

Section 1: Introductory Remarks Respecting the Affections

- 1Peter 1:8 – inexpressible love and glory for Christ in midst of suffering
- Trials have benefit in regards to faith: (1.) showing it as true (2.) showing its beauty (3.) increasing and purifying
- It showed in two ways: (1.) love to Christ and (2.) joy in Christ
...it was a prelibation [foretaste] of the joy of heaven, that raised their minds to a degree of heavenly blessedness; it filled their minds with the light of God’s glory, and made themselves to shine with some communication of that glory.

DOCTRINE. *True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.*

- What are the affections? Varying degrees of known and felt inclinations; either towards, or away from something
 - like or dislike; pleasure or displeasure; approval or rejection; love or hate; joy or grief; delight or sorrow
- There can also be a mixture of them at the same time
- Because of the union between the soul and the body, the activity of the soul ordinarily has effect on the body
Such seems to be our nature, and such the laws of the union of soul and body, that there never is in any case whatsoever, any lively and vigorous exercise of the will or inclination of the soul, without some effect upon the body, in some alteration of the motion of its fluids, and especially of the animal spirits.
- Out of this combination of thinking and affections comes the will responding in choice to act
As all the exercises of the inclination and will, are either in approving and liking, or disapproving and rejecting; so the affections are of two sorts; they are those by which the soul is carried out to what is in view, cleaving to it, or seeking it; or those by which it is averse from it, and opposes it. Of the former sort are love, desire, hope, joy, gratitude, complacency. Of the latter kind are hatred, fear, anger, grief, and such like...
- This is why what we think, and the cultivation of our affections, is so important
- One essential thing about being a Christian is the transformation of the mind by the Word of God
- Often our lack of holy affections is because, while we know, we do not think on what we know sufficiently (meditation)
- But it doesn’t end there – it is to then “steep” and cause affections
- By these two, the will is then liberated in great joy and delight (the chief end of man to enjoy God...even in trial)
- The major point of the next section (and 9 arguments for it) is that “*True religion, in great part, consists in the affections.*”

Qualification: This will be to varying degrees in different backgrounds and personalities – not everyone will be the same

- Nevertheless, the largest capacity in each for a person in the varying categories for things “spiritual”
- Also, remember the emotions are fallen, and we should pursue their renewal and expansion of them also

Section 2: True Religion, in Great Part, Consists in the Affections

1.) What God requires in true worship includes the affections.

That religion which God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wishes, raising us but a little above a state of indifference. God, in His Word, greatly insists upon it, that we be in good earnest, fervent in spirit, and our hearts vigorously engaged in religion.

- Serving the Spirit is to be with fervency - Rom12:11
- To love God with every dimension of our humanity, which certainly includes the affections - Deut10:12
- There is a distinction between a mere form of godliness and its power – 2Tim3:5
The business of religion is from time to time compared to those exercises, wherein men are accustomed to having their hearts and strength greatly exercised and engaged, such as running, wrestling or agonizing for a great prize or crown, and fighting with strong enemies that seek our lives, and warring as those, that by violence take a city or kingdom.

2.) The Author of our nature has not only given us affections, but also made them the spring of actions.

- True religion is practical, and interested in the outcome of our conduct and life
- This being so, we should pay attention to how God has created us as to how and why we do what we do
- We do those things, and especially in a vigorous way, that we are passionate about and deeply moved by
We see the world of mankind to be exceeding busy and active; and the affections of men are the springs of the motion: take away all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all anger, zeal, and affectionate desire, and the world would be, in a great measure motionless and dead.

And as in worldly things, worldly affections are very much the spring of men’s motion and action; so in religious matters, the spring of their actions is very much religious affection: he that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only, without affection, never is engaged in the business of religion.

3.) The things of religion take hold of men's souls no further than they affect them.

There are multitudes that often hear the word of God, and therein hear of those things that are infinitely great and important, and that most nearly concern them, and all that is heard seems to be wholly ineffectual upon them, and to make no alteration in their disposition or behavior; and the reason is, they are not affected with what they hear.

- There are numerous examples of those who seem to intellectually embrace the truth of the Gospel, but who do not bear fruit in the long run.
- There is a kind of cold, doctrinal acceptance, and even defense of the truth, but it doesn't produce life by way of holy affections - eventually many are seen to depart from God
- Our ability to be moved to attempt great things for the Lord Jesus depends on this

4.) The Holy Scriptures everywhere show examples of true religion being very much in the affections.

- **Fear** – Is66:2 **Hope** – Ps31:24 146:5 **Love** – 1Pet4:8 **Hatred** – Ps97:10 **Desire** – Ps63:1-2 **Joy** - 119:4
- **Delight** – Ps37:4 **Sorrow** – Mt5:4 **Compassion** – Col3:12 **Zeal** – Tit2:14

I have mentioned but a few texts, out of an innumerable multitude, all over the Scripture, which place religion very much in the affections. But what has been observed, may be sufficient to show that they who would deny that much of true religion lies in the affections, and maintain the contrary, must throw away what we have been wont to own for our Bible, and get some other rule, by which to judge of the nature of religion.

5.) The Scriptures represent true religion as being summarized as love.

