

01) Religious Affections

Introduction: Baxter: "I only preach that which I did first smartingly feel."

- Two strong movements within US Evangelicalism (Reformed and Charismatic) – often knee-jerk reactions to extremes

I. Author of Religious Affections

A. Preparation

1. Childhood (1703)

- October 5th born at East Windsor, Connecticut
- father a pastor; only son from 11 children

2. Studies (1716-1722) Yale College

- Yale – New Haven, CT; fd.1701 (3rd oldest higher learning inst. in US)
- Enters before 13th birthday, finishes in 4 years at head of class
- eventually earns Master's degree

3. Pulpit supply (1722-1723) Presbyterian churches in NYC

4. Tutorship at Yale (1724-1726)

B. 1st Pastorate (1726-1750) Northampton, Massachusetts

- Assists maternal grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, in the ministry
- 1727 Marries Sarah Pierpont (father credited for founding Yale)
- 1729 Solomon Stoddard dies, Edwards takes up role as main pastor
- 1734 Revival begins in Northampton
- 1740-1741 Great Awakening
- 1746 Edwards publishes Religious Affections
- 1750 Dismissed as pastor over communion controversy

C. 2nd Pastorate and missionary (1751-1758) Stockbridge, MA

- ministered to small congregation, and was missionary to Housatonic Indians
- publishes among his greatest works

D. Presidency of College of New Jersey/Princeton (1758)

- 5 days after the death of his son-in-law, Aaron Burr (then 2nd president of college), is elected as president
- March 22nd dies of smallpox inoculation; buried in president's row at Princeton cemetery

- Recognized by many as the greatest American theologian/philosopher
- Wrote works of classis defense and definition of original sin, the freedom of the will, and on revival
- There was also a great humility

But as to the success of my inquiries it must be left to the judgment of the reader of the following treatise...

And whether I have succeeded to bring any light to this subject or not, and however my attempts may be reproached in these captious [marked by a disposition to find and point out trivial faults] and censorious [highly critical] times, I hope in the mercy of a gracious God, for the acceptance of the sincerity of my endeavors; and hope also for the candor [openness, impartiality] and prayers of the true followers of the meek and charitable Lamb of God.

II. Background of Religious Affections

- During time as pastor at Northampton, after revivals and Great Awakening
- Two extreme views: true religion is (1.) mostly the mind (intellectualism) and conduct or (2.) is mostly emotion (emotionalism)
- Had become a most heated debate, each extreme side almost completely denouncing the other
- 1742 Edwards preaches series of sermons on 1Peter 1:8; 1746 sermons undergo revision and put into print

III. Use of Religious Affections

- Personal application – "Have I experienced the new birth, as seen by ongoing effects?"
- ...am I presently experiencing the Christian life as I ought?
- Edwards again and again contrasts what a person appears to be before others, and what they are in their hearts
- There is such a thing as religious hypocrisy with much knowledge; there is also false experience of emotionalism
- It is not our merely knowing the Gospel that will save us.....it is not merely our having an emotional experience that will save us...salvation is to come in with an igniting of the mind and of the emotions with the Gospel

PREFACE

- Purpose: "What is the nature of true religion (or biblical Christianity)?"
- Historical context - discern between good and bad in various religious experiences
- In O.T and N.T., Reformation, Revivals there s a mixture of good and bad

01) Religious Affections

- the Word of God is to be the judge of all experience
- 7 Effects of error in not discerning marks of true Christianity
- 1.) The devil gratifies himself, that multitudes offer to God that which they think is acceptable, but which is an abomination to God
- 2.) The devil deceives many as to the state of their soul. While they think themselves to be superior in holiness, they are really hypocrites
- 3.) The devil dampens the hearts of the true people of God by suppressing real affections
- 4.) The devil encourages enemies of the church by the show of false religion
- 5.) The devil directs men to do wickedness with the idea that it is service to God
- 6.) The devil deceives true Christians to unknowingly do his work by suppressing true experience
- 7.) The devil scatters the flock of Christ by turning them against one another

...during the strife, Satan leads both parties far out of the right way, driving each to great extremes, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, according as he finds they are most inclined, or most easily moved and swayed, till the right path in the middle is almost wholly neglected.

...what I aim at now, is to show the nature and signs of the gracious operations of God's Spirit, by which they are to be distinguished from all things whatsoever, that the minds of men are the subjects of, which are not of a saving nature.

PART I - CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE AFFECTIONS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN RELIGION

I. Introductory Remarks Respecting the Affections

- Mini exposition of 1Peter 1:8 [read] – inexpressible love and glory for Christ in midst of suffering
- Trials have benefit in regards to faith: (1.) showing it as true (2.) showing its beauty (3.) increasing and purifying
- It showed in two ways: (1.) love to Christ and (2.) joy in Christ
 - ...it was a prelibation [foretaste] of the joy of heaven, that raised their minds to a degree of heavenly blessedness; it filled their minds with the light of God's glory, and made themselves to shine with some communication of that glory.*

DOCTRINE. *True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.*

- What are the affections of the mind? – “The more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul.”
- There are two primary faculties of the soul: understanding (perception) and inclination
- This inclination is either towards, or away from something; likes or dislikes; pleased or displeased; approves or rejects
- From the two spectrums there are varying degrees, from love to hate; from joy/delight to grief/sorrow
- There can also be a mixture of them at the same time
- Because of the union/connection between the soul and the body, the activity of the soul ordinarily has effect on the body
 - Such seems to be our nature, and such the laws of the union of soul and body, that there never is in any case whatsoever, any lively and vigorous exercise of the will or inclination of the soul, without some effect upon the body, in some alteration of the motion of its fluids, and especially of the animal spirits.*

- Out of this combination of thinking and affections comes the will responding in choice to act

As all the exercises of the inclination and will, are either in approving and liking, or disapproving and rejecting; so the affections are of two sorts; they are those by which the soul is carried out to what is in view, cleaving to it, or seeking it; or those by which it is averse from it, and opposes it. Of the former sort are love, desire, hope, joy, gratitude, complacence. Of the latter kind are hatred, fear, anger, grief, and such like...

- This is why what we think, and the cultivation of our affections, is so important
- One essential thing about being a Christian is the transformation of the mind by the Word of God
- But it doesn't end there – it is to then “steep” and cause affections
- By these two, the will is then liberated in great joy and delight (the chief end of man to enjoy God...even in trial)
- The major point of the next section (and 9 arguments for it) is that “*True religion, in great part, consists in the affections.*”
- Imagine two extremes: most of us would be seriously concerned if someone said “being spiritual isn't about the mind, but the emotions.” Biblically, we should be as concerned if someone were to say “being spiritual isn't about the emotions, its about the mind.”

Qualification: This will be to varying degrees in different backgrounds and personalities – not everyone will be the same

- Nevertheless, the largest capacity in each for a person in the varying categories for things “spiritual”
- Also, remember the emotions are fallen, and we should pursue their renewal and expansion of them also