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Divine Heartbeats and Human Echoes: A Theology of Affectivity and Implications for Mission

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STAR TREK'S MR. SPOCK was not fully human, and the proof was not just in his pointed ears. His affective deficiency revealed his Vulcan origins. Presumably, missionaries among the Vulcans would not need to take emotions into account, but missionaries on Planet Earth do. This article takes a theological look at missions in light of 'affectivity', the emotional aspect of human personality which plays a major role in influencing feelings, desires, felt needs, prejudices, attitudes, receptivity and dispositions.

I Affectivity and Revelation

God is the great communicator. Like all good communicators, he conveys not only his thoughts, but also his heart. He does this consistently in all his various forms of self-expression.

1. Affectivity in the Bible

The Bible is a book of passion. It presents us with a passionate God who responds to and incites intense human emotions and discerns the noblest and basest of motivations. It confronts entrenched attitudes and nurtures a heart-felt disposition toward God.

The Pentateuch's *narratives* are intensely affective, depicting God and the human race as feeling and acting upon the basis of a wide range of strong emotions. *The Legal Codes* contain injunctions regarding motivations, prejudices, and even emotions. Deuteronomy makes clear that the key to keeping the law lies in the affective state of God's people (Dt. 6:4-6, 30:1-20).¹ Obedience to the Law brings God pleasure and love. Disobedience is insensitivity to God's feelings (Lev. 1:9 and many parallels, Dt. 7:7-13; Lev. 18:22-29; Dt. 12:31; 16:22-17:1).

The Historical Writings both record and inspire a wide range of affective

¹ All biblical quotations are taken from the New International Version.

motivations and responses. The stories carry great emotional power—from the heart-pounding suspense of two spies in a heap of flax relying for their lives on the word of a pagan prostitute, to the grim satisfaction of seeing Haman hang. The manner of God's interaction with humanity conveys his attitudes, will, and feelings. Sacred history prods the reader to examine his or her attitudes and allegiances, and builds in the reader an emotional solidarity with heroes of the faith.

The Wisdom and Poetry of the Bible are saturated with emotion. Job's speeches swim in grief, anger, self-pity, confusion, and a desperate need to find meaning in it all. The intense poetry of the Psalms speaks to the heart, still, after three millennia. In addition to expressing human attitudes, felt needs, and feelings, the Psalms dwell on Divine affectivity: God's contempt for his enemies, his compassion and mercy, love and dignity. The Proverbs promote wisdom with affective causes and effects.² The Song of Songs resounds with passion and pleasure, in marked contrast to the futility, false hopes, and resigned contentment of Ecclesiastes.

The word of the Lord through the prophets proclaims God's attitudes with intense emotion.³ Their oracles portray, promote and predict a wide range of affective human responses.⁴

The prophetic books also describe and invite empathy with the moods of the prophets for whom they are named. The feelings and attitudes of the prophets, whether they are commended or rebuked by God, are an integral part of the process of inspiration, a process in which human beings, sometimes despite themselves, were 'carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pet. 1:21).

The narratives of the Gospels and Acts convey the emotions, moods, and attitudes of the characters: Joseph's sense of duty and honour (Mt. 1:19-25; 2:13-23), the self-righteousness of Simon the Pharisee and the gratitude of the sinful woman he despised (Lk. 7:36-50), the confusion of the disciples (Mt. 28:17; Mk. 8:31-33, 10:5-6; Lk. 24:12-43; Jn. 6:60; 12:16; 13:36-37), the compassion of Jesus (Mt. 9:35-38; Mt. 11:28-30), the defiant courage of the apostles (Acts 4:8-13; 23:1), the awe surrounding the church in Jerusalem (Acts 3:10; 5:9-13), and the mindless fury of the Ephesians (19:28-34). By identifying with the disciples, the reader finds himself or herself emotionally involved in their experiences. Something is fundamentally wrong with a reading of these texts which does not stir the heart.

The Epistles contribute to the affective character of the Scriptures in at least five ways. First, they are built upon the affective relationship between writer and recipient churches and individuals. Second, the epistles are full of exhortations to such affect-based qualities as faith, hope, joy, patience,

2 The causes include the fear of the Lord and the love of what is good, and results include honour, patience, compassion, cheerfulness, refreshment and contentment. The Proverbs seek to correct excessive or inappropriate affections.

3 Such as wrath, compassion, vengeance, disappointment, disgust, love and delight.

4 These dispositional and emotional re-

sponses include woe, elation, terror, security, despair, certain hope, rebellion, disrespect, trusting submission, humility, pride, shame, honour, and dullness of heart.

perseverance, love, and humility.