- Love is seen as the chief affection, and the fountain of all others
- Some would try to maintain that love is merely a principled commitment (which it is), but devoid of affection
- The two great commandments that summarize the law are love to God and to neighbor
- It is love with all the heart, mind, soul and strength, which indicates more than cold and principled obedience
- As one increases in holy and affectionate love, the opposite will also be increased, a holy hatred for everything opposed to what is loved

From love arises hatred of those things which are contrary to what we love, or which oppose and thwart us in those things that we delight in: and from the various exercises of love and hatred, according to the circumstances of the objects of these affections, as present or absent, certain or uncertain, probable or improbable, arise all those other affections of desire, hope, fear, joy, grief, gratitude, anger, etc. From a vigorous, affectionate, and fervent love to God, will necessarily arise other religious affections; hence will arise an intense hatred and abhorrence of sin, fear of sin, and a dread of God's displeasure, gratitude to God for his goodness, complacency and joy in God, when God is graciously and sensibly present, and grief when he is absent, and a joyful hope when a future enjoyment of God is expected, and fervent zeal for the glory of God. And in like manner, from a fervent love to men, will arise all other virtuous affections towards men.

6.) The religion of the most eminent saints in Scripture, consisted much in holy affections.

- David – witness of the Psalms Paul – his letters and life John – especially his epistles "little children"
- *Now if anyone can consider these accounts given in the Scripture..., and yet not see that [that] religion consisted much in affection, must have a strange faculty of managing his eyes to shut out the light which shines most full in his face.*

7.) The Lord Jesus Christ's virtue was expressed very much in the exercise of holy affections.

- Jesus is the perfect example of humanity in worship to God
- Love, zeal, crying, compassion, grief, desire, etc.

8.) The religion of heaven consists chiefly in holy and mighty love and joy.

- To learn the true nature of anything, we should go to where that thing is to be found in its purity and perfection
- Those in heaven, though without bodies, are described with bodily terms expressing exuberant affections
- Rev5:12 19:1

The love and joy of the saints on earth, is the beginning and dawning of the light, life, and blessedness of heaven, and is like their love and joy there; or rather, the same in nature, though not the same with it, or like to it, in degree and circumstances.

9.) The nature and design of the ordinances and duties used to express worship.

- **Prayer** – often described as "cries" or "groaning" - fervent prayer Jm5:16
it is manifest, we are not appointed in this duty, to declare God's perfections, his majesty, holiness, goodness, and all-sufficiency, and our own meanness, emptiness, dependence, and unworthiness, and our wants and desires, to inform God of these things, or to incline his heart, and prevail with him to be willing to show us mercy; but suitably to affect our own hearts with the things we express, and so to prepare us to receive the blessings we ask.

- **Singing in worship**

And the duty of singing praises to God seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections. No other reason can be assigned why we should express ourselves to God in verse, rather than in prose, and do it with music but only, that such is our nature and frame, that these things have a tendency to move our affections.

- **Baptism and the Lord's supper** - visible representations to stir our senses and think of Christ

- **Preaching** – Act14:1 2Cor5:20

And the impressing divine things on the hearts and affections of men, is evidently one great and main end for which God has ordained that his word delivered in the holy Scriptures, should be opened, applied, and set home upon men, in preaching. And therefore it does not answer the aim which God had in this institution, merely for men to have good commentaries and expositions on the Scripture, and other good books of divinity; because, although these may tend as well as preaching to give men a good doctrinal or speculative understanding of the things of the word of God, yet they have not an equal tendency to impress them on men's hearts and affections.

10.) Scriptures place the sin of the heart very much in hardness of heart.

- In conversion, the heart of stone is removed and a heart of flesh is given (Ez11:19)
- This does not indicate the lack of knowledge, but usually the fact of its being known
- It is rather being “unmoved” by it, in heart and in conduct

it is evident, that religion consists so much in affection, as that without holy affection there is no true religion; and no light in the understanding is good, which does not produce holy affection in the heart: no habit or principle in the heart is good, which has no such exercise; and no external fruit is good, which does not proceed from such exercises.

Section 3: Some Inferences Deduced from the Doctrine.

1. How great an error it is to discard all religious affections as having nothing solid or substantial in them.

- To do so is a knee-jerk reaction to abuse, but runs into serious biblical error
- This appears to be true especially for those who have discovered Reformed theology and rejected the emotionalism
Of late, instead of esteeming and admiring all religious affections, with distinction, it is much more prevalent to reject and discard all without distinction.
- Some make the error of accepting religious affections, but because of the possibility of it becoming a show actually confine it to “personal” worship and exclude it from public worship – where is this biblical distinction found?

This he knows is the way to bring all religion to a mere lifeless formality, and effectually shut out the power of godliness, and everything which is spiritual, and to have all true Christianity turned out of doors. For although to true religion there must indeed be something else besides affection; yet true religion consists so much in the affections, that there can be no true religion without them.

...where there is a kind of light without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light, that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart.

The prevailing prejudice against religious affections at this day, in the land, is apparently of awful effect to harden the hearts of sinners, and damp the graces of many of the saints, and stun the life and power of religion, and preclude the effect of ordinances, and hold us down in a state of dullness and apathy

2. Such means are to be desired, as have much tendency to move the affections.

Such books, and such a way of preaching the word and the administration of ordinances, and such a way of worshipping God in prayer and praises, as has a tendency deeply to affect the hearts of those who attend these means, is much to be desired.

3. What great cause we have to be ashamed and confounded before God, that we are no more affected with the great things of religion.

God has given to mankind affections, for the same purpose which he has given all the faculties and principles of the human soul for, viz., that they might be subservient to man's chief end, and the great business for which God has created him, that is, the business of religion. And yet how common is it among mankind, that their affections are much more exercised and engaged in other matters, than in religion!

But is there anything which Christians can find in heaven or earth, so worthy to be the objects of their admiration and love, their earnest and longing desires, their hope, and their rejoicing, and their fervent zeal, as those things that are held forth to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ?