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Soul Recreation: Enjoying God with Heart and Mind

Tom Schwanda
Wheaton College

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C26: “Soul Recreation: Enjoying God with Heart and Mind”

CICW Symposium January 25–26, 2013

Tom Schwanda

1. Introduction to Church Context and Vocabulary:

- . Church Context

- . Puritan desire for experience of God

- . **QUOTE:** “Study therefore, and study more, but be sure your study and your knowledge, be rather practical than speculative; do not merely beat your brains to learn the history of Christ’s death, but the efficacy, virtue and merit of it: know what you know in reference to yourself” (Isaac Ambrose, *Looking Unto Jesus*, Sprinkle Publications (1968 ed.), 375, language updated).

- . Eighteenth-century Evangelicals emphasized “heart religion.”

- . **QUOTE:** John Wesley’s fourth principle of his preface to *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (1780): “[t]he hymns are not carelessly jumbled together, but carefully ranged under proper heads, according to the experience of real Christians. So that this book is in effect a little body of experimental and practical divinity” (John and Charles Wesley, *Selected Writings and Hymns*, ed. Frank Whaling (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 176).

2. Isaac Ambrose (1604–1664)

- . Annual month-long retreat (Song 7:11–12)

- . Importance of enjoyment and contemplation of God.

- . Contemplation typically refers to a loving or grateful gazing upon God, some aspect of God’s creation, or Scripture. Metaphor: contemplation=soul recreation.

- . Influence of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153)

- . **QUOTE:** “[t]he proceedings of our meditation are in this method. 1. To begin in the understanding, 2. To end in the affections” (Isaac Ambrose, *Media* (1657), 222. The Bernard citation is from his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, 49.4.).

3. Differing Ways of Enjoying God

- . Wisdom of personality theory
- . T=more cognitive, experiences are often around truth, new insights, wisdom or justice.
- . F=more affective, experiences are often around relationships, intimacy, or sense of warmth.
- . Contemporary culture privileges affection over intellect.
- . **QUOTE:** “For my own part I tend to find the doctrinal books often more helpful in devotion than the devotional books, and I rather suspect that the same experience may await many others. I believe that many who find that “nothing happens” when they sit down, or kneel down, to a book of devotion, would find that the heart sings unbidden while they are working their way through a tough bit of theology with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand” (C.S. Lewis introduction to Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press), 8).

4. Importance of Integration and Balance:

- . Potential danger of focusing on intellect to the exclusion of affect.
- . Potential danger of focusing on affection to the exclusion of intellect.
- . Isaac Ambrose emphasis upon integration:
 - . Facing the challenges and fears of life. He first began by reviewing some of the biblical promises of God (I) as he meditated more on these scriptural truths he described his experience as “sweet refreshing and encouraging impressions on my soul” (A) (May 19-*Media* (1657), 89).
 - . In reflecting on his sufferings as a nonconformist minister he focused on the challenges of his current position and to recognize any sin that he might be blocking his life (I). In his continued reflection he concludes by writing that the Holy Spirit left a sweet impression upon his soul (A) (May 31-*Media* (1657), 89–90).
- . Celebration on the Lord’s Supper
 - . On April 21, 1644 Ambrose writes, “[t]his day one received the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, but found not in it the comfortable presence of Christ as at other times; it troubled his soul, and then falling to examination and prayer, the Lord was pleased a last to give him a sweet visit, and spiritual refreshing” (Isaac Ambrose, *Media* (1650), 111).

5. Importance of Soliloquy (“O my soul”)

6. Integrating Heart and Mind:

. Heart example

. Mind example

7. Worship and Implications:

. Worship designers

. Worship leaders:

. Worshipers (non-leaders):