Jonathan Edwards’ Religious Affections

Part III

Jonathan Edwards Center Brasil 2014
A TREATISE
Concerning
Religious Affections,
In Three Parts;

PART I. Concerning the Nature of the Affections, and their Importance in Religion.

PART II. Shewing what are no certain Signs that religious Affections are gracious, or that they are not.

PART III. Shewing what are distinguishing Signs of truly gracious and holy Affections.

By Jonathan Edwards, A.M.

And Pastor of the First Church in Northampton.

Levit. ix. ult. and x. 1, 2. And there came a Fire out from before the Lord, upon the Altar; which when all the People saw, they feared, and fell on their Faces. And Nadab and Abihu offered strange Fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not: And there went out a Fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

Cant. ii. 12, 13. The Flowers appear on the Earth, the Times of the Singing of Birds is come, and the Voice of the Drums is heard in our Land; the Fig-tree putteth forth her green Figs, and the Vines with the tender Grapes, give a good Smell. Ver. 17. Take us the Flowers, the Fruits of our Hands, which our Vines have tender Grapes.

BOSTON:
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Religious Affections: Trajectories and Text

• Structure

  • Part I: Nature and Importance of the Affections (based on a sermon of I Peter 1:8) [Definition]

  • Part II: Showing No certain Signs of Truly Gracious Affections

  • Part III: The Distinguishing Signs
Religious Affections: Trajectories and Text

Part III: The Distinguishing Signs

- Edwards edition Part III, like Part II, consists of 12 signs
- Wesley edition 1801, Part III consist of 8 signs, deleting:
  - 2. The first objective ground of gracious affections, is the transcendentally excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves; and not any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest.
  - 3. Those affections that are truly holy, are primarily founded on the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things. Or (to express it otherwise), a love to divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency, is the first beginning and spring of all holy affections.
Religious Affections: Trajectories and Text

Part III: The Distinguishing Signs (Wesley edition 1801)

4. Gracious affections do arise from the mind’s being enlightened, rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.

7. Another thing, wherein gracious affections are distinguished from others, is, that they are attended with a change of nature.

Corresponding numbering Edwards edition vs. Wesley edition:
1-1, 5-2, 6-3, 8-4, 9-5, 10-6, 11-7, 12-8
Part III: The Distinguishing Signs

1. Affections that are truly spiritual and gracious, do 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 transcendentally excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves; and not any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest.

3. Those affections that are truly holy, are primarily founded on the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things. Or (to express it otherwise), a love to divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency, is the first beginning and spring of all holy affections.

4. Gracious affections do arise from the mind’s being enlightened, rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.

5. Truly gracious affections are attended with a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the judgment, of the reality and certainty of divine things.

6. Gracious affections are attended with evangelical humiliation.
Religious Affections: Trajectories and Text

Part III: The Distinguishing Signs

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 affections that are false and delusive, in that they tend to, and are attended with the lamblike, dovelike spirit and temper of Jesus Christ; or in other words, 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 and followed 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 between gracious affections and others is, that gracious affections, the higher they 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. I mean, they have that influence and power upon him who is the subject of ’em, that they cause that a practice, which is universally conformed to, and directed by Christian rules, should be the practice and business of his life.
Edwards last and greatest work on revival, it is a masterpiece of what scholars now call “religious psychology.” The fundamental question of the work is “How can one determine what is a true work of the Spirit of God in one’s own heart?”

III. Distinguishing Signs
These include such things as affections that originate from spiritual, supernatural, and divine operations in the heart (having little to do with the flesh), affections with no relation to self-interest, affections that promote humility, affections that are not of a censuring or judgmental spirit, and affections that desire communion with God.

The Twelfth Sign is most important:

True religious affections manifest themselves in Christian practice “by their fruits you shall know them.” (Matt. 7:16)
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