

Religious Affections, Jonathan Edwards - Notes

Preface

- The subject matter — “There is no question of greater importance to mankind, and that it more concerns every individual person to be well resolved in, than this: *What are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favour with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards?* Or, which comes to the same thing, *What is the nature of true religion? and wherein lie the distinguishing notes of that virtue which is acceptable in the sight of God?*”
- On the present controversy — “It is a difficult thing to be a hearty zealous friend of what has been *good* and glorious in the late extraordinary appearances, and to rejoice much in it; and, at the same time, to see the evil and pernicious tendency of what has been *bad*, and earnestly to oppose that. Yet, I am *humbly* but *fully* persuaded, we shall never be in the way of truth, a way acceptable to God, and tending to the advancement of Christ’s kingdom, till we do so.”
- On the mixture of false religion in the midst of true religion.
- How the devil uses this — lack of clear distinction between true and false religion — for dreadful consequences.
- Thereby, i.e., noting these otherwise negative consequence, Edwards establishes the importance of this subject.
- His aim — “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 which are not of a saving nature.”

Part I. Concerning the nature of the affections, and their importance in religion.

- **SECT. I - Introductory remarks respecting the affections:**
 - An exposition of 1 Peter 1:8 and the nature of joy in the midst of suffering.
 - His conclusion — “Hence the proposition or doctrine, that I would raise from these words is this, true religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.”
 - The nature of affections: Such affections consist in a certain inclination of the will — “The affections are no other, than the more vigorous and *sensible exercises of the inclination and will* of the soul.” And — the “more vigorous and sensible exercises of this faculty, which are called the *affections*.”
- **SECT. II - True religion, in great part, consists in the affections:**
 - True religion consists in exercises and inclinations of the will, which are born out of affections of the soul. Proof and explanation thereof.
 - Affections our the “spring of actions” and are at the core of our humanity. And therefore, inasmuch as genuine religion shows up in action, so affections are at the heart of genuine religion. Genuine religion effects never occur without the affections, of which love is the chiefest.
 - What is an “affection”?
 - Not a physical phenomenon, but when the soul is moved.
 - "Not that I think these arguments prove, that religion in the hearts of the truly godly, is ever in exact proportion to the degree of affection and present emotion of the mind: for, undoubtedly, there is much affection in the true saints which is not spiritual; their religious affections are often mixed; all is not from grace, but much from nature. And though the affections have not their seat in the body, yet the constitution of the body may very much contribute to the present emotion of the mind. The degree of religion is to be estimated by the fixedness and strength of habit exercised in affection, whereby holy affection is habitual, rather than by the degree of the present exercise: and the strength of that habit is not always in proportion to outward effects and manifestations, or indeed inward ones, in the hurry, vehemence, and sudden changes of the course of

the thoughts. But yet it is evident, that religion consists so much in the affections, as that without holy affection there is no true religion.”

● **SECT. III - Some inferences deduced from the doctrine:**

- Don't overreact. Previously, some were naive about expressions of affections, assuming all were legitimate. But now others, seeing false displays of affection, swing the pendulum and throw the baby out with the bath water.
 - “The right way, is not to reject all affections, nor to approve all: but to distinguish between them.”
- Key quotes:
 - “For although to true religion there must indeed be something else besides affection; yet true religion consists so much in the affections, that there can be no true religion without them. He who has no religious affection, is in a state of spiritual death, and is wholly destitute of the powerful, quickening, saving influences of the Spirit of God upon his heart. 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. ... Where there is ... a head stored with notions and speculations with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light, that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart. The reason why men are not affected by such infinitely great, important, glorious, and wonderful things, as they often hear and read of in the word of God, is, undoubtedly, because they are blind; if they were not so, it would be impossible, and utterly inconsistent with human nature, that their hearts should be otherwise than strongly impressed, and greatly moved by such things.”
 - “The prevailing prejudice against religious affections at this day, is apparently of awful effect to harden the hearts of sinners, to damp the graces of the saints, to preclude the effect of ordinances, and hold us down in a state of dulness and apathy. ... For persons to despise and cry down all religious affections, is the way to shut all religion out of their own hearts, and to make thorough work in ruining their souls.”
 - “They who condemn high affections in others, are certainly not likely to have high affections themselves.”
- “If true religion lies much in the affections, we may infer, that such means [form of preaching, ordinances, prayer, worship, etc.] are to be desired, as have much tendency to move the affections.”
- God has given mankind affections. What better, more appropriate, or high cause for their use than religion?
 - “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....”

Part II. Showing what are no certain signs that religious affections are gracious, or that they are not.

- **SECT. I - It is no sign, one way or other, that religious affections are very great, or raised very high:**
 - We shouldn't condemn high amounts of affections, since if religion consists in affections, we should expect purer religion to have high affections.
 - At the same time, we should not assume that high affections are an automatic sign of genuine religion, since affections can be superficial.
- **SECT. II - It is no sign that affections have the nature of true religion, or that they have not, that they have great effects on the body:**
 - Body effects often accompany affections given our psycho-somatic union. Thus, it is no surprise that religion affections are often accompanied by physical effects on the body.