Third, the authors are sensitive to the affective state of the recipients, and that affective state is sometimes the occasion of the letter. Fourth, the authors of the epistles frequently remind their readers of the affections of God in greetings, farewells, and benedictions, and in the didactic and hortatory passages. Fifth, the authors make self-disclosures of their own attitudes, passions, and motivations (Rom. 7:14-25; 9:1-3, 10; 2 Cor. 1:8; 2:13; 12:7-11; 12:19-21; Gal. 5:12; Phil. 1:6; 1:22-25; 3:10, 18; 4:10-14; Phlm. 8; 1 Tim. 6:6-11; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:9-18).

Revelation is the Bible's affective grand finale. Its seven letters rebuke or affirm attitudes and emotions, as well as holding out emotionally evocative promises. Its apocalyptic visions are designed to inspire in the listener an emotional appreciation of eschatological mystery, calling forth awe, dread, hope, triumph, and longing. From start to finish, then, the Bible is full of emotion. In its writing styles and contents it communicates, draws out, and seeks to influence the affective.

2. Affectivity in Extra-Biblical Revelations

The Bible is not unique in being an affectivity-rich revelation from God. *Natural revelation* is intended to elicit responses of wonder and awe, fear, gratitude, humility and delight (Some examples are Ps. 8; Ps. 92:4; Ps. 107:24-32, and Acts 14:17). Specific natural phenomenon may function to express God's attitudes—grace, magnanimity, or anger (as in Gen. 3:13-19; Ex. 7:14-10:20; Ps. 18:7-15; Hab. 3:3-15; Mt. 5:44-45; Acts 14:17; Rev. 6:12-

17). *Theophanies and angelic visitations* inevitably draw reactions of fear, awe, sorrow, encouragement or repentance (Ex. 3:1-6; Num. 22:31; Dan. 5:5-6; Zech. 12:10-11; Mt. 17:5-7; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 1:11-13, 28-30; 2:9-10; Jn. 20:10-15; Acts 12:1-11; 26:13-14).

They express God's feelings (Num. 22:33-34; Mt. 17:5; Lk. 1:30; Acts 27:24), provide a response to human attitudes and emotion (Ex. 3:7; Dan. 5:22-23; Jn. 20:10-15; Acts 26:14, 18; 27:23-27); predict specific human affectivity (Zech. 12:10; Lk. 1:14, 17, 30; 2:10), or address the very emotions they elicit (Mt. 17:6-7; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 1:13; 2:10). Likewise, *dreams and visions* often involve intensely powerful images that evoke strong emotional reactions (Is. 6:1-5; Ezek. 1:28; Dan. 8:17; 2 Cor. 12:1-7; Rev. 1:9-17).

3. Affectivity and God's Revelation in Christ

Jesus, God's ultimate self-disclosure, demonstrates the vibrantly responsive heart of God. The gospels ascribe to him a variety of affective states. Among them a sense of humour (Mt. 7:3; 23:24; Lk. 13:8); astonishment, both positive (Mt. 8:10) and negative (Mk. 6:6); compassion (Mt. 9:36; 14:14; Mk. 1:41; 6:34); gentleness and humility (Mt. 11:29); longing (Mt. 23:37); overwhelming sorrow (Mt. 26:38); anger (Mk. 3:5); joy (Lk. 10:21; Jn. 15:11); weeping (Lk. 19:41; Jn. 11:35); grace (Jn. 1:14); zeal (Jn. 2:16-17); distrust of human nature (Jn. 2:24-25); gladness (Jn. 11:15); being deeply moved or disturbed, (Jn. 11:33,38; 12:17; 13:21); love (Jn. 13:1; 14:21; 15:9), and peace (Jn. 14:27).

These affective states are not sim-

ply expressions of the humanity of Jesus, but also revelations of the divine heart, as for instance Jesus' weeping over Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41). Even in his most obviously human emotions, like his distress and exhaustion in Gethsemane (Lk. 22:43-45), Jesus is revealing the love of the Father by bearing our grief and carrying our sorrows (Is. 53:4); sharing our full humanity with all of our inner as well as our physical hurts. This is not surprising, as sending Jesus is the Father's ultimate expression of love for humanity (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 8:31-32).

By becoming incarnate, God the Son allows himself to be subject to the chemical processes of the brain, the social conditioning, and all of the other factors which influence human affectivity. The result of such an incarnation from Jesus' perspective is sympathy for human frailty; from the Father's perspective, a means of expressing freely his mercy and grace; and from the believer's perspective, confidence (Heb. 4:15).

That Jesus became truly human at an affective level provides grounds for the writers of the epistles to hold up as exemplary for us Jesus' attitudes and emotional self-management (Rom. 15:5-9; Phil. 2:1-8; Heb. 12:2-3; 1 Pet. 4:1-2). It was Jesus' own practice to draw attention to his attitudes, motivations and emotional dispositions for didactic and hortatory purposes (Mt. 11:25-30; 26: 39-46; Mk. 8:1-21; Lk. 10:17-24; Lk. 19:41-44; Jn. 14:27; 15:9-14; 17:13). In so doing, he underlines the affective aspect of his incarnation and intentionally utilizes it as an indispensable component in his approach to mission and disciple-making.

