

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF AFFECTIONS

In this chapter, I will first introduce Edwards' concept of religious affections in detail and then analyze the influence of John Locke on Edwards' idea of affection. To identify what Edwards borrows from Locke and what he differs from Locke.

2.1 Edwards' definition of Affection

Edwards provides one proposition just before he unpacks the nature of the affections in his *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*: “True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.”²³ Alvin Plantinga interpreted this proposition as “true religion is first a matter of having the right affections.”²⁴ John E. Smith once observed that all of Jonathan Edwards's thoughts could be considered “one magnificent answer” to “What is true religion?”²⁵ However, Edwards's answer to that question invariably involved what he called the “affections” since they lay at the heart of his theological anthropology.²⁶ Now, let's start with Edwards' definition of affection and further explore the rich meaning of affection in his thoughts.

As for the definition of “affection,” Edwards explains two faculties of the human soul that God has endued: The first one is understanding that perceives and speculates things. The second one is called by various names. When it moves the soul towards or away from something, it is called inclination; and when it is emphasized on determining and governing one's actions, it is called will; When the mind exercises this faculty, it is usually called heart. In addition, the more vigorous and tangible exercises of the inclination and will in the soul are defined as affections.²⁷

²³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.95.

²⁴ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 313.

²⁵ Edwards, *Works*, Editor's Introduction, 2.2.

²⁶ Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 311.

²⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.95.

2.1.1 The big picture: the unity of the human soul

As a prelude to this entire discussion, it is necessary to bear in mind that at the center of all of Edwards's thinking about affections and the religious experience was his conviction of the unity of the human person.²⁸ Edwards made distinctions of affection, inclination, and will to preserve the integrity of the self against division into separate "faculties."²⁹ For Edwards, McDermott summarized that "affections are strong inclinations of the soul that are manifested in thinking, feeling, and acting."³⁰ In other words, The human person, for Edwards, was a bundle of affections that determine nearly everything that person feels, thinks, and does.³¹ Thus, for Edwards, affections consist of three dimensions: intellectual, emotional, and behavioral. McClymond points out that "this brief definition of the affections rooted in the faculties of the soul is often misunderstood in two related ways: commentators either ignore the intellectual component or reduce the affections to "emotions," thus missing Edwards's insistence on the unity of the human person."³² I shall add that the behavioral dimension, to participate in "religious business specifically actively" is also what Edwards highly emphasized in his Affections, or to say the ultimate goal of his whole argument of affections. Edwards quoted Rom 12:11 to prove that "God, in his word, greatly insists that we be good in earnest, "fervent in spirit," and that our hearts be vigorously engaged in religion."³³

Then, what exactly does Edwards mean by "affection"? What's the difference between "affection" and "emotion" for Edwards? What is the intellectual component of Edwards' concept of affection? How does Edwards' affection result in actions? (This is the primary concern of this thesis. It will be discussed in Chapter 4.) Another critical question is, is it "affection" his original concept or a copy from the thoughts

²⁸ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 315

²⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.97-98.

³⁰ Gerald R. McDermott, *Seeing God: Jonathan Edwards and Spiritual Discernment* (Canada: Regent College Publishing, 1996), 31.

³¹ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 311

³² McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 312.

³³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.99.

of John Locke? To unpack what Edwards means by affection, we shall treat these problems.

2.1.2 Affection and passion/emotion

To understand what Edwards meant by affections is essential to distinguish them from passions or emotion, as Edwards did. According to Edwards, affections are not passions or what is usually called emotion. The meaning of affection is much broader than passion. The former is used for all vigorous lively acting of the will or inclination.”³⁴ While the latter is more relating to the effects on the animal spirits that are more sudden, more violent, overpower the mind, and may cause one to lose control of oneself.³⁵ From Edwards's comparison of affection and emotion or passion, at least the following differences can be seen.

First, affections are more profound and long-lasting than passions, which are more superficial and fleeting. According to the teachings of the Bible and contemporary theologians, Edwards often views this so-called sudden, intense religious passion as a manifestation of false religious affections,

“This 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... And it is the concurring voice of all orthodox divines that there may be religious affections, which are raised to a very high degree, and yet there be nothing of true religion.”³⁶

And Edwards went even further, and he even saw this religious passion as an expression of hypocrisy. As he described, “there is a sort of high affections that some have from time to time, that leave them without any manner of appearance of an abiding effect. They go off suddenly; so that from the very height of their emotion, and seeming rapture, they pass at once to be quite dead, and void of all sense and

³⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.96.

³⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.98.

³⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.130-131.

activity.”³⁷ As one of the renowned Edwards scholars, John E. Smith based on Edwards' ideas, compared hypocrites with vigorous but fleeting emotions to "meteors which flare up suddenly in a blaze of light trailing but soon their light dissipated; all is over in a twinkling.” And faithful saints with affections to “fixed stars that shining with a steady and sure light, a light which continues to show itself over time and through the infinite spaces.”³⁸

But why do affections and passions have such different characteristics? According to Edwards' logic, affections are more related to the soul, while passion is mainly related to the body. In his *Religious Affections*, according to “the laws of the union of soul and body,” which is human nature, “the lively and vigorous exercise of the will or inclination of the soul” will definitely produce some effect upon the body, “some alteration of the motion of its fluids, and especially of the animal spirits.”³⁹In other words, all affections (either natural or spiritual) have some effect on the body, “the greater those affections be, the more vigorous their exercise (other circumstances being equal) and the greater will be the effect on the body.”⁴⁰ However, Edwards emphasized that “the seat or the actual source of the affections” is only in the mind or the soul, not the body. Because man's body is not capable of thinking and understanding, then has ideas with pleased or displeased, loves or hates, rejoices or is grieved, but the soul.⁴¹ Although this kind of “bodily sensation” is always accompanied by affection and may promote the exercise of the affections. They are only “the effects or concomitants of the affections that are entirely distinct from the affections themselves; they are in no way essential to them.” Accordingly, an unembodied spirit is still capable of all the affections, just as one that is united to a body.⁴² Edwards repeated for emphasis that “we are not speaking of the affections of the body, but of the affections of the soul, the chief of which is love and joy. When

³⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.344.

³⁸ Edwards, *Works*, Editor's Introduction, 2.9.

³⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.98.

⁴⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.132.

⁴¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.98.

⁴² Edwards, *Works*, 2.98.

these are in the soul, whether that be in the body or out of it, the soul is affected and moved.”⁴³ On the other hand, emotion or passion is emphasized in “the union of soul and body,” mainly used to describe “the bodily sensation.”⁴⁴ Edwards described emotion as “the effects on the animal spirits” which means that emotion must be bound to the flesh.⁴⁵

Due to these “effects on the animal spirit,” “the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command.” This implies that affection is more active for a person, while passion is more passive. From the big picture of Edwards’ “the unity of human soul,” the reason for this difference may be that “all reasonable affection consists of the exercise of the understanding.”⁴⁶ Affections are the fruit or effect of what the mind understands and knows. The will or inclination is moved either toward or away from something perceived by the mind. For this reason, it is totally related to the mind. However, emotions, or rather passion, can be more about physiologically heightened states of either euphoria or fear that are loosely connected to the mind. Hence, affections are active responses by a person to another person or to an object evoked by an idea or understanding of the nature of what affects us.

In contrast, passions are inclinations that overpower the individual to be passive to them. In the words of John Smith, “the self becomes literally a ‘patient,’ seized by the object of passion. With the affections, however, the situation stands quite otherwise. These require a clear understanding and sufficient control of the self instead to make a choice possible.”⁴⁷

If we step a little further, the consequence of actions is that affections always result in lasting actions because they are consistent with what the mind believes. At the same

⁴³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.113.

⁴⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.113.

⁴⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.98.

⁴⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.107.

⁴⁷ Edwards, *Works*, Editor’s Introduction, 2.14-15.

time, passions often fail to produce long-term action, as passions are likely disconnected from the mind and will. The relationship between affection and behavior is the core theme of this paper, which will be discussed in more detail later.

To summarize, for Edwards, affection primarily seats in the soul. It is active, rational, deep, long-lasting, unites the soul as a whole, and consistently produces lasting actions. While emotion is more emphasized in the union of soul and body, it is passive, irrational, superficial, fleeting, (often) disconnected from the mind and will, and fail to produce long-term actions. In the words of Edwards scholars, “true spirituality is a matter of the affections-strong inclinations of the soul. People who are in the kingdom of God will be moved by the spiritual conviction that affects everything they are and do: their feelings, their thinking, and their actions.”⁴⁸

While “emotions for Edwards were only one dimension of human experience shaped by affections, along with thinking and choosing.”⁴⁹

2.1.3 Affection and Understanding/Reason/Intelligence

Then, what is the intellectual component of Edwards’ affection? Edwards believes that “all reasonable affection implied the exercise of the understanding.”⁵⁰ As mentioned before, Edwards’s basic idea of the relationship between affection and the faculty of understanding is that they are distinct from each other yet not separable.

The differences between affection and reason, for Edwards, can be found in his unique concept of “the sense of heart,” in which he makes a clear separation between the “speculative knowledge” and the “sensible knowledge.” Edwards writes that there are two kinds of knowledge that a person has, “a merely notional understanding” of a thing, which Edwards called “speculative knowledge.” That person’s “being in some way inclined” toward it, which is affection or he called the “sensible knowledge.”

⁴⁸ McDermott, *Seeing God*, 40.

⁴⁹ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 313.

⁵⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.107.

This is what he learned from the Bible. Edwards refers to the words of Apostle Paul (in Rom. 2:20), who illustrates the distinction between mere speculative knowledge of the things of religion and spiritual knowledge. He believes the former is called “the form of knowledge, and the truth,” while the latter is often represented by "relishing, smelling, or tasting" in the Bible.⁵¹

He was fond of exemplifying “tasting-sense” in the sweetness of honey to illustrate the difference between these two kinds of knowledge in *Religious Affections*.⁵² “a person may know that honey is sweet, but no one can know what ‘sweet’ means until they taste the honey.”⁵³ Having knowledge through experiencing the sweet taste of honey is far from merely knowing that honey is sweet. Likewise, having a purely “notional knowledge” of the religious truths is insufficient to be a true saint until they experience true religious affections.⁵⁴ Edwards repeatedly insisted that religious faith is not only a purely “notional understanding” of doctrine but also graciously affected by these dogmatic confessions or correct doctrines resulting in a vigorous inclination towards God, which is called “affection.” It is more truly a love of God that kindles in believers the affections of joy, hope, trust, and peace. In the words of John Smith, being affected by these ideas means not being merely “entertaining” them but “being engaged with the spiritual realities-love, joy, humility-to which they point.”⁵⁵ Therefore, Edwards believes that “God ordained preaching as an effective way to arouses sinners’ affections by making them understand his Word revealed in the Holy Scripture” to “effectively affect sinners.” Good books of divinity can “give men a good doctrinal or speculative understanding of the things of the Word of God,” but it does not equally serve the same purpose as preaching.⁵⁶ Because “genuine religion means having a sense of all the divine marks or fruits of

⁵¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.272-273.

⁵² Edwards, *Works*, 2.205, 207, 258, 260, 272.

⁵³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.272.

⁵⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.205.

⁵⁵ John E. Smith, “Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character,” *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 2 (1974): pp. 166-180, <https://doi.org/10.1086/486384>, 169-170.

⁵⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.115-116.

the spirit, and not everyone who has a notional understanding or who can repeat the dogma can be said to possess this sense.”⁵⁷ And such "sense" is what Edwards called “the sense of heart.” Here, we need to focus on Edwards' distinction between reason and affection. The concept of “the sense of heart” will be discussed in more detail later.

On the other hand, for Edwards, affections, and understanding are not separable. In the thesis, Edwards never tired of repeating that “holy affections are not heat without light.”⁵⁸ In the later paragraphs, he explains this in more detail:

“As on the one hand, there must be light in the understanding, as well as an affected fervent heart, where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart; So, on the other hand, 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.”⁵⁹

Here, by “light,” he means “some information of the understanding, some spiritual instruction that the mind receives, some actual knowledge,” a more deeply and clearly understanding of God or Christ, and all the glory of divine things exhibited in the gospel. By “heat,” he means “be in good earnest, fervent in spirit, engaged in religion with a vigorous heart” that God significantly insists in his Word.⁶⁰ The holy affections are the affections that arise from this spiritual knowledge, accompanied by the “heat” towards God.⁶¹

Edwards' concept of affection is discussed in the framework of the unity of the human soul: the two faculties of the soul, understanding, and will, are not acting distinctly and separately but as a unitary account. Affection, for Edwards, is the exercise of two faculties (understanding and will), the whole heart and soul.

⁵⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.199.

⁵⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.266.

⁵⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.120.

⁶⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.99.

⁶¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.266.

Edwards's scholars summarize that "If the soul is warmed toward God, it will be drawn to certain understandings of God. All inclination or affection already involves the perception of the mind because of the unity of the soul and self."⁶² More discussion about the relationship between understanding and affection will be in chapter 3.

2.2 Affections and John Locke

2.2.1 Edwards and John Locke

Now we have a sketch of Edwards' concept of religious affections, but another question is that is "affection" his original concept or a copy from the thoughts of John Locke? Most important, is it teaching from the Bible or human thoughts? Evidence has suggested that John Locke heavily influenced Edwards. Edwards had great respect for Locke and was a close reader of his writings, especially Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edwards' first biographer, his younger friend, and associate Samuel Hopkins, famously captured Jonathan's lifelong attitude to Locke's Essay:

"In his second year at college, and the thirteenth of his age, he read Locke on human understanding with great delight and profit. His uncommon genius, by which he was, as it were by nature, formed for the closeness of thought and deep penetration, now began to exercise and discover itself. Taking that book into his hand, upon some occasion, not long before his death, he said to some of his select friends . . . that he was beyond expression entertained and pleased with it when he read it in his youth at college; that he was as much engaged and had more satisfaction and pleasure in studying it, than the most greedy miser in gathering up handful of silver and gold from some new discovered treasure."⁶³

For Edwards's original concept of religious affections, it does seem clear that Locke's Essay is probably the best source of inspiration. John E. Smith confirmed that "behind Edwards' whole outlook of affection stands a thought that he learned early in his

⁶² McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 313

⁶³ George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 62.

reading of the *Essay*.”⁶⁴ Although Edwards was heavily influenced by *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, the name of John Locke is rarely mentioned in this great work, *Religious Affections*. The only time that Locke appeared by name was when he described him as a man of “great genius.”⁶⁵ Why is Locke absent in an explicit reference? British reformed theologian Paul Helm answered the reason might be that Edwards’ first great book, *The Religious Affections* was for domestic consumption, principally for the churches of New England. It is likely that its author decided that it would be unwise to advertise the identity of John Locke, a broad church Arminian on whom he was in fact relying.⁶⁶

In fact, the relationship between the thought of John Locke and Jonathan Edwards has been richly discussed over the past 70 years. An intellectual and influential American historian, Perry Miller, claims that John Locke wholly influenced Jonathan Edwards’ overall thoughts in 1949. It was dropped like a bombshell on the playground of the American intellectuals. From Miller’s framework of interpretation, a considerable number of scholarly studies have been fostered to defend the originality of Jonathan Edwards’ thought.⁶⁷ After decades of heated debate, scholars today almost unanimously reject that Jonathan Edwards was a “Lockean” in any significant sense.⁶⁸ In one of the influential biographies of Edwards, the author George Marsden famously noted that John Locke “opened up exciting new ways of looking at things, especially regarding the relation between ideas and reality. Locke was crucial in setting Edwards’ philosophical agenda and shaping some of his categories. Yet Edwards was no Lockean in any strict sense.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Lee, *The Princeton Companion*, 105.