- And scripture itself testifies to this, by linking physical responses to religious affections and experiences.
- However, physical effects can also stem from natural affections (as opposed to “spiritual affections” — these are two distinct categories for Edwards). Thus, the phenomenon of physical effects are not a sure sign of genuine religion, i.e., the Spirit’s work.
- **SECT. III - It is no sign that affections are truly gracious, or that they are not, that they cause those who have them, to be fluent, fervent, and abundant in talking of religious things:**
 - "It is very much the nature of the affections, of whatever kind, and whatever objects they are exercised about, if they are strong, to dispose persons to be very much in speaking of that with which they are affected; and not only to speak much, but to speak very earnestly and fervently. And therefore persons talking abundantly and very fervently about the things of religion, can be an evidence of no more than this, that they are very much *affected* with the things of religion; but this may be (as has been already shown) without any grace."
 - "That persons are disposed to be abundant in talking of religious things, may be from a good cause, and it may be from a bad one."
- **SECT. IV - It is no sign that affections are gracious, or that they are otherwise, that persons did not excite them by their own endeavours:**
 - Some might say that the Spirit always works through mediate or natural means; and, therefore, if some sense an immediate work of the Spirit, that this is false. However, if it is God that is at work, and not ultimately the effect of natural means, than he need not necessarily use natural means (although sometimes he does).
 - On the other hand, just because someone feels that something was immediate pressed upon them and not “from themselves,” this does not necessarily mean it was the spirit either. It may be a false spirit. Or sometimes we just have impressions that do not seem to come from ourselves.
- **SECT. V - It is no sign that religious affections are truly holy and spiritual, or that they are not, that they come to the mind in a remarkable manner with texts of Scripture:**
 - Edwards rebuffs the idea that just because someone has the experience where scriptures come to mind, seemingly outside of their own will, that this is necessary evidence of saving grace.
 - He says this could come from the devil, false teaching, the deceit of the human heart, or even a work of the Spirit, yet one that is not necessarily saving.
 - Key quote: “What deceives many of the less knowing and considerate sort of people, in this matter, seems to be this; that the Scripture is the word of God, and has nothing in it which is wrong, but is pure and perfect: and therefore, those experiences which come from the Scripture must be right. But then it should be considered, affections may arise on *occasion* of the Scripture, and not properly come *from*, as the genuine fruit of the Scripture; but from an abuse of it. All that can be argued from the purity and perfection of the word of God, with respect to experiences, is this, that those experiences which are *agreeable* to the word of God, are right, and cannot be otherwise: and not that those affections must be right, which arise *on occasion* of the word of God....”
 - Contemporary application — It’s worth asking, what other things exist today that some would view (or claim) as automatic evidences of saving grace? Maybe speaking in tongues in more pentecostal or charismatic circles.
- **SECT. VI - It is no evidence that religious affections are saving, or that they are otherwise, that there is an appearance of love in them:**
 - There is a certain form of counterfeit love that exists. “with respect to love, it is plain by the Scripture, that persons may have a kind of religious love, and yet have no saving grace.”
- **SECT. VII - Persons having religious affections of many kinds, accompanying one another, is not sufficient to determine whether they have any gracious affections or no:**
 - Counterfeit affections are possible, that is affections which resemble genuine affections but which are not the product of saving grace. So too then a collection of counterfeit affections can

exist, their multiplicity being no sign of genuine grace.

- **SECT. VIII - Nothing can certainly be determined concerning the nature of the affections, that comforts and joys seem to follow in a certain order:**
 - It is no indictment on the legitimacy of an experience that it involves feelings of great distress over the wretchedness of sin and the terrors of hell. God often convinces people of their need for salvation before he saves them.
 - On the other hand, that some people experience comfort or joy following such distress, this is no sure sign of genuine grace.
 - Terror and conviction are different things.
 - There is no “set” order in scripture — terror or conviction followed by comfort and joy — that guarantees those who experience something like this are Christians, as if this only happens to true Christians and is therefore a sign thereof.
 - Furthermore, one can have genuine terror — even produced by the Spirit — but that does not mean it will lead to true salvation and genuine joy.
 - Or, the devil can produce counterfeit experiences.
 - Finally, “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.”
 - Explanation — “For, though it might be made evident to a demonstration, on scripture principles, that a sinner cannot be brought heartily to receive Christ as his Saviour, who is not convinced of his sin and misery, his own emptiness and helplessness, and his just desert of eternal condemnation—and therefore such convictions must be some way implied in what is wrought in his soul—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.”
 - The Spirit works in various and mysterious ways, not according to a set scheme.
 - Conclusion — “What we have principally to do with, in our inquiries into our own state, or the directions we give to others, is the nature of that effect which God has brought to pass in the soul. As to the steps which the Spirit took to bring that effect to pass, we may leave them to him. 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.”
- **SECT. IX - It is no certain sign that affections have in them the nature of true religion, or that they have not, that they dispose persons to spend much time in religion, and to be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship:**
 - “It is plain from the Scripture, that it is the tendency of true grace to cause persons very much to delight in such religious exercises.” So it is no indictment on someone if they engage heavily in religious activities.
 - At the same time, “But yet, on the other hand, persons being disposed to abound and to be zealously engaged in the external exercises of religion, and to spend much time in them, is no sure evidence of grace; because such a disposition is found in many who have no grace.”
 - Contemporary application — Many today are tempted by the idea, “[So and so, e.g., Muslims, Jews, Catholics, secular humanitarians, etc.] are so sincere and devout. Do we really believe they will spend an eternity in hell?” Edwards challenges this — religious activity, devotion, sincerity are not signs of true grace, and can accompany false religion.
- **SECT. X - Nothing can be certainly known of the nature of religious affections, that they much dispose persons with their mouths to praise and glorify God:**
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- **SECT. XI - It is no sign that affections are right, or that they are wrong, that they make persons exceeding confident:**
 - It is not a sign of hypocrisy that one has assurance of salvation, since scripture teaches assurance.

