

Piety Rationalized: Notes on Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, and the Ramist Logic of Method

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All the Learning that many have, serves only as a bag of Gold about a Drowning Man; it sinks them the deeper into the scalding Floods of the Lake that burns with fiery Brimstone: But the Knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is a saving thing.

(Cotton Mather, 1690)

Abstract

Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather, two of the most significant Colonial New England intellectuals and ministers, began to develop an educational theory that aligned the intellect, the powers of rationality and natural world secular disciplines, with the emotional experience of evangelical tradition. Simply, they sought a union of the head and the heart. This was not an easy union. They understood the need for a pedagogical means to help the congregation seek the most important experience of the head and the heart, conversion, and a life of visible sainthood, also known as piety. They found such a method in Ramist Maps, which provided a step-by-step technique for revealing how to live a Godly life and how to achieve piety, which involved behaviors one contemplated and practiced before the actual conversion, then transforms into visible sainthood and a model for all would-be elect to observe. Simply, whereas one worked on being pious before conversion, one became pious after the experience.

In colonial New England during the early-to-mid 1700s, Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather, important members of an expanding group of American intellectual ministers, departed upon an “evangelical” expedition in educational theory that disclosed a distinct alignment of intellect and emotional experience -- a union of head and heart (Cremins, 1970). This theological and secular betrothal birthed tensions and ambiguities necessary to navigate for any hope of a reasoned

conversion dependent upon piety and a renewed fervor for the divine path to knowledge. This was a difficult passage. Both men recognized a tacit need for the right tools of interpretation and the right map giving order to the journey and a sense of certainty to help quiet the anxiety of whether one was truly chosen or not. The New England Puritans found such a technique and practice in 16th Century pedagogical schematics known as Ramist Maps, the invention of a Puritan favorite schoolmaster and eventual martyr of the Protestant cause, Petrus Ramus (1515-1572).

The Ramist Maps endorsed step-by-step, general-to-specific representations that “logically” guided one through what was considered providential and secular knowledge of the day. In effect, the maps and corresponding methods were more than merely means for the categorization of knowledge, but a system for illuminating the maxims of a godly life. In fact, signposts dotted the map an ever-building stream to be circumnavigated and ruminated upon then delivered by ministers and/or schoolmasters as they guided the congregation to the map’s final point of arrival -- piety, a type of behavior one contemplates and practices before the actual conversion, then transforms into visible sainthood and a model for all would-be elect to observe. For Mather and Edwards, piety was to absorb all of life, not only in themselves but in their congregation. A pietistic minister saw himself as a failure if he (sic) found salvation, but his flock foundered. Mather and Edwards both wrote jeremiads exhorting church members to open their hearts and minds to the

emotional conversion experience by following the right path to possible salvation and a new kind of pious state of existence. Simply, whereas one worked on being pious before conversion, one became pious after the experience.

Toward that end, Mather's intellectual labor extended to developing pietistic traits within minister training at Harvard, along with a life-long correspondence with European philosophers and theologians operating under an umbrella of Pietism, which ultimately linked "the psychology of religious experience with the psychology of learning," thus making "the educative process" (Cremins, 1970, p. 291) analogous to the conversion process and subsequent life of piety. Edwards agreed with and followed Mather's intellectual efforts on this conceptual wedding. However, Mather did not deliver this pietistic conversion framework *ex nihilo*. Mather's ideas fermented through lifelong correspondence with August Francke and his pietist followers at the University of Halle. Mather also cooperated both directly and through his English associates at the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). An international network collaborated in what they hoped would be a second Protestant Reformation that refashioned the soul to facilitate the kingdom of peace and piety under the reign of Christ as promised in Biblical prophecy. With his pen, building upon the edifice of John Winthrop's famous sermon, *A model of Christian charity* (1630), Mather laid out the colonial Puritans purpose and responsibilities in the New World. New England was to regain the Biblical prophecy of their New World home as Winthrop's "City upon a hill," whose congregations full of visible saints would shine a light to all other protestant enclaves and compel them to join the colonials in bringing about the end of time. Later American thinkers failed to appreciate and give enough weight to just how powerful of an impulse toward such grandiose beliefs and expectations was, nor how these impulses would persevere after long after the disappearance of Puritanism proper. Even though the theological language that explained and demonstrated these impulses became hidden,

institution after institution continued to carry them along in different guises. In fact, education, beginning with the family and extending to church and school sustained these desires without ever actually employing the Puritan language. Simply, the compulsions were embedded in all the rituals and practices of schooling and education in general.