⁶⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.99.

⁶⁶ Paul Helm, “Jonathan Edwards, John Locke, and the Religious Affections,” Online Journal, accessed June 6, 2022, <https://jestudies.yale.edu/index.php/journal/article/view/221>, 3.

⁶⁷ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 641.

⁶⁸ Obbie Tyler Todd. “What Is a Person?: Three Essential Criteria for Jonathan Edwards’s Doctrine of Personhood.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 61, no. 1 (2018): 121.

⁶⁹ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 63.

After all, it is certain that Edwards' and Locke's ideas are very close, especially in Edwards' thoughts on religious affections. Scholars generally agree with the statement that Edwards utilized Lockean terminology to explain the procedure of regeneration or to say what happened in conversion. For Edwards, no salvation or true apprehension of God exists apart from conversion and regeneration. He rejected the older Puritan "morphology of conversion." He used a Lockean notion of sensation as a model for his understanding of "a divine and supernatural light" producing "the sense of the heart."⁷⁰ This is why we need to clarify the relationship between their thoughts here. I shall start with Edwards's understanding of regeneration and conversion and then move on to these two core themes about religious affections above to clarify what Edwards draws on Locke and what he does differs from Locke.

2.2.2 Religious affections and John Locke

First, for Edwards, "regeneration is the work of God in which grace is infused."⁷¹ The grace that is infused into the heart of a saint in regeneration is the giving of "a new spiritual sense" by the work of the Holy Spirit. Based on biblical principles, Edwards writes through the saving influences of the Spirit of God in the saints, that is, "dwelling in them" as his proper lasting abode, supernaturally affected their hearts and mind, "communicating itself" in its own proper nature to make the creature participation of God, "the persons can be called spiritual."⁷² By this supreme work of God, the mind of a sanctified and spiritual person was endowed with "a new spiritual sense" or "a principle of new kind of perception or spiritual sensation, which is in its whole nature different from any former kinds of sensation of the mind."⁷³ "In the exercise of this new sense of mind," the spiritual and divine things that a true saint perceives are entirely diverse from anything perceived by the natural men.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 19.

⁷¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.398.

⁷² Edwards, *Works*, 2.203.

⁷³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.205.

⁷⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.206.

On the other hand, for Edwards, conversion is the work of God that delivers a person from the power of sin and mortifying corruption once and again by God's taking away "the heart of stone" and giving "a heart of flesh."⁷⁵ It is a significant and universal change of man (a lifelong process), turning him from sin to God.⁷⁶ However, it is worth noting that sometimes, Edwards seems to confuse conversion with rebirth, using the same biblical metaphor (opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, and a work of creation) to describe them.⁷⁷ Just as scholars noted that Edwards followed the Later Reformed tradition "identifying regeneration as the passive reception of divine life and conversion as active turning from sin to new life in Christ." For Edwards, "while regeneration was immediate and instantaneous, conversion is an event that sometimes took place subsequent to regeneration." But sometimes, Edwards changes his mind. Picking up on hints in some of the scholastics about regeneration being "imperfect" and "never reaching completion here on earth." Hence, while Edwards at times spoke of regeneration as instantaneous, at other times, he referred to regeneration as a gradual, lifelong process, like conversion, which is turning from sin to Christ.⁷⁸ But this should not bother us now. For Edwards, it is reasonable to assume that after regeneration comes conversion, which was closely related to his original concepts of "the divine and supernatural light" and "the sense of heart." In *Religious Affections*, he wrote that the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind of saints. Thus, "this inward perception of the saints" is along with the understanding of things that are taught of God and Christ "in a new manner,"⁷⁹ named "spiritual understanding" that consists primarily in "a sense of heart" of the spiritual beauty.⁸⁰ And the beauty of the divine nature primarily consists in God's holiness.⁸¹ Thus, for Edwards, a person is called a saint or a spiritual person because they can "sense" the beauty of God's holiness manifested in Christ in a

⁷⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.117.

⁷⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.340-341.

⁷⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.204, 206, 340.

⁷⁸ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 333.

⁷⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.268.

⁸⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.271-272.

⁸¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.258.

supernatural way. Besides, this “sensation” is based on the spiritual understanding of the Scripture, which means “rightly understand what is in the Scripture, and what was in it before it was understood.”⁸² Discovering “the new world” (the glory of all the perfections of God and everything appertaining to the divine being) in the soul opened up by “sense” the moral beauty of divine things is a life-long process.⁸³ This spiritual knowledge coming from the Scripture's understanding by the Holy Spirit's enlightenment is the spring of all religious affections or what he called “gracious or spiritual affections”⁸⁴ and finally produces fruit in Christian practice as a lifelong pursuit.⁸⁵

It is clear that the big picture of regeneration and conversion, for Edwards, involved both illumination and infusion, which are two significant works of the Holy Spirit that activate the human mind. Illumination relates to the concept of spiritual understanding. In the fourth sign of the true religion, Edwards uses the whole chapter to explain how the Holy Spirit illuminates the mind of saints. At the beginning of the chapter, he summarized that “gracious affections do arise from the mind’s being enlightened, rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.”⁸⁶

Infusion is noticed in Edward’s original concept of “new spiritual sense” and “the sense of heart.” For the new spiritual sense, the Spirit of God, in his spiritual influences on the hearts of his saints, operates by infusing or exercising new, divine, and supernatural principles; principles which are indeed of a new and spiritual nature and principles vastly more noble and excellent than all that is in natural men.⁸⁷ For the sense of heart, God’s implanting that supernatural spiritual sense spoken of makes

⁸² Edwards, *Works*, 2.280.

⁸³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.273.

⁸⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.205.

⁸⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.383.

⁸⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.266.

⁸⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.207.

a significant change in a man.⁸⁸ In his *Religious Affections*, Edwards describes this procedure by using two metaphors:

“The light of the Sun of Righteousness doesn’t only shine upon them, but is so communicated to them that they shine also, and become little images of that Sun which shines upon them; the sap of the true vine is not only conveyed into them, as the sap of a tree may be conveyed into a vessel but is conveyed as the sap is from a tree into one of its living branches, where it becomes a principle of life. The Spirit of God is thus communicated and united to the saints. They are from thence properly denominated from it and are called spiritual.”⁸⁹

It is essential to bear in mind that “new spiritual sense” and “the sense of heart” are original concepts developed by Edwards yet heavily utilized by Locke’s empirical terminology, especially Locke’s concept of “new simple idea.” To clarify what Edwards took from Locke and what he differs from. Let’s treat these topics one by one.

2.2.3 The new spiritual sense

John Smith noted that Locke’s emphasis on “sense” and his concept of “simple idea” is essential for understanding Edwards’s conception of the religious affections “in terms of which he sought to establish a standard for true religion.” Because Edwards transformed Locke’s notion of “sense” and “new simple idea” to develop his own concept of “new spiritual sense”—“the characteristic of true saints who are graciously affected by the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁰

No single sentence can better summarize John Locke’s empirical epistemology than this famous phrase, “nothing is in the intellect which was not first in a sense.” Locke’s explanation of the sense provides a fundamental framework for understanding his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*.⁹¹ Rejecting the existence of innate ideas,

⁸⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.275.

⁸⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.200-201.

⁹⁰ John E. Smith, "Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character," *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 2 (1974): 169-170.

⁹¹ Quoted in Hyunkwan Kim, Jonathan Edwards’s Reshaping of Lockean Terminology into a

Locke held to the notion that Idea as the foundation of all knowledge is the object of the mind.⁹² The human mind is like a white paper, “void of all characters, without any *ideas*.” All the materials of reason and knowledge are “founded by experience, and ultimately derive from it.”⁹³ Then, Locke defined two ways of the mind acquiring ideas: one is “depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding,” which he calls external sense or *sensation*,⁹⁴ and the other is “the perception of the operations of our own mind within us, as it is employed about the idea it has got,” which he calls internal sense or *reflection*.⁹⁵ Locke reminds us to notice that the perceivable operation of our minds can be generated because “it is employed the idea it has got,”⁹⁶ which means that the first source of the idea—— *sensation* is the foundation of the second source—— *reflection*. Thus, for Locke, the mind cannot operate independently without ideas employed by Sense.

Like Locke, Edwards also considers sensation a fundamental beginning in acquiring knowledge. “Edwards accepted the fundamental concerns of Locke’s empiricism: sensation is fundamental, whatever else there may be in the total content of the cognitive process, sensation is the indispensable beginning.”⁹⁷ In his *Religious Affections*, Edwards writes that

“It was a new spiritual sense that the mind has, or a principle of new kind of perception or spiritual sensation, which is in its whole nature different from any former kinds of sensation of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other senses; and something is perceived by a true saint, in the exercise of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things, as entirely diverse from anything that is perceived in them, by natural men.”⁹⁸

Calvinistic Aesthetic Epistemology in his *Religious Affections*, *Puritan Reformed Journal* 6, 2 (2014): 105.

⁹² John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1995), 59, Essay II.I.1. ‘Of ideas in general, and their original’. References to the Essay are by book, chapter and section. .

⁹³ Locke, *Essay* II.I.2 (Prometheus Books,59).

⁹⁴ Locke, *Essay* II.I.3 (Prometheus Books,59-60).

⁹⁵ Locke, *Essay* II.I.4 (Prometheus Books,60).

⁹⁶ *Ibid*.

⁹⁷ Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards: Expanded Edition* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 124.

⁹⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.205-206.

And later in the same chapter, he said,

“We call a clear apprehension of things spiritual by the name of light; and a having such an apprehension of such or such things, by the name of seeing such things; and the conviction of the judgment, and the persuasion of the will, by the word of Christ in the gospel, we signify by spiritually hearing the call of Christ.”⁹⁹

The concept of the sense of heart which develops follows the new spiritual sense is clearer,

“Spiritual understanding primarily consists in the sense of heart, or taste of the moral beauty of divine things; so that no knowledge can be called spiritual, any further than it arises from this, and has this in it. But secondarily, it includes all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, which depends upon, and flows from such a sense.”¹⁰⁰

Following the traditional Calvinistic view, Edwards believes that the Holy Spirit provides the elect with spiritual knowledge. However, the uniqueness of Edwards lies in his assertion that the existence of a new spiritual sense is a precondition to receiving spiritual knowledge. In other words, Edwards insists that “utterly new knowledge requires a new sense.”¹⁰¹

However, here we can see at least four distinct differences between Edwards’ application of sensation and Locke’s.

First natural knowledge or spiritual knowledge. The objects Locke’s sense mainly focuses on natural human experiences: the idea that one can get through sensation including “yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities.”¹⁰² In comparison, the object of Edwards’s new spiritual sense

⁹⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.212.