Jesus seeks to bridge the emotional

gap between God and humanity. From the divine side, he reveals to humanity God's affectivity in all that he teaches, does, and feels. On the human side, Jesus demonstrates an acute sensitivity to the affective states of those with whom he interacts, a sensitivity which frees him from being either the victim or the perpetrator of emotional manipulation (for instance Lk. 4:14-28; Jn. 5:44-45; 8:2-11).

He examines motivations and attitudes, attacks prejudices, and fosters or rebukes emotions and moods. When questioned, he tends to confront the attitude of the questioner, rather than giving a direct, informative answer (Mt. 9:14-17; 18:1-3; 19:3-12; Mk. 10:17-22; Lk. 10:25-37; Jn. 8:3-7). He is not content to deliver a message, but clearly longs to facilitate intensely affective two-way communication between the Father and sinful humanity.

4. Implications for Mission

If God chose to reveal himself through an emotion-laden message via affective media and messengers in sensitivity to the affective state of the recipients, seeking from them an affective response, then it follows that our communication of his word is inadequate unless it is affective from start to finish.

Missionary *motivation* should reflect the affective purposes of God in revelation: zeal for his glory, anger and distress at idolatry and sin, love, and a longing to save. There is a need for accountability involving the missionary, the sending church and agency, and local believers in assessing to what extent these holy motivations are operative, growing, and determinative of the

worker's approach to ministry.

It is difficult to imagine how the gospel *message* could be presented, stripped of its affective character, rooted as it is in its central tenets of the love of God, the disgrace of sin, the passion of the cross, the surprising triumph of the resurrection, and the glorious hope. Unfortunately, some inter-religious dialogues replace vibrant witness with distant, coldly-academic comparison of creeds, sacred histories, and ethical systems.

Polemicists transmogrify the cross into a club, and the good news into a dagger for wounding the enemy in verbal combat. Whether by stripping the message of Jesus of its affective nature or by distorting that nature into a tool of diabolical power struggle, the message sustains fatal damage and the church fails to be faithful to the revelation with which it has been entrusted by God. It would be well for evangelists regularly to consider the question, 'What is the affective message we are *in fact* conveying to this people?'

The *media* used in mission should, like God's revelation, have appropriate affective power. Creativity is required in driving home the intensity of the message through affectivity-laden media. This is not simply a matter of pragmatics or a desire for success in mission. It is a matter of faithfulness in communicating to the world the revelation with which God has entrusted his people.

God's best human *messengers* allow him to use their whole selves as instruments of his revelation. The force of their communication is not only in the words they speak, but in their humility or confidence, their self-giving love or their zeal for truth, their com-

passion, sorrow, or joy. Although the qualities that accompany emotional intelligence are hard to measure, they should be taken into account in selecting, training, developing, evaluating, and debriefing workers. The missionary's prayer life is vital, for without it he or she will fail to be sensitive to the Lord's attitudes in any given situation, and risk misrepresenting the Almighty.

The process of communicating God's Word is greatly enhanced when the communicators are characterized by affective *sensitivity*. Like Jesus, sensitive communicators are instinctively aware that questions and challenges may reveal or cloak foundational affective spiritual issues. Missionary responses to questions should, in keeping with the practice of the Master, address the affective at least as much as the cognitive.

While this sensitivity comes naturally (or supernaturally) to some, nearly everyone can learn a greater level of affective sensitivity. The professional development of workers should include mentoring relationships in which such sensitivity can be nurtured.

Finally, the missionary who is true to the content and spirit of divine revelation will look for affective *responses*, not as the result of human manipulation, but as evidence that the Word of God has been inscribed on the heart by the Spirit of God. The type and intensity of emotional and dispositional reactions will vary, but some affective response will be present if God has indeed opened the eyes of a person's heart. Such responses are not limited to the moment of conversion, but continue with spiritual growth.

II Affectivity and Biblical Anthropology

1. The Unity and Affectivity of the Human Person

Affectivity is both essential and intimately interwoven into the fabric of the human person. Many central theological terms in the Bible contain a strong affective core which interacts with the whole life of the person. *Faith* is ultimately affective—a resting in God—and yet it is mutilated to the point of extinction if it is divorced from its intellectual element of right belief or its physical/volitional/social component of working through love. *Love* is foundationally affective in nature, yet the Scriptures make abundantly clear that to thrive love needs thought, action and appropriate objects. Consider also these terms: *heart, soul, the fear of the Lord, forgiveness, repentance, grace, peace,*⁵ *hope, and praise*. Many other terms, although not primarily affective, contain an essential affective element: *conversion, submission, glory, holiness, sin, gospel, signs and wonders, revelation, power, spirit*, and so on.

The spiritual life of a social group is influenced by collective attitudes, moods, and motives. Nations, families, and churches are described by the Scriptures as being wilful, faithful, rebellious, dismayed, proud, contemptuous, and loving (Ex. 32:9; 2 Chr. 7:14; Is. 54:1-15; Obad. 3; Mt. 23:30-32; Rom. 10:2, 11:11; Rev. 2:4,

19-20). Individuals who run counter to the prevailing mood of their people are singled out by the Scriptures for praise or censure, depending on whether the group's disposition meets God's approval. With communities, as with individuals, the affectivity of the group is intimately linked with its customs, beliefs, and social structure.

2. The Source of Human Affectivity

Theologians have variously contended that the divine image in humanity is evident in our rationality, spirituality, potential for moral goodness, or some combination of these. However, any assessment of human likeness to God which ignores affectivity is wanting. Augustine⁶ asserted that desires and feelings are good because God made us so. I would add that he made us so to share in his likeness.

The Scriptures are prolific in their references to God's affectivity, and draw direct connections between his affectivity and ours. As we cannot separate God from his affective attributes, so we cannot properly understand a person apart from his or her affections. Even a society cannot be understood merely through its prevailing beliefs and practices, apart from its affective core: its collective longings and motivations, its moods, loves, and hatreds. Human affectivity at its very best should be a highly polished mirror reflecting the heart of God.

⁵ See Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 9-10, for a discussion of the role of the affective in the biblical term *shalom*.

⁶ Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, translated by Anna S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff (Indianapolis/ New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 49.

3. The Corruption of Human Affectivity

However, human affectivity since the Fall is diseased. The first sin consisted not so much in eating the forbidden fruit as in pride, the distorted affection which precipitated that fateful bite. The result of sin was affective in character and corresponded precisely to the offence: our first parents were filled with shame (Gen. 3:7; contrast Gen. 2:25). They experienced for the first time fear and alienation (Gen. 3:8-24). Dysfunctional thinking, behaviour and relationships resulted.

The Fall is a prototype of the corruption of the affective by sin.⁷ Sin results from evil desires, robs us of joy, peace and dignity, brings sorrow and distress to the sinner and those around, and grieves and angers the heart of God. Sin has a negative spiralling effect, dragging down one aspect after another of the person or community infected by it. The Reformers teach that the whole person is corrupted by sin, apart from divine grace.⁸ Affections, motivations, and attitudes are normally at the root of the problem.

The Bible leaves no doubt that human beings are morally culpable not only for evil acts, but for unholy affectivity. As Augustine⁹ puts it, 'When we ask whether someone is a good man,

we are not asking what he believes, or hopes, but what he loves.' Nicholls¹⁰ notes that not only are guilt and shame part of the human condition, but that we experience both objective and subjective guilt and shame. Because of sin, we cannot always tell when the subjective sense contradicts our objective state.

Correct doctrine is therefore only part of the solution. Having tried and failed to control his own passions, Augustine concluded that the mind is more the slave of passion than its master. Maddox¹¹ describes Augustine's understanding of original sin as consisting of bent affections which are impotent to produce good actions. Calvin¹² notes with dismay that Greek philosophers 'always imagine reason in a man as that faculty whereby he may govern himself aright', and thinks they might have noticed that in fact people naturally choose what seems most pleasing to them.

Human affectivity has become fatally disfigured; yet the Bible teaches that something remains of the image of God. John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards argued on the basis of Scripture

⁷ Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, 2.

⁸ Richard B. Steele, 'Gracious Affection' and 'True Virtue' According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley, vol. 5 of *Pietist and Wesleyan Studies*, edited by Richard B. Steele (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1994), 8-9.

⁹ Quoted by John P. Langan, 'Augustine on the Unity and the Interconnection of the Virtue', *Harvard Theological Review* 72 (1979), 93.

¹⁰ Bruce Nicholls, 'The Role of Shame and Guilt in a Theology of Cross-Cultural Mission', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 25, no. 3 (July 2001), 235.

¹¹ Randy L. Maddox, 'A Change of Affections: The Development, Dynamics, and De-thronement of John Wesley's Heart Religion', in 'Heart Religion' in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements, *Pietist and Wesleyan Studies*, No. 12, edited by Richard B. Steele (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2001), 10-11.