However, 19th and 20th Century educational historians tended to dismiss any real impact of the colonial Puritan theological narratives on education and schooling. Colonial Puritans were painted as disconnected artifacts not relevant to later ideologies of the Fathers of the Revolution (e.g., Thomas Jefferson and Noah Webster) and the political framework of the common school in mid-to-late 1800s. The overall assumption was that colonial Puritans served as a quaint if not odd and curious collection of congregationalist whose worship of a providential plan, framed within the "errand into the wilderness" and "city upon a hill" narratives, foretold a national rhetorical inclination toward political rhetoric and lofty nationalism, such as the concepts of American exceptionalism and "Manifest Destiny." However, while the New England Puritans dispersed into enclaves that eventually stretched and broadened out and lost much of its geographical coherence, the same could not be said for their cultural and intellectual beliefs, pedagogies, and institutional frameworks. These assemblages endure but go unspoken in current educational thought. The Puritans were the first to provide a European imprint on the imagination of what it meant to be an "American." As Miller (1953) wrote, "The first Puritans did indeed succeed in impressing upon the *tabula rasa* of America a European and Protestant seal. With their articulated sciences of theology, psychology, logic, and rhetoric, they possessed coherent answers to all conceivable contingencies" (p. 14). Simply, their ideology of theological and secular impulses still directs the national consciousness and narratives about the aims and methods of schooling even as the rhetoric has shifted from theological to Capitalistic metaphors. The colonial Puritan footprint goes beyond that. They were the

first intellectuals to spread their gospel of secular and spiritual mission, the first to provide a national literature, local and national histories (Nash, 2009) and theological narratives with an accompanying social ethics (Bercovitch, 1975, 1993) the creators of spiritual autobiographies, public testimonials and the act of witnessing so important in Protestant culture (Hall, 2004), not to mention the first to develop conceptions of science in relation to God's material world. For all forms of secular scholarship attempting to understand the world was just another means by which to access God presence in the world, another means to serve the spiritual. In the material world were clues to be accessed and interpreted as part of the conversion and piety journey. Only would the Divine plan come to fruition if all learning aims pointed toward the pious life and finally, if all the Elect are truly converted, the end of life all together as foretold by Biblical prophecy.

For the Puritans that involved eschatology, which was both a burden and an inspiration about which the Pietist especially obsessed. Annihilation of the world was both end and beginning. Only through destruction, made so vivid to the Puritan by the medieval paintings of God's horrific final act of justice, would regeneration of the spirit occur (Miller, 1953, 1957).

All these New England products converged and led to the origination of the first higher educational institutions, primarily Harvard and Yale. These foundational initiatives still speak through the inherited forms of their modern descendants. Indeed, the Puritans were particularly situated to embody and carry out these changing social, scientific, intellectual, educational, and theological lines of flight. Giving such thought its significant spiritual qualities was the profound principal of piety, which for fervent New England Pietist such as Mather and Edwards, was God's ecstatic gift for a congregation to renew and sustain the evangelical roots.

Puritan Piety and Ramism

Pietism was a 17th and 18th century religious movement—often recognized in histories

of the Great Awakening of 1740—that stressed individual Bible study, spiritual experience, religious fervor, and the daily impact of jeremiads upon the ears and the souls of a congregation that gathered its weekly practical religious charges from the mouths of ministers. Pietism demanded that the individual engage in an “errand into the wilderness” (Miller, 1957), an interior and exterior passage of suffering and possible grace and salvation, or at least a chance to craft some Godly order out of the overgrowth of sin. As Cremin (1970) explains, during the early-to-mid 1700s Mather and Edwards amplified this message with the creation of a “rational piety,” combining secular knowledge with a practical theology propelled forward by a passionate, emotive condition of being. Together, the head and the heart, along with the minister's instruction, would steer the congregation along the flight God intended for a pious life and away from a state of malaise and declension.

Edwards claimed a state of acceptance and purely reasoned existence had curtailed most congregations. Edwards bemoaned the loss of the “errand into the wilderness” and the emotive passion crucial to pursue and banish evil and its conterminous suffering. However, Edwards shared a commonplace Puritan dilemma -- doing right in a world that does wrong so that the end may arrive, and the spirit be rejuvenated (Miller, 1953, 1957). Through his words, Edwards painted horrific images of what a life without passion and emotion would become unless the congregation burned away their sin and allowed a revival spirit to emerge from the ashes. In *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (Edwards, 1740), a jeremiad written during the time of the Great Awakening and at the height of his call for preparation and conversion to beat back declension and overt rationality, Edwards tackled the threat of back sliding and the evil that awaited. If the congregation waited too long, they would experience a physical and spiritual devastation that no rational solution could either ignore or arrest. Life was on a razor edge, with the fear of failure generating as much emotion as experiencing God's presence. Edwards began

his most famous jeremiad on the inevitability and hopelessness of backsliding in true Ramist fashion -- setting up the general theme, then breaking it down into its constituent parts, each leading to the necessity but improbability of piety through God's grace:

The expression I have chosen from my text, *Their foot shall slide in due time*, seems to imply the following things . . . 1. That they were always exposed to destruction; as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall . . . 2. It implies, that they were always exposed to sudden unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall . . . There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. (Edwards, 1740, pp. 65-66)

But all was not lost. If one prepared enough, studied enough, prayed enough, acted righteously enough, and opened the spirit up for emotional exploit by God, the individual (and so the whole congregation) yet might be saved. This spiritual and intellectual exertion was employed for one purpose and desire – conversion. In fact, for Mather and Edwards, true Christianity started with the moment of conversion, the acceptance of God's permeating presence, and how this profound experience must stir all thought and conduct. A reader concerned with piety was to become intimate with Scriptural knowledge and appreciative of God's Creation and our place within it, for only then could one begin to perceive correctly divine knowledge. When a young Puritan began the process of accessing the theological and natural world (secular knowledge), the possibility of conversion came one step closer. And conversion meant guaranteed salvation and a life of piety that made salvation visible. In other words, chosen status (elect) was revealed through these rituals of contemplation of and acting with piety. Or not. There were no guarantees. Yet God charged the minister and the minister pleaded with and threatened the congregation to accept this state of

uncertainty as necessary. It was divine mystery. It was also a mystery for mankind to understand and embrace. And only with all the intellectual and emotional efforts going into pre-conversion, the conversion, then living a life a piety, did one begin to understand.

The significance of this experience was tied to the Puritan (as good Calvinists) belief in predestination, which generated a persistent anxiety as one struggled to engage in a true conversion experience. One was never quite sure even after the conversion experience. The intellectual and emotive vigilance was a way of indicating that the individual was truly a member of the elect. Thoughts were nothing without poignant feelings, and feelings were but fleeting impulses without rational order and correspondence to the natural world. As such, the colonial Puritans were literate people raised in the educational movements toward "rational" thought taking place in Europe during the Reformation, conversion was believed to occur through an interaction of faith and Reason. As point out above, one had to prepare through study and prayer, which would result in exacting moral behavior of piety. The elect's actions were to demonstrate visible sainthood, especially due to the uncertainty (McKnight, 2004). This uncertainty of salvation, given their schooling, led to the creation of instructional methods developed by the 16th Century pedagogue, Peter Ramus. Leading from general to specific, his method for classifying and presenting knowledge provided an easy and efficient step-by-step process for all learning. As Mages (1999) explains, "Employing this Ramean method, one first identified the concept to be investigated then divided it into halves, halved these again in turn, and so on until all the components were established. Once all the reasons or concepts were laid out, then an individual could start combining them to form arguments" (p. 97). Essentially, Ramus developed techniques, or better, the technology of standardization to administer and transmit knowledge effectively to a great mass of people. It was tailored for the Puritan world view, which sought eclectic truths that felt

right and supported their faith. According to Morrison (1936) Ramism was the first system taught to students attending grammar schools and then Harvard, and its method of diagramming concepts became highly popular with educators throughout New England (Ong 1958; Miller 1953; Morison 1936; Hamilton 1990). It provided neat dichotomies of wisdom, “branching out like a family tree, and on which the student could conveniently hang all the knowledge that he acquired from either books or lecture” (Morison 1936, 155). As president of Harvard “Mather’s Father [Increase] had been a devotee of the Ramean logic” and his own “copy of Ramus was heavily glossed” (Woody, 1969, p. 11).

Ramus’ appeal to the pietistic Puritans of colonial New England flowed from its practical power (Miller 1953; Ong 1958, 1956; Morgan 1986). Morgan (1986) identifies its utilitarian value for different audiences, both high and low.

First, those who were learned but who had not yet been converted could be brought to an “external’ (or preparationist) appreciation of the procedures of Christianity; secondly, for those whom faith had already made regenerate, the structures of reason, familiar from secular existence, could be shown to be compatible with the truths of revelation. While Ramism did not overwhelm its opposition in the [English] universities ... it became extremely popular among those who sought to explain their knowledge to a wider audience. These included Puritan preachers and schoolmasters. (p. 112)

The Ramus method was not just for the schoolroom, but also applied by clergy, most notably within jeremiadic works, such as Edward’s famous 1741 “Sinners in the hands of an Angry God,” which sought to spark fear and trembling within the congregation, and to reveal and reject any notion that they could achieve their fate without God’s grace and salvation. God had to call them. And they had to learn how to hear it. In

contrast to Aristotle, Ramus’ logic complemented this instructional goal. As Miller (1953) explains

Ramus held that logic was derived from experience by ‘invention.’ Therefore, logic had to remain faithful to reality [nature]: it could not create fanciful constructions, but only make replicas of that pattern of ideas embodied in creation. If God so desired, He could call His saints by an audible voice, or by investing them with a halo visible to the naked eye. Instead, He had chosen to deal with them as with rational creatures. ... He has provided that the Word should come to men’s ears externally and sensibly. (pp. 74-75)

