

THE FRUITS OF TRUE CONVERSION IN
JONATHAN EDWARDS' «RELIGIOUS
AFFECTIONS»

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ABSTRACT: This presentation offers to examine some of the most wonderful truths discussed by Edwards in his treatise on *Religious Affections*. I will seek to establish the nature of true godliness and to explain what constitutes a true believer and how we can distinguish him from a hypocrite. The subject is a very practical one and requires to be treated from a very practical point of view. The stress was laid on the inclinations of the heart. The whole objective is to prove that a man's act must be the proper evidence of the state of the heart. In Edwards's terms this is called Christian practice and is evidenced by its fruits. After an analysis of the fruits of true conversion we conclude with Edwards that Christian practice 'is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace'.²

From the general presentation of the fruits of true conversion I have moved to present a fruit that is absolutely essential to true spirituality: evangelical humiliation. Our interest is first to differentiate between legal humiliation, inappropriate for the true converted believer, and evangelical humiliation, absolutely necessary in the life of the truly converted believer. From there we proceed to discover how evangelical humiliation originates and then manifests itself in the life of the believer.

Our conclusion is in saying with Edwards that all Christian affections flow out to Christ from a pure and broken heart.

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2 *Religious Affections*, 320 (henceforth RA). Reprinted in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Banner of Truth, 1974), 2 vols., Vol. 1, 234-343. This article focuses on Part 3, Section 12.

KEY WORDS: affections, conversion, hypocrite, inclination of the heart, fruits, true spirituality, saving grace, evangelical humiliation.

Introduction

In one of his discussion William K. B. Stoever explains that the *Treatise concerning Religious Affections*³ (1746), produced in the controversial retrospect of the Great Awakening, was Edwards's 'fullest and most pointed statement about the nature and expression of true godliness.'⁴ Someone else has labelled it 'a classic, a literary and a theological masterpiece', because it transcends generations and addresses numerous problems that overwhelm Christians and the church.⁵

Right from the outset of *Religious Affections* we see Edwards seeking to establish what is the nature of true religion⁶. He offers us the privilege of understanding what constitutes a true converted believer. For Edwards these are most important issues. These issues were not just the product of his imagination or of his desire for more inquiries into religion, but they were addressed in the midst of controversies and struggles with the opponents of revival. He knew that many others had wrestled with these problems and the attempts to answer them often tended to bring more confusion than clarity. Yet Edwards would not let these issues go, but directed his efforts to help us distinguish between a true believer and a hypocrite. In *Religious Affections* Edwards is interested to demonstrate how can we test in practice if someone is truly converted or not. He describes what are sure signs of genuine conversion and what are not.

3 Reprinted in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Banner of Truth, 1974), 2 vols., Vol. 1, pp. 234-343. This article focuses on Part 3, Section 12.

4 William K. B. Stoever, "The Godly Will's Discerning", in S. J. Stein (ed.), *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation* (Indiana University Press, 1996), 85.

5 See Stephen J. Nichols, *Jonathan Edwards: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* (P&R, 2001), 107.

6 *Religious Affections*, p. 234. See also Murray's comments in Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards* (Banner of Truth, 1987), 252.

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In his work on the theology of Jonathan Edwards Conrad Cherry explains how Edwards has continually reminded himself that faith is not only ‘an exercise of the understanding’ but also ‘a falling in of the inclination, the choice, the affection’⁷. For Edwards it is vitally important to understand that religious faith is inseparable from one’s active, practical life in the world, because to know the truth which God reveals to us through faith means to dare to live by it. Edwards shows that there is a correspondence between the state of man’s heart and his outward behaviour. His whole objective in this section is to prove that a man’s actions must be the proper evidence of the state of his heart. The understanding and the will must be outworked in the attitude of the whole person. This Edwards called Christian practice and it was considered to be the most important fruit of true conversion.

Edwards claimed Christian practice as the chief means through which one may be assured that he is a man of faith. Developing the same theme Cherry explains that practice, the performance of good works, exhibits the nature of faith before both man and God.⁸ The same point is stressed by Edwards when he preaches on the subject of true humility, which we shall consider in the second part of this paper. He asserts: ‘And this humility, as a virtue in men, implies a sense of their own comparative meanness, both as compared with God and as compared with their fellow-creatures.’⁹

In what follows we shall endeavour, first of all, to examine, in general, the fruits produced by true conversion and show how these fruits arise from ‘new taste’, secondly, to focus on one fruit of conversion, namely, evangelical humiliation and explain how this is different from legal humiliation, and thirdly, to give an idea about how this fruit should test converts from the Greek-orthodox church of Romania.

