrary sovereignty of God - with an accompanying pressure upon the related anxiety of death, and destiny coupled with its close associate, the moral anxiety which is concerned with guilt. The medieval concern with this last was still very present in Puritan traditions, and the preaching of Stoddard called upon its influence to the full - not calculatingly, but as "deep calleth to deep", from the inner urges of his own unconscious self. If Tillich is right, and the ages are differently dominated by anxiety, yet at the same time it is needful to notice that in all ages the close association of different anxieties provoke their own expressions, then we can understand how it is possible to have the difference of opinion about the nature of conversion as we have discussed above; and how it can be that today, while some still demand an understanding of conversion along the lines of an established 'analogy' that has spoken, and in many cases still speaks to men in need, yet others are pointing to a different kind of religious concern that appertains to a

more dominant anxiety-need, and points to the importance of approaching it with understanding. In the final analysis, just as with each age, so with each individual, the dominant anxiety has deeply associated with it the other two; and while the approach may be along the path of the appropriate requirement, as suggested by the above table, it may well be that sooner or later the pastor will be faced with the need to concern himself with the other aspects of anxiety need. In some such terms, we would understand the outlook of Brandon previously noted.<sup>1</sup> It is probable that by one main line or another of the three, a true conversion has to find the threefold sense in answer to the threefold anxiety along the path of the threefold aspects of the process.

Modern depth-psychology would probably point to the sense of permanence and stability in God, with a certainty in belief, as the deeply basic need of man, inasmuch as the anxiety caused by the sense of loss of being is basic to those other aspects of meaninglessness and guilt. In such a perspective, the sense of forgiveness is a spiritual therapy that enables a man to come to such a final assurance. It is a further indication of Edwards' spiritual insight that he had just this very recognition of ultimate priorities. His positive

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1. vide p.381 above,



signs in the Religious Affections draw us to the goal of union with God in the Spirit as the vital heart of the regenerate life. This union is the spiritual vision of God, the "clear and distinct idea" to which is combined the felt trust and knowledge and love towards God and His works and ways; from which can issue forth the different life of achievement in spiritual activity. Allied to this, and the main way of coming to it, is the ordo salutis wherein true repentance must be fully worked out until the sense of acceptance and new life imparted by grace is felt. Our study would suggest that while Edwards gave his most mature thought, and the best of his philosophic and theological insight to elucidating the sweeping sequence of the twelve positive signs, he took over the "analogy" from the past tradition, and applied it more or less as he had seen Stoddard do. Despite his refusal to be completely tied to it, this way of first repentance and then faith, illumination and peace, was the only way in which people in New England had been converted, and, so far as most of the literature which he read told him, so had people elsewhere. It had not for him the essential nature of the twelve positive signs and he evidently saw that it involved somehow a whole crop of unsatisfactory concomitants - very much as more recent pastoral psychology has seen - though he was not so aware as to the reason. The survey of the literature of the revival

has shown him constantly facing and correcting those whom he would term "evangelical hypocrites"; people who had followed the ordo salutis so far as could be seen, but whose subsequent religion was characterised by a spiritual pride, completely confident in the "experiences" they had had, "impulses and supposed revelations", texts suggested to the mind, coupled with a censorious spirit, sometimes a dogmatic air of a pundit, a noisy assertion of all their spiritual progress, a levity of attitude in dealing with spiritual matters - and with no very evident change of manner of life. Too often this gradually faded into a dull attitude which was described then as "trusting God in the dark". Edwards does not specify whether those who show these manifestations are among the youth, many of whom were converted in the revivals, or older people. But it might be possible to suggest a number of reasons why the presentation of the ordo - the 'plan of salvation' had so many unsatisfactory side-effects, both upon continuing church members and also in the cases of lapsed converts.

In the first place there was the obvious danger occasioned by the social pressure of the revival once it had begun. Even beforehand, Northampton was a place where there had been small revivals under Stoddard; the ordo salutis was probably more or less known to at least all the adults; and a not altogether spiritual curiosity in the religious experience

of the members of the town and church was probably fairly strong in this rather remote township. We have seen Dwight noted that the change in preaching manner and the itinerations of preachers made the church generally prepared for "events of a more interesting nature".<sup>1</sup> During the revival, the whole thrust of the crowded meetings would create, as they always do,<sup>2</sup> a high degree of suggestibility and a ready response to the combined rational and emotional approach that Edwards so well combined. Imitation and even spiritual competitiveness entered in, that Northampton especially should not lag behind other places in continuing to experience blessing. In such circumstances there must necessarily be a considerable amount of conforming to the pattern and a giving forth of such expressions, both of being affected, and of what stages of experience were being from time to time gone through. Here then the ordo has the drawback, as well as the advantage of a recognised pattern of experience.

Next we may see a very real theological and pastoral weakness in the suggestion that to go through the ordo and so to be converted is the main spiritual experience besides which little else is needed except to keep up the final blessed vision and to be able to talk about it. Edwards as we have

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11. cf. p. 36 above.

2. cf. Thouless op.cit. p.148.

seen, had little to say of sanctification in the way that Puritans in Britain were wont to teach; and we noted that he seemed to see revival conditions as the ideal for the church's continuing life.<sup>1</sup> All this forces a pressure upon the church to "keep up" the revival and must tend towards superficiality and pretence. It has no clear view that conversion is the beginning of a growth in grace; indeed Edwards might well reject this view, if it were to mean that the fervour of the conversion were to be taken as a concomitant of that first experience to be replaced by a less flamboyant, steady, glow of spirituality. His attitude on post-conversion Christian life was that the Spirit of God would renew the conversion experience continually and so bring about a completely changed character. Such a presentation of the place of conversion tends to concentrate so much attention on it, and this of course is what happened under Stoddard and Edwards in Northampton, that it could only too easily lead to an unhealthy preoccupation with ones' spiritual state, so that the whole issue of God's love and grace and the Spirit's quickening power becomes regarded in terms of what it means for oneself. The whole work of salvation has its *raison d'être* in what it is going to effect in me. Nothing leads to the ego-centric religiosity of the false conversion like this,

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1. vide pp134-136 above. This too is the implication of the favourite word "engagedness" cf. p.211 above.

the very nature of original sin which taints all it touches.<sup>1</sup>

This however cannot just stand by itself; it is related to the way in which, in Edwards' background and in his own ministry, the evangel is geared to the concern about individual election. Stoddard had tended to push this issue into the background of people's thinking, but it could hardly have been very likely when at the same time the themes of common and saving grace, of the possibilities open to 'natural men' are discussed, and the ways of "preparation" toward the possibility of grace are laid open in fourteen or seventeen directions.<sup>2</sup> Yet it was their tradition to regard the individual as "wax beneath the seal" in conversion.<sup>3</sup> This passive aspect of conversion, in which those passing through the ordo were looked upon, by themselves and others, as in the throes of a process in which they were subject very much to the pressures of irresistible grace, formulated the experience very much in less than fully personal terms. The easily socialised introvert might have a less strenuous experience, and come to a sense of peace quicker than the less controllable extrovert, with his probable generous allowance of unconscious aggression and therefore in all probability, guilt, which would cause him to attempt all the ways referred to in

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1. McKenzie, Psychology, Psychotherapy and Evangelicalism. p.135 cf. Gerstner, Steps to Salvation 83,84 for conversion preaching to the converted.
  2. ibid.
  3. cf. P.Miller. The New England Mind; from Colony to Province. p.64.

the ordo for escaping the true way of humility and loving trust; and each might well elude the insight that would recognize that in fact, his experience was only superficially that to which the 'analogy' really bore witness. Northampton seemed from Edwards account of it, to have a good proportion of this latter kind of person. As evidence of some lack of sense of personal engagement with God Himself in the experience of conversion, other than as a force, we may remember Edwards' reference in the Faithful Narrative to the use God makes of reason in some, among which there were those who <sup>were</sup> afraid that their experience was therefore not a divine illumination.<sup>1</sup>

Both parts of this quotation would seem to tell their own tale. In the impact of the ordo with its correlation of electing grace and the stress on the guilt and condemnation of sin, which God is under no constraint to pardon, there is pressed upon the individual the full sense of anxiety as to his ontological being and as against his moral self-affirmation. But how far were men fully aware of this genuinely? Traceable as this whole experience is to Luther's 'Anfechtung', it is remarkable that he recognised that few knew such a struggle; but it entered into the whole scheme of Protestant moral theology as essential for the saint.<sup>2</sup>

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1. vide above p.133

2. cf. The Righteousness of God. G. Rupp. (London 1953) pp. 105-114. esp. p.114 and 105. n.3.

One final suggestion for the considerable defects in the revival which might be made in looking at Edwards presentation of the goal and way of conversion is to note the lack of emphasis upon forgiveness. Haller has noted that

The Puritan saga did not cherish the memory of Christ in the manger or on the cross, that is the lamb of God sacrificed in vicarious atonement for the sins of man. <sup>1</sup>

Wakefield also has mentioned that they united their meditations on Calvary with the redemptive significance and glory of the total work of Christ.<sup>2</sup> In this, mystical union with Christ by faith is the normative and essential theme. We may lack evidence here because so much of Edwards' writing, of sermons especially, remains unpublished. It is true that we have seen above that at the first (1735) revival people were rejoicing in the "forgiving love of Christ" and the phrase "the dying love" of Christ is a frequent one in Edwards.<sup>3</sup> But as Edwards speaks about the ordo it is become apparent that the great personal sense of forgiveness is actually swallowed in the urge that the whole process engenders, towards the illumination to know that one has come to acceptance and belonging, to the assurance of election, to the joy and peace and comfort of knowing one is a child of God.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Rise of Puritanism. W.Haller (Harper Torchbook 1957) p.151.
  2. Puritan Devotion. G.S. Wakefield. pp. 92.cf. p.5.,
  3. vide. p.21 above.
  4. vide. pp.120/1 above.