The system of mapping knowledge served to structure life. As William Doll (1997) notes, “there was an affinity between the discipline, order, and control Calvin [Puritans were strict Calvinists] felt all Christians should bring to their lives and that which Ramus brought to pedagogy” (p. 11). Thanks to Ramus’ instructional turn knowledge gained a new utility within the modern world its utility was key. Indeed, for Ong (1971) “there is an obvious relationship between this mentality and the mentality of a commercial, merchandising world, where good had to be thought of in terms of operations with a view to possible users or consumers” (p. 171). Ramism combined naming, ordering, analyzing, and storing for quick reference; it explained experiences, brought control, and charted a linear flight toward a desired end. Edwards, fortified with the Ramist methods he learned at Harvard, implied that the pious life could not be sustained purely on emotion. Individuals also needed a sense of meaning and order. As a master teacher (a term often used for the head minister of the congregation) he thus sought to unite fear of God with the explanation of the rational pathway to salvation.

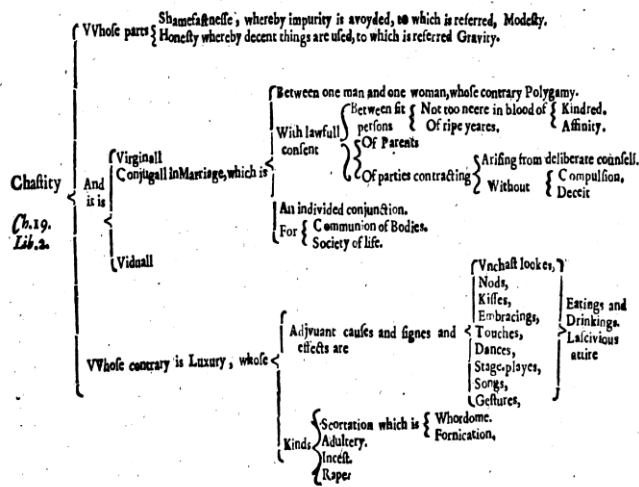


Figure 1 Ramus Map of Charity from William Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* (1642) which Edwards and Mather would have read at Harvard.

This Ramean pedagogical desire generated the cultural muscle needed to sustain an early national narrative constructed by the colonial Puritans that coupled their religious, symbolic typology and their literal historical situation as settlers in a “New World.” This symbolic narrative configured the “New World” as a “city upon a hill” throwing light onto the rest of the world. This “light” was one element in the symbology of the broader “errand into the wilderness” (Bercovitch, 1975, 1978; 1993; Miller, 1957). The errand was constituted by the colonial Puritan’s Godly ordained mission in the “New World” to shape and order the primitive “American” wilderness. This errand could not occur happenstance. It needed a means. Hence, order and God’s will could be achieved only by applying a spiritual, yet earthly bound map, constructed with the techniques revealed and mastered through the observations and study of God’s world – both internal and external (Bercovitch, 1975, 1993; McKnight 2003; Miller, 1957).

Pedagogy of the Exterior and the Interior

True to the spirit of Christian philosophy, Ramus methods offered a powerful and efficient

means to instill and guide piety across the colony. That is, the Ramist technology, understood as the ordering and administering of knowledge to reflect the Divine form of thought, was perceived as the key pedagogic instrument to help the individual find salvation and play their part in God’s plan. Miller identifies this impulse toward technique, the technology of method, that allowed a minister, teacher, student, church member and, finally, any literate Puritan to “break down” in a linear general-to-specific map imprinted with what constituted knowledge in both Bible and textbook. This map contained only the simplest and plainest of words expressing accepted translations so that anyone could easily grasp, organize, manage, and recall the information imprinted upon it. Importantly, it was this ease of managing knowledge that enabled the individual to analyze and seriously engage with the meaning of the content. This was key to a Godly learning that helped students comprehend God’s plan and voluntarily embrace their religious and social duties. In sum, it provided a technique by which to map out and explicate the path to spiritual conversion and a life of ethical action. God could be located and listened to not only by way of objective study of natural world, but through objective and reasoned observation and study of the interiority of mankind as well. The inner world, just as much a wilderness to be made over as the landscape of “America,” was considered an object to be analyzed, reflected upon, and made anew. To make over one’s inner world and outer world was an effort to make oneself and one’s surroundings coincide with the God’s intention, the ultimate in pietistic hopes.