7 Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Indiana University Press, 1990), 14.

8 See Cherry, 143-144.

9 Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits* (Banner of Truth, 2000), 131.

A General Examination of the Fruit Produced by True Conversion

As Edwards progresses through *Religious Affections* he deals more precisely with the outward results of the inward changes. When we reach Section 12 in Part 3 we see how Edwards comes down to what he calls 'the chief of all the sign of grace': 'christian practice or a holy life'.¹⁰

Under this heading we do not purpose to discuss in detail all the signs discussed in the previous 11 sections of Part 3¹¹, but only to make some references to them and then give a brief summary of the material found in Section 7. Before proceeding further it is important to understand from where such signs of grace originate.

In Part 2¹² Edwards addresses the problem of hypocrisy and self-deception by pointing out that what we often take to be genuine affections do not in fact guarantee genuine religious affections. These are not produced by divine influences but are found in men themselves by the exercise of natural principles. He mentions in that part twelve signs and shows how they do not necessarily guarantee genuine religious affections, and we should be cautious about using them as certain evidence.

In Part 3 Edwards is determined to make clear that the cause and origin of truly gracious affections is in spiritual, supernatural and divine operations on the heart, as the Holy Spirit dwells in the saints and brings renewal in their life. He does this in his treatise of the first, the third and forth signs¹³. According to what he says, it becomes obvious that genuine religious affections would come only from the Holy Spirit whom the believers experience. Here is what Edwards says in Section 1 about the influence of the Spirit in the believer's life:

10 RA, 314 and 320.

11 RA, 262-336

12 RA, 245-262. See also "Sinners in Zion Tenderly Warned: Why Hypocrites will be Surprised", in *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 205, where Edwards explains the severe consequence of hypocrisy.

13 RA, 264ff, 278ff, 281ff. See also, 316, 317.

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...it is evident, that those gracious influences of the saints, and the effects of God's Spirit which they experience, are entirely above nature, and altogether of a different kind from any thing that men find in themselves by the exercise of natural principles. No improvement of those principles that are natural, no advancing or exalting of them to higher degree, and no kind of composition, will ever bring men to them; because they not only differ from what is natural, and from every thing that natural men experience, in degree and circumstances, but also in *kind*; and are of a nature vastly more excellent. And this is what I mean by *supernatural*, when I say, that *gracious affections are from those influences that are supernatural*.¹⁴

The natural inference is that those who do not have the Spirit of God are incapable of producing genuine religious affections because, following Paul in 1 Corinthians 2, they are natural and not spiritual.¹⁵ When the Holy Spirit works in our life through His work of regeneration, we are given spiritual understanding and ability to see Scripture accurately. Edwards describes this as a whole new outlook not only on Scripture, but on God, the self, and the world. Furthermore, it is not just a new way of seeing, it is a new way of living or a new disposition. This is Edwards' notion of the new sense, which is not a sixth sense, but a 'new supernatural sense' or 'a new spiritual taste'.¹⁶ When the Spirit works in their lives, the believers love the Word of God, because it is the pure word of truth, they love the saints, and heaven is lovely to them. To put it in Edwards' own words this new taste is described as:

This is in its whole nature diverse from any former kinds of sensation of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other five 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 different from any thing that is perceived in them by natural

14 RA, 266.

15 See similar comments in Nichols, *op. cit.*, pp. 118, 119, and Stephen R. Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory: An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (T&T Clark, 2000), 176-177.

16 RA, 280.

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men, as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men get of honey by looking on it or feeling of it.¹⁷

So those who are so blessed by this work of the Spirit in their life see and respond to the world in a new way. They are able to grasp the surpassing beauty of the moral perfection of God, and of what He has done in the gospel story, and it is this that leads to the effective response that is the mark of true holiness.

As we progress through the rest of the affections we also see how beauty, symmetry and proportion are described to be the nature of truly gracious affections¹⁸. It must be mentioned at this point the difference that exists between true and false affections. The truly converted man sees that divine things are beautiful in themselves, rather than just seeing personal advantage in them. But a hypocrite who believes in the general truth of the Christian scheme may be zealous in religion for a time, but such zeal is merely a selfish attempt to gain personal advantage, rather than a heartfelt response to the overwhelming perfection of God.

We note that the remaining signs¹⁹ describe the result of their presence in the life of the believer. Such quality as love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy are part of the true Christian nature. All these find their final fulfilment in the twelfth sign which essentially is an exposition of Christ's own words: 'By your fruits you will know them' (Matthew 7:16). In his comments on this final sign Nichols shows that Edwards 'reorients the previous signs of truly gracious affections to the notion of practice.'²⁰ In other words, in the last sign Edwards looks for the manifestation of the earlier eleven signs in person's life.

As Edwards proceeds to describe his last and chief sign he succinctly states it: 'Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit

¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ Second sign in *RA*, pp. 274-278, fifth sign in *RA*, pp. 288-294, sixth sign in *RA*, 294-302, seventh sign in *RA*, pp. 302-303, and tenth sign in *RA*, 309-312.

¹⁹ Eighth, ninth, eleventh and twelfth signs in *RA*, 303-309; 312-320.

²⁰ Nichols, *op. cit.*, 118.

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in Christian practice.²¹ This leads him to show that the business of the Christian life is to be ‘universally conformed to, and directed by Christian rules’²². But according to the view he holds, this imply three things (1) this practice is directed by Christian rules, (2) this practice receives priority in his life and is pursued with highest earnestness and diligence; and (3) he persists in it to the end of his life. At this point Edwards begins to discuss the doctrine of perseverance and the natural process of growth and fruit bearing that accompanies genuine conversion.

Like everywhere else everything Edwards says is now supported with biblical truth. Within the doctrine of perseverance universal obedience is the first topic to be discussed and supported with biblical example of people who have followed the Lord wholeheartedly. Edwards stipulates that all those who belong to God ‘should part with their dearest iniquities... sins that most easily beset them, and to which they are most exposed by their natural inclinations, evil customs, or particular circumstances, as well as others.’²³ Edwards explains that this obedience must not be understood only in terms of ‘negatives’, or in universally avoiding wicked practices. The true converted person, says Edwards, must also be universal in the ‘positives’ of religion, because sins of omission are as much breaches of God’s commands, as sins of commission (Matthew 25).

The next point in the discussion focuses upon the need to perform all Christian service with ‘great earnestness and diligence’. He asserts that for a truly converted man the business of religion becomes the main business of his life. Edwards stresses not only the importance of doing good works, but also the need to be zealous of good works. From workers in God’s vineyard Edwards moves to the analogy of ‘good and faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ’ and to that of runners in a race for the ‘prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord’²⁴. These are all Christian duties which must be undertaken in one way only: with earnestness and dili-

21 RA, 314.

22 Idem.

23 RA, 315.

24 Idem.

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gence. Only those who conform to this standard are proved to have the fruits of true conversion. They are people who pray always and watch in order to escape the awful things that are coming on the ungodly. Edwards beautifully summarises everything in the following words:

The true faith by which persons rely on the righteousness of Christ and the work he has done for them, and truly feed and live upon him, is evermore accompanied with a spirit of earnestness in the Christian work and course.²⁵

Edwards' next step in the development of this theme is to show that the truly converted Christian perseveres in obedience not only with earnestness and diligence, but also 'through all the various kinds of trials that he meets with, to the end of life'.²⁶ This is a doctrine abundantly taught in Scripture and to prove this he refers to various texts from the Bible. He does acknowledge that the saints may not always live saintly lives. In fact he writes:

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; as is evident by Gal. vi. 9. Rom. ii. 7 Heb. x. 36. Isa. xliii. 22. Mal. i. 13. They can never backslide so as to continue no longer in a way of universal obedience; or so, that it shall cease to be their manner to observe all the rules of Christianity, and do all duties required, even the most difficult, and in the most difficult circumstances.²⁷

A true saint cannot be guilty of such things. Edwards continues to explain that they who are truly converted are new men, new creatures; new, not only within, but without, they are sanctified throughout, in spirit,

²⁵ Idem.

²⁶ Idem.

²⁷ Ibid., 316.

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soul, and body. With respect to the hypocrite who falls away Edwards explains that he is visibly displaying that he was never risen with Christ. His hypocrisy is especially visible when his opinion of his being converted is the very cause of his failure. With regard to the hypocrites Edwards says:

...whether their falling away be into their former sins, or into some new kind of wickedness, having the corruption of nature only turned into a new channel, instead of its being mortified.²⁸

As Edwards continues to explain the difference between true and false conversion he draws attention to the lack of solidity, life and strength in the life of the hypocrite. He explains:

False discoveries and affections do not go deep enough, to reach and govern the spring of men's actions and practice. The seed in the stony ground had not deepness of earth; the root did not go deep enough to bring forth fruit.²⁹

But with regard to the truly converted man, Edwards has this to say: 'But gracious affections go to the very bottom of the heart, and take hold of the very inmost springs of life and activity. Herein chiefly appears the power of true godliness, viz. in its being effectual in practice.'³⁰ Thus he explains that the power of godliness is manifested first of all within the soul; within the place where the sensible, lively exercise of gracious affections take place. 'Yet', says Edwards, 'the principal evidence of this power is in those exercises of holy affections that are practical; conquering the will, the lusts, and corruptions of men, and carrying them on in the way of holiness, through all temptation, difficulty, and opposition.'³¹ He then proceeds in this last sign to relate all of the previous signs to this great truth. Thus the reasons that explain why holy affections will cause men

28 Idem.

29 Ibid., 317.

30 Idem.

31 Idem.

to be holy in their practice are: 'the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, an embracement of religion for its own sake, the love for holiness, or moral excellency, divine teaching and leading of the Spirit of God which gives the soul a natural relish of the sweetness of that which is holy, spiritual knowledge, a thorough conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things, change of nature, a spirit of humility, Christlikeness, tenderness of spirit, a beautiful symmetry and proportion and spiritual hunger.'³²

Edwards refers this way to the connection between this sign and the others signs and stresses again that 'true grace is not an inactive thing, there is nothing in heaven or earth of a more active nature, for it is life itself, the most active kind, even spiritual and divine life.'³³ He then adds: 'Regeneration, which is that work of God in which grace is infused, has a direct relation to practice, for it is the very end of it, with a view to which the whole work is wrought.'³⁴ As Edwards comes towards the conclusion of his treatise he explains that 'none but true Christians do live such an obedient life, so universally devoted to their duty, and given up to the business of a Christian, as has been explained. All unsanctified men are workers of iniquity.'³⁵ His closing remark about this final sign is that Christian practice 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 conscience.'³⁶

A Particular Examination of Evangelical Humiliation

We come now to focus upon one individual sign, or one fruit of conversion, namely evangelical humiliation. In discussing evangelical humiliation, Holmes makes a distinction between 'evangelical humiliation' and

32 Ibid., 317-318.

33 Ibid., 318.

34 Idem.

35 Ibid., 319.

36 Ibid., 320.

what he calls ‘a purely natural humiliation’³⁷. He shows that the first is a standard term in Puritan discussions of conversion.

Jonathan Edwards draws our attention as well to an important distinction. He wants us to understand that not everything which passes for humility in this world is the sort of humility that the Bible requires. Thus he distinguishes between ‘legal humiliation’ and ‘evangelical humiliation’, and explains that the former represents what men have while in ‘a state of nature’ and the latter being ‘peculiar to true saints’.³⁸ He then proceeds to outline the characteristics of these two sorts of humiliation as well as indicating the difference between them.

Legal Humiliation: the Causes and Manifestations of Legal Humiliation

The legal humiliation originates, says Edwards, from the ‘common’ influence of the Spirit of God and assists our natural principles and especially our natural conscience. He maintains that this ‘common’ humility comes from an understanding of the religious things. The man possessing legal humility knows their natural properties and qualities and particularly the natural perfections of God, such as His greatness, terrible majesty and realises that he falls short of them. In order to realise better which are these natural perfections, Edwards alludes to the manifestations experienced by the congregation of Israel when the law was given at Mount Sinai.

Under this legal humiliation the sense of the awful greatness and natural perfections of God convince men that they are exceeding sinful and guilty, and exposed to the wrath of God. But Edwards points out that the people judged in the Day of Judgement will have similar feelings. They will feel sinful and guilty, knowing that they can do nothing to make themselves righteous. They will still be proud and unbroken. The problem for Edwards consists in the fact that these people do not see their own odiousness on account of sin; they do not see the hateful nature of sin. Their submission to God will be forced. They will have no desire to throw themselves before God in worship freely confessing and mourning

³⁷ Holmes, *op. cit.*, 176.