It seems clear that most of those affected were far more concerned with escaping the consequences of sin than to feel and know that sin was forgiven; it was important to progress through the process than to enter responsibly into the personal dealing with God that entered into the meaning of the cross. The one great sermon preached by Edwards on Justification by faith in 1734 (he may have preached others) is far more concerned with the place of faith, and its relating us to Christ, and so to His merits, than ever to be concerned with the atonement. Indeed at the beginning, Edwards looks upon forgiveness in justification as an incomplete aspect needing an accepting aspect to complete it, which Edwards relates to the resurrection of Christ.<sup>1</sup> He would say that Christ died and by that passive obedience put away sin; but by his life of active obedience for man, which was recognised in the resurrection by the Father, He has fulfilled all righteousness for His people; so that in Him they are both forgiven and accepted fully as perfect. Yet later the death of Christ is seen to be the culmination both of a life of suffering for sin and of active fulfilment of the will of God.<sup>2</sup> But the drift of the sermon, is not of the cross, but of the place of justification and of faith in the scheme of salvation. This theoretical presentation of the gospel is generally true of Edwards; it

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1. Works. vol.i. p.623.

2. op.cit. p.639.



attaches to the presentation of the ordo, and to what conversion means; and it is expressed also in the way he refers to the "new views" of glory and truth which the believer has. These are very much in abstract terms as "things of religion", "divine perfections and glory", the "divine excellency", the "works and ways of God in the Gospel". We must of course grant that this is not all to be said, and there is the stress on love for God; also it is no doubt an important aspect of faith that it should see and grasp the truth more clearly; there may be something of the period's own influence in the turn of phraseology; yet one is left with this gap in the whole portrayal of conversion, that, though much is said of sense of sin, of humbleness, of light and illumination, of love and admiration, of relish and new sense of the heart, almost nothing is said about a deep sense of having been forgiven. It is possible that Edwards feared that to dwell on this might engender the self-love, the sense of gratitude for God's love to us rather than the love for God for Himself.<sup>1</sup> We have noted that Edwards great concern was to centre the conception of true religious experience in the true union of love, the true vision of divine excellency, in the power of the Spirit; he was one who, in the Puritan tradition, sought to lead to "the sense of permanence and stability in the divine" and also

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1. vide. above. p. 272

"the felt certainty of belief". The ordo was the path out of the anxiety of guilt and condemnation, but the path frequently passed quickly over the answer to guilt and condemnation in the sense of forgiveness, to the other answer of faith and calling and regeneration out of the strong anguishes of penitence.

Edwards is in fact so concerned with the psychology of conversion, that the sense of forgiveness and the process of sanctification find such little consideration. Even further, the eschatological act of justification is interpreted mainly in terms of the experience of conversion and vice versa; thus conversion as an experience is invested by Edwards with the wholeness and completeness of justification. This is why conversion is not looked upon as the first step in a developing growth in grace; although there is a reference to first grace in the Christian experience being as it were embryonic in some, this is a simile which is not really part of his central thought. The psychology of conversion experience turns his thought even in dealing with justification to the theme of the faith which justifies, or the doctrine as part of the scheme of salvation. And in dealing with sanctification again it is the renewal of conversion which, ex hypothesi is an ideally complete experience to be renewed. A converted man is not, in sanctification, exploring the riches of what God has wrought

in justification through Christ's redemptive work, but rather is renewing the revival experience of a wonderful and overwhelming conversion. It may well be that in this under-emphasis, in which forgiveness was too quickly passed by in the concern for the infusion of love and the gift of light, with comfort and peace, that another contribution was made to a state in the experience of some in which a sense of spiritual pride was able to assert itself. In this we must recognise the defect of the quality of Edwards' great contribution to the understanding of genuine spiritual vision as taught in the twelve positive signs.

In all these suggestions as to the causes for the revival defects as latent within the kind of presentation of the Christian gospel that we see in Edwards' own writings, it must not be forgotten that, coupled with what was manifest in Northampton from his own ministry, there was much upon which he was commenting, that derived from what was inspired from other places and ministries. We have noted that in the Great Awakening, there was a good deal that troubled him in the way matters were handled by both clergy and still more by lay evangelists. Indeed in Northampton itself, he had cause for concern once others shared his ministry.<sup>1</sup>

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1. vide. p.44,45 above.

## V. Bringing to the Birth; the Preacher and the Pastor.

When Edwards urged ministers to avoid a "cold manner" in preaching, it was in order that the words they used might be the true vehicles of the meaning they referred to.<sup>1</sup> This was the purpose behind his advocacy of "sensational preaching" by which he meant, not as the term would suggest nowadays, preaching that would make a commotion, but preaching in which the terms and phrases used would be able to convey to the hearers the very sensation of the reference. As we have seen, his epistemology was related to an ideal understanding of the cosmos, in which all things were maintained in being from moment to moment by their being engendered from the mind of God; and in that sense, the universe is a vast complex of ideas in which the human subject is part. This being the case, the world that is external to the mind of perceiving man, comes to his passive intelligence not just as a sensation, but as already charged with the meaning which derives from the creative purpose of God as He thus images forth His ideas. Dead objectivity, without meaning being perceived, is to lose the clear and distinct idea, which must be sensed in the object being presented in experience. Edwards assessment and application for his own use of Newtonian physics and Lockean psychology

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1. vide. above p.153.

enabled him to show man and his mind as in living relation to his cosmos, in which his mind is in intimate connection with his environment. This of itself would seem to suggest that the perceiving mind of any man could therefore at once recognise the reality inherent in any object, but in fact this is not so. The rebellion of man as a sinner makes him blind to the reality of his universe, and words referring to objects become detached from their sense. They can "thus be spoken separately by those who have forgotten the experience, by those who have barely felt it, even by those who never had it and have no idea of the 'actual idea' at all".<sup>1</sup> The word can be but a sound, referring to something which is no more than a hazy, shadowy notion, altogether adding up to a remote relationship with true reality. Edwards saw religion of his day as just in this state in the midst of its jargon. Of course, the perception that truly apprehends the significance of the 'distinct idea', is again a correlation of external object and the perceiving mind by the activity of the Holy Spirit; the idea which is the mind of man and the idea which is the real meaning of the objective truth are both brought into relation from God in whose total activity all these ideas are held. By the Spirit, the mind is enabled, in regeneration,

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1. cf. P. Miller; Jonathan Edwards and the Sense of the Heart; (Harvard Theological Review XLI 1948) p.126.

to perceive what it otherwise is unable to do; it is 'enlightened' so to perceive in the very act of the presentation of the idea to the mind. In this way the full realization of the 'sensation' of what is cognised is gained with its implied accompanying emotional response.<sup>1</sup>

Such a new appreciation is indeed a sense above what is attainable to the ordinary man. At the level of a certain "natural" appreciation of what the senses provide, or an interest that the mind may have in intellectual pursuits there is indeed a certain degree of appreciation. But Edwards has shown that he holds this to be quite of a different order from what the heart relishes in spiritual experience as it is given the new sense of divine things.<sup>2</sup> Use, in this higher experience, is made of the reason, and rational conviction leads on to spiritual. Hence man must be taught to look out on the world of nature, or to hear the doctrine preached, with understanding that can be the entrée for the Spirit's special illumination. Therefore in preaching, great care must be taken also by the preacher, that the words used should make the hearers 'sensible' of the reality to which they refer.<sup>3</sup> Although, it is true, the actual perception and appreciation

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1. op.cit. p.127 cf. Images or Shadows of Divine Things. ed. P.Miller. pp. 19-23.

2. cf. pp.282,283 above.

3. vide. above p.153.

by the hearer of the reality is itself only by the work of the Spirit, nevertheless, through the divine constitution of things, the distinct idea is given through the sensation of the object; and for the Spirit to work in the heart of the sinner, it is essential that the full truth should be made known and that in carefully prepared phraseology and words that might be thought most conducive to the purpose of 'sensible' understanding. Thus, although the exposition may point out the reasonableness of the truth, the insight is not as the conclusion of an argument, but as the vivid and direct experience of the quality of the sensed object. The amount of actual reasoning in conversion Edwards found to vary with different people. Along these lines, Edwards answered the contemporary metaphysical problem in preaching; how, in the light of Locke's epistemology can there be a genuine relation between objects and ideas? How can fixed causal sequences have value, even though the sequence is understood? How can language regenerate men under preaching, if it is but a series of conditioned reflexes paralleling the perception of objects? How do they convey real ideas? <sup>1</sup> It is not quite the case that Edwards therefore solves the problem by action, not by metaphysics. <sup>2</sup> In fact he produces a philosophic foundation to the active preaching ministry in which he works out the principle of leading his listeners to such a comprehension that they see the whole

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1. Jonathan Edwards. P. Miller p.149.

2. op.cit. p.148.

meaning and answer to their state. The insight thus is a Lockean 'simple idea', a unit of experience to which the whole self consents. The natural reflex in the mind's working must be stimulated by the phraseology of the preacher, who must strip the words from all confused and merely ornamental verbiage, so that they become the proper vehicles for sensation of the objects and also the means the Spirit can employ for awakening and illuminating the soul.

But the Spirit is still sovereign. Dr. Perry Miller goes beyond both the evidence and the logic of Edwards' position when in discussing the relation between Edwards' underlying metaphysic and the use of words in preaching, he argues, as of Edwards' own outlook - "language must be freed from stale associations, by forcing words to function in a chain of natural causes so as shock the senses into apprehending the idea.... the shock must be so given that the percipient would receive it in only one way".<sup>1</sup> The fact that Edwards castigated a good deal of the dull and superficial preaching of his day, does not lead logically to the assertion that he held that he had discovered an infallible method in preaching by psychologically gearing in to the metaphysical mechanism of the universe, so as to produce conversions as required.

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1. op.cit. p.158.