For the Puritans Ramus’s visual branching maps served not only to facilitate the study of God’s Creation, but also as a tool to by which to interrogate the interior landscape of the soul (e.g., see above Ramus map of *Charity*), a part of the “errand into the wilderness” narrative framework. They objectified divine norms capturing the guiding light of Christ’s (*sola fide*) example; a mirror by which the individual could quantify their sinfulness. In this way, the inherent dialectic of God’s material world and spiritual plan was

revealed, providing a pedagogy of religious education that would teach the straight and narrow path of Christian piety—as evident in the jeremiadic tradition still in use today (Bercovitch, 1975; McKnight 2004). The sense was that even if one was not truly saved, at least they could follow the path along with the elect and give the impression of piety and salvation.

Ramist methodology enabled the schoolmaster and minister to “break down” knowledge in both the Bible and the textbook and convey it in a clear and distinct manner readily understandable. Given the corruption of the faculties caused by the Fall, knowledge did not come through pure intuition, it had to be built through the careful guidance of Christian reason. The wisdom inherent in the order of things radiated “to the brain through the perceiving senses, as is the smell of flowers through the nostrils” (Miller 1953, p. 428). Ramist logic, Miller explains was derived from experience by ‘invention.’ Therefore, “logic had to remain faithful to reality: it could not create fanciful constructions, but only make replicas of that pattern of ideas embodied in creation. If God so desired, He could call His saints by an audible voice, or by investing them with a halo visible to the naked eye. Instead, He had chosen to deal with them as with rational creatures. ...He has provided that the Word should come to men’s ears externally and sensibly” (Miller 1953, pp.74-75). The danger came with the human imagination, which had to be constrained to spiritual revelation and manifested within the experience of emotions. Ramist dialectic provided a logical form to the subject content which facilitated comprehension and easy communication to the learner. Indeed, over time, according to Miller (1953, 1957) the Puritans shifted in their understanding of reason from the act of interpreting text of perceptions to the clear apprehension of a given, self-evident truth as presented in the Ramus map. Plain style required the pedagogical expediency of simplifying, ordering, and transmitting ideas in order that the learner could understand self-evident truths through the light of reason granted by God. Human

reason led to vice and error, Christian wisdom to the pious life.

For the New England Puritans, the capacity to read and understand the Bible was a beginning burden of every citizen, making basic, primary schooling in reading a must, though the reading of the Bible began even earlier, a healthy habit of the family, a sacrament carried into every part of daily life, including work and church. Every individual had to read the Bible and other devotional texts for themselves – with the correct guidance of Ramus methods and ministerial jeremiads -- to determine the meaning of God’s plan. They also had to master sufficient secular learning to support their vocational duties and appreciate the splendor of God’s creation (Bercovitch, 1993; Miller, 1957; Morgan, 1986). Accordingly, the Puritans were not isolated from the general shifts taking place in Europe in the late 16th and 17th centuries, as the quest for useful knowledge (Reinhold, 1975) became more and more of a consideration in the daily lives of individuals. Perhaps the broadest statement one can make concerning this era, was the pursuit for efficient techniques to organize and apply to all areas of life (Ong, 1958, 1971). For the Puritans this charge wedded theological and secular impulses into an ethos that entertained no conflict between religious and worldly education (Greaves, 1969; Merton, 1938; Morgan, 1986).

This utopian scheme—the vision of a Godly community of Christian service—could only be achieved by overcoming evils and errors that flowed from Mankind’s sinful nature. It demanded a spiritual rebirth brought about by the profound experience of religious conversion. As introduced above, only then could the mind be freed from selfish passions and deceits of human reason. First and foremost, therefore, the Puritans looked to the preparation of the soul, an interior labor that found its logic and narrative through the concept of errand. This began with a recognition that the fall of Adam rendered all lost without God. To reclaim their original identity, men and women had to analyze and transform within. Like the wilderness without, the soul was overgrown and disordered. An interior turn was needed to cultivate

reason and restore the innate powers granted by God so that the individual could see, embrace, and mirror the truths revealed in the example of Christ. During the inward interrogation, evil was not something to turn away from, but to confront and root out. In fact, due to the Fall,

the notion of evil served as a prime motivation in this struggle to succeed. All things, the Puritans believed, were naturally depraved and as such needed a purifying will to impose goodness upon them. Simply, evil became the object of purification. Evil became the lowly matter by which the Puritan will would mold goodness. Evil was not to be ignored, eschewed, or even feared. It was opportunity. It was a means by which to focus the tendency to identify and struggle with moral dilemmas. Each dilemma was an occasion for the individual to impose upon the world a form, a moral structure, carved out of the symbolic narrative of the “errand into the wilderness.”

(McKnight, 2004, p. 44)

Simply, the soul’s original identity vanished, along with Paradise. Meaning and reality was no longer transparent, the harmonious order of God’s creation had become a thicket of confusion. A method was needed to reform this interior wilderness. Simply, to have any chance of achieving a return to the Garden, the individual required a lens, a language by which to comprehend God’s reality.