¹² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill, and translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), I: 194.

for a non-rational divine sense, 'an innate, pre-reflective awareness of God' which comes in part through the conscience.¹³ The result is an internal dissonance, a divided heart.¹⁴

It is obvious both from the Scriptures and from experience that, while some people suffer from the pain of internal contradiction between God's image and sin, others seem content, self-satisfied and unaware of any such tension because they have found false resolutions. False resolutions always involve a degree of self-deception.¹⁵ Religious beliefs and practices often serve to preserve sin under the guise of righteousness, thereby providing a particularly treacherous resolution. Many examples could be given from the Scriptures: in all of them, the affective has a crucial role. Edwards¹⁶ says that people are immensely creative in devising arguments that will stop their consciences and make them feel jus-

tified in their sin. Because of the deception of these false resolutions, the gospel is often heard first as disturbing news before it can be received as good news (Heb. 5:12-13).

4. Implications for Mission

If there is a conflict between the divine image in humanity and human sinfulness, we should expect to encounter distressed people seeking solutions to the disharmony in the self and the world. Missionaries who expect to find this sort of disarray will have an ear tuned to the way each person or community perceives the problem and how Jesus might be presented as a credible solution. They will also be less inclined to complain or become disillusioned: the reason for our calling is precisely the chaos, dishonesty, and conflict that pervade humanity.

If there are always some people who are oblivious to their own or their culture's sin, and who become adept at whitewashing the problem, the missionary should be alert to the extensive and creative systems, including religion, which people devise as false resolutions. The whole missionary church needs to be taught to recognize these schemes. Courage and tact are needed in bringing them to light, particularly where people are genuinely convinced that their schemes make them acceptable to God, society, or self. The most important prerequisite for this task is unflinching self-examination.

III Affectivity and Soteriology

Salvation begins with the affections of God. His love motivated the sacrifice of Jesus through which salvation

13 Gerald R. McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions? Jesus, Revelation and Religious Traditions* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 50-52, drawing upon Calvin's *Institutes*, I.3.1, and Jonathan Edwards, *The 'Miscellanies'*, edited by Thomas A. Schafer, volume 13 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, general Editor, John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 268. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, translated by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, and edited by Joseph Fessio and John Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), 1: 365-425 traces in detail the idea of spiritual senses in Christian theology.

14 Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, 62.

15 Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, 106-108.

16 Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise on Religious Affections* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1746/1982), 102.

comes. It is God's desire that all people be saved. His wrath, sense of justice, and desire for glory were ironically and definitively vindicated in the cross and resurrection. It was the Lord's pleasure to bring about our redemption through the passion of Christ (Is. 53:10; Eph. 1:5, 9; Col. 1:19-20; Acts 1:3). Divine grace is the means of salvation; divine patience waits in order to save.

Human affections are necessary for the appropriation of salvation. According to John Wesley,¹⁷ since sin is so woven into human affectivity, the remedy for sin must strike at the affective level of human experience, a statement in keeping with Wesley's own and well-known experience of a 'heart strangely warmed'.¹⁸ We are saved by faith (Rom. 10:9). Faith is essentially trust, a reckless, dogged, and sometimes exuberant confidence. The repentance which accompanies faith is a change of habit brought about by a change of mind and heart. The essence of sanctification is love: 'Righteousness is a thing of the heart.'¹⁹ The absence of these affections in a person results in destruction, their presence in salvation.

The Scriptures place great emphasis on the affective as a means of the knowledge of God: one knows him in an intuitive way through faith, love, and experience.²⁰ Salvation is personal

knowledge, the restoration of a broken relationship, and the affective is at the centre of both the relationship and its restoration.²¹ Conversion in the Bible is primarily relational and affective, a turning to the knowledge of God. This is particularly true in the Old Testament.²²

Yet this affective saving knowledge is intimately bound with intellectual understanding. Jonathan Edwards recognizes both a 'notional' knowledge and a 'sense of the heart'. The former makes judgments as to what is true, the latter takes delight and pleasure in the idea and involves the disposition. The 'sense of the heart' is always accompanied for Edwards by an idea, but the idea doesn't transform the person until he or she tastes it with the 'sense of the heart', and finds it sweet.²³

There is a paradox which has never been fully understood regarding the role of the Divine and the human in saving affectivity. On the one hand,

and Related Movements, Pietist and Wesleyan Studies, No. 12. (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2001), 234. See for example Eph. 3:16-19; 1 Jn. 3:1.

²¹ Perry W.H. Shaw, 'Education as Hospitality: A Christian Approach to Teaching and Learning', *Theological Review* 23, no. 2 (2002), 95-124.

²² James I. Packer, 'Conversion', in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, edited by J. D. Douglas (Leicester: IVP, 1980), 1: 312.