Hence even more exception must be taken to his almost ribald conclusion;

"If he could not make good his case in fact as well as in metaphysics they (his critics) would beat him, Shortly after the sermons of 1734, in part, as it seemed, because of them he succeeded; he got up a revival that silenced his critics, attracted the notice of the Protestant world and made Edwards famous. (He) had vindicated in experience, in the shrieks and groans of repentant Americans, the laws of causality and of perception and was destroying Arminianism root and branch. 1

If Edwards believed in anything that he could do to promote conversion, he would almost certainly have agreed with the editors of the Faithful Narrative, Drs. Watts and Guyse, that it was "the common plain protestant doctrine of the Reformation.... that the Spirit of God has been pleased to honour";<sup>2</sup> and especially "the old protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone".<sup>3</sup>

Coupled with Edwards' theoretical account of the correlation of epistemology and semantics in the approach to preaching must also go his view of the activity of the will, Strictly speaking, the phrase the "will" is, as Elwood points out, a façon de parler; and Edwards very clearly established that it is not permissible to talk about the "will" but rather about the agent as willing; "will" has not the power of

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1. op.cit. p.126.
  2. vide above p.109
  3. cf. Intro. to the Sermon on Justification.

choice or to will, but the man chooses and wills whatever he does will. This is set out in the formidable treatise by Edwards entitled A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will, which is supposed to be Essential to moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame.<sup>1</sup> Quite clearly, this is a polemical work, one further broadside against the Arminian position in New England. It is not within the terms of this thesis to discuss the philosophical and theological implications of this treatise but to observe its reflection upon Edwards' pastoral psychology. Briefly, Edwards discriminated between moral necessity and determinism, which is consistent with moral judgment and responsibility, and compulsion, which is not. Freedom of action therefore is "freedom from hindrance for doing what one wills". However the choice is come by and made, yet if "there is nothing in the way to hinder his pursuing and executing his will, the man is fully and perfectly free". Calvin had previously referred to this:

This is perfectly true; but why should so small a matter have been dignified with so proud a title? An admirable freedom!<sup>2</sup>

But Edwards was disposed to explore the thought to considerable lengths. His view reflects similar trends in Hobbes and Hume

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1. Published 1754 but had been in mind since at least 1748 (cf. Works vol.1. p.cxxxvii cf. Yale Edition ed. P.Ramsay (Yale U.P. 1957) pp. 2-8.)
  2. Inst. II.ii. 7.

but it is doubtful how far Edwards had read much in them or had been influenced by them before writing the treatise. The liberty the self has in choosing however, is not that of indifference. While there may be indifference before the man addresses himself in the first place to the issue at stake, whatever it may be, yet as soon as there is any personal approach to a situation the volition and so the action will be determined by "a prevailing inclination of the soul". The man determines himself and the will "is always where the greatest apparent good is"; and as the man wills, he acts. The act of will is according to the last dictate of the understanding, it is not the victory of one strong motive over active competitors. The choice depends upon the good as seen by the mind,<sup>1</sup> and any debate by the mind or suspension of action is itself an act of willing.

Edwards' view is derived from the Augustinian tradition and what is embodied in Luther's Bondage of the Will, but rendered into the terms of philosophy influenced by Locke, especially by his chapter 'Of Power' in his 'Essay concerning Human Understanding'. As Edwards had a philosophy of causation very like Hume's but with the added certainty, that "connections" (Hume's "constant conjunctions") were not merely empirical norms,

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1. cf. Freedom of the Will. Part I. Sect.ii. (Works vol.i.p.7) where this must be "taken in a large sense" - to include apprehension as a whole, not just reason.

but harmonious correlations within the divine creative activity, his view of necessity means the fixed connections between a subject and its predicate which God upholds. All events therefore are determined, but acts are not compelled if there is no external action contrary to the action willed. All moral action takes place under moral necessity, which is simply the normal fixed connection in terms of motive or inclination. Thus the will is involved in the universal principle of necessary causation; there is no essential difference in principle between moral and natural necessity but only as to the terms connected. Thus he can say that it is a man who wills when he wills, and so is capable of praise or blame for what he wills for there is no necessity for the man to will and so act differently from his desire. Moral necessity is itself within the willing act, not, as with natural necessity, apart from it and constraining it apart from its own inner constraint of choice. All this understates the universal scheme of the divine order, which would say that in willing and acting, it is God by His universal and intimate maintenance of causation who makes a man will as he wills, with a necessity which lies within the choosing activity.

The regenerative working of God within the mind of man is variously described by Edwards, as we have already seen,

either as the infusion of a new nature or principle of nature by the Spirit, working within the mind or self of the unregenerated person; or as an illumination to the mind whereby it senses completely, ie. with accompanying feeling or 'sense of the heart', the 'distinct idea'. In this way he clothes the traditional Augustinian-Reformed and Biblical terms into "modern" philosophic ones. As the preaching of the Gospel, or the presentation of the Biblical message, brings to the hearer the objective idea, with which God has already in the divine constitution associated all the sense of the knowledge of Himself, so His Spirit within the mind of the elect, directs the view to see this as the greatest apparent good and to incline the self towards the Gospel in choice and action. The Spirit, as we have seen Edwards teaching, so illumines the mind to see clearly the meaning of the Gospel that the perception carries with it the intense appreciation and delight in what is truly perceived in its true significance, so that inevitably the willing act of faith and response follows. Thus Edwards integrates his view of grace working through the total harmony of creation, with a modern epistemology, and a view of volition that makes it entirely consistent with his view of the place of the affections. This whole circuit, in which the mind is primarily passive, encloses the action

of the self within the activity of the divine both objectively and subjectively, and seems to involve the individual within, again, a subtle mechanism, in which however much from the kind of phenomenological approach that Edwards uses a good deal in the Inquiry he can argue that the man's will and act is his own, it is still subject to the question as to what causes the motive, that inclines him, to incline him. This was in fact asked soon after the publication of the Inquiry.<sup>1</sup> And Professor Paul Ramsey also points out that Edwards defines moral necessity as indicating more what a man can do in willing than what he cannot do if he does not will.<sup>2</sup> Edwards' elaborate reinterpretation of the doctrine of grace and freedom (or responsibility) in order to justify divine sovereignty before the minds of men, may give satisfactory account of the assurance "By grace ye have been saved", but it still leaves in an unsatisfactory state the issue about those who reject that grace. Of them he has spoken of an "external influence" upon them by the Spirit; by this he would apparently imply that there is a presenting to their intelligence the truths of the Gospel, but without the subjective activity from within, in which the truths are seen with delight as the greatest good, and so become the motive for the response of choice. However

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1. Inquiry into that Freedom of the Will etc.; by Jonathan Edwards ed. P. Ramsey. (Yale edition). p.10. refers to J. Dana's two books An Examination of.... Edwards' "Enquiry etc." (1770) and The Examination etc. Continued (1773).
  2. op.cit. p.46.

unsatisfactory theologically or philosophically his view here may finally be reckoned,<sup>1</sup> it was this that formed the unseen structure to his own preaching practice.

Edwards thought of his Enquiry as rebutting two main evils which effectively spoiled evangelism. This comes out in a letter written to the Rev. John Erskine of Culross, Scotland on August 3rd 1757.<sup>2</sup> The first he refers to, speaking of a time,

when the minds of sinners are affected with some concern for their souls and they are stirred up to seek their salvation. Nothing is more necessary for men, in such circumstances than thorough conviction and humiliation; than that their consciences should be properly convinced of their real guilt and sinfulness in the sight of God and their deserving of his wrath. But who is there that has had experience of the work of a minister, in dealing with souls in such circumstances that does not find that the thing that mainly prevents this is men's excusing themselves with their own inability..... Conscience does not condemn them for those things (i.e. no true love for God) because they cannot love God of themselves, they cannot believe of themselves and the like. They rather lay the blame of these things..... to God.... for want of being thoroughly instructed in that great and important truth, that a bad will or an evil disposition of heart itself is wickedness..... this notion of their inability to help it, excusing them, will keep them from proper conviction of sin herein.

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1. Dr. Austin Farrer's Gifford Lectures 1957 - The Freedom of the Will have much that is apposite to Edwards' especially chapter 6, which discusses will and act much as Edwards does; ch.7 which echoes the point of Edwards' determinism of action by the last dictate of the understanding; and ch.11 on choice and motive.
  2. Works. vol.i. pp. ccxii, ccxiii.

Dwight points out that Edwards is distinguishing between physical and moral inability. He saw that the well-taught Puritan doctrine had become a cause for spiritual apathy, in which the teaching on election, predestination and irresistible grace and reprobation, had produced an attitude in which the one who discerned no stirrings of grace or faith within could reply to the evangelistic call - "I cannot; God has not enabled me". Edwards knew that in Puritan doctrine this itself was not an excuse, but a further condemnation, for to be without grace was not reckoned to leave the sinner with a sound reason for faithlessness, and a sense of excuse. But it was a contemporary need to bring this home with understanding, and he was hopeful that his treatise would enable ministers to make clear that the causative chain of moral necessity did not absolve men from responsibility. Inability was a choice; a refusal; and therefore deeply culpable. This recognised, all the beginnings of the conviction of sin would be enhanced towards the deep distress and humiliation that led to the stillness before God, which in the ordo was the only place in which light might begin to come. But to go on thinking of inability as an excuse, as if it were a physical preventive, a natural necessity, is to provide a "strong hold" and a "sheet anchor" to those whose "hearts stand out", when "the



gospel is preached and its offers and invitations and motives<sup>1</sup> most powerfully urged". The "design and end of the law, as a schoolmaster to fit them for Christ, is defeated".<sup>1</sup>

The other evangelistic problem is involved in the idea of a self-determining will. Edwards has little trouble in pointing out that this implies,

man is not dependent upon God; but God is rather dependent upon man in this affair; for he only operates consequentially in acts, in which he depends on what he sees we determine and do first.<sup>2</sup>

Thus faith, honour to God, seeking conversion, true holiness are all dismissed by "notions of liberty of indifference, contingency and self-determination".<sup>3</sup> And the possibilities of evangelistic preaching are entirely reduced towards such; for their view

implies a power men have, at all times, to determine them to repent and turn to God. And what more can more effectually encourage the sinner, in present delays and neglects, and imbolden him to go on in sin, in a presumption of having his own salvation at all times at his command?<sup>4</sup>

Edwards was quite clear in his view that the New England Arminianism that taught this among other doctrines, was effectually killing evangelism; but he was also aware how

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1. ibid.
  2. ibid.
  3. ibid.
  4. op.cit. p.ccxiv.

dull repetition and unskilful handling of Calvinist doctrines was equally deleterious. Yet his own sermon on Divine and Supernatural Light in magnifying the grace of God, might well be thought to produce the same result in the mind of man as he has castigated above.

