

**THESIS: TRUE RELIGION, IN GREAT PART, CONSISTS IN HOLY AFFECTIONS**  
**PART I – CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE AFFECTIONS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN RELIGION**  
**PART II – SIGNS WHICH NEITHER PROVE NOR DISPROVE GENUINE EXPERIENCE**

**PART III – SHOWING WHAT ARE DISTINGUISHING SIGNS OF TRULY GRACIOUS AND HOLY AFFECTIONS**

**Section 1 – Affections that arise from spiritual, supernatural, and divine influences.**

**Section 2 – Affections which have as their ultimate foundation the love of God’s excellence.**

**Section 3 – Affections for God’s excellence, particularly His moral excellency.**

**Section 4 – Affections that arise not only in “heat” of emotion, but also the “light” of right understanding.**

**Section 5 – Affections attended with conviction of the reality and certainty of Divine things.**

**Section 6 – Affections attended with evangelical humiliation.**

- humiliate – to lower the pride, dignity, or self-respect

*Evangelical humiliation is a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odiousness, with an answerable frame of heart.*

- It is to recognize one’s fallen condition (sinful nature), and the sin before the Holy God one has committed (sinful deeds)

- there is a difference between “evangelical” and “legal” humiliation

*In legal humiliation, men are brought to despair of helping themselves; in evangelical, they are brought voluntarily to deny and renounce themselves: in the former, they are subdued and forced to the ground; in the latter, they are **brought sweetly to yield**, and freely and with delight to prostrate themselves at the feet of God...This is a great and most essential thing in true religion.*

- Is57:15 66:1-2 Mic6:8

- It is no overstatement to say that much of American Christianity works in direct contradiction to declaring and making people feel this reality. This emphasis is influenced by at least three major influences:

1.) Man’s **natural opposition** and self-deception

2.) The **humanistic influence** of the “Enlightenment” and “Renaissance” (14-16<sup>th</sup> cent.) periods – “man is the measure of all things”

3.) The American influence on **individualism**

- This should not be confused with the demonic degradation of our humanity; treating people as trash or with indignity

- We are created in God’s image – Gen1:26 Ps8:5 Jm3:9

- I prefer the term “dignity” to “self-esteem” because of the cultural and god-disconnected baggage of meaning

- The greatness of our sin is in contrast to our great image bearing capacity; there really is great hope in redemption

- This hope must come first in our humiliation, then God lifts us up – Jm4:10

- one real measure of our humiliation is whether we are open and teachable when addressed about our sins

*There are many that are much in crying out of their wicked hearts, and their great short comings, and unprofitableness, and speaking as though they looked on themselves as the meanest of the saints; who yet, if a minister should seriously tell them the same things in private, and should signify, that he feared they were very low and weak Christians, and thought they had reason solemnly to consider of their great barrenness and unprofitableness, and falling so much short of many others, it would be more than they could digest; they would think themselves highly injured; and there would be a danger of a rooted prejudice in them against such a minister.*

- the greatest measure of pride, and lack of humiliation, is self-righteousness, trust in works

**Section 7 – Affections attended with a change of nature.**

- this has been spoken of before, as to its spiritual and gracious nature; here the additional point that the nature is seen to be changed in that it continues in its effects; there is perseverance, and abiding influence of God on the soul

**Section 8 – Affections attended with Christ-like spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness, and mercy.**

- this especially informed and modeled after the Gospel, the cross, the love of God

- this works its way out not primarily in relationships that are occasional, but in those that are closest (in the family, in the church)

- Edwards address the issue of “boldness” for Christ – most often this is seen as a confrontational spirit, lambasting others in the Name of God

*There is a pretended boldness for Christ that arises from no better principle than pride. A man may be forward to expose himself to the dislike of the world, and even to provoke their displeasure out of pride. For it is the nature of spiritual pride to cause men to seek distinction and singularity; and so oftentimes to set themselves at*

*war with those that they call carnal, that they may be more highly exalted among their party. True boldness for Christ is universal, and overcomes all, and carries men above the displeasure of friends and foes; so that they will forsake all rather than Christ; and will rather offend all parties, and be thought meanly of by all, than offend Christ. And that duty which tries whether a man is willing to be despised by them that are of his own party, and thought the least worthy to be regarded by them, is a much more proper trial of his boldness for Christ, than his being forward to expose himself to the reproach of opposers. The apostle sought not glory, not only of Heathens and Jews, but of Christians; as he declares, 1 Thessalonians 2:6. He is bold for Christ, that has Christian fortitude enough, to confess his fault openly, when he has committed one that requires it, and as it were to come down upon his knees before opposers. Such things as these are of vastly greater evidence of holy boldness, than resolutely and fiercely confronting opposers.*

**Section 9 – Affections attended with a softened heart and tenderness of spirit.**

**Section 10 – An increasing balance of these various traits.**

- this is not only true in "religious" or "public" situations, but increasingly in the domestic sphere

*And as to love to men, there are some that have flowing affections to some; but their love is far from being of so extensive and universal a nature, as a truly Christian love is. They are full of dear affections to some, and full of bitterness towards others. They are knit to their own party, them that approve of them, love them and admire them; but are fierce against those that oppose and dislike them. Matthew 5:45, 46, "Be like your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil, and on the good. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" Some show a great affection to their neighbors, and pretend to be ravished with the company of the children of God abroad; and at the same time are uncomfortable and churlish towards their [husbands or] wives and other near relations at home, and are very negligent of relative duties.*

*Many hypocrites are like comets that appear for a while with a mighty blaze; but are very unsteady and irregular in their motion (and are therefore called wandering stars, <650113>Jude 13), and their blaze soon disappears, and they appear but once in a great while. But the true saints are like the fixed stars, which, though they rise and set, and are often clouded, yet are steadfast in their orb, and may truly be said to shine with a constant light. Hypocritical affections are like a violent motion; like that of the air that is moved with winds (<650112>Jude 12), but gracious affections are more a natural motion; like the stream of a river, which, though it has many turns hither and thither, and may meet with obstacles, and runs more freely and swiftly in some places than others; yet in the general, with a steady and constant course, tends the same way, until it gets to the ocean.*

**Section 11 – Affections that, when raised, causes increased spiritual appetite and longing after holiness.**

*The more a true saint loves God with a gracious love, the more he desires to love him, and the more uneasy is he at his want of love to him; the more he hates sin, the more he desires to hate it, and laments that he has so much remaining love to it; the more he mourns for sin, the more he longs to mourn for sin; the more his heart is broke, the more he desires it should be broke the more he thirsts and longs after God and holiness, the more he longs to long, and breathe out his very soul in longings after God:*

**Section 12 (13&14) – Affections attended with practical obedience (as an evidence to others, and to one's own conscience).**

- particularly in circumstances which are difficult

- One pastor has put this issue into one large question: "Are you for real?"
- Are these things true of us "at the bottom", giving room for remaining sin and struggles
- Whatever the answer to that question, the response is the same: going to God through the mercies of Christ in the Gospel