- At the same time, a sense of assurance is not a sure sign one should actually feel assured, that one is actually saved.
 - We can consider the nature of the man in his depraved state — self-deceiving, dull to spiritual things, blindness to his lostness, etc.
 - Also the devil deceives, and is perfectly content to leave unregenerate individuals in a state of false assurance.
- On certain types of hypocrites — two.
 - The main one of concern = “Evangelical hypocrites” — “The chief grounds of the confidence of many of them, are impulses and supposed revelations....”
- On certain doctrines which when taught incorrectly lead to confusion:
 - Christians living by faith, not by sight — Or: Christians giving glory to God, by trusting him in the dark —
 - This refers to “When we are governed by a respect to eternal things, which are the objects of faith, and are not seen, and not by a respect to temporal things, which are seen; when we believe things revealed, that we never saw with bodily eyes; and also exercise faith in the promise of future things, without yet seeing or enjoying the things promised, or knowing the way how they can be fulfilled.” // It does not mean that folks can trust without having any understanding of these things or that folks should have assurance without having a life that matches.
 - Or again, we are to trust God even when he providence seems dark. But this is different than trusting him blindly.
 - Or again, “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 example, they may have a profound sense of God’s sovereignty, but a less immediate sense of his love. But this is different than trusting without any “light or experience.”
 - Living upon Christ, and not upon experiences — Or: Not making one’s good frame the foundation of one’s faith —
 - “Those who thus insist on persons’ living by faith, when they have no experience, and are in very bad frames, are also very *absurd* in their notions of *faith*. What they mean by faith is, believing that they *are in a good estate*. Hence they count it a dreadful sin for them to doubt of their state, whatever frames they are in, and whatever wicked things they do, because it is the great and heinous sin of unbelief.”
 - But — “The Scripture represents faith, as that by which men are *brought into a good estate*; and therefore it cannot 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!*”
 - “Nor is it at all to be lamented, that persons doubt of their state in such circumstances [when they are in a ‘a dead, carnal frame’]; but on the contrary, it is desirable and every way best that they should.”
 - God uses fear and love in reciprocal increasing/decreasing quantities in the lives of his children. As we increase in sin and our love diminishes, so fear increases and we are pressed back to the importance of confirming our salvation. On the other hand, as love increases, so this fear diminishes.
 - “They therefore directly thwart God’s wise and gracious constitution of things, who exhort others to be confident in their hope, when in dead frames ... and who warn them not to doubt of their good estate, lest they should be guilty of the dreadful sin of unbelief.” This teachings leads folks never to doubt their

salvation who very well should.

- “Persons cannot be said to forsake Christ [i.e., fail to trust in him], and live on their experiences [i.e., trust in their “good works”], merely because they use them as evidences of grace; for there are no other evidences that they can take [i.e., what else can we look to as evidence?]. But then may persons be said to live upon their experiences [i.e., trust in their own works], when they make a *righteousness* of them; and when, instead of keeping their eye on God’s glory, and Christ’s excellency, they turn it on themselves.”
 - Contemporary — This is contrary to a hyper-“free grace” view which has no place for the role of fear in the Christian life, or that sin can cause a rift in one’s ongoing relationship with God, notwithstanding that it doesn’t put one’s salvific relationship in jeopardy.
- **SECT. XII - Nothing can be certainly concluded concerning the nature of religious affections, that the relations persons give of them, are very affecting:**
 - "The true saints have not such a spirit of discerning, that they can certainly determine who are godly, and who are not. For though they know experimentally what true religion is, in the internal exercises of it; yet these are what they can neither feel nor see, in the heart of another.* There is nothing in others, that comes within their view, but outward manifestations and appearances; but the Scripture plainly intimates, that this way of judging what is in men by outward appearances is at best uncertain, and liable to deceit. ... Wise and experienced men will proceed with great caution in such an affair.”
 - Those who presume to know for sure and think they can discern with certainty are either:
 - (1) “have had but little experience.”
 - (2) “or are persons of a weak judgment.”
 - (3) “or that they have a great degree of pride and self-confidence, and so ignorance of themselves.”
 - “When there are many probable appearances of piety in others, it is the duty of the saints to receive them cordially into their charity, to love, and rejoice in them, as their brethren in Christ Jesus.” // But yet we understand that we are often times mistaken. And this is proven by common experience.
 - The reason this can be — The “graces” which would serve as evidence of salvation can be imitated and counterfeited.
 - We should not be deceived by the fact that folks can give testimonies to conversion that seem legit.
 - We should follow Christ’s instruction to judge people’s sincerity by their fruit.
 - Demonstrations and illustrations from scripture:
 - Edwards uses the parable of the wheat at the tears.
 - He interprets the story of Jephthah and his use of the word *Shibboleth* as “typifying the fruits of the friends of Christ.”
 - The rules of leprosy — The priest was to wait to see what came of the skin abnormality.
 - “This is agreeable to the doctrine we are abundantly taught in Scripture, viz.” The God “will judge every man according to his works.”
 - Answering the idea of some that their love for professed believers, energized by the Spirit who infallibly knows who are true believers, elucidates a certain knowledge that these individuals are genuine.
 - But Edwards notes that it is our duty to love all people, especially believers. This means it is our duty to love those who seem to be believers even if they are not. Yes, the Spirit empowers this love. But that doesn’t mean he is deceitful (me: the fact that the Spirit, who is infallible and omnisciently knows