³⁸ *Religious Affections*, Sect. VI, 294.

their sins. According to Edwards in legal humiliation men do not have an answerable frame of heart, consisting in a disposition to humiliate themselves, and exalt God alone.

Edwards explains that such a disposition is given only in evangelical humiliation, and is given to the believer by overcoming the heart and changing its inclination through the discovery of God's holy beauty.

So, with respect to legal humiliation Edwards wants us to understand that it has in it no spiritual good, nothing of the nature of true virtue. Therefore we must move on to consider the true humiliation, called by Edwards evangelical humiliation.

Evangelical Humiliation: the Importance of Evangelical Humiliation

According to Edwards evangelical humiliation is absolutely essential to true spirituality. Without it there is no genuine spiritual life, regardless of the intensity of religious feeling. Edwards supports this argument with a host of text from both Old and New Testament.³⁹

He takes and views Holy Scripture as 'our rule', in judging the nature of true religion, and judging of our own religious qualifications and state. Edwards then says: 'This is a great and most essential thing in true religion. The whole frame of the gospel, every thing appertaining to the new covenant, and all God's dispensations towards fallen man, are calculated to bring to pas this effect.'⁴⁰

After dealing with the biblical texts brought to support the importance of evangelical humiliation, Edwards continues to say: 'It concerns us greatly to look at this humiliation, as one of the most essential things pertaining to true Christianity.'⁴¹ Therefore our next interest is to look at the causes and manifestations of evangelical humiliation.

39 Idem.

40 Idem.

41 Ibid., 295.

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The Causes and Manifestations of Evangelical Humiliation

Edwards' question and ours as well, is what is true humility? Edwards would say that true humility is to know God as He is, in all the glory and beauty of His holy love. In one of his sermons Edwards gives the following definition: 'Humility may be defined to be a habit of mind and heart corresponding to our comparative unworthiness and vileness before God, or a sense of our own comparative meanness in his sight, with the disposition to a behaviour answerable thereto'.⁴²

He explains that this evangelical humiliation is the work of the Holy Spirit and leads in time to a conviction of the hopelessness of our condition, and finally a looking to Christ for pardon and help.⁴³ When we thus get a glimpse of God's beauty and self-giving love in Christ, of the transcendent beauty of divine things in their moral qualities, we are overwhelmed by our own uncleanness and self-obsession.

Edwards explains that those affected by evangelical humiliation see their horrible condition as a result of sin. They distinguish the hateful nature of sin which troubles them in this life. Again it must be emphasized that this sense is given to them by a discovery of the beauty of God's holiness and moral perfection. In evangelical humiliation truly converted men have an answerable frame of heart, consisting in a disposition to abase themselves, and exalt God alone. In evangelical humiliation such a disposition is given to them by overcoming their heart and changing its inclination.

In evangelical humiliation men see the need for self-denial. The new state of their heart brings them to a disposition in which they are happy to humble themselves before God. This is how Edwards explains the essence of evangelical humiliation:

42 *Charity and Its Fruits*, 130.

43 See also Edwards' discussion on the importance of the doctrine of Justification by faith alone for a detailed account of the importance of trust in Jesus for our right standing before God and not on ourselves. "Justification by Faith Alone", first published in 1734; reprinted in *Works*, Vol. I, 652-54.

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The essence of evangelical humiliation consists in such humility as becomes a creature in itself exceeding sinful, under a dispensation of grace; consisting in a mean esteem of himself, as in himself nothing, and altogether contemptible and odious; attended with a mortification of a disposition to exalt himself, and a free renunciation of his own glory.⁴⁴

He then says:

This is a great and most essential thing in true religion. The whole frame of the gospel, every thing appertaining to the new covenant, and all God's dispensations towards fallen man, are calculated to bring to pass this effect. They that are destitute of this, have no true religion, whatever profession they make, and how high soever their religious affections may be.⁴⁵

But Edwards moves his attention towards a more careful look at how humility acts. Once humility perceives God's realities as they are, it begins to practice what Edwards calls 'self-denial'.⁴⁶ According to Edwards, self-denial is the principal part of the great Christian duty. He continues to show that this duty consists in two things: (1) in a man's turning away from worldly interests and pleasures. This means that he wants to ignore or redirect his uncontrolled desires for greed, fame and power when he sees that fulfilling those desires will bring unhappiness in the long run. And (2) in denying his natural pride and self-esteem, and he does this freely and from his own initiative. This is what the Christian does in evangelical humiliation. The second is described by Edwards to be the most difficult part of self-denial, because he thinks that natural man can come much nearer to the first than the second. It is much easier to abandon wealth, pleasures and common enjoyments of the world, but it is much more difficult to renounce your own dignity and righteousness. For Edwards this is impossible to practice unless the soul has seen the