²³ John E. Smith, 'Testing the Spirits: Jonathan Edwards and the Religious Affections', *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* XXVII, nos. 1-2 (1981-1982), 32. Smith refers to Edwards' *A Divine and Supernatural Light, Immediately Imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God, Shown to be both a Scriptural and Rational Doctrine* (from the Sermon on Mt. 16:17). For more on 'sensible knowledge', see David W. Waanders, 'The Pastoral Sense of Jonathan Edwards', *Reformed Review* 29 (Winter 1976), 125.

¹⁷ John Wesley, 'A Caution Against Bigotry', Sermon 38 in *The Works of John Wesley*, edited by Albert C. Outler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984-1987), 2: 66.

¹⁸ Maddox, 'A Change of Affections', 17.

¹⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1: 774-775.

²⁰ So John Wesley, according to Maddox, 'A Change of Affections', 12, and Les L. Steele, 'Educating the Heart', in Richard B. Steele, ed., *'Heart Religion' in the Methodist Tradition*

the Scriptures make clear that God is the only source of saving affections. Faith is not a human work, but comes from God (Eph. 2:8-9). Love, joy, and peace are fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). God confirms the new covenant with his people by giving them a new heart (Rom. 2:29; Heb. 8:10). God works in the believers to both motivate and cause them to act according to his desires (Phil. 2:13).

God is even held responsible for the hardened attitudes of those whom he rejects (Rom. 9:17-18). People cannot come to Jesus unless the Father draws them (Jn. 6:44). Yet, human beings are morally responsible for their affective states. God frequently commands people to be characterized by certain emotions, attitudes, and motivations, thereby assuming some degree of human agency in the fulfilling of those commands.

Through God's grace in creating humanity in his image, through the common grace with which he shows his kindness to all, and through special intervention, people who are not saved are enabled to demonstrate positive affectivity such as love, concern, mercy and the fear of the Lord, respect for God's sovereignty, generosity, and humility (Mt. 5:46; Dan. 6:18-20; Jon. 1:11-16; Acts 5:38-39; Ex. 11:2-3; Neh. 1:11-2:8; Mt. 7:11; Dan. 2:46; 4:37). Appropriate affectivity is not necessarily a guarantee of salvation.

Appropriate affectivity in some biblical characters is a sign of readiness to receive salvation: Zacchaeus eagerly climbing a tree to see Jesus (Lk. 19: 3-4); Cornelius's devotion, fear of the Lord, and generosity (Acts 10:2), and the humble, grateful love of the sinful woman at Simon's dinner (Lk.

7:36-50). Others, however, are saved through the special intervention of God from markedly negative affective patterns, as were James the brother of Jesus (Jn. 7:1-5) and Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1 and 9:1).

Regeneration is the first moment of a lifelong transformation by the Holy Spirit of the believer's affectivity. This transformation ideally involves the whole person in an integrated manner. The type and intensity of emotion at the moment of regeneration varies, and may be expressed in a variety of behaviours. John Wesley noted that 'heart religion' does not mean salvation from mood swings and sudden bursts of emotion, but a change of disposition from anxious pre-occupation with the self to abiding 'trust, love, joy and gratitude'.²⁴

There is no consistency in the degree or type of emotion expressed in the biblical invitations to salvation, but emotional manipulation is unethical and, in the long run, unhelpful. It is dangerous to a person or group's spiritual welfare to provide them with false comfort or to inflict them with false guilt. However, Jesus, Paul, and the apostles did not consider it manipulative to combine evangelism with the alleviation of physical and social distress. Throughout the biblical narratives, God reveals himself to people

²⁴ Richard B. Steele, 'The Passion and the Passions', in *Heart Religion in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements, Pietist and Wesleyan Studies*, edited by Richard B. Steele, (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2001), xxi. Steele cites Wesley's *Journal* entries for May 26, 27 and 28, 1738, which record Wesley's varying moods in the days following his Aldersgate experience on May 24, 1738.

in circumstances of emotional vulnerability.

The Bible appears at times to say that the affective states which pertain to salvation are qualitatively different from corresponding affectivity in the unregenerate (for example, Jn. 14:27, Gal. 5:22). We are not told how they are different, aside from their Source, and it is clear that judging the genuineness of the affections of others is an uncertain business at best. While appropriate affectivity is not a guarantee of salvation, habitually inappropriate affectivity provides good grounds for persons or groups to question the genuineness of their salvation (1 Tim. 6:10; Heb. 10:35-39; 1 Jn. 4:7-8; Rev. 2:4-5).

New Testament religion does not stress law codes suited to external measurement and enforcement, because the saints' love of God and divine righteousness ensures that duty will be fulfilled without the need for rigid guidelines.²⁵ The affective fruit of salvation is portrayed in Scripture as both the fruit of the Spirit and as a moral obligation. All theologians allow some role for human co-operation in the encouragement of these virtuous affections among believers, recognizing worship, teaching, behavioural guidance and sanctified socialization as means of fostering godly affectivity. The idea of habituation in holiness appealed to both Edwards and Wesley,²⁶ but it carries with it the danger of relying on the human will and socialization processes to produce what only

the Holy Spirit can produce. Edwards²⁷ contends that there are some means inappropriate to the stirring up of truly gracious affections.