the hearts of all, does so does not mean we are infallible in our sense of their genuineness). God may use this sense we have that they are believers for the end of us loving them.

- Also this idea goes against scripture, nor is founded on scripture. The Bible directs us to judge others by their fruit.

Part III. Showing what are distinguishing signs of truly gracious and holy affections.

● INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:

- (1) In identifying these distinguishing marks, this doesn't mean we will be able to infallibly discern who is genuine and who is not. Christ gives us rules by which we can judge others — for the welfare of his church; and for the operation of ministers. But it is only God's prerogative to know with absolute certainty people's hearts.
- (2) Nor can these distinguishing marks give certainty of salvation to those who are not living Christianly and evidencing fruit.
 - The defect here is not in the signs or rules by which we can discern someone's legitimacy. The defect is in the person. Twofold:
 - (a) The grace in their lives is small and not as easy to see or distinguish.
 - (b) Our ability to perceive and distinguish is lessened by sin in our lives.
 - "many persons in such a case spend time in a fruitless labour, in poring on past experiences, and examining themselves by signs which they hear laid down from the pulpit, or read in books. There is other work for them to do [i.e., change their life and actually bear fruit], which, while they neglect, all their self-examinations are like to be in vain..." // It is not the rules for discerning that are the basis for our assurance. Rather it is our lives. // "It is not God's design that men should obtain assurance in any other way, than by mortifying corruption, increasing in grace, and obtaining the lively exercises of it."
- (3) The point isn't that these signs would convince hypocrites, who are normally too self-deceived to be persuaded, although God can certainly do that. // But also, God may also use these signs to help believers distinguish pure and illegitimate affections in themselves.

● SECT. I - Affections that are truly spiritual and gracious, arise from those influences and operations on the heart, which are spiritual, supernatural, and divine:

- The Bible speaks of "spiritual persons" and properties of those persons as "spiritual" in the sense of being affected by the Spirit, his presence, his influence, his control, etc.
- There is a common influence of the Spirit on natural, unregenerate persons. But this is distinct from the Spirit's work on true saints.
 - "The Spirit of God, in all his operations upon the minds of natural men [i.e., those not regenerate], only moves, impresses, assists, improves, or some way acts upon *natural principles*; but gives no new *spiritual principle*." // "So in the more ordinary influences of the Spirit of God on the hearts of sinners, he only assists natural principles to do the same work to a greater degree, which they do of themselves by nature."
 - E.g., "So in those awakenings and convictions that natural men may have, God only assists conscience, which is a natural principle, to do that work in a further degree, which it naturally does."
 - ** In a footnote he links this general influence of the Spirit to Hebrews 6 — this seems to be how he interprets this passage — as well as the Spirit's anointing on folks like Saul in the OT or his gift of prophecy to Balaam.
- And this latter work, wherein the Spirit communicates himself and his properties (e.g., holiness), to persons "is what I mean ... when I say, that *truly gracious affections arise from those influences that are spiritual and divine*."

- ** He speaks in this chapter about the Spirit's role in union with Christ and participation in the divine nature. —> Helpful.
- One of the results of this change brought about by the Spirit is that the saint has a new sense and perception of (appetite and appreciation for) spiritual things. [The true #SixthSense]
 - "Here is, as it were, a new *spiritual sense*, or a principle of new kind of perception or spiritual sensation, which is in its whole nature different from any former kinds of sensation of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other senses. And something is perceived by a true saint, in the exercise of this new sense of mind in spiritual and divine things, as entirely diverse from any thing that is perceived in them by natural men, as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men get of honey by only looking on and feeling it. So that the spiritual perceptions which a sanctified and spiritual person has, are not only diverse from all that natural men have as the perceptions of the same sense may differ one from another, but rather as the ideas and sensations of different senses differ. Hence the work of the Spirit of God in regeneration is often in Scripture compared to the giving of a new sense, eyes to see, ears to hear, unstopping the ears of the deaf, opening the eyes of them that were born blind, and turning from darkness unto light."
- "This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions that attend it, are ... new *principles* of nature:"
 - = "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." // It's not a new faculty, "but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul, for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty."
- On affections then — "From what has been said it follows, that all spiritual and gracious affections are attended with, and arise from, some apprehension, idea, or sensation of mind, which is in its whole nature different, yea exceeding different, from all that is or can be in the mind of a natural man."
- Two points of clarification:
 - On the one hand, some things are common to both gracious and natural affections. Not everything about gracious affections are unique. Although, on the other hand, there certainly are unique things that are not present in natural affections.
 - "On the other hand, it must be observed, that a natural man may have religious apprehensions and affections, which may be, in many respects, very new and surprising to him; and yet what he experiences, be nothing like the exercises of a new nature."
- Summary statement —
 - "Upon the whole, I think it is clearly manifest, that all truly gracious affections arise from special and peculiar influences of the Spirit, working that *sensible effect* or *sensation* in the souls of the saints, which are entirely different from all that is possible a natural man should experience; different, not only in degree and circumstances, but in its whole nature. So that a natural man not only cannot experience that which is *individually* the same, but cannot experience any thing but what is exceedingly diverse, and immensely below it...."
- Applications that follow:
 - "impressions which some have on their imagination ... have nothing in them that is spiritual, or of the nature of true grace."
 - "*the immediate suggesting of the words of Scripture* to the mind, has nothing in it which is spiritual."
 - "*that no revelation of secret facts by immediated suggestion*, is any thing spiritual and divine."

beyond just saying the excellencies of God in general (see Sect. II above) — but his moral excellencies in particular.

- Because true excellency consists or has its foundation in moral excellency, not natural excellency. — “Moral excellency, if I may so speak, is the excellency of natural excellencies. Natural qualifications are either excellent or otherwise, according as they are joined with moral excellency or not. ... A true love to God must begin with a delight in his holiness, and not with a delight in any other attribute; for no other attribute is truly lovely without this. ... these attributes are no part of the excellency of God’s nature, as that is excellent in itself, any otherwise than as they are included in his holiness. ... Grace enables men to see these things in a better manner, than natural men do; and not only enables them to see God’s natural attributes, but that *beauty* of those attributes.”
- Secondly, because holy, regenerate individuals, by nature of being holy, love that which is holy (not just great) — “Various creatures show the difference of their natures, very much, in the things they relish as their proper good, one delighting in that which another abhors. Such a difference is there between true saints and natural men: natural men have no sense of the goodness and excellency of holy things, at least *for* their holiness. ... the nature of holiness chiefly to tend to and delight in holiness.”
- And this beauty of God’s moral excellency is only perceived by the regenerate. The natural man does not apprehend this.
 - God’s moral excellency, contrary to things like God’s greatness or an opinion of one’s own self-interest in God, is not something sinful humans will delight in.
 - “But the saints, by the mighty power of God, have it discovered to them; they have that supernatural sense given them, by which they perceive it.”
- Scriptural support is given.
- We may test our affections according to this rule to see if they be genuine/spiritual — are they excited by God’s *moral* excellency?
- The unregenerate man have natural sorts of affections for God rooted in other things, like his greatness or their self-interest.
 - For instance, at the day of judgment, all will see God’s glory and will respond with a sort of affection (tremble); but that doesn’t mean they will be saved.
 - “but if the *moral* beauty of God be hid, the enmity of the *heart* will remain in its full strength.”
- Hence focusing too much on “discoveries” of God’s great excellency is misleading, for individuals with such experiences may not be genuinely regenerate and may simply be sensing God’s greatness apart from his moral excellency.
- **SECT. IV - Gracious affections arise from the mind being enlightened rightly and spiritually to apprehend divine things:**
 - “Holy affections are not heat without light; but evermore arise from some information of the understanding, some spiritual instruction that the mind receives, some light or actual knowledge. ... more of God or Christ, and of the glorious things exhibited in the gospel. He has a clearer and better view than he had before, when he was not affected; either he receives some new understanding of divine things, or has his former knowledge renewed after the view was decayed.”
 - “Now there are many affections which do not arise from any light in the understanding; which is a sure evidence that these affections are not spiritual, let them be ever so high.”
 - This isn’t to say that when one has non-spiritual affections they are never rooted in some sort of new understanding. But “those apprehensions or conceptions wherewith they are affected, have nothing of the nature of knowledge or instruction in them.”
 - He proceeds to give examples of many such affections not rooted in spiritual illumination.
 - This understanding is unique to the regenerate on account of the Spirit’s illumination.

