

# JONATHAN EDWARDS'S EARLY PSYCHOLOGY

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For the last century (give or take), there has been a tendency among many evangelicals and scholars to read Edwards's notion of as emotions. Among evangelicals, this includes John Piper, Sam Storms, Brian Borgman, and Mark Talbot. American Charismatics have often justified their revival accesses using Edwards's writings defending the Great Awakening. Many Edwardsean scholars like Perry Miller, Ola Winslow, and Paul Helm have also equated the concept of affections with emotions. Some scholars, however, disagree with this approach.

Academics have also often accused Edwards of inventing his understanding of psychology and human affections from John Locke. They allege that Edwards reinvented Reformed understandings of the soul's faculties in order to defend the Great Awakening.

The question is whether Edwards is being read rightly. My forthcoming book attempts to answer the question of how Edwards understood the soul's affections, whether our contemporary term "emotions" is a suitable substitute for "affections," what the various sources informed Edwards's understanding of the inner workings of humankind.<sup>1</sup> To do this, I trace the notion of affections throughout Edwards's entire life. This paper is a condensed version of chapter 5 of my book, which looks at how Edwards's thought about these things as represented in his earliest notebooks and sermons.

## 1. "The Mind"

- 1.1. Context
- 1.2. Excellency
- 1.3. Spiritual beauty
- 1.4. Spirituality over physicality
- 1.5. Self-love
- 1.6. Love, the essence of all intelligent beings
- 1.7. God as excellent.
- 1.8. Human bodies, a type of the spiritual world
- 1.9. The difference between humans and animals
- 1.10. The minds and appetites of beasts
- 1.11. Edwards vs Locke

## 2. Personal Writings

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. The Early "Miscellanies"
  - 2.2.1. Jonathan Edwards's "Miscellanies" is a series of over 1,400 observations in nine volumes spanning from his early life to the end of his ministry.
  - 2.2.2. "Miscellany a.," on holiness
  - 2.2.3. "A Will Against a Will"

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<sup>1</sup> Ryan J. Martin, *Understanding Affections in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards: "The High Exercises of Divine Love,"* T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology (London: T&T Clark, 2018).

- 2.2.3.1. *Human beings, and the relationship and nature of the soul and body*
- 2.2.3.2. The glorification of humanity
- 2.2.3.3. Sensitive appetites and passions
- 2.2.3.4. The Fall & Human Appetites
- 2.2.3.5. The Fall & Self-love
- 2.2.3.6. Passions not sinful *per se*
- 2.2.3.7. Passions and Jesus Christ
- 2.2.4. "Voluntariness ... to an Infinitely Greater Height"
  - 2.2.4.1. Human affections are central for the glory of God in creation
  - 2.2.4.2. People created to be happy in God
  - 2.2.4.3. God the greatest object of love
  - 2.2.4.4. Affections part of the *imago Dei*
  - 2.2.4.5. Creation ttifies to the understanding and will of its Creator
  - 2.2.4.6. Edwards: "He acts more of himself, infinitely more purely active, and in no respect passive, as all created minds are in a great measure passive in their acts of will. And the acts of will are more voluntary. Though there be no proper passions as in created minds, yet voluntariness is exercised to an infinitely greater height. The divine love, which is the sum of all the exercises of the divine will, is infinitely stronger, more lively and intense, as not only the light of the sun, but his heat, is immensely greater than that of the planets whose light and heat is derived from him" ("Misc. 749," in *WJE* 18:396–7).
  - 2.2.4.7. Edwards, the Trinity, and the soul of man
- 2.2.5. Summary of the "Miscellanies"
- 3. Early Sermons and Revival Writings
  - 3.1. Introduction
  - 3.2. Historical Context
  - 3.3. A note about terminology
  - 3.4. Edwards's sermon on Isa. 35:8 (in *WJE* vol. 10)
  - 3.5. The necessity of holy affections in true religion
  - 3.6. *Charity and Its Fruits* (in *WJE* vol. 8)
    - 3.6.1. Historical context
    - 3.6.2. Love, given by the Spirit, is the essential mark of a true saint.
    - 3.6.3. Love and Christian Virtue
    - 3.6.4. True Christian charity comes from the indwelling Spirit
    - 3.6.5. The distinction between sensitive and rational aspects of humankind
    - 3.6.6. The distinction between natural affection and divine love
    - 3.6.7. The distinction between the affections and passions
    - 3.6.8. Anger, the sensitive passions, and spiritual affections
    - 3.6.9. Inordinate or "unsuitable" anger is evil
    - 3.6.10. Edwards: "Reason has no hand in the business. Their passions go before their reason. They suffer anger to arise before they so much as turn inward their

thoughts to what advantage or benefit will it be for me to be angry in this case. And so they go on in their anger without any such inquiry. *Such anger is not the anger of men but of beasts. It is a kind of beastly fury, rather than any affection of a rational creature.* All things in the soul of man should be under the government of reason, which is the highest faculty; and every other faculty or principle in the soul should be governed and directed by that to their proper ends" (WJE 8:277).

3.6.11. Love for God, anger, and humankind's irascible passions, the movement of the soul opposing an object

3.6.12. *Heaven is a World of Love* and the primacy of love

3.6.13. Sainly love

3.6.14. The nature of saints' love in glory

3.6.15. Edwards: "In this world [the saints] find much to hinder them. . . . They carry about with them a heavy moulded body, a lump of flesh and blood which is not fitted to be an organ for a soul inflamed with high exercises of divine love, but is found a great clog to the soul, so that they cannot express their love to God as they would. They cannot be so active and lively in it as they desire" (WJE 8:378–9).

3.6.16. Affections now vs affections in glory

3.6.17. The love of heavenly saints as a love of perfect peace.

#### 4. Conclusion

4.1. Edwards embraced his theological tradition

4.2. Passions vs affections

4.3. Human beings vs animals

4.4. Edwards's notions of affections and passions vs contemporary ideas concerning emotions: emotions are a "class of feelings, differentiated from sensation or propiceptions by their experienced quality."<sup>144</sup>

1.1. Affections and passions vs "feelings"

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<sup>144</sup><sup>144</sup>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "Emotion." Compare Brian S. Borgman, *Feelings and Faith* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2009), 23–7. A propiception is a sense beyond the five typical senses of knowing the state of body parts and organs and your location in space.

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