¹⁰⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.273.

¹⁰¹ James Hoopes, *Consciousness in New England: From Puritanism and Ideas to Psychoanalysis and Semiotic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 83.

¹⁰² Locke, *Essay* II.I.3.

is the supernatural experience or the spiritual knowledge. Let's review what we mentioned earlier about the meaning of "light" for Edwards. The "light" Edwards speaks of has two implications: the cognitive ability of spiritual knowledge¹⁰³ and the spiritual knowledge itself¹⁰⁴. And the essence of spiritual knowledge is the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things¹⁰⁵, which are primarily founded on God's glory and supreme beauty of morality that manifested in Jesus Christ: "He is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely; he is the Holy One of God and God's holy Child, and "he that is holy, and he that is true."¹⁰⁶

Second, natural man or the saints. It is clear that Locke applies his concept of sense to the universal human mind when they acquire knowledge. When Locke described his idea of sense, he didn't mention any particular group of people who can have this kind of sense. In comparison, Edwards's use of new spiritual sense is confined only to describe the mind of the elect when they acquire spiritual knowledge, which is new simple ideas. As mentioned before, Edwards firmly believed that the new spiritual sense is given only to the mind of the elect through the works of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is the inheritance that Christ has purchased for the elect, "not in any extraordinary gifts, but in his vital indwelling in the heart, exerting and communicating himself there, in his own proper, holy or divine nature, as is intimated Gal. 3:13–14."¹⁰⁷

Third, dyadic or triadic. Locke considered revelation just as "enlarged natural reason": "revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately."¹⁰⁸ However, in Edwards's epistemology, the human mind must depend on the revelation of the Holy Spirit to acquire spiritual knowledge. Continuous "supernatural revelation and the spiritual light" is "essential

¹⁰³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.212.

¹⁰⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.266.

¹⁰⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.259.

¹⁰⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.258.

¹⁰⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.236.

¹⁰⁸ Locke, *Essay* IV.XIX.4 (Prometheus Books,591).

for clarifying the nature of reality.”¹⁰⁹ In describing the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the saints, Edwards seems to depict their connection so intimately united as to imply that human faculties and divine principles are identical. However, Edwards never ignores the qualitative difference between God and human beings: “Not that the saints are made partakers of the essence of God, and so are ‘Godded’ with God, and ‘Christed’ with Christ...” the word “fullness” in the Scripture (Eph. 3:17–19; John 1:16) means the saints are made partakers of God’s fullness (beauty and happiness) according to the measure and capacity of a creature.”¹¹⁰ So, Edwards’s diagram of epistemology shows “triadic” structure rather than “dyadic” connection.¹¹¹ Because, in this form of epistemological structure, not only are both “perceiving subject” and “perceived object” involved, but the Holy Spirit occupies the most critical pivot.¹¹²

Forth, relational or non-relational. Shang Hyun Lee further points out that

“The effect that Edwards' radically relational ontology has upon the Lockean doctrine of the simple ideas. Being, for Edwards, is essentially relational, and individuality (simplicity) and relations are correlative and overlapping categories. The essence of an entity is a tendency to particular sorts of relationships... Therefore, unlike Locke, Edwards saw the simple ideas of sensation as coming into the mind with readiness for relations.”¹¹³

Now, let’s move on to the similarities and differences between Edwards and Locke on “the new simple idea.”

¹⁰⁹ Harry S. Stout et al., *Jonathan Edwards at 300: Essays on the Tercentenary of His Birth* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 28, Quoted by Hyunkwan Kim, Jonathan Edwards’s Reshaping of Lockean Terminology into a Calvinistic Aesthetic Epistemology in his Religious Affections, *Puritan Reformed Journal* 6, 2 (2014): 103–122

¹¹⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.203.

¹¹¹ Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 25-43.

¹¹² Michael J. McClymond, "Spiritual Perception in Jonathan Edwards," *The Journal of Religion* 77, no. 2 (1997): 200-201.

¹¹³ Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology*, 124.

In Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, after he explains the two sources of knowledge in experience: sensation and reflection, Locke then identified ideas, which are the knowledge itself, into two types: simple ideas and complex ideas. Simple ideas are something "which being each in itself uncompounded, contains in it nothing but *one uniform appearance*, or conception in mind, and is not distinguishable into different ideas."¹¹⁴ Such as "the coldness and hardness, which a man feels in a piece of *ice*, as the smell and whiteness of a lily; or as the taste of sugar, and smell of a rose, being as distinct ideas in mind,"¹¹⁵ "These simple ideas, the materials of all our knowledge, are suggested and furnished to the mind, only by those two ways above mentioned, viz. sensation and reflection."¹¹⁶

As the fundamental building blocks of knowledge, Locke repeatedly highlights the transcendence of simple ideas to the human mind: "In the reception of simple ideas, the understanding is merely passive." It does not have the power to refuse the acceptance of these "materials of knowledge," "nor alter, nor blot them out, and make new ones in itself, when they are imprinted."¹¹⁷ In later paragraphs,

"The mind can neither make nor destroy them....it is not in the power of the most exalted wit, or enlarged understanding, by any quickness or variety of thought, to invent or frame one new simple idea in mind, not taken in by the ways of Sensation and Reflection: nor can any force of the understanding, destroy those that are there. "¹¹⁸

For the concept of "new simple idea," Edwards explicitly refers to this Locke's terminology in the explanation of "new spiritual sense":

"In those gracious exercises and affections which are wrought in the minds of the saints through the saving influences of the Spirit of God, there is a new inward perception or sensation of their minds...and it could not be produced by exalting,

¹¹⁴ Locke, *Essay* II.II. 1 (Prometheus Books,70-71).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Locke, *Essay* II.II. 2 (Prometheus Books,71).