Central to this paradigm, therefore, was the assumption that not only could one locate God in the external world through the objective study of nature, but He was also to be found in the inner life of the soul (Greaves, 1969). Certainly, a significant portion of the “errand into the wilderness” journey was that the interior world was as much confused and overgrown as the New World, literally an unknown forest waiting to be given form and order so that a “city upon a hill” could arise – or so they believed. Just as cutting down forest and building

“civilization” was an arduous task, so was it important to recognize that finding God was a demanding and profound experience that—given our corrupt nature—did not come easily. Conversion without “soul searching” was no conversion at all. Moreover, emotional outbursts that lacked the means or technique to understand and sustain rebirth was useless. As such, the results of the conversion experience would always be suspect. One had to be born to Christ every day. Careful preparation, which involved confessional writings, fervent acknowledgment of failures and humble notices of success, spiritual autobiographies, study of the minister’s Ramist map sermons from the day before, and so forth, all were necessary to toil through a sinful nature so that when conversion did occur, the extent of its truth would be revealed and acknowledged. Importantly, they also had to know how to methodize and sustain it. Aligned with their German brethren, Mather and Edwards understood that emotion was the prime mover of any individual called by God, but reason was also necessary to channel this energy into a productive, practical faith. It is important to remember that the end game was nothing less than salvation. The curriculum thus went far beyond the mastery of scholarly learning to encompass Christian knowledge about the proper order of individual, family, church, and community life. Hence, piety was possible only once order was established.

The Pedagogy of Conversion

Pietism can also be read as a rebuke to the intellectualism and dogmatics of orthodox theology, in favor of the centrality of spiritual experience. Edwards offers the most striking example of the vitality of the imperative. Religious faith demanded more than knowledge of the Bible it required the correct emotional response (Marsden, 2003). But he was far from discounting the positive and necessary role of reason, he demanded members of his congregation keep a diary—a spiritual autobiography—reflecting the trials and tribulations of the inner life and struggles. Only through such organized and methodical

examination could the emotional fervor of conversion be rationally cultivated and sustained. Being “born again” was both a cognitive and an affective task. To this end, Edwards penned and presented jeremiads, such as “Sinners in the hands of an angry God” as Ramist maps (represented as short notes to memorize and follow the step-by-step instructions toward conversion) that identified the dangers lurking in the dark wake and threatening the individual’s relation to the congregation. Such sermons revealed a method of revelation of God’s light, burning and cleansing the spiritual and material weeds lodged deep in both the interior and exterior existence (Ong, 1958; Miller, 1957).

Edwards harangued those in his congregation to hear and speak and experience the powerful light of God’s knowledge, insisting that all possible forms of experience must be attended to by way of the senses, the emotions, and the intellect, the faculties of reason. The soul had to be stirred through the full and broad engagement of both the mind and the emotions. This method, as Marsden point, had been honed under the influence of his father, Timothy Edwards. Jonathan was required to report vigorously on his spiritual progress; his first fervent moments of faith and the litany of personal failures that inevitably followed. “First was ‘conviction’ or ‘an awakening of a person’s sad estate with reference to eternity” (Marsden, 2003, p. 27). After the initial explosion of powerful emotions, an inevitable relapsing would commence, making real to all in the congregation just how helpless one was without God’s grace. As laid out above, the only way to temper the relapsing narrative and prevent its consummation of the soul was to spend all waking hours working through an extensive spiritual chronicling. The form of prose was a humble recounting of triumph, but more importantly, it was often a melodramatic account of the tiniest disappointments. Each failure, no matter how small, served as a warning of what will happen when, not if, one falls asleep to God’s purpose. Such writing was nothing less than a necessary

preparation toward awakening to the difficulty of conversion as well as staying on the path of piety.

True conversion occurred through this writing and reporting because the narrative becomes one of humiliation leading to humility. “Potential converts not only had to recognize their guilt deserving eternal flame but be truly humbled by a total sense of their unworthiness. Only then was one sufficiently prepared to reach the third step—if God graciously granted it—of receiving God’s regenerating ‘light’” (Marsden, 2003, p. 28), as guided by the Holy Spirit, which was found in all God’s creation and all acts of mankind. The more one worked at it, the greater the light, the better chance of receiving God’s grace. Only then was one truly ready to receive it. This narrative entered Edwards’ preaching during the religious Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s, as well as to his more theological and philosophical explanations with other theologians. Edwards had to walk a fine line.

While true to the strict doctrines of Congregationalism, he also sought to excite and incited his congregation to engage in an emotional turn to God—represented in his hell and brimstone sermons—warning his congregation that if they failed in the methods of following a Pietistic life, they would be doomed in all possible physical and spiritual domains. An emotional attachment was to be formed with pious existence so that the journey could be sustained. Even more important, however, was the imperative that emotion embed itself in the actions one takes in the world. The Ramean curricular layout of how to move from emotion to emotion, from experience to experience, tied his narrative to a Providential order of life.

