

**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.**

- This is an expansion of the previous point
- By moral excellency Edwards explains the difference between moral good/evil (related to sin) and natural good/evil (related to the comfort of nature) – i.e. punishment (a moral good) is painful (a natural evil) or sexual immorality (a natural good) is breaking God’s law (a moral evil)
- Theologians sometimes break down God’s attributes into moral and natural categories
- **Natural attributes** include power, knowledge, eternity, omnipresence
- **Moral attributes** include justice, goodness, faithfulness, truth – all summarized by “holiness”
- A way of thinking about the difference of these categories to think about how if a sinful person had the natural attributes, how bad it would be – a tyrant could have the degrees of the natural ones, and yet be very evil
- **Holiness** then is this moral dimension, and a person who has the Holy Spirit has the influence of this holiness, in the above areas - the righteous love God’s moral attributes; the wicked do not
- So God’s true beauty, and the foundation of a true love for God, is a love for these moral attributes
- It is God’s holiness (the only 3x call) is the unifying factor, and makes all the other attributes beautiful
  - A true love to God must begin with a delight in his holiness, and not with a delight in any other attribute; for no other attribute is truly lovely without this, and no otherwise than as (according to our way of conceiving of God) it derives its loveliness from this; and therefore it is impossible that other attributes should appear lovely, in their true loveliness, until this is seen.*
  - ...they that do not see the glory of God’s holiness, cannot see anything of the true glory of his mercy and grace.*
- Holiness adorns His house ([Ps93:5](#)), His City ([Rev22:19](#)), the Scriptures ([Rom1:2](#)), the Spirit ([Ps51:11](#)), Jesus ([Act3:14](#)), is what we pursue ([Heb12:14](#)), and God Himself ([Rev15:4](#))
- What follows then is the realization that we are not – this is where **the Gospel** comes in and gives astounding help
  - It is this that captivates their hearts, and delights them above all things; it is the most amiable and sweet thing to the heart of a true saint, that is to be found in heaven or earth; that which above all others attracts and engages his soul; and that whereby above all things, he places his happiness, and which he lobs upon for solace and entertainment to his mind, in this world, and full satisfaction and blessedness in another. By this, you may examine your love to God, and to Jesus Christ, and to the word of God, and your joy in them, and also your love to the people of God, and your desires after heaven.*

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

- True affections arise from information in the understanding; while true spirituality is not merely informational, it certainly must be produced by what we come to know of the truth revealed to us by God
- [Phil 1:9](#) [Rom10:2](#) [Col3:10](#) [Jn6:45](#)
- Affections that arise apart from truth are to be treated with suspicion, even if they are high affections
- The means of this truth can be creation – [Ps19](#): [Rom1](#):
- The truth with which we are most clearly to be affected are those revealed in Scripture
- Sometimes it is truth that we come to know for the first time
- At other times it is a deeper comprehension of that which we already have known
- [Lk24:32](#) the disciples’ hearts burning when the Scripture opened to them and their understanding
- This spiritual understanding is not mystical in the sense of by mysterious, but rather a work of the Holy Spirit in the mind - [Col1:9](#)
- This is one reason we must turn from sin, so that the Spirit is not grieved, for we need His help to understand
- There is a connection between this understanding (or “seeing”) as found in Scripture and seeing the face of Christ – [2Cor3:14-4:6](#)
- This is why if we are to grow in grace, grow in holiness, that the Word of God has to be taken in in regular and heart dealing portions
- What is crucial at this point is to understand that there is a connection between the previous points of a love of God’s excellency, particularly His moral attributes, and this light and knowledge of truth which then ebbs forth affections for those things

- Think about two different ways one can be affected by truth
- Someone can come under conviction of the truthfulness of their personal sin, God’s holiness and justice, the reality of Hell, and they may pursue to live differently merely out of a motivation of fear – this can be true about the unconverted
- Another may experience these same things, and yet the evidence of their conversion is that this fear causes them to flee to Christ for salvation, turn from sin from the heart, and pursue a new way of life – as they do so there is also implanted within them more than a principle of fear, but of love; there is increased love for God for who and what He is, not merely an aversion of punishment

Illustration: the difference in one’s desire for health food; one knows that it is good for them, but it doesn’t taste like it; another has a taste for it, and it is good

- conversion is not merely to take the medicine because they believe it is good, but also to have a supernaturally born taste and desire for it
- the most vital question we can ask ourselves if we are those who profess to be believers in Christ is this: what motivates me to do what I believe to be the right that is found in Scripture (with a more foundational question of whether I am motivated at all)?
- Edwards touches on what is called the “leading of the Spirit”, primarily as the Spirit’s work in one’s soul to understand, love, and pursue from the heart what God reveals in Scripture

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

- a conviction that influences – a “remarkable alteration”
- is there evidence of progressive sanctification in response to the truth of Scripture?