However, in actual fact, in his preaching, Edwards is always urging his hearers to 'improve' their opportunity. In an undated sermon<sup>1</sup> (probably therefore before 1733) he urges

I would earnestly exhort those who hear me to make to themselves a pure heart. Though it be God's work to give it, yet it is as truly your work to obtain it.  
 .... All pure and holy exercises are man's acts and they are his duty.

Another<sup>2</sup> on the arbitrary sovereignty of God yet calls upon the congregation

to admire the grace of God, that he should condescend to become bound to us by covenant.

Yet, it must be noted, this is

towards believers, when once they have believed in Christ, and should for their more abundant consolation become bound. So that they can challenge salvation of this Sovereign; they can demand it through Christ as a debt.

Edwards would not have said this about the unconverted.

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1. Works. vol.ii. p.912. Sermon IX Application 3.
  2. op.cit. p.854. Sermon IV.

Nevertheless, Gerstner summarizes Edwards paradoxical doctrine of ability thus;

"it is the realization of their moral inability that is the occasion for the realization of and exercise of their natural ability. The sinner may object.... that the strong desire for salvation that he needs is quite out of his reach. True, replies Edwards, but the need of it may stir you up to seek it. If you will use the means that are within your reach, God may give you what is not in your reach".<sup>1</sup>

As opposed to Wesley who always preached for decision, Edwards called on men to seek.<sup>2</sup> Yet he often did so with such earnestness and encouragement that it was not far removed from an appeal for conversion.

In the light of the foregoing, the preaching background of Edwards' view of the importance of the verbal sensation, and its promotion, under the grace of the Spirit, of the perception of the distinct idea, so that the affections are elicited and the motive for the response of the will provided, we must turn to the aspect of Edwards' preaching by which he is most popularly known - his emphasis upon the certainty and terrors of hell. It has already been noted earlier that opinion on this has widely fluctuated, from an attribute to him of being a 'Fiery Puritan' to an attempt to discount the whole reputation as dependent on little more than one sermon.

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1. Steps to Salvation p.91.
  2. op.cit. p.95.

We have seen reason to discount both of these overstated views.<sup>1</sup> Edwards did preach on hell torments on a number of occasions so far as the published material reveals and how far it may be increased by the large amount unpublished can only be conjectured. If there were a good deal more it would not greatly alter our view of Edwards for he quite deliberately and convincingly gave attention to this topic and defended his action against those who thought that he should not.<sup>2</sup> It should not be thought that he was a typical 'hell-fire preacher' however. His tall, spare, figure in the pulpit spoke quietly with hardly a gesture, though "he had a piercing eye"<sup>3</sup> and "his language was with propriety and purity..... nothing ornamented. Florid diction was not the beauty he preferred.... precision of sentiment and clearness of expression are the principal characteristics of his pulpit style".<sup>4</sup> Gerstner rightly comments on him;

What must have been especially terrifying to Edwards' audience listening to his merciless pictorial representations of the pit was the realization that they were not hearing a sensationalistic ranter striving for an effect, but a prodigious and cool intellect driven by the purest moral earnestness seeking to approach some adequacy of representation for a transcendently awful fact.<sup>5</sup>

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1. vide above pp. 14, 15. cf. pp. 29, 33, 34-35; 39, 42.
  2. vide above p. 153.
  3. Intro. to the Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended. (Works. vol. i. p. 144).
  4. ibid.
  5. Steps to Salvation. p. 24.

An interesting parallel here is able to be suggested between Edwards and Wesley. Dr. S.C. Carpenter has commented on Wesley and Whitfield,

It seems at first curious that the physical paroxysms of converted hearers in process of being converted, occurred through Wesley's preaching rather than through that of his colleague (Whitfield). Mr. A.D. Belden explains this by saying that -'Whitfield's more dramatic and warmer emotional style in preaching expressed a degree of the audience's emotion for them and so served as a safety valve, whereas Wesley's colder type of utterance, his more statuesque delivery left his hearers pent up emotionally and liable to sudden convulsive and even physical outbreaks' (George Whitfield p. 77) <sup>1</sup>

The same could well be said of Edwards. He spared no pains to paint "in lively colours" the most harrowing pictures of suffering in eternal torment, using not only Scripture but reasonable arguments that this must necessarily be so, and drawing upon the actual known terrors of this life to argue the 'much more' of what would be worse in its nature and infinite in duration. For a special occasion such as the Enfield sermon, to a people known to be especially careless in religion, we have noted that he would work over his phraseology to increase the threat that it contained; and he would create the existential situation of final judgment in the minds of his congregation by representing their dismay and grief

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1. Eighteenth Century Church and People (London 1959) p.199.

before the wrath of God, either at the last day or on a godless deathbed.<sup>1</sup> Yet all this would be done in quiet, measured tones, his voice even "a little languid" and "low for a large assembly" although with "a proper emphasis, just cadence, well-placed pauses, and great distinctness in pronunciation".<sup>2</sup>

Edwards did this quite deliberately, not merely because he believed in the truth of his subject, but because he thought it his responsibility to use the truth to the full to "awaken sinners in Zion". He had thoroughly imbibed the view of Stoddard on this<sup>3</sup> and it combined with his view of man's two basic inner compulsions, fear and love, which "rise and fall, like the two opposite scales of a balance".<sup>4</sup> If men did not love God the only possible and right thing to do, right because it would be following the way God had ordained, was to scare men thoroughly, to accentuate the fear that would be there in their hearts in so far as that their lack of love for God must necessarily result in that condition. There was a practical drawback in this method, which Edwards is quite aware about. The "awakening sermon" becomes a stereotype, pigeon-holed in the recognition of the regular congregation,

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1. vide. above pp. 34,35,39-40.

2. Works. vol.i. p.144.

3. vide p.105 above.

4. Religious Affections; eleventh negative sign (Works. vol.i. p.259) cf. p.234 above.

and in more than one sermon, Edwards openly laments that "for all the awakening sermons they have heard" there are those "yet secure in sin" however much they are told about hell.<sup>1</sup> The task for the preacher in a church that had got used to "awakening sermons" and was tending to excuse its lack of response to Gospel preaching either by a misused application of human inability or by the self-comfort derived from the opposite view of self-determination, that "when I want to, I will", was the combined effort to make clear that any kind of unresponsiveness was sin, that salvation was of God alone and must be intensely sought by every provided means, and that the whole activity of seeking was fraught with the moment by moment danger of sudden precipitation into the indescribable horrors of everlasting damnation. Such a sermon as The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners preached as a series during the first revival<sup>2</sup>, urges to repentance by insisting that God is under no obligation to answer man's seeking, for man can claim nothing from him as of right or by promise. This sermon, Dwight claims, "compels him (the hearer) as he stands before his Judge, to admit, if he does not feel, the justice of his sentence" Edwards was early convinced, says Dwight, that to do other than insist on these doctrines with penitents would "have utterly undone them".

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1. Works. vol.ii. pp.206,219 cf. p.35, above.

2. vide p.18 above cf. Works vol.i. p.lxxxv, xcii.

In Edwards' preaching it is important to note his attitude to imagination. He accepted, of course, that imagination was part of the mental endowment of man, a God-given 'faculty' necessary even for spiritual understanding in a measure; it is 'that power of the mind' by which ideas of external things can be had which are not objectively present, and these can have a "liveliness" of character which makes the recipient think that they are there. Edwards notes its relationship to physical conditions of brain and body, and suggests that the imagination has greater influence in those with a weakness along these aspects of personality.<sup>1</sup> The trouble with imagination arose when it either was naturally too powerful in an individual or was stirred up to overwhelm other mental aspects or 'faculties'; then it brought into true spiritual experience what was not truly of God, even though it might be religious in its content.<sup>2</sup> It was the stimulant for ambiguous religious experience, the avenue of merely psychological impressions with which the "evangelical hypocrite" was satisfied, as Edwards pointed out repeatedly in the revival. Consequently in his Directions for Judging he urges discrimination as to the spiritual effect being 'upon the Will or Heart, not on the Imagination'.<sup>3</sup> There is a parallel therefore in his thinking

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1. vide above pp. 149, 2623.

2. ibid pp. 157, 179, 180, 22139.

3. ibid p. 287.



about the imagination as with the affections;<sup>1</sup> for Edwards discriminates between affection and passions in terms of suddenness and violence of the latter; and imagination itself is of value in the measure that it is restrained and subjected to the other activity of the mind. Otherwise it can be the very avenue of Satanic temptation and delusion, whereby ideas are excited in the mind, that dominate the whole self.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore in these terms that we can note the use of imagination, in representing the terrors of hell in literal detail, in terms derived from the most dreadful experiences of the present life... Yet it was totally involved in a Biblical and 'rational' argument, to keep the imaginative element within bounds. What Edwards does not specifically say, but what is implied in his references is that imagination is of value or otherwise according to the purpose of its use; and that purpose cannot just be generally religious; i.e. it is not enough for it simply to convey satisfying impressions or hallucinations of religious sights or sounds; for then the purpose is fulfilled in the individual's satisfaction with his experience. Only as the imagination is harnessed to the full pursuit of the truth, and the experience of trust and love for God himself is it playing its proper part. Edwards

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1. ibid. p. 202.

2. ibid. p. 287.

in his hell-fire preaching drew on it for just this end; but he did not seem to make much of the fact that it had also a part to play in the positive approach to God in faith- probably because he was so constantly finding the self-centred experiences of the revival imaginatively dwelling upon revelations of God for the satisfaction of the person concerned. Yet unquestionably, without recognition by him, imagination was involved in the perception of the 'distinct idea' of the gospel, which inspired also the true religious affection.<sup>1</sup>

Edwards really divided his congregation into two, according to their openness to approach by reason or by imagination, Elwood<sup>2</sup> quotes from Edwards' private notebook,

In the more unthinking people such as husbandmen and the common sort of people who are less used to much reasoning, God commonly works this conviction of sin by begetting in their minds a dreadful idea and notion of the punishment. In the more-knowing and thinking men the Holy Spirit makes more use of rational deductions to convince them that 'tis worth their while to seek earnestly for salvation.