Cotton Mather’s Pietism

The strict religious instruction demanded by the founders of the Common School had gradually been diluted both by the apathy of communities and the demand for more relevant and useful instruction. Even Harvard was straying from its foundational mission, as liberal clergy (tiring of doctrinal disputes) introduced the secular uses of classical learning. Certainly, Boston was awash

with the latest intellectual currents of enlightenment thought; Mather himself was a professed cosmopolitan. But science had to be married to Scripture. Most importantly for Mather Aristotelian Logic had to be supplanted with a Christian philosophy—the discoveries of Baconian experimentalism he extolled in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Lovell, 1979). The discovery and understanding of God’s works were a natural instrument for the promotion of piety. Indeed, the schooling of children in texts embedded learning in their sense experience of the world. In short, knowledge of nature complemented the divine word, reinforcing the pious life through knowledge of God and his works. The secular and the sacred were thus tools in the all-important project of conversion. Mather identified and celebrated this union of heart and mind in many of his writings. He wrote that “the Power and Process of Reason is Natural to the Soul of Man”

We have to do with GOD, as often as we have Right Reason calling upon us And I will now say, We never Transgress any Law of Reason, but we do at the same time, Transgress the Law of GOD. . . . GOD sets up Reason in Man. If we do not keep Reason in the Throne, we go to Dethrone the Infinite GOD Himself. The Voice of Reason, is the Voice of GOD. (Mather, 1718, p.7)

Accordingly, while Mather looked to the religious traditions of Europe with suspicion, he found a kindred spirit in August Francke, whose “strong emphasis on the authority of scripture and the necessity of individual spiritual rebirth as a foundation for social reform” matched his own deep-seated aspirations for the regeneration of religiosity in New England (Peterson, 2019, p. 235). “For Mather,” Peterson continues, Francke’s pietism “complemented and confirmed a range of ideas that he had independently been developing” during the period when his “interest in practical piety, reform, and social benevolence was at its

height” (Peterson, 2019, p. 237). No less than Edwards Mather wanted to transform the religious education of the whole community through active clerical engagement. He spent his life as an associate minister of Boston’s North Church offering Christian council for families in the community, advocating in concert with the SPCK for Charity Schools, the reformation of prisoners, the instruction of Native Americans and the other “uncivilized” peoples of the world. Notably, this included enthusiastic support of Francke’s efforts to export the message of Christian piety through the Tranquebar mission in India.

This raised the all-important question of ministerial education. How should Harvard prepare future clergy for this more expansive and demanding religious mission? His father, Increase Mather had been president of Harvard between 1681 to 1701, and Cotton Mather long hoped to follow in his footsteps. But his candidacy for the presidency in 1708 and then 1724 failed to convince the university’s liberal trustees. Even so, in one of his last works he laid out his vision for the reform of university instruction along the lines Francke had pioneered at Halle. Mather had been in communication with Francke and his English disciple Anthony William Bohme, a leading member of the SPCK who translated Francke’s works into English and English works into German in support of the growing Protestant cause. He also translated the key pietist text, Johan Arndt’s *True Christianity*, which was highly valued by both Mather and Edwards. Bohme supplied Mather with a Latin copy of Francke’s (1727) *Pietas Hallensis*, detailing the aims and methods of the Halle project which Mather then summarized in English and published for the benefit of New England clergy. As the tract’s title explained, these “Good & Great things: A Doing for Kingdom of God in the Midst of Europe” mirrored the essential commitments of his own rational piety and evangelical Biblicism. Drawing upon Francke’s achievements, Mather drew inspiration from Halle for the reform of his beloved *alma mater*. It too had to educate ministers able to advance practical Christianity and help promote the good works necessary to realize

the prophesied millennium of peace and prosperity under Christ's monarchy.

Mather's view of clerical education laid out in *Manuductio ad Ministerium*, his 1727 prospectus for reform at Harvard, has notable similarities to the program of instruction instituted at Halle. Both operated off certain shared principles, themes that ran throughout their conceptualization of the university. Indeed, Mather borrowed directly from Francke his understanding of the purpose of Pietist universities (Woody, 1969). Mather worked diligently to provide universities in the colonies with a means for "Candidates of the ministry, how to order their Studies, that they may become useful Servants of God" (Mather, *Diaries*, quoted in Woody 1969, p.9).

A beginning principle emphasized the centrality of Biblical knowledge, which possessed the power of the Holy Word that served to spiritually edify the reader. Mather's pietist colleague from Germany, Francke, believed that conversion depended upon an emotive experience and use of the scripture. He insisted that only the converted was up to the task of working for God's glory and participating in the conversion of other souls. Mather and Francke insisted that knowledge of the Bible's spiritual power was best learnt through Hebrew and Greek, the languages most closely aligned to the original tongue of the inspired authors. The secular discourses and disciplines that begun to shape how mankind conceptualized, understood, and shaped the world were only as useful to the point they could serve Christian philosophy.