- o On spiritual pride / false humility — Many rail against pride, who themselves are prideful. Many think they are humble, whose pretense of humility is actually their opportunity for pride and self-righteousness.
- o Two ways spiritual pride is detected:
 - First, this one is “apt to think highly of his attainments in religion, as comparing himself with others.”
 - True spiritual humility, on the other hand, thinks quite low of one’s religion. The truly humble person is slow to speak, slow to take positions of leadership and teaching, etc.
 - Another version of spiritual pride is to view one’s spiritual experiences quite highly, notwithstanding even if you attribute these things to God and his grace.
 - "Such is the nature of grace, and of true spiritual light, that they naturally dispose the saints in the present state, to look upon their grace and goodness little, and their deformity great. And they that have the most grace and spiritual light, of any in this world, have most of this disposition.”
 - “*That* grace and holiness is worthy to be called *little*, which is little in *comparison* of what it ought to be. ... Such an one has his eye upon the rule of his duty; a conformity to that is what he aims at; it is what his soul reaches after; and it is by that he estimates and judges of what he does, and what he has. To a gracious soul, and especially to one eminently gracious, *that* holiness appears little, which is little compared with what it should be. ... If his holiness appears to him to be at a vast distance from this, it naturally appears despicable in his eyes. ... The nature of true grace and spiritual light, opens to a person’s view the infinite reason there is that he should be holy in a high degree. The more grace he has, the greater sense he has of the infinite excellency and glory of the Divine Being. ... And as grace increases, the field opens more and more to a distant view, until the soul is swallowed up with the vastness of the object. ... and therefore is more ready to think that others are beyond him. Wondering at the littleness of his own grace, he can scarcely believe that so strange a thing happens to other saints. It is amazing to him, that one who is really a child of God, and who has actually received the saving benefits of the unspeakable love of Christ, should love no more. He is apt to look upon it as a thing peculiar to himself, a strange instance; for he sees only the outside of other Christians, but he sees his own inside. ... In order to judge how much corruption or sin we have remaining in us, we must take our measure from that height to which the rule of our duty extends. The whole of the distance we are at from that height, is sin: for failing of duty is sin.”
 - This fits to the reality that our sin of not honoring the infinite God is of infinite heinousness. While on the flip-side, given the lowliness of the creature—how minuscule any proper service he does offer to such an infinite God. // And the more illuminating grace on has, the more this is apparent to him/her.
 - On the contrary, many who claim to have religious experiences claim they are freed from sin.
 - On the contrary, those who have experiences that puff them up with pride.
 - Answering an objection based on Ps 119:99.
 - Second, this is one are “apt to think highly of their humility.”
 - “a proud person is apt to think his humility great, and a very humble person his

humility small." // This is because the proud have a high view of themselves, such that any act of lowering themselves they perceive to be a great thing. Humble Christian though, who understand their actually low position before God, perceive their lowering rather proportionally trivial compared to what it should be.

- On conviction of sin:
 - Those who are so truly humbled by conviction of sin are not so much aware of their humiliation, because they feel it appropriate given an honesty apprehension of their sin (which is humiliating). If, on the other hand, one is being more so sensitive to his *sense* of that sin, to the experience of conviction, and not the sin itself, which should be the true cause of conviction, one is not truly humbled, because one feels his conviction and sense of humiliation to be rather remarkable, when in fact, in light of his great sin, it is not—it's actually just appropriate.
- On the temper and behavior that follows from genuine, evangelical humility.
 - The truly humble is poor and spirit, from which his disposition and actions follow.
 - "Now, it is out of such a heart as this, that all truly holy affections flow." // "All gracious affections, which are a sweet odour to Christ, filling the soul of a Christian with a heavenly sweetness and fragrantcy, are broken-hearted affections."
- **SECT. VII - Another thing, wherein gracious affections are distinguished from others, is, that they are attended with a change of nature:**
 - All spiritual discoveries, from which all gracious affections arise, bring about a change of nature. // 2 Cor 3:18.
 - And all true changes of nature are permanent. i.e., Gracious changes are not due merely to the Spirit's influence on the in the moment such that if they Spirit withdraws such influence the person returns to their original condition, but the Spirit's actual acting on the soul, which brings with it a change of nature that the person carry's with them thereon out. The Spirit serves as the person's abiding principles of (spiritual) life.
 - Along these lines, the nature of conversion is that it entails a changing on one's affections.
 - Thus, if not lasting change is affected in a person, they have not experienced genuine conversion.
 - To be clear, this conversion does not entirely eradicate sin, especially those to which we are personally inclined. But it inevitably has some great effect even on those sins.
- **SECT. VIII - 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:**
 - Genuine believers are governed by particular virtues.
 - And there are particular virtues that are rather agreeable to the nature of the gospel and our experience of it — namely humility, meekness, love, forgiveness, and mercy.
 - In the gospel, we see Christ exemplify these virtues; and so by extension they are to be manifest in Christians (i.e, the Christ-like ones). Our salvation entails a conformity to his image; and his image consists in manifesting these virtues.
 - "None will understand me, that true Christians have no remains of a contrary spirit, and can never, in any instances, be guilty of a behaviour not agreeable to such a spirit. But this I affirm, and shall affirm until I deny the Bible to be any thing worth, that every thing in Christians that belongs to true Christianity, is of this tendency, and works this way; and that there is no true Christian upon earth, but is so under the prevailing power of such a spirit, that he is properly denominated from it, and it is truly and justly his character. Therefore, ministers and others have no warrant from Christ to encourage persons of a contrary character and behaviour, to think they are converted, because they tell a fair story of illuminations and discoveries. In so doing, they would set up their own wisdom against Christ's, and judge *against* that rule by which Christ has declared all men should know his disciples. ... It is true, allowances must be

made for men's natural temper; but we must not allow men, that once were wolves and serpents, to be now converted, without any remarkable change in the spirit of their mind. The change made by true conversion, is wont to be most remarkable, with respect to the past notorious wickedness of the person."

- **SECT. IX - Gracious affections soften the heart, and are attended with a christian tenderness of spirit:**
 - "False affections, however persons may seem to be melted by them while they are new, have a tendency in the end to harden the heart." // People like this have a sense that they are saved when they are not, and thereby become dulled to the warnings and their need.
 - Truly gracious affections make the heart more tender to sin, not less.
 - "Gracious affections do not tend to make men bold, forward, noisy, and boisterous..." Rather it tends to instill a "holy fear."
 - Objection: "Is there not a place for godly boldness before God?" // Answer: Sure, but not at the expense of reverence. Salvation with God get's rid of the distance between us and God on account of our sin; but it does not get rid of the distance between us and God in terms of our natures (infinite vs. finite; Holy God vs. lowly creature). Even as believers we approach God — now not with terror — but still contrition.
 - One reason why gracious affections result in this sort of tenderness of spirit is because conversion, although eliminating terror of God, does not remove conviction of sin, but actually serves to increase it by making us all the more sensitive to it. // It also enables us to see the dreadfully hateful nature of sin, rather than just to have an aversion to it on account of its punishment.
 - All gracious affections indeed stir this tenderness.
 - For instance, even hope in God's mercy does this — i.e., the more one has "holy hope" and assurance, and eliminated fear of hell, the more one hates sin for sin.
- **SECT. X - Another thing wherein those affections that are truly gracious and holy, differ from those that are false, is beautiful symmetry and proportion:**
 - True gracious affections are whole (proportional) inasmuch as the believers sanctification in Christ — putting on the image of Christ — is whole. As those who have put on all of Christ, there cannot be disproportional affections in one respect and lack in another. That is indicative of hypocritical / false affections.
 - One thing that distinguishes true from false saints is that true saints mourn sin, not only as the pathway to proper conversion, but throughout the Christian life.
 - A characteristic of false affections is disproportions in the same affection as relates to differing objects.
 - E.g., some show great love for God; but fail to show that same affection (=love) to their fellow man.
 - E.g., or they love some men, but not all.
 - E.g., or they love man's physical condition, but fail to show concern for his spiritual condition (or vice versa).
 - E.g., or they show zeal against and hatred towards certain sins, but not others.
 - True Christians are more (or firstly) bothered by their own sin than that of others.
 - Aside: Those who pretend to have made great attainment to religion, without the actually substance of it, do so out of vain pretense.
 - Other characteristics of false affections:
 - Distortional (shifting) based on time/occasion.
 - ... or different places (e.g., in company of others vs. alone).
- **SECT. XI - 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:**
 - Experience of truly gracious affections causes one to long for more such grace.

- On the one hand, experience these splendid grace, one will certainly want more—aiming at the full and perfect realization.
 - On the other hand, one will become aware of their inadequacies and loathe their imperfections increasingly so.
 - Answering objection: Aren't spiritual experiences completely satisfying? If so, how then could one long for more?
 - False affections on the other hand do not lead to a desire for more, because they self-deceive one about their salvation and leave one satisfied with that misperception of things.
 - The NT primarily speaks of striving and longing as something that occurs post-conversion.
 - But some false converts will claim to have an ongoing desire for spiritual things. // Answer: They desire such things for their own end (e.g., assurance) and not as a good in and of itself (sanctification; increased holiness).
- **SECT. XII - Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in christian practice:**
 - Explanation — “I mean, they have that influence and power upon him who is the subject of them, 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.”
 - Implications: “This implies three things; ...
 - "1. That his behaviour or practice in the world, be universally conformed to and directed by christian rules."
 - The denial of sin, in other words, must be universal. Christians must reject even those besetting sins to which they are most inclined, rather than these sins being granted as the exception.
 - “And it is of importance to observe, that in order to a man's being universally obedient, his obedience must not only consist in *negatives*, or in universally avoiding wicked practices; but he must also be universal in the *positives* of religion.” // Not just refraining from sins if commission but also commission.
 - "2. That he makes a business of such a holy practice above all things; that it be a business which he is chiefly engaged in, and devoted to, and pursues with highest earnestness and diligence; so that he may be said to make this practice of religion eminently *his work and business*.”
 - "And, 3. That he persists in it to the end of life: so that it may be said, not only to be his business at certain seasons, the business of Sabbath-days, or certain extraordinary times, or the business of a month, or a year, or of seven years, or his business under certain circumstances; but the *business of his life*; it being that business which he perseveres in through all changes, and under all trials, as long as he lives.”
 - “True saints may be guilty of some kinds and degrees of backsliding, may be foiled by particular temptations, and fall into sin, yea, great sins: but they can never fall away so as to grow weary of religion and the service of God, and habitually to dislike and neglect it, either on its own account, or on account of the difficulties that attend it.” // They cannot backslide so as to discontinue in universal obedience, or primarily giving their life to the business of serving God.
 - Reason: “The reason why gracious affections have such a tendency and effect...” (cf. previous pts. in the book):
 - (1) Christ dwells with the believer through the Spirit, who communicates omnipotence-level, effectual transformation / resurrection-newness to the core of the saint. It is not superficial displays of affection; but affection that springs from fundamental, core, wholistically-altering regeneration.
 - (2) Because the nature of true conversion is to be won over for the sake of religion itself — which calls forth universal and persevering embrace, since religion's worth on its own terms is unchanging — versus being won over for some sort of self-interest, which will only produce a half-hearted devotion (only inasmuch as it suits own's

interest) and non-persevering (only until those interests stay in tact).

- (3) The moral excellency of the things of religion — Holy men by nature of being holy find holiness lovely and want to exemplify it.
- (4) The “*divine teaching and leading of the Spirit of God ...* gives the soul a natural relish of the sweetness of that which is holy.”
- (5) Believers are unwaveringly captivated by Christ’s beauty and desire to serve him perseveringly and sacrificially.
- (6) Such affections are “*attended with a thorough conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things.*”
- (7) “*a change of nature, accompanying such affections.*”
- (8) that “*spirit of humility, which attends them.*”
- (9) that “*tenderness of spirit*” which attends them.
- (10) The affections themselves are properly proportional, meaning they are not partial, but constant and universal.
- (11) The nature of spiritual affections is to create an appetite and longing for further attainments in religion, which attends to increasing affections.

o To illustrate and confirm:

- The full entailments of converted / regenerated life could be summed up as “self-denial for Christ.” // And with such true self-denial and devotion to Christ necessarily comes behaviors and action that follow suit, if this in fact be genuine (otherwise it does not mean what it is said to mean).
- God’s life-giving grace is effectual and fructifying “as a habit or principle of action has to action.”
- God’s whole work of salvation is towards this end of changed action. “And therefore every thing in a true Christian is calculated to reach this end. This fruit of holy practice, is that to which every grace, every discovery, and every individual thing which belongs to christian experience, has a direct tendency.”

o “none but true Christians do live such an obedient life.”

- o Conclusion — “it is manifest, that 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, both as an evidence of the sincerity of professors unto others, and also to their own consciences.”

● **SECT. 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:**

- o Goal: “I will endeavour particularly and distinctly to prove, that christian practice is the *principal sign* by which Christians are to judge, both of their own and others’ sincerity of godliness.”
- o Bible: The Bible teaches that works are the consistent evidence of faith (not merely profession or testimony — e.g., Js 2).
- o Reason: Common sense shows it’s better to look at one’s actions than just take their word for it.
- o Conclusion (A): “christian practice is the best sign or manifestation of the true godliness of a professing Christian, to the eye of his *neighbours.*”
- o Notes:
 - (1) When we observe that works are the chief evidence, a profession of faith is nonetheless assumed to be present, not excluded from consideration. // The evidences the Bible gives us to look for are meant to be rules for testing *professing Christians*. So, it assumes these folks in view profess. That’s not irrelevant or excluded.
 - What constitutes a profession of Christianity though?
 - 1. He must profess those things that are essential to Christianity.
 - e.g., that Jesus is the Messiah; that he satisfied our sins; that

we have sinned and deserve God's wrath; that we repent, renounce ourselves, and wholly follow Jesus; that they place their faith in him as their righteousness.

- 2. They must be persons who have the capacity to understand what they profess.
 - Notes:
 - "But in order to persons making a proper profession of Christianity ... it is not necessary they should give an account of the *particular steps* and method, by which the Holy Spirit, sensibly to them, wrought those great essentials of Christianity in their hearts."
 - Nonetheless, to profess these things is to give testimony to have experienced them.
 - And this isn't to say that testimony's aren't helpful in discerning the legitimacy of one's faith.
 - (2) What constitutes christian practice—the greatest evidence.
 - (3) These good works are sufficient for us to be able to judge one another's sincerity in all that is needed in this life; but no observable good works of another can ever give us absolute certainty of their legitimacy. That's not something we're able to attain.
- **SECT. XIV - Christian practice is a distinguishing and sure evidence of grace to persons' own consciences:**
 - Scripture testimony:
 - (1) how christian practice, doing good works, or keeping Christ's commandments, is to be taken, when the Scripture represents it as a sure sign to our *own* consciences, that we are real Christians.
 - The Bible speaks specifically of our actions as fruit, it by implications includes our intention, motives, will, etc. as the root. Good works are foundationally acts of the soul, of our wills. The will must be primarily considered when determining what are good works.
 - "If the acts of obedience and good fruits spoken of, be looked upon, not as mere motions of the body, but as acts of the soul; the whole exercise of the spirit of the mind, in the action, must be taken in, with the end acted for, and the respect the soul then has to God, &c. otherwise they are no acts of denial of ourselves, or obedience to God, or service done to him, but something else."
 - "And this is the obedience and fruit that God mainly looks at, as he looks at the soul, more than the body. ... As God looks at the obedience and practice of the man, he looks at the practice of the soul."
 - And so when the Bible speaks of practice as the main evidence of our legitimacy, it has in view not merely our external actions (which are the main evidence of our faith to others), but for us also and primarily our consciences, which is the volitional seat of our actions.
 - But one cannot then twist this to say that inward exercises *alone* are sufficient evidence, as if one can claim to be godly inwardly while living wickedly outwardly. Outward actions are evidence of inward exercises.
 - There are two kinds of exercises of grace:
 - (a) Immanent acts that terminate internally and don't act on another object (e.g., contemplation).
 - (b) Practical acts which terminate in something to be done.
 - Scripture evidence that the heart is in view of judging our legitimacy.
 - (2) that this is the chief of all evidences that men can have of their own sincere godliness.
 - Corollary — Contra. to preferring "the method of the first convictions, enlightenings, and comforts in conversion; or any immanent discoveries."

experiences" (decreasing pride and show).

- And as a result of these things, it would increase evangelistic effect.

Appendix: To the treaties of the affections, in two letters:

- **Letter I - to Mr. Gillespie, in answer to objections:**
- **Letter II - to Mr. Gillespie, in answer to objections:**