The religious affections that precipitate and accompany salvation must take an object or point of reference, and that is Jesus Christ, a timely, visible expression of the eternal, invisible God (Jn. 1:14-18; Col. 1:15). Faith is a good thing only if its object is reliable. There is no virtue in gullibly trusting a scoundrel or placing one's hope in that which promises but cannot deliver. I have heard it said at inter-religious dialogues that 'we are all people of faith', as though that should make us all feel cosily united in a religious fraternity with various branches.

This is a naïve approach which fails to recognize, not only the fundamental differences in doctrine, but also the connectedness of emotions and attitudes to their objects. Failure to recognize the definitive importance of the objects of religious affectivity is failure to recognize the relational nature of religion in general and of salvation in particular.²⁸

Implications for Mission

If God alone is able to transform human affectivity in such a way that salvation can take place and the fruit of salvation can flourish, then the foun-

²⁵ William C. Spohn, 'Sovereign Beauty: Jonathan Edwards and the Nature of True Beauty', *Theological Studies* 42 (1981), 400.

²⁶ Maddox, 'A Change of Affections', 19-20.

²⁷ Edwards, *A Treatise on Religious Affections*, 45.

²⁸ Henry H. Knight III, 'The Role of Faith, and the Means of Grace in the Heart Religion of John Wesley', in *'Heart Religion' in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements, Pietist and Wesleyan Studies*, No. 12, edited by Richard B. Steele (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2001), 277.

dational tasks of mission are fervent intercessory prayer, discernment of the workings of God, and unreserved co-operation with him. A human-centred approach looks for success where it cannot be found—in human strategies—and risks becoming emotionally manipulative. Gospel invitations should demonstrate sensitivity to people's spiritual and affective states, the affective patterns of local culture and affective signals of readiness for salvation.

There is a place in mission for prophetic confrontation of ungodly attitudes, moods, emotional reactions and prejudices, since humans are accountable for the management of their affective states. Two caveats are necessary, however. First, it must not be assumed that people who are so challenged are capable of making the foundational changes of heart needed to correct the problem. They should therefore be urged to meet Jesus, not just to reform themselves. Second, the messenger delivering such a challenge must be humble, for the sake of his or her own spiritual safety, to be true to the message spoken, and to level the path before a difficult communication.

On-going affective renewal requires holistic spiritual direction or other affect-sensitive discipleship throughout the believer's lifespan. Affective discipling is more likely to take place if the mentors (1) model giving and receiving it, (2) prayerfully and strategically consider how best to accomplish it, and (3) train leaders in a manner that integrates the development of affective, cognitive, practical, and relational skills. The redemptive passion of Jesus should be a central metaphor in the for-

mation of Christ-like affectivity.²⁹

The missionary should not expect new believers to fit uniform affective patterns. In fact, conformity to a preferred pattern may be a warning either of imitation faith or of genuine but inarticulate faith. Care must be taken in assessing the motivations, values, desires, moods and emotions of others. There is no fool proof affective measuring stick for determining whether someone is saved. (Neither is there a fool proof rational or behavioural measuring stick, although churches are more inclined to devise and act upon these.) Any sort of evaluation should distinguish between a lone event and the overall course of the person's life.³⁰

If God often reveals himself to people at their point of felt need, the missionary should be highly alert to felt needs, ready to communicate God's love and truth to hurting people in speech and life. Love must be sincere (Rom. 12:9), not simply a ploy to gain converts. Emotional appeals and affective self-disclosure are effective and honouring to God only when they are genuine and result in lasting change. Since false guilt or comfort is dangerous, anyone with an apostolic ministry needs to be certain that the affective message they bring is timely and from God.

It would be wise for the evangelist and discipler to notice the presence or absence of unusual godly affectivity as a factor in assessing a person's spiritual growth and standing. For example, if a spiteful person claims to submit to

²⁹ Steele, 'The Passion and the Passions', 257.

³⁰ Smith, 'Testing the Spirits', 34.

Christ's Lordship and becomes forgiving and patient, there is evidence that a change of heart has really taken place. Notice, however that this is *evidence*, but not *proof*. A great deal of humility and restraint is needed in assessing others.