¹¹⁷ Locke, *Essay* II.I.25 (Prometheus Books,70).

¹¹⁸ Locke, *Essay* II.II.2 (Prometheus Books,71).

varying, or compounding the same kind of perceptions or sensations which the mind had before. There is what some metaphysicians call *a new simple idea*.”¹¹⁹

In short, after the saints are infused with a new spiritual sense by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, they can have a new simple idea or, in Edwards's words, "a new inward perception or sensation of their minds" by this new sense. Just as Locke insists that "the creation of new simple idea is beyond all human power,"¹²⁰ Edwards also thinks that new spiritual sense is something new infused into the minds of the saints by the mighty power of God¹²¹.

However, it is interesting to notice that it seems for Edwards that the new spiritual sense, along with the spiritual knowledge acquired through this new sense, is what Edwards called "the new simple idea." This is reasonable because, after all, both the new sense and the new knowledge come from the mighty power of God. This is already beyond what Locke originally meant for "the new simple idea."

Moreover, Edwards decisively shows a different perspective on the human mind compared to Locke's. While Locke describes the mind as entirely passive in acquiring new simple idea, Edwards believes that "the Holy Spirit is represented as being there so united to the faculties of the soul, that he becomes there a principle or spring of new nature and life."¹²² This implies that the mind of the saints is temporarily passive until it is endowed with a new spiritual sense. With this new spiritual sense, specifically, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the saints, it is possible for their minds to contemplate the spiritual knowledge actively.

Therefore, Edwards' use of "sense" and "new simple idea" definitely deviates from Locke's. He actually adopted Locke's empirical model to explain the operation that the elect acquires the spiritual knowledge through the medium of a new spiritual

¹¹⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.205.

¹²⁰ Locke, *Essay* II.II. 2 (Prometheus Books,71).

¹²¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.205, 275.

¹²² Edwards, *Works*, 2.200.

sense. Hyunkwan Kim further points out that “even though Edwards adopted Lockean terminology to explain his concept of spiritual sense, his use of Lockean language effectually served to develop his peculiar aesthetic epistemology in an empirical way.”¹²³ The new spiritual sense as a part of saving grace is infused to the mind of the saints by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Then, the mind of the saints is endowed with the new cognitive ability “to perceive something that it was not able to perceive before,” which is God’s divine beauty of Holiness, in the process of conversion. Alvin Plantinga also confirmed that “this cognitive ability is a new simple idea. And one who doesn’t have this new simple idea—one in whom the cognitive process in question has not been regenerated—doesn’t have spiritual knowledge of God’s beauty and loveliness.”¹²⁴ Consequently, this aesthetic experience of divine beauty also becomes a true mark of distinguishing the regenerate from the unregenerate in Edwards’s understanding of genuine religious experience. In the words of John Smith, “the saints are saints through no effort of their own, and the proof is that the hallmark of their status is a simple idea which no man can create.”¹²⁵

2.2.4 The sense of heart

Based on the concept of “new spiritual sense,” Edwards continues to use the Lockean language of sensory experience to describe conversion and develops his original doctrine of “the sense of heart.” John E. Smith noted that it is characteristic of Edwards to highlight an important idea not by repeating it but by putting it under a new heading so as to expand its meaning.¹²⁶ There is no difference in their nature, but the same cognitive ability “implanting” by God to the saints in regeneration, to perceive divine things in a whole new manner, and

“God’s divine beauty of holiness” as the primary object. Then, what is the sense of heart? According to Edwards, “spiritual understanding primarily consists in a sense of

¹²³ Hyunkwan Kim, Jonathan Edwards’s Reshaping of Lockean Terminology into a Calvinistic Aesthetic Epistemology in his Religious Affections, *Puritan Reformed Journal* 6, 2 (2014): 103–122

¹²⁴ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 298-299.

¹²⁵ John E. Smith, “Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character,” *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 2 (1974): pp. 166-180, <https://doi.org/10.1086/486384>, 169-170.

¹²⁶ Sang Hyun Lee, *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, 103-104.

heart of the spiritual beauty,” or “taste of the moral beauty of divine things”; secondly, it includes all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion. “So that no knowledge can be called spiritual” if it is not “depending upon and flows from such a sense.”¹²⁷

As we can see, both “the spiritual sense” and “the sense of heart” seems to be talking about the same thing: a new cognitive ability “implanting” by God to the saints in regeneration, to perceive divine things in a whole new manner, and “God’s divine beauty of holiness” as the primary object. However, in comparison, the new spiritual sense is talking more about what happened in regeneration— it instantly happened. The saint is given a new sense of receiving new sorts of knowledge. But the sense of heart is developing under the heading of “spiritual understanding,” highlighting the intellectual component of affection and the unity of the human faculties.¹²⁸ It talks more about what happened in conversion — a lifelong process that turns from sin to Christ.