44 Idem.

45 Idem.

46 Ibid., 295.

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beauty of God's love and lives in response to that love. Edwards stresses that people never deny themselves for Christ, but only sell 'one lust to feed another'.⁴⁷

Edwards explains that many hypocrites pretend to be humble and quite often there is nothing more important for them in their Christian behaviour. This is how Edwards describe their attitude:

They endeavour to make a great show of humility in speech and behaviour; but they commonly make bungling work of it, though glorious work in their own eyes. They can not find out what a humble speech and behaviour is, or how to speak and act so that there may indeed be a savour of Christian humility in what they say and do: that sweet humble air and mien is beyond their art, being not led by the Spirit, or naturally guided to a behaviour becoming holy humility, by the vigour of a lowly spirit within them.⁴⁸

McDermott observed as well that the unregenerate are often able to practice the first kind of self-denial, but are totally incapable of the second.⁴⁹ They can deny themselves the obvious sins of the flesh because they know that those sins will hurt them and ruin their reputations.

Edwards proceeds to make an application important to all true Christians. Making this application he discusses the problem of spiritual pride⁵⁰. Firstly, Edwards refers to the man who trusts in his own experiences and makes his own righteousness from them. This man, explains Edwards, is proud of his own experiences and admires his own spiritual experiences and consider himself superior to others. Such spiritual pride

47 Ibid., 295.

48 Idem. Edwards continues to describe the language of the hypocrite who pretends to be humble.

49 Gerald R. McDermott, *Seeing God: Jonathan Edwards and Spiritual Discernment* (Vancouver, Canada: Regent College Publishing, 2000), 147.

50 RA, 296. Edwards' sermon: "The Spirit of Charity is an Humble Spirit is also relevant for the subject of humility and its causes and effects. Jonathan Edwards," *Charity and Its Fruits*, 128-156.

makes him think that he did well before God. Edwards then explains that he looks on these experiences with satisfaction and then thinks that God looks on them so too. And so unavoidably he imagines that God looks on his experiences as a merit in him.

Secondly, the spiritually pride man wishes to promote himself and he prides himself as much in God's eyes as he does in his own. There is something in him which makes him desire to let others know what he has accomplished or what he can teach them. Thus he is always in the position to demand to do things. Edwards describe this demanding attitude in the following way: 'It is natural for them to do the part of dictators and masters in matters of religion; and so implicitly affect to be called of men Rabbi.'⁵¹ The truly humbled spirit, on the other had, is always ready to offer to help when help is needed. The one, says Edwards, 'whose heart is under the power of Christian humility is of a contrary disposition'. True humility is more impressed by others' gifts than by its own. Humble men do not assume they are teachers. They want to be taught. They are much more eager to hear and to receive instructions from others, that to demand and dictate. Edwards supports all his arguments with biblical texts, referring to Jeremiah 1:6: Exodus 3:11 and James 1:19 where people like Jeremiah and Moses stand as example of truly humble saints.

Finally, Edwards also refers to the spiritually man's speech and the manner of his conversations. This is what he says about this man: 'He may use humble terms, and speak of his experiences as of the great things God has done for him, and it may be calls upon others to glorify God for them.'⁵² McDermott, describing the same attitude, makes the following assertion: 'When I am given a flattering introduction before a speech, a part of me winces at the attention, but another part of me secretly revels in it.'⁵³

Edwards summarises everything he has said about spiritual pride with the following comments: 'The deceitfulness of the heart of man appears

51 RA, 297.

52 RA, 296.

53 McDermott, *op. cit.*, 142.

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in no one thing so much, as this of spiritual pride and self-righteousness.⁵⁴

Having examined the subject of true and false humiliation we shall move on to our next and final heading.