The missionary should model and encourage humble and sober self-assessment, especially with regard to the congruity or lack of it between professed affectivity and actual practice. Missionaries should be familiar from observation and personal experience with the virtues that accompany salvation, and should have a working notion of those most likely and least likely to be counterfeited.³¹ It is helpful to be on the alert for the sorts of transformation which Satan cannot or will not do, in order to have confidence in the source of the change or experience.³²

IV Affectivity and Pneumatology

Just as the Scriptures describe the Father and the Son using the language of human emotion, so they describe the Spirit. The Holy Spirit intercedes with unspeakable groans (Rom. 8:26), grieves (Eph. 5:30), and is intensely jealous (Jas. 4:5). The Holy Spirit is presented as the impetus of mission, and it is therefore not surprising that the Spirit catalyses affective changes both in the agents and recipients of mission.

The agents of mission resound with the groans and jealousy of the Spirit in their ministries (Gal. 4:19; Acts 17:16). The Spirit confirms to them the love of the Father and his commission to service, so that they at times feel compelled to ministry (Mt. 12:18; Lk. 3:22; Jn. 14:15-21; 2 Cor. 3:1-3; Acts 20:22; Rom. 5:5 with 2 Cor. 5:11-14). The power by which the Holy Spirit enables believers for mission is effectual word and action rather than an intuitive sense of power in the worker (Mich. 3:8; Acts 1:8; 1 Thess. 1:5-6; 1 Tim. 1:7).³³ In fact, the Spirit's power is most keenly displayed in the context of the missionaries' subjective experience of weakness (1 Cor. 1:26-2:5; 2 Cor. 3:17-4:18; 11:16-12:12).

Yet the Spirit's power does have the effect on the workers of producing boldness, confidence, joy, peace even in difficulty, love and self-control (Acts 4:31; 8:29-30; 2 Cor. 3:4-6; 1 Thess. 1:5-6; Lk. 10:21; Jn. 16:22-24; Acts 13:52; Rom. 15:30; 2 Tim. 1:7; Jn. 14:25-27). The Spirit's confirmation that God has accepted believers of other ethnic and religious backgrounds helps the church to accept others and treat them with compassion (Acts 15:8-11).

When those outside the people of God observe the Holy Spirit in the miracles, words, and character of his servants, they often display strong affective reactions which run the emotional gamut: hope, fear, jealousy, confidence in the message, confusion, attraction, fury, awe, amazement, dismay and joy. The Bible teaches that faith is both the

³¹ On the value of Jonathan Edwards' 'signs' for missionary practice, see Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tiénou, *Understanding Folk Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 374-384.

³² Smith, 'Testing the Spirits', 33.

³³ See Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 35, 823-826, 849.

occasion and the result of receiving the Holy Spirit,³⁴ but never states plainly *how* the Spirit and human affectivity interrelate in the lives of people outside of the community of faith. It is clear in the Scriptures, however, that the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people is unpredictable (Jn. 3:6-8; Acts 10:44-48; 15:8-12), and that communities of believers need mutual encouragement in the Spirit (Heb. 3:7-14).

The Holy Spirit establishes believers experientially, linking the rational (a new self-understanding as children of God) and the affective (confirmation in our spirits, teaching us to cry 'Abba Father!').³⁵ The presence or absence of the fruit of the Spirit may be helpful in assessing the genuineness of a conversion or the degree of maturity in a new follower of Jesus, and this fruit consists of inner dispositions evident in relationships, rather than external conformity to religious strictures (Mt. 7:16-20; Gal. 5:22-23).

Implications for Mission

Jesus did not want the church to start its mission without the empowering of the Spirit. The missional church shares the Spirit's affective states of joy, jealousy, and pain on behalf of others, and its love and humility impress outsiders. Its apostles go out Spirit-impelled, exercising faith and boldness in the face of opposition.

The Holy Spirit also draws an emotional reaction from the hearers, and their responses range from visceral hatred to exuberant welcome. When the Holy Spirit works, one should not expect universal popularity. Those who do believe will be taught by the Spirit, and missionaries should help new believers to learn to hear the Spirit's confirmation and admonitions.

This is a far healthier way of fostering sanctification than embarking on a missionary-designed program of indoctrination and social control. Heeding the Spirit will mean celebrating a variety in patterns of spiritual growth and resisting attempts to 'institutionalize the Spirit'³⁶ in church development. Ethical teaching should emphasize character flowing from a relationship with God rather than external behaviours.

V Conclusion

God is passionate: lavish in mercy, consuming in anger, relentless in jealousy for his own honour, unparalleled in majesty, extravagant in love. He created the human race to live in his presence in a relationship characterized by awe, trust, humility and love. When we betrayed his goodness, he sent—not a Vulcan—but Jesus, the ultimate expression of his great justice and love. The most faithful and effective witnesses to Jesus will be, like him, skilled in matters of the heart.

34 Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 853, contrasting Gal. 3:2-5 with 1 Cor. 12:8.

35 Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I: 230-231, based on Rom. 8:14-17; also Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 856.

36 John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and Christian Mission* (Bristol: SCM, 1972), 119, 209.