

- True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections
- This does not mean that all great affections are necessarily true or "holy", or evidence of true religion
- There is almost nothing as "infallible" in human experience as the emotions, and to question them is to question what almost remains as the only TRUTH
- Just because someone has emotional experiences does not mean that they have been genuinely converted or are entering into true worship
- In this section will consider some signs which are not necessarily indicators one way or another, but can exist both in true affections and false – so they do not *in and of themselves* prove true spirituality and a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ

## PART II – SIGNS WHICH NEITHER PROVE NOR DISPROVE GENUINE EXPERIENCE

### 1.) Affections that are raised very high.

- Positively - some are ready to dismiss all extraordinary displays of affections as false, hypocritical, delusional or emotionalism; but if there is a strong love for God true worship, then there will be an increasing of the affections, even to high degrees; JE gives Scriptural examples from the Psalms, Paul, John the Baptist, the Church, the heavenly host

*It is very manifest by the holy Scripture, our sure and infallible rule to judge of things of this nature, that there are religious affections which are very high, that are not spiritual and saving.*

- Negatively – the church of Galatia ([Gal4:15, 11](#)), the Israelites (terror on Mt. Sinai, but turning to golden calf with exuberance), Jesus' raising of Lazarus and His entrance into Jerusalem ([Jn12:18-19](#))...eventually turning from "Hosanna, hosanna" to "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

*...common affections are sometimes stronger than saving [affections]. – Stoddard*

- This is especially true if someone merely points back to emotional experiences of the past, even in true worship to take confidence in what happened apart from ongoing evidence

### 2.) Affections that create unusual effects on the body.

- Positively – all affections have some effect on the body (as seen by our nature and the union of the body and the soul); the greater their degree, then the greater their effect on the body (in some way); often this is involuntary (seen in great fear or joy); this can even be seen in the effect of dreams (purely mental...but imaginative) on the body
- He argues from his own experience, as well as Sarah's and others, that to be absorbed in God's truth can so overtake and overwhelm the mind so as to have effects on the body similar to what would happen if God's glory actually physically was manifested

*I know of no reason, why a being affected with a view of God's glory should not cause the body to faint, as well as being affected with a view of Solomon's glory ([1Kn10:5](#)).*

*And who that considers what man's nature is, and what the nature of the affections is, can reasonably doubt but that such unutterable and glorious joys, may be too great and mighty for weak dust and ashes, so as to be considerably overbearing to it? It is evident by the Scripture that true divine discoveries, or ideas of God's glory, when given in a great degree have a tendency, by affecting the mind, to overbear the body; because the Scripture teaches us often, that if these ideas or views should be given to such a degree as they are given in heaven, the weak frame of the body could not subsist under it, and that no man can, in that manner, see God and live.*

*And I think they are very bold and daring, who will say God cannot, or shall not give the like clear and affecting ideas and apprehensions of the same real glory and majesty of his nature, to any of his saints...*

- There are examples in the Psalms, as well as places like [Hab3:16](#) as to the bodily affect of God's truth apart from physical manifestations
- Scripture also makes use of bodily effects to express the strength of holy and spiritual affections (i.e. trembling, groaning, being sick, crying out, panting, fainting).

*I cannot think, God would commonly make use of things which are very alien from spiritual affections, and are shrewd marks of the hand of Satan, and smell strong of the bottomless pit, as beautiful figures, to represent the high degree of holy and heavenly affections.*

- Negatively – not necessarily spiritual, as this great effect also happens because of temporal things disconnected from eternal truths
- He spends the majority of his time demonstrating the positive element, and only mentions the negative in passing

**3.) Abundant talk of religious things.**

- Positively - It is the nature of things that where there are affections, there is conversation and interest in their object (you don't have to try to convince someone to talk about that which gives them delight)
- There are some who take a person's excitement, zeal, and fluency in speaking of spiritual things as pride or hypocrisy
- Negatively – there are those who merely talk for other reasons, to impress others, to try to convince themselves, to appease others, only temporary believers - Prov25:15 clouds and wind without rain Jude 4, 12
- Others are prejudiced the other way, and assume that such talk must be positive and sure evidence that they are converted (particularly the case when one desire's their conversion)
- This temporary interest, conversation, and excitement are seen in the ministry of Jesus, people even going three days into the wilderness with Him – Jn12:19 (the world has gone after Him)
- While it may be evidence, it is not necessarily so

**4.) Affections that are not purposefully stirred in oneself.**

- There are those who see the affections in spiritual matters merely as a social phenomenon, and nothing supernatural or holy – it is so wholly of the intellect, that all outward show of affections as not spiritual, merely carnal
- Others detach all affections from the means, standing alone as an emotional experience, and thus necessarily an immediate work of the Spirit (apart from truth, the mind, instruction) – there is no Gospel, no proclamation of truth, no thinking about the person of Christ – only a vague sense of God and desire for help
- Negatively - There are also deceptive spirits, and those spirits can work powerfully on the human soul as well - this is especially seen when those experiences harden them against the truth of the Word of God, and resistant to the Gospel

*There are many false spirits, exceeding busy with men, who often transform themselves into angels of light, and do in many wonderful ways, with great subtlety and power, mimic the operations of the Spirit of God. And there are many of Satan's operations which are very distinguishable from the voluntary exercises of men's own minds.*

*As a person who is asleep has dreams that he is not the voluntary author of; so may such persons, in like manner, be the subjects of involuntary impressions, when they are awake.*

**5.) Affections that come to the mind powerfully with texts of Scripture.**

- Here is addresses experiences where specific texts of Scriptures "involuntarily" or suddenly come to the mind, or perhaps in a kind of inner voice
- Positively – there is certainly the possibility that truth stored up in the mind is "ignited" by the work of the Spirit suddenly; when one embraces the Gospel, it will certainly be connect to the truth of the Word
- Negatively – just because they do so, does not necessarily demonstrate that it is the Holy Spirit; some will cling to this alone as positive evidence – where, asks Edwards, is Scriptural proof that this evidences saving faith?
- Is it not possible, that the devil (or his helpers) will use Scripture itself to mislead or give false assurance?
- Isn't this what he did with Jesus?

*And if Satan did presume, and was permitted to put Christ himself in mind of texts of Scripture to tempt him, what reason have we determine that he dare not, or will not be permitted, to put wicked men in the mind of texts of Scripture, to tempt and deceive them?*

*We see they have the free use of Scripture, in every part of it: there is no text so precious and sacred, but they are permitted to abuse it, to the eternal ruin of multitudes of souls; and there are no weapons they make use of with which they do more execution.*

- Mt13:20-21 there may be an initial influence (even with joy), but it is only temporary

**6.) The appearance of great love for God and man.**

- Positively – there will be, in true conversion, the evidences of love to God and man as marks of grace; some argue that the devil (or the flesh) cannot counterfeit love, thus it is always evidence
- Negatively – love is the chief grace, but the more precious and excellent something is the more counterfeits there will be of it
- Mt24:12-13 – there is a kind of love that does not endure; Eph6:24 - there is a love for Christ that is sincere (as opposed to not)
- 1Cor13 – marks that would appear to be love which aren't