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1. Professor J. McIntyre of Edinburgh, writing on The Place of Imagination in Theology in the Expository Times LXXIV.1. pp. 16-21 refers to Kant, S.T. Coleridge and R.G. Collingwood as those who found a positively good place for imagination in epistemology. Hence he suggests that the poetic experience of the glory of creation through imagination is because there is imagination, of God, in it. It is strange that Edwards had not had some such thought in the light of his own epistemology and aesthetic sense.
  2. The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards. p.4.

Yet even so, as Gerstner rightly points out, Edwards never reckoned to scare men into conversion. In an early sermon, before 1733, when it seems Edwards was concentrating a good deal upon this kind of preaching, possibly under the influence of Stoddard, he points out that the very sight of hell itself would not be conducive to real repentance;

If it should not fright men to death.... It would probably drive them to despair.... Instead of driving them to God, it would probably make them hate him the more..<sup>1</sup>

Rather it is the whole of Scripture in its warning and promise which is the best means of leading to conversion; consequently his own ministry of warning and promise, law and gospel, was he thought, along the lines of Scripture. But it must be asked whether in fact he went beyond the word of Scripture in describing hell and judgment in 'lively colours' to create something of the impression which he has yet said might well be injurious. He did it as of loyalty to God's warnings in Scripture and in earnest concern for the souls of men; and he did it with the clear insight that this side of ministry was to awaken sinners to seek, but it could not enable sinners to be saved. In his Rules for Judging he urges that the seeker should be aware of his need as a sinner and not just concerned with "freaks and frights" among other things. Again in the

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1. Works. vol.ii. p.70.

eighth negative sign of the Religious Affections he contrasts conviction of sin by the working of the Holy Spirit with 'terrors' from 'frightful apprehensions of Hell' which however are not true convictions. Fear may well be an accompaniment of conviction; but conviction must have a different content, a just and reasonable view of one's sinful state before God.

Edwards never believed in skimping the work of conviction. A comparison might well be made in this between his preaching and what is to be seen in two contemporary works of a similar nature in Great Britain; Philip Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul (1745) and William Romaine's The Life of Faith (1763) neither of which stress the terrors of hell though reference generally is made to the "wrath of God abiding upon the sinner". Rather, Edwards would find a more suitable ally in the recent writer, Otto Hallesby when he warns,

most preachers who still preach the law of God take the edge off the sword of the law at the very moment when it is about to strike the sinner.

They speak clearly and forcibly about what the law of God requires. But no sooner have they done this, than they hasten to say to the awakened soul who has begun to take these divine requirements seriously and is therefore ready to proceed to fulfil them. 'This you understand is the law and the will of God and you and I must know what the law of God is. But you must not imagine that you can fulfil it, for that is impossible. To think that you can is only a manifestation of the self-confidence and pride which is inherent in your old nature. You should much rather thank God that Christ has fulfilled the law in your stead, and that you need

only believe on Him to be saved'..... Those who thus deal with such souls desire to help them not to come under the law, but to lay hold of grace and become free and happy Christians at once..... But such preachers forget that a soul cannot believe in Christ until he has been made to feel his own helplessness.... As a result of this the believing soul believes neither in the law nor in grace; he appropriates the grace of God with his head only and not with the heart....<sup>1</sup>

Although Edwards had no qualms about the outcries and other physical effects of such preaching, he could not be accused of being an emotionalist preacher. Edwards, unlike some undiscerning moderns was quite unprepared for emotional expression and thoroughly recognised the important place emotion must have in the eliciting of a completely personal response. But that is not to be reckoned as the same as 'emotionalism' where the arousing of the feelings is to a great extent the main purpose of the approach, S.G. Dimond has well pointed out in his book on the psychology of the Methodist revival, that conviction of sin, due to the awakening of the mind and its conscience, on moral questions, must involve also the whole apparatus of emotion, desires and feelings.<sup>2</sup> Dr. J. Mcquarrie also quotes Professor H.H. Farmer (in Revelation and Religion) to the point that feelings refer to their own specific situation, and include an understanding of the situation.<sup>3</sup> The popular pastoral differentiation made still

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1. Conscience pp. 47,48.

2. The Psychology of the Methodist Revival p. 199.

3. "Feeling and Understanding" (Theology May 1955).

in preaching, between understanding and feelings (or emotions) is still harking back to an outmoded faculty psychology from which Edwards was seeking to deliver the church of his day and might well be used for the present! He saw that the will of God, and the law of God and the holiness of God present to the understanding an implied view of judgment upon sin and he explored the implications to the utmost to stir up in the minds, especially of lax church people, an understanding fear, a rational terror that would lead to action. Dimond here again points out that revival fear did not inhibit action - as in fact instruction alone often does - but rather strengthens effort towards a prize imaginatively recognized, even though at times it may seem all the more beyond one's grasp.<sup>1</sup> In this we are faced with the basic paradox of Christian ethics that a man is called to reach after what must for ever elude him fully in this life; yet with the promise of a certain hope of God's grace, that while the achievement of entire holiness is ever beyond him, the acceptance within the full range of divine fellowship through union with Christ, the Holy One, may be his. Yet that fellowship and union and acceptance cannot be his through striving; he cannot under any circumstances lift himself up into the divine relationship. True seeking, with the ever more feverish energy that results can

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1. op.cit. p. 202. cf. Stoddard's combination of hell-fire fear and the open communion, and "safety in approaching" God without latent concern about election.

only be led rightly to the moment of stillness, when in the want of knowing what to do further, and in fear that the nothing that seems left leaves one in a hopeless state, is in fact the moment when 'the comforts of the Gospel' might begin to arise.

Edwards had a good deal to support him in this evangelistic approach and has a good deal to uphold him even in the present. Not the least has been the thesis of evangelism by the American Charles G. Finney in his Lectures on Revivals of Religion (1840) which, with Edwards own, is referred to in some fulness by Dr. William Sargant in "Battle for the Mind"<sup>1</sup> Sargant also points out that "Intellectual indoctrination without emotional excitement is remarkably ineffective"<sup>2</sup> and instances Edwards as one who used to the full the methods that had underlying them physiological mechanics which are identical with brain-washing under modern totalitarian control. Dr. Sargant seems not to be too clear about the thesis of his book for while in the Foreword he disclaims a thorough discussion of conversion, as omitting in his work any reference to intellectual aspects of it and concentrating upon physiological stimuli, he is at pains to suggest that this understanding of the working of the brain in conversion is necessary to the work of the church. Yet in the final chapter he

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1. London 1957. Pan Books 1960.

2. op.cit. (Pan book edition) p. 100.

points out that whatever may be the value of overwhelming people emotionally, this is no longer the eighteenth century when it could take place, and the intellectual climate is all important. While the scientific aspect of the book is important, it is quite clear to anyone with a knowledge of the religious history Dr. Sargant comments upon, that he has overstated his case, simply because he has been subtly led into explaining conversion situations mainly in terms of the view of conditioned stimuli that he is concerned with, and omitting the intellectual and rational aspects that are so vital in relation to human beings. The result is a considerable misrepresentation of the Biblical and ecclesiastical precedents he refers to. What does come out of his work, however, is some further light on the way in which the chain of experience referred to in the ordo salutis can be elicited to some considerable extent without it involving a really spiritual conversion but simply a psychological one, with subsequent lapses and distortions. We have seen that Edwards was very clear in discriminating on this matter and neither accepted that some outward exhibition of the ordo necessarily implied true conversion, nor was true conversion always expressed in terms of the ordo. But it is important, with Edwards, not to set at a distance from each other the spiritual and psychological. As we have seen, Edwards's philosophy makes a close



association between God's activity as creator and as saviour, even though he preserves an essential difference. The psychological pattern of man's inner activity is a work of God, which He uses to bring about genuine regeneration. The 'new nature' is a different principle basic to the whole pattern of the mind's working which guides that activity on different lines than before; but it is not a new 'faculty' or pattern. Edwards held that preaching, in order to serve the working of the Spirit of God, must ally itself with the created pattern<sup>h</sup> X, which God has provided and, according to the activity of which, influence is made upon the individual. This is not simply to apply a technique that mass-produces Christians; but it is to be "a wise master-builder" aware of what one is doing in the winning of souls.

Is it however a 'human' wisdom? This is apparently the view of Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones in a critique of Sargant's book and also of Jonathan Edwards..<sup>1</sup> He accepts that Sargant's view, that in hell-fire preaching, Edwards

Allowed his imagination to run riot. Thereby he began to do something closely akin, to put it mildly, to that which is described by Dr. Sargant in his book.

It is probable that this author does not know what Edwards

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1. Conversions; Psychological and Spiritual. (IVF.London 1959) p. 33.

is consciously about, for the last thing that Edwards did, was to let his imagination 'run riot'. Nevertheless, it also seems that here we have the kind of attempted distinction between 'spiritual' and 'psychological' that Edwards would have condemned as arguing along the lines of false 'philosophy'. Edwards would raise serious questions about this author's absolute discrimination between psychology and the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Again the separation of approaches to mind, emotions and will in this pamphlet would produce his very similar corrective..<sup>2</sup> If you state the truth properly, Edwards would say, you address mind, feeling and will together, in the co-ordinated re-action of the whole man; only an outmoded faculty psychology is ignorant of this; and the weight of modern psychology is giving him massive support in this very emphasis. We may in fact, recognise two real problems in Edwards thorough-going practice here; one is theological the other is pastoral. Edwards believed in hell; he believed that the terrors of eternal damnation were real; he believed that as men were naturally blind, deaf and utterly without true love for God, their basic attitude to Him must be fear (according to his analogy of the balance of fear and love). He believed that that fear was well-founded, by the constitution of God Himself. The task of the preacher therefore must be to awaken and heighten

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1. op.cit. p.39.

