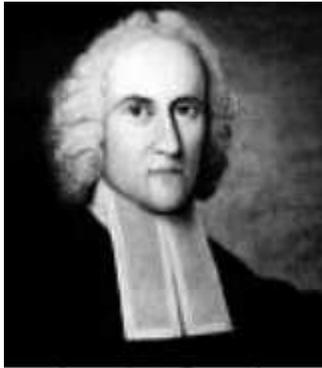


1747
The Character of David Brainerd
A sermon Edwards' preached at the funeral of his friend, and fellow theologian,
David Brainerd.

THE CHARACTER OF DAVID BRAINERD by Jonathan Edwards

THUS God sanctified, and made meet for his use, that vessel that He intended to make eminently a vessel of honor in his house, and which he had made of large capacity, having endowed him with very uncommon abilities and gifts of nature. He was a singular instance of a ready invention, natural eloquence, easy flowing expression, sprightly apprehension, quick discerning, and a very strong memory; and yet of a very penetrating genius, close and clear thought, and piercing judgment. He had an exact taste; his understanding was (if I may so express it) of a quick, strong and distinguishing scent.



Jonathan Edwards



His learning was very considerable; he had a great taste for learning; and applied himself to his studies in so close a manner when he was at college, that he much injured his health; and was obliged on that account for a while to leave the college, throw by his studies and return home. He was esteemed one that excelled in learning in that society.

He had an extraordinary knowledge of men, as well as things. Had a great insight into human nature, and excelled most that ever I knew in a communicative faculty; he had a peculiar talent at accommodating himself to the capacities, tempers, and circumstances, of those that he would instruct or counsel.

He had extraordinary gifts for the pulpit; I never had opportunity to hear him preach, but have often heard him pray; and I think his manner of addressing himself to God, and expressing himself before him, in that duty, almost inimitable; such (so far as I may judge) as I have very rarely known equalled. He expressed himself with that exact propriety and pertinency, in such significant, weighty, pungent expressions; with that decent appearance of sincerity, reverence, and solemnity, and great distance from all affectation, as forgetting the presence of men, and as being in the immediate presence of a great and holy God, that I have scarcely ever known paralleled. And his manner of preaching, by what I have often heard of it from good judges, was no less excellent; being clear and instructive, natural, nervous, forcible, and moving, and very searching and convincing. He nauseated an affected noisiness, and violent boisterousness in the pulpit; and yet much disrelished a flat, cold delivery, when the subject of discourse, and matter delivered, required affection and earnestness.

Not only had he excellent talents for the study and the pulpit, but also for conversation. He was of a sociable disposition; and was remarkably free, entertaining, and profitable in his ordinary discourse; and had much of a faculty of disputing, defending truth and confuting error.

As he excelled in his judgment and knowledge of things in general, so especially in divinity. He was truly, for one of his standing, an extraordinary divine. But above all, in matters relating to experimental religion. In this I know I have the concurring opinion of some that have had a name for persons of the best judgment. And according to what ability I have to judge of things of this nature, and according to my opportunities, which of late have been very great, I never knew his equal, of his age and standing, for clear, accurate notions of the nature and essence of true religion, and its distinctions from its various false appearances; which I suppose to be owing to these three things meeting together in him;-the strength of his natural genius, and the great opportunities he had of observation of others, in various parts, both white people and Indians, and his own great experience.

His experiences of the holy influences of God's Spirit were not only great at his first conversion, but they were so, in a continued course, from that time forward; as appears by a record, or private journal, he kept of his daily inward exercises, from the time of his conversion until he was disabled by the failing of his strength a few days before his death. The change which he looked upon as his conversion, was not only a great change of the present views, affections, and frame of his mind; but was evidently the beginning of that work of God on his heart which God carried on, in a very wonderful manner, from that time to his dying day. He greatly abhorred the way of such as live on their first work, as though they had now got through their work, and are thenceforward, by degrees, settled in a cold, lifeless, negligent, worldly frame; he had an ill opinion of such persons' religion.

Oh that the things that were seen and heard in this extraordinary person, his holiness, heavenliness, labor and self-denial in life, his so remarkably devoting himself and his all, in heart and practice, to the glory of God, and the wonderful frame of mind manifested, in so steadfast a manner, under the expectation of death, and the pains and agonies that brought it on, may excite in us all, both ministers and people, a due sense of the greatness of the work we have to do in the world, the excellency and amiableness of thorough religion in experience and practice, and the blessedness of the end of such, whose death finishes such a life, and the infinite value of their eternal reward, when absent from the body and present with the Lord; and effectually stir us up to endeavors, that in the way of such a holy life we may at least come to so blessed an end.

~AMEN~