They had no standing on their own without the teleology of God's Divine plan, which only Christian philosophy could speak of directly. However, such discourses as science, history, and geography all provided insights into God's creation—revealing the purpose and duties of life. All were encompassed with a Christian philosophy. This replaced Aristotelianism, but it also steered away from pure rationalism. Francke and Mather, for example both rejected secular ethics—religious piety, which developed higher

sentiments, was the proper source of moral action. Students, according to Francke and Mather were to read Arnt's *True Christianity* (n.d.) rather than philosophical texts on virtue. Through this text students were supposed to exemplify and demonstrate their piety, and their state of conversion, by working in concert to interrogate and support their spiritual growth by way of confessional "solidarities," intense examinations of one's failings and desire for forgiveness, which revealed their true piety and conversion status. For Mather and Francke, this theology and pious method of virtue were nothing if not practical arts with the purpose of pushing the student ever further down the pious path, constant spiritual growth as opposed to some final doctrinal orthodoxy. In other words, "Man should want the illuminations' of knowledge not just 'to gain a comfortable subsistence in the World,' or to be the recipient of other men's praise; he should want to become a better servant of God and 'an instrument of Good unto others' (Mather, 1724, p. 24-26). In other words, every word in the Bible had to pierce the heart of every soul in the congregation, compelling them to fall to their knees and swear to serve God in a Pietistic fashion, meaning with fervor and commitment and a confessional method to keep himself honest as to God's intention.

Whereas Francke had economic resources to realize his vision of a Godly city (literally a "city upon a hill") and put into mass practice this form of Pietism. This was made possible due to the political support of the Prussian monarchy. Situated in more liberal and commercially oriented Boston, Mather's ideas failed to convince in any widespread way throughout New England.

Mather gathered Francke's German Pietistic works and communications and used them to seed and grow and renew his congregation. And in reference to piety as focusing on practical yet spiritual matters, the question in each other's correspondence often centered upon practical concerns over this renewal. In fact, as an example of just how practical the concerns were, the two would correspond on matters such as what sort of jeremiads were best to instruct the congregation

during the week and what sort worked best on the Holy Days. Both recognized that the congregation needed different curriculum during the week, usually providing Ramus maps for the congregation to read and prepare and practice the next few days during the week.

However, underlying every jeremiad was the guiding principle of renewal and revival. These practical considerations always emphasized the need for each minister to go through the renewal process of building a sermon that compels the congregation to engage in a great revival, and then develop sermons that attempt to confront, scare, beatify, and consume the congregation in a way that increases everyone's emotive listening and reading, which could then secure piety and sustain the powerful act of renewal and revival. Each sermon had a specific job in this, and so needed a tool, a narrative form and logic by which to make this task easier for not just the reverend preacher, but the congregation whom he was attempting to teach and instruct on the methods of renewal, on conversion (Lovelace, 1979). In fact, as discussed above, while both men celebrated the value of Reason, reason itself was not adequate when it came to living a pious life. Unless Reason was employed at the service of determining how notions such as good and evil were to operate in a divine way as opposed to operating in a purely secular sense of what these concepts can speak to in everyday life. As Edward's wrote in his *Works* (1957-) "To show how all arts and sciences, the more they are perfected, the more they issue in divinity, and coincide with it, and appear to be parts of it. And to show how absurd for Christians to write treatises of ethics distinctly to from divinity as revealed in the Gospel" (as quoted in Marsden, 2003, p.134). Simply, Marsden (2003) argued,

while the law could reveal the basic rights and wrongs of a community as well as the law showed the unregenerate their true state and was the delight of the converted, driving them toward a holiness they would never perfectly obtain in their life. If Calvinist Orthodoxy collapsed in New

England...so would piety and so would strict morality. Mere moralism would never do because it depended on flawed human efforts rather than on God. In short, the future of their civilization and the light it might provide for the world depend on maintaining the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. (p.138)

As Edwards's extensive exchanges with Cotton Mather demonstrate, a true Christian life demanded the coupled guidance of both reason and emotion (Marsden, 2003). And he was tasked with the difficult charge of explaining and convincing other theologians of the rightness of his approach. Edwards spent much time in discussion and explanation with Cotton Mather during his life doing just that (Marsden, 2003). This correspondence mattered as it heightened the importance of education, because reason and emotion had to formed, controlled, guided to achieve the correct results. Simply, it had to be taught. The Puritans rested their whole system upon the belief that "every Grace enters into the soul through understanding; and since children were born without understanding they had to be taught." (Morgan, 1944, p. 46; quotes Mather 1724, p. 34).

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