2. ibid.

that fear of the reality of hell until men would seek wholeheartedly even though from the false motive of self-salvation and self-love.<sup>1</sup> Only then could they be stirred to the point where they could truly be placed ready to receive saving grace by the sovereign work of the Spirit. As we have seen English writers on similar themes, contemporary to Edwards gave far less attention to hell-fire preaching, and this is also true of Wesley,<sup>2</sup> although Baxter in the seventeenth century can write in similar vein to Edwards.<sup>3</sup> The theological question therefore, from Edwards is, what is to be made of the doctrine of hell in a theology that is not universalist? And does a repressed bad conscience about the doctrine of hell lead to a dislike of the emphasis on fear and indeed upon the approach to the emotions in preaching? The pastoral problem derives from this; in the evangelistic approach to men for conversion can 'successful' methods escape the additional liability to many lapses and false experiences? Apart from Edwards' view of the need to correlate the psychological and semantic aspects of preaching, does not his right insight into the human mind necessarily involve side-effects of imitation of the genuine

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1. cf. also N. Snaith Mercy and Sacrifice (A Study in the Book of Hosea) SCM 1953: "The secret of any reformation in the individual or in a group large or small is in the emotions. Men must become enthusiastic; their emotions must be stirred. They must be whipped up by hatred or transformed by love. This is because they are living beings, persons not automata." (p. 68).
  2. cf. Dimond op.cit. p.83.
  3. cf. Saints Everlasting Rest. ch.6. (1819 Abridged Ed.)

spiritual experience which he attributes to either common grace or Satanic caricature? And therefore is evangelism to reckon on either "making mistakes or making nothing"? These two problems are inter-related; the fact that from the eighteenth century onwards in England "this element (the Devil and his angels, the pit and the lake of fire) tended to drop out of popular Christianity altogether - much to the detriment of the depth of the Gospel";<sup>1</sup> without any "effective translation" has possibly very considerably strengthened the pastoral truth of Edwards that fear as well as love operates within the human mind, and to forget it courts evangelistic failure.

But to accept it as fully as he did produces many pastoral difficulties. Edwards found that his pulpit work produced a crop of problems, in which for a long time his week-day hours were fully occupied. Edwards had fully accepted the principle of Stoddard that no man could properly judge of another's spiritual state, and yet he found himself faced with the imperative responsibility of helping and counselling converts. Long after the revival was over he wrote to a fellow minister,<sup>2</sup>

I am far from, pretending to a discriminating judgment of men's spiritual state, so as infallibly to determine who are true converts and who are not.... I have seen enough of my own fallibleness and of the uncertainty of my own judgment in things of this nature...

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1. cf. Honest to God. J.A.T. Robinson (SCM London 1963) p. 16.
  2. To Peter Clark of Salem Village. May 7th 1750 quotn. from Elwood op.cit. p.186. n.23.

But from the first revival and in the Great Awakening he was so sought after, and he found his ministry was so needed to interpret experience that, while he would only use guarded terms as to anybody's spiritual state, he would attempt to direct them so as to understand what God was doing in them and for them. For some it involved increasing terrors, through 'beating them off' from every attempt to provide themselves a refuge to lay hold upon, rather than upon Christ alone; for some it meant removing erroneous notions such as that the unpardonable sin had been committed; for some it meant acquainting them with the fact that the 'comfort of the Gospel' had truly begun to arise within them; for some to help them to understand what had happened to them, and whether it was a genuine work of grace. In this Edwards looked upon his task as a co-worker with Christ, and it was imperative 'to strike while the iron is hot'.<sup>1</sup> For all this he had had first-hand experience and training under Stoddard, the guidance of New England writers from Hooker and Shepard to Stoddard's own books; his own very considerable Bible knowledge and theology; his early understanding of the implications of 'modern' psychology. But all the while he was re-valuating his knowledge and trimming it in some details to his continuing pastoral experience. He often argued from what experience

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1. Works (vol.i. p.392).

taught - "God commonly works" in certain ways and he found that this was not greatly different from what he saw exemplified in Biblical examples.

In the defence of the revival against its detractors we have seen Edwards pointing out that genuine spiritual experience can be mixed with disfiguring aspects. Generally speaking so far as the revival as a whole was concerned, he is prepared for imitations of true religion, either from the effects of mass influence, the "common working" of the Holy Spirit or Satanic counterfeit. All revival activities must therefore be complicated by a mixture of both genuine and false religion which however does not exclude the reality of the work as a genuine work of God.<sup>1</sup> Yet even within the truly converted he notes the way in which genuine spirituality is disfigured by the power of the imagination, the way in which true spiritual experience tends to set off diverse results due to the overwhelming influence upon the brain or upon the whole psychophysical organization of the body. Here he faced the dual aspects of the 'bodily effects' of the revival. He was able to see that these could be compulsive,<sup>2</sup> or imitative or excessive<sup>3</sup> yet at the same time he was never prepared to reject them; they are to be expected, taking into consideration the

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1. vide. refs. p. 156 above.

2. p. 180 above.

3. pp. 44, 45 above.

human constitution and the way great impressions upon the mind must necessarily affect the body.<sup>1</sup> Thus he worked out that kind of view which he tried hard to get others to see as to the revival; that great spiritual experience may well have extraordinary physical and mental accompaniments; but these phenomena are not to be taken as proof positive of true spiritual experience. Yet he welcomed them, and never accepted the idea (at any rate openly) that the progress of vital religion might well go on without these manifestations<sup>2</sup> nor the view of Dwight later that revival exertions produce their own inevitable declension.<sup>3</sup> But as time went on and the Great Awakening led to controversy in which he nobly sought to further the true view of revival both to its critics and to its unwise friends, he gradually turned from showing what aberrations did not disqualify the genuineness of the revival, to pointing out what really manifested the work of the Spirit within.

We may well recognise that this development in his teaching of what is positively spiritual arose from much pastoral counselling both to individuals and to the church at Northampton as a whole. He frequently points out the errors that result from seeking satisfaction in the experience itself,<sup>4</sup> and so in self-love and spiritual pride. In his Thoughts on

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1. p. 147. above.

2. p. 173/4 above.

3. p. 135. above.

4. pp. 182, 183. above.

the Revival he concluded that the ideal was spiritual experience unsullied by human feelings, proportionate to divine truth and raised to the highest degree of realization.<sup>1</sup> But this had to be developed further and the twelve positive signs of the Religious Affections was the result. Here he shows how the inner vision of God in His saving grace, is actually manifested and proved both by continuous persistence in active Christianity and in the well-ding that showed concern for others rather than for oneself. Professor J.E. Smith refers to this means of assessing the genuineness of religious devotion as one of Edwards permanent gifts to us.<sup>2</sup> But one needs to go a little further afield into his writings for the full value of his insights. From this it would be apparent that even though from a modern understanding of the workings of the human mind, some of the disfigurements of the revival could have been seen as produced by the very approach to the hearers in the terms of the preaching and in the administration of the ordo-salutis it is probable that Edwards would not have been deterred by this. He would have accepted that the ministry must be exercised within the operation of all the factors which might both help and mar the evangelistic enterprise. He would have seen the relevance of the sermon Transposition by Mr. C.S. Lewis to this very situation; that the richer realm has to be

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1. vide above p. 182.

2. p. 348 above.



transposed into the more limited range provided by the human psycho-physical apparatus and in so doing it gives the appearance of being "sometimes not only natural but pathological.... at other times..... the organ of the Holy Ghost".<sup>1</sup> The task of discerning whether the higher source is there can only be assisted by the minister; finally the individual must interrogate his own heart and soul. But the twelve signs are means whereby this may be done aright; and the Rules for Judging are the way the pastor may helpfully point out the likely errors and necessary path.

The ministry of preaching and of pastoral counselling are integrated in Edwards parochial activity - as indeed was usual in Puritan and all the seventeenth century reformed church life.<sup>2</sup> If revival came Edwards was prepared for it and it is highly likely that he expected it from the first. Nobody serving with Stoddard could have done otherwise. When it came he was ready to do all that a minister in his opinion should do; his sermons show a conscious concern to 'improve' the situation, to urge all to take the opportunity as they can and as it is now with them; not to be left outside when others are pressing into the Kingdom; to stir themselves anew and not to sink into lax and careless attitudes. He renews the warnings of divine

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1. Transposition and other Addresses. C.S. Lewis. (London 1949) pp. 9-13.

2. cf. The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology. H.R. McAdoo (London 1949) p.15.

wrath in the strongest terms and in fact uses the widest possible range of considerations to promote a right understanding of the truth, a right concern for one's state, the continual preservation of convictions and stirrings of conscience until conversion comes about. The youth of the parish were an especial concern and he refers continually to the effect that the revival had upon them from time to time and the steps he took to promote it among them. He saw the value of keeping the matter alive by informal conversation, which he tells us, in the Faithful Narrative, he organized in group discussions, during which members told of how they had come to conversion. Whether to individuals or to a community he was convinced of the importance to 'strike while the iron is hot' with complete certainty and forthrightness; for

A people must be taken when they are in the mood, when considerable religious impressions prevail among them.

As he knew quite well, the opportunity could pass with other concerns inviting and distracting attention; and however much the work was an extraordinary one of grace, it seemed that such all-too-earthly interests could inhibit it.

In the background of all the concern about experience, both by pastor and people was the issue about personal

assurance. Edwards saw that the falsities of evangelical self-expression during the Great Awakening were due ultimately to individuals producing various evidences for self-assurance that were not fit for the soul to rest upon. The inward voices or visions, the texts to the mind, the belief that God had shown Himself in a wonderful manner to oneself, the confidence that one had properly negotiated the process of the ordo, the variety of feelings of uplift and the new-found ability to talk much of religious matters were all possibly delusion and not sufficient of themselves. Inwardly the true assurance of heart was centred in God Himself and a sincere delight in Him. This glowing, delightful trusting adoration of the beauty of God in His holiness, is a refined and elevated test of true religion which no other person can test and may not be easily tested by oneself. Yet this is the purpose of the first few of the positive signs of the Affections. Edwards has himself pointed out that once the true evaluation of spirituality is taught, it will be open for a hypocrite to deceive himself into thinking that he conforms. Thus he never speaks of those professing conversion except in guardedly hopeful terms. And at the same <sup>time</sup> the outward marks of regeneration are perseverance and good works.