As mentioned earlier, about the intellectual component of affection, “the sense of heart” is characterized by distinguishing the two kinds of knowledge, namely speculative knowledge and sensible knowledge. This is evidently learning from Locke. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke exalted the knowledge gained through experience, as he wrote in the chapter “*Of Faith and Reason, and their Distinct Provinces*” in Book four:

“For whatsoever truth we come to the clear discovery of, from the knowledge and contemplation of our ideas, will always be certainer to us than those which are conveyed to us by traditional revelation. For the knowledge, we have that this revelation came at first from God can never be so sure as the knowledge we have from the clear and distinct perception of the agreement or disagreement of our own ideas.”¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.272-273.

¹²⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.272.

¹²⁹ Locke, *Essay* IV.XVIII.4 (Prometheus Books,585).

In the section before, Locke describes the phenomenon that God communicates new knowledge to the mind of an inspired individual or prophet as “original revelation.” To distinguish it from the body of truths passed along by the inspired person to others, in oral or written form, he called “traditional revelation.”¹³⁰ Although Locke acknowledged that God may have imprinted ideas directly into the human mind in the original revelation, in the true sense, it was only the “original revelation,” as it existed in the mind of the prophet, that constituted knowledge in the complete sense of the term. For everyone else, this knowledge was just a tradition passed down. As David Laurence explains, Locke's position created a chasm between the inspired prophet and the rest of humanity: “inspiration was knowledge to him who experienced it; but to anyone else it was but the diffracted analogies of the report of it ... Original revelations were experiences, yet they were not properly human experiences because they could not be shared.”¹³¹ Therefore, for Locke, traditional revelation may make us know propositions knowable also by reason, but not with the same certainty that reason doth. For whatsoever truth we come to the clear discovery of, from the knowledge and contemplation of our own ideas, will always be more certain to us than those which are conveyed to us by traditional revelation.

Obviously, Edwards' contrast between “speculative knowledge” and “sensible knowledge” is very similar to Locke's contrast between “traditional revelation” and “experiential knowledge.” In fact, Edwards’ “Miscellanies” on “the sense of heart”¹³² shows that he actually developed his own thinking by borrowing from Locke’s more profound notion behind this contrast, which is Locke's distinction between the knowledge that is only a “sign” of an idea and the knowledge that is the idea’s entity which the sign refers. Following Locke's thought, in pursuing the matter of signs and actual ideas, Edwards adds that there are two ways of thinking about spiritual or

¹³⁰ Locke, *Essay* IV.XVIII.3 (Prometheus Books,583-584).

¹³¹ David Laurence, “Jonathan Edwards, John Locke, and the Canon of Experience” (*Early American Literature* 15, 1980), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25070986>, 121.

¹³² Edwards, *Works*, 18.453-466, No.782.

mental things¹³³: The first one is the mind indirectly views the things themselves in their ideas through signs, which is just “putting signs in our minds, instead of the actual ideas of the things signified.” The result is that such knowledge is “very dim and transient, and exceeding confused and indistinct.” Therefore, this is mere cogitation without apprehension called the “head,” known as “speculative knowledge.”¹³⁴ And the second one “is more properly called apprehension, wherein the mind has a direct ideal view or contemplation of the thing thought of.” This is what “is vulgarly called a having a sense.” Thus, this is the understanding that consists of “the sense of the heart.” Therefore, it relates to both the faculty of understanding and will, called the “heart,” known as “sensible knowledge.”¹³⁵

Although Edwards learned a lot of Locke's ideas in “the sense of heart,” McClymond noticed that Edwards deviates significantly from Locke in two critical places: rejecting Locke's denial of innate ideas and rejecting Locke's disparagement of affection in religion.¹³⁶

First, Reject Locke's denial of innate ideas. By how great John Locke emphasizes that “nothing is in the intellect which was not first in sense,” we can say John Locke's entirely empirical epistemology was built upon the foundation of “the denial of innate ideas.” Sang Hyun Lee sums up Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* as “begins with an exhaustive objection to innate ideas and then proceeds to demonstrate how knowledge is derived wholly from passively conveyed ideas through the external organs of the five senses and the internal sense or reflection.”¹³⁷ Therefore, not surprisingly, the result of Locke's identification of the difference between “original revelation” and “traditional revelation” seemed to be that all ideas derived

¹³³ Sang Hyun Lee, *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, 103-114.

¹³⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 18.457.

¹³⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 18.459-460.

¹³⁶ Michael McClymond, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 14-16.

¹³⁷ Lee, *The Philosophical Theology*, 118.

ultimately from sensation or reflection, no idea could ever be directly perceived as coming from God. The divine revelation could only reinforce concepts and principles already known through the sensory experience of the world.¹³⁸ This is what Locke insists on “God’s revelation is nothing but the enlarged natural reason.”¹³⁹ This implies that there is no distinctive religious experience reserved for saints alone. Although Edwards borrowed Locke's empirical epistemology and his distinction between speculative knowledge and sensible knowledge, he directly negates this foundation. As I have already explained, for Edwards, spiritual knowledge, the divine beauty of God, which depends on the sense of heart, is directly given to the saints only.¹⁴⁰ And this spiritual knowledge is what “innate Ideas” Locke strongly opposed.

Besides, Edwards combined Locke’s original revelation and traditional revelation and transcended it: even though readers may not be able to experience the stories written in the Bible, which