The Application of Evangelical Humiliation to Converts from the Greek-Orthodox Church of Romania

Among other doctrinal issues which should be explained to all those converted from the Greek-orthodox church of Romania, the issue referring to the difference between legal humiliation and evangelical humiliation must be given significant emphasis. I am saying this because it is well known that the Christian life in the Greek-orthodox church is very much characterized by what Edwards calls legal humiliation. There is much emphasis in this church on humility, which is reflected in many different ways, contrary to Scripture, but the humility of this people is hypocritical and it has in it no spiritual good, nothing of the nature of true virtue.

The Greek-orthodox church is in most of the cases only interested in bringing people to a 'common' humility, but it does not do anything to bring them to a real conviction of sin. People are not made to see the hateful nature of sin.

Therefore, those converted from this church must be taught that it is not enough to have some feelings of God's majesty and power. It is not enough to know that God is righteous and that they are not. They need to know that a truly humbled man comes before God with his pride broken, with his sin exposed and confessed. He feels conviction of sin not simply as a work of the natural conscience, but as a result of his understanding and perception of the beauty of God's love. He mourns his sins not because he fears God's punishment, but because he knows he has dishonoured the One whose love is so great and beautiful. He throws himself at God's feet in worship and submission not because he has to, but because this is his delight.

54 RA, 296.

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One other important application for those converted from the Greek-orthodox church is with regard to what Edwards calls spiritual pride. The sin of spiritual pride is exceedingly obvious within these churches. When Edwards speaks about the man who trusts in his own experiences and makes his own righteousness from them you feel that he is speaking specifically to these people. Trusting in his own efforts to attain favour with God is the main characteristic of the Greek-orthodox believer. He goes to the church in order to perform deeds that will earn him merits before God. So the more he performs the more satisfied and proud he is. He thinks he is spiritual and therefore his pride is a spiritual one. Edwards explains that this man not only is proud of his own experiences, but he admires them too, he looks on them with satisfaction, and, while he does that, he thinks that God looks on them in the same way. Consequently his spiritual pride makes him think that he did well before God. This in turn leads to a desire to promote himself. There is something in him which makes him desire to let others know what he has accomplished or what he could teach others to accomplish. It is important to show here that his spirituality is only a matter of importance for the time he is in the church. He is never willing to renounce his sin when he is either in the church or outside the church. He likes to know he has served God in some way, but he wants to enjoy his lusts too.

When these people are converted they need to understand that true humility means trusting in Christ's righteousness and in what he has accomplished on their behalf. When they look at themselves they need to see themselves 'poor in spirit'⁵⁵, dependent on God's mercy and grace. The gospel's message is to cut off all glorying, not only before God, but also before men (Romans 4:1, 20). According to Edwards the true humble person, the one converted, in our case from the Greek-orthodox church, needs to learn to renounce all sins, great and little, and to refuse to comply with the demands of the world, because serving God and yet continuing to live in sin is inconsistent with true spirituality.

55 Edwards explains in some details the meaning of 'poor in spirit', in *RA*, 301.

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Final Remarks

I have endeavoured in this presentation to examine some of the most wonderful truths discussed by Edwards in his treatise on *Religious Affections*. My purpose was to seek to establish the nature of true godliness and to explain what constitutes a true believer and how we can distinguish him from a hypocrite. The subject is a very practical one and requires to be treated from a very practical point of view. Before we discussed Section 12 from Part 3 of the *Affections* we saw that the stress was laid on the inclinations of the heart. In Section 12 the whole objective is to prove that a man's act must be the proper evidence of the state of the heart. In Edwards' terms this is called Christian practice and is evidenced by its fruits. After an analysis of the fruits of true conversion we conclude with Edwards that Christian practice 'is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace'.⁵⁶

From the general presentation of the fruits of true conversion I have moved to present a fruit that is absolutely essential to true spirituality: evangelical humiliation. At that point we were interested, first to differentiate between legal humiliation, inappropriate for the true converted believer, and evangelical humiliation, absolutely necessary in the life of the truly converted believer. From there we proceeded to discover how evangelical humiliation originates and then manifests itself in the life of the believer.

We shall conclude saying with Edwards that all Christian affections flow out to Christ from a pure and broken heart. This is what he finally says about the truly humble believer: 'A truly Christian love, either to God or men, is a humble broken-hearted love. The desires of the saints, however, earnest, are humble desires: their hope is a humble hope; and their joy, even when it is unspeakable and full of glory, is an humble, broken-hearted joy, leaving the Christian more poor in spirit, more like a little child, and more disposed to an universal lowliness of behaviour'.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ RA, 320.

⁵⁷ RA, 302.

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