This may seem as if Edwards has accepted the position of the later syllogismus practicus particularly as he closed his

section on the negative signs in the Religious Affections with the words

Assurance is not to be obtained so much by self-examination, as by action. <sup>1</sup>

Wilhelm Niesel has examined the case for the syllogismus practicus actually deriving from Calvin<sup>2</sup> and has decided in the negative. Calvin in fact thought of the works of a Christian as highly ambiguous and not at all a sure basis for assurance; and to fix one's assurance upon them is to imperil one's trust in Christ alone. Thus Niesel sums it up (on Calvin in Inst.III.xv.8) that

faith is not without works and that the believer can be recognized by his works. But it does not say that works are of significance in answering the question whether I am a partaker of salvation or not. <sup>3</sup>

And he closes with a remark that seems to be highly relevant to Edwards;

The position which Calvin thus takes up makes it clear that his theology is something very different from a predestination system of thought concerning the relation of God and man, in which the syllogismus practicus is assigned an important place.<sup>4</sup>

For in Edwards twelve positive signs in the Religious Affections.

1. vide. p.249 above.

2. The Theology of Calvin (London 1956). pp. 170-181.

3. op.cit. p.178.

4. op.cit. p.181.

the test of good works is most certainly an essential implicate of a spiritual reflex, which is itself, as a whole, the outcome of predestinating grace, so that works are the necessary manifestation of the activity of that grace. Hence it is able to be said that Edwards would direct the Christian to faith in Christ for assurance, as the first of the twelve positive signs imply. Yet as this invites the question whether the faith in Christ is of the nature of the spiritual vision and delight in God which those signs require, and difficulties are undoubtedly to be faced in the answer, the emphasis on good works<sup>1</sup> becomes all the stronger.

With this goes the other assuring sign of perseverance; and the problem of the backsliding Christian, or the believer who is clearly still marked by many signs of the unconverted life. Gerstner is not quite accurate in his chapter on backsliding, when he says that in Edwards it refers to a person's desisting from seeking salvation rather than to his losing a salvation obtained.<sup>2</sup> In fact, as we have seen Edwards does think of a Christian as able to be 'guilty of some kinds and degrees of backsliding'.<sup>3</sup> But there is always a continuance in faith and obedience; whatever there may be in inconsistency, or disproportion, there will be manifest the genuine spirit of a Christian; in kind even if deficient in

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1. cf. above pp. 311-313

2. Steps to Salvation p.110. cf. above pp. 311, 313.

3. vide. above p.307.

degree. If Christian men so fall into "great sins" God may well hide Himself so that they lose their sense of assurance and seem to be in spiritual darkness.<sup>1</sup> But if they are genuine this will not involve apostasy, or a declension to a state of life identical with that before their conversion.<sup>2</sup> To return to this must argue a false experience in the first place. We have seen the Rev. Thomas Gillaspie asking anxiously about this dictum; and it may well be felt that in the midst of so many doubts which Edwards raises about genuine spirituality, that he was making the way of faith increasingly difficult in order to declare its assured inner reality. But Edwards believed in the possibility and indeed necessity for continued and repeated experiences of God in converting and renewing grace, until the soul was brought to spiritual perfection in glory.<sup>3</sup> He deplored the decline of the spirit of the revival; he believed that only sin prevented the Holy Spirit continuing to impart the high level of religious experience that would both carry each affected soul onwards to greater degrees of grace and heightened spirituality, and also spread this wider and wider over the world. Hence Edwards could hardly bring himself to think very much of the Christian backsliding; and his references to Christian incompleteness of sanctity is only to direct them to the onward aspiration after holiness.<sup>4</sup>

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1. vide above p.245,306.

2. p.307 above.

3. Works vol.i. p.303.

4. Gerstner op.cit. ch.xvii.

This is a mark of their true estate, and a permanent concern which they must act upon.

The spiritual condition which, not surprisingly, almost defeated him was that of the 'melancholic'. He confesses to his inability to help them very much but one positive insight into a case that Gillespie produced for his advice is valuable. Gillespie describes the case of

one who is incessantly harassed by Satan; can by no means keep him out of his mind.... for a long time has cried to Christ, but he hears not, seems not to regard him; all his efforts are swallowed up in the deluge of the foe...., is apt to dread he shall sink under the load....<sup>1</sup>

Edwards in reply, pointed out that the evidence given was not clear and specific enough as to the nature of the temptations to be readily susceptible to proper advice. But, assuming that this is a case of

those strange, horrid impressions, to which persons afflicted with hypochondria are often subject,

he warns against the man

engaging in a violent struggle with the grand adversary; but rather diverting the mind from his frightful suggestions, by going on steadfastly and diligently in the ordinary course of duty, without allowing themselves time and leisure to attend to his sophistry, and by committing themselves to God in prayer.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Works. vol.i.p.cxxviii.
  2. op.cit.pp: cxxx, cxxxi.

In resisting the devil,

he more effectually disappoints him in such cases, who treats him with neglect.... if he can get persons thus engaged in a violent struggle, he gains a great point. He knows that hypochondriacal persons are not qualified to maintain it.... By such a struggle he raises a deeper melancholy, weakens the mind still more... and increases the anxiety of his mind; which is the very thing by which he mainly accomplishes all his purposes with such persons.

By the last remark we may take Edwards to refer to suicide or madness which he has had to face in connection with the revival in the case of just such persons. Quite apart from the Satanic interpretation of this kind of problem it is interesting to see Edwards applying to the case the law of reversed effort, to relax the situation and so to attempt to stave off the threatened breakdown. More than this he was not able to do.

"It forms an important branch of ministerial faithfulness to probe the human heart and to expose that common self-deceit which lead persons to imagine that they have been converted to God, who have never experienced that essential quickening process, which we would term life from the dead".

So wrote the Rev, George Townshend Fox, Vicar of St. Nicholas Durham, in 1880 in the introduction to his little book on Regeneration.<sup>1</sup> It might easily have been penned by Jonathan Edwards; and a great deal of his preaching and writing was

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1. The Doctrine of Regeneration. (London 1880) p. 14.



given to that end, but only in order to make clear what life from the dead could mean. It may not be too much of a posthumous eulogy that could write of him;

His knowledge of the human heart and its operations, has scarcely been equalled by that of any uninspired preacher. He derived this knowledge from his familiarity with the testimony of God concerning it in the Bible; from his thorough acquaintance with his own heart; and from his profound knowledge of mental philosophy. The effect of it was, to enable him to speak to the consciousness of everyone who heard him; so that each one was compelled to reflect..... "Here is a man who is revealing to me the secrets of my own heart and life; is not this man from God?"<sup>1</sup>

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1. Works. vol.i. p. ccxxxi.

CHAPTER SIXConclusion; An Evangelical Integrity.

When Dwight summed up Edwards' whole character in these two words - evangelical integrity<sup>1</sup> - he used a phrase of even wider application than he intended. Jonathan Edwards integrated so many aspects of personality so eminently into one whole. It is a common-place to speak of him, as did Dugald Stewart, as "one metaphysician of whom America has to boast who... does not yield to any disputant bred in the universities of Europe".<sup>2</sup> Yet Dr. Perry Miller has also emphasised, perhaps a little too much, his empiricism. The preacher of hell-fire sermons is also known for his dignified humility and gentleness of spirit;<sup>3</sup> his nature is retiring yet he is the epicentre of a widespread religious revival, preaching and counselling, defending and directing. He can be called a mystic, with a profound sense of the glory of God in nature, and a highly developed aesthetic appreciation; and at the same time he is a meticulous, almost logic-chopping controversialist prepared from the outset to assert the doctrines of Calvinist theology and to harry 'Arminianism' out of the land. He loved to ride into the woods, to return later with ideas written upon slips of paper and pinned to his coat; yet was

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1. op.cit. p. ccxxvi.

2. op.cit. p. ccxxx.

3. op.cit. ccxxviii.

a devoted husband and father, selling in Boston the fans his daughters made, buying jewellery for his wife, or showing his son how to measure a mountain.<sup>1</sup> It is such a person who was capable of uniting in himself so many aspects of work and life, who also set himself the task, never completed, of uniting the arts and sciences into a Summa Theologiae, for which we have some of the material in his actually published work.

Pectus facit theologum; O.E. Winslow speaks for a number of people when she asserts;

One might almost say that out of a personal emotional experience of his seventeenth year he built a theological system.<sup>2</sup>

The word "almost" here has to carry a considerable burden of qualification; indeed this writer reveals how much when she writes about Edwards "choosing to speak through an outworn dogmatic system" - the Calvinism of his inheritance and of his own refurbishing.<sup>3</sup> What needs to be remembered is that his early religious experience turned at once to the Calvinist system of theology to find its adequate intellectual correlate. It might be alleged that there was hardly any very live option on this. And yet it is not so easily explained by the pressures of his environment when the nature of that religious

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1. cf. Faust and Johnson Selections etc. intro.
  2. Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758; A Biography. p.75.
  3. op.cit. p.325.

experience is noted. Edwards wrote what is known as his Personal Narrative somewhere about the age of thirty eight.<sup>1</sup> In it he tells of his early antagonism to the whole system of Calvinist dogmatics; its predestination doctrines he looked upon as horrible and this view was spreading around him. But by some way, he cannot remember how, he became intellectually convinced of their truth; and this was followed by a richer experience of a delightful sense of the glory of God, as he read I.Tim.i.17. which was quite a different experience from any other. He longed for heavenly union with the divine and he kept singing the words of the text over and over to himself and praying "with a new sort of affection". This first experience which was continued and deepened, took place about six months after graduation and the commencement of his theological course at New Haven. From time to time afterwards he tells of "an inward sweetness", "a calm, sweet abstraction of soul from the concerns of this world", "a kind of vision, or fixed ideas and imaginations, of being alone..... sweetly conversing with Christ". Such experiences would suddenly "kindle up" in an inexpressible "ardour of soul". In this account he tells of his delight, in a new way, in the whole of nature. God seemed to be in everything and especially a thunderstorm. Instead of, as before, being terrified of this,

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1. Works. vol.i.pp. liv-lvii.

he now put himself into the best position to watch the clouds and the lightening and while there to chant his meditations upon God's majesty. With this, the Bible became also his constant study and he frequently combined the two by solitary meditation with the Bible in the woods. Edwards also tells that at the beginning of this period, he told of his thoughts and experience to his father and their conversation "pretty much affected" him. From this time onwards, he observes himself eagerly pursuing after holiness and conformity to Christ, though hardly suspecting, in those early days "the bottomless depths of secret corruption and deceit" in his heart despite the constant and earnest self-examination to which he subjected himself.

What light does this account of the later theologian and psychologist throw upon his writings. Dwight comments,<sup>1</sup>

It was in these early years of his life that those correct views were formed which afterwards expanded in his admirable treatise on Religious Affections.

Dr. Perry Miller reverses this and looks upon Edwards later account of himself as "the application of the rules of psychological investigation set out in Religious Affects applied to himself".<sup>2</sup> Of these two accounts it would seem that Dwight

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1. op.cit. p.lvii.

2. Jonathan Edwards. p.206.

is nearer the truth for the following reasons. Edwards makes little or no reference in Religious Affections to the effect of conversion upon one's view of the natural world. But it enters considerably into his Personal Narrative and is consistent with what is clearly seen in him throughout his life. And this is quite consistent too with his background, for nature's revelation of the glory of God was a strong Puritan emphasis. Furthermore, if this account were a reading back of the rules of Religious Affections then it is clear that some are hardly if at all referred to. The twelve negative signs have no reference at all, and several of the twelve positive ones could not easily be discerned here (e.g. numbers 7,8,10). The fact that the description uses Edwards favourite terms like "divine excellency", "sense of divine things", "a new sense", "taste" may indeed reflect his later perspective in clothing the facts in suitable expression, but no more. Beyond this however, one great omission is evident. There is no sign that Edwards experienced conversion along the lines of the ordo salutis. He speaks of his earlier religious life as having "seasons of awakening", and of a time in an illness when God "shook me over the pit of hell" that was followed later by seeking salvation. But his manner of doing so was never with the kind of concern that could be described by "the name of terror". All this goes to suggest convincingly that his later

development of the twelve positive signs, and his recognition of the ordo yet with a certain detachment from it, are indeed traceable to his own religious experience, though with the added elements provided by Biblical knowledge, with Puritan theology and pastoral experience.

The question then arises, how far Edwards' spiritual counsel and exposition of the experience of conversion can be detached from his theological system. As we have seen, O.E. Winslow regrets that he did not see that this ought to have been done. It is questionable whether she has sufficiently entered into what was Edwards' theological concern - what in fact is the real issue in the matters of theology which he discussed - to give a helpful opinion here. Dr. Perry Miller comes closer to the point when as giving a general editorial introduction to the Yale edition of Edwards' works, he remarks upon the renewed interest in these writings and a new urgency to confront and reinterpret the historical, philosophical and theological cruxes with which Edwards grappled so courageously.<sup>1</sup> Edwards' theological system was no drawback. It is essential to see that without the tensions and "cruxes" of that theology, and its importance for the whole Christian view of God and the world, Edwards would never have had the spiritual experience,

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1. Jonathan Edwards; Freedom of the Will. ed. P. Ramsey. Vol. I of the Works of Jonathan Edwards. Ed. by Perry Miller (Yale U.P. 1957) p.viii.

nor would he have thought about it or discussed it in the way that O.E. Winslow yet finds valuable. Calvinistic theology is one of the great monumental expositions of the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and its vitality is certainly not exhausted. It takes up issues which any thoughtful approach to human existence must raise in some form, of determinism and responsibility, existence and destiny, of moral values and the sense of accountability, and sees them as involved in a theology of grace. Only a theology of grace can have the inner dynamic that comes alive in successive generations and produces theologians who wrestle with it anew in the terms of their own times. Such a one was Jonathan Edwards, and his existence as the man he was, is entirely due to this. Otherwise he might have become a philosopher but with a corresponding limitation to his interests and activities.

Yet as such a theologian it is at once noticeable that Edwards is by no means simply reaffirming the truths in which he had been nurtured. As we have watched him wrestling in the revival both with its critics and mistaken friends, taking a third way of his own, so we may see him approaching the great themes of responsibility and sovereignty, of regeneration and conversion, of grace and faith. In working on the subject of

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the absolute and the relative, it must be clear that the accent must be, with him, on the absolute. Everything combined to make it so; the whole Augustinian-Reformed and Puritan tradition of his past and total environment; the recapitulation this had had in his own experience; and the logical implicates of the Christian gospel. This was also enhanced by the apparent correlation between the growing "Arminianism" and loss of "vital religion". Yet within this emphasis upon the absolute, he wrestles to find an adequate place for human responsibility. He recognises, perhaps remembering early attitudes of his own, that it is not possible for ever to stop the mouths of critics to divine sovereignty by Calvin's question. "Who art thou, O man...?" For some rejoinder has to be made to the reply - "We are not arguing against God, but against your theology". In seeking to establish the genuine character of the human response within the whole of divine sovereignty, Edwards investigates and draws out the psychology of religion which he incorporates into his pastoral psychology. Edwards "panentheism" provided an absolutist and idealist solution to the epistemological problem of his day, and indeed has anticipated one of the most attractive religious philosophies up to the present.<sup>1</sup> Within that context, he could develop the

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1. e.g. Nature, Man and God by William Temple.

analysis of the spiritual enlightenment and volitional response, which true faith involves, in psychological terms that opened a new era of thought upon the nature of human response and responsibility; (although in fact this was never followed up at the time). It clarified the preacher's task in how to present truth so as to approach the whole man without reservations and misapprehensions. It provided the evangelist and pastor with criteria as to what to look for and what to beware of in the varieties of religious experience.

Here again, and pre-eminently Edwards was a man characterised by evangelical integrity; the integration of truth and knowledge in terms of the Gospel. How far he was completely successful is not answered by how far his thought can be accepted in its entirety. As we have already suggested, it is possible that his recasting of classical Calvinism into Newtonian and Lockean philosophic terms took him back into the rigorism of Zwingli's views, and asserts absolutism to the extent that everything is really involved in a subtle cosmic mechanism. In such circumstances, the discussion of human psychology and responsibility is only possible upon a phenomenological plane that keeps out of sight and mind the epistemology Edwards adopted. Here in fact is both the strength and weakness of his theological synthesis. Yet however much

it may be clear that his philosophic underpinning of the doctrines of sovereign grace cannot satisfy fully, nor in actual fact, does it fulfil the task he intended it should; yet in the perennial task of interpreting this basic theological issue, Edwards cannot be neglected. Nor can his way of approach and kind of attitude, the widely ranging outlook, the association of Biblical teaching with whatever might be seen as throwing light on to the problem from other sources, be looked upon as other than a proper example for careful theologians to imitate. Apart from this over-all verdict, there is much in Edwards' teaching that can only be of supreme value for the preacher and pastor, especially in the Treatise concerning Religious Affections. And where they draw back as they may, from some of the aspects of his ministry, as in the emphasis upon hell and terror, they will still have to face the basic questions about his view of the law, and the place of fear in religion. J.K. Mozley has rightly said of Edwards<sup>1</sup> - his arguments 'are easier to disagree with than to refute'. This itself was written before existentialism in philosophy, psychoanalysis, and the influence of Barth in theology could remove or change the presuppositions from which Edwards started out.

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1. Doctrine of the Atonement (London 1915) p.159.

Modern psycho-analysis would probably illuminate the deep causes for Edwards' own concern for harmonization of thought, by pointing to his own personality traits of meticulous order, the daily routine, and regularity of practice. All the great are undergoing this kind of treatment<sup>1</sup> but it is not yet clear that it helps us to assess their teaching except in the terms of the actual discipline concerned. Similarly, we may be helped to understand the impact of hell-fire teaching in the Puritan society of New England, and to recognize also the link it has with the many revival disorders. Social psychology studies such as G.R. Taylor's Angel Makers<sup>2</sup> may help us to understand the deep forces operative in different types of society, and to recognise them as influencing the New England of Edwards. It may help us to write history; it may help us to understand the contemporary situation; it may enter into the recognition of doctrinal distortion. But at the moment, it needs such careful historical sifting, and philosophical criticism, that it is a tool not too greatly to be depended on in a study such as this. For after all, if we take depth-psychology seriously, all intellectual discussion is going on through the speech of individuals who are to some extent distortions of normality. Consequently unless the whole thing is to be dismissed in terms of subjectively-

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1. Psychology of the Methodist Revival. S.G. Dimond. Christianity and Fear. O. Pfister. The Unconscious Origin of Berkeley's Philosophy. J.O. Wisdom.
  2. The Angel Makers; A Study in Psychological Origins of Historical Change. 1750-1850. (London 1958)

conditioned relativities, it has to be recognised that 'we have this treasure in earthen vessels' but that there is the treasure there all the same. Basically, this is the kind of outlook Edwards had in the revival. It was not to be written off as enthusiasm or wild emotionalism, no more than this whole matter is to be evacuated of significance by Freudian or any other depth-psychology. Edwards again pioneers in discriminating between the 'treasures' which must be understood and evaluated in their own terms and the human distortions which to a greater or less extent attach to them. In this he again points the way for the modern pastor, who has to reckon with a much more authoritative critique in the deliverances of the science of psychology and in the way it has been adopted into some books of pastoral psychology as a result.

The present times require a careful assessment and an integration of the different disciplines of theology, philosophy, social and individual psychology for the purposes of the Christian ministry. There can still be the fundamental conviction of Edwards that these thoroughly pursued will tend to divinity, while there also needs to be kept in mind his own careful and penetrating examination of their contribution. Edwards kept abreast of the best modern thought, but had his

clear view of basic ultimates. It is little use to disagree with him and yet have nothing so dynamic and perceptive to put in the place of his own well-thought-out views. All this in him had one great aim, and here too, he stands as a noble example for all who minister in the church. Dwight sums it up; Jonathan Edwards' great powers of mind and intensity of feeling were from first to last brought to bear on one aim; the salvation of his hearers and the glory of God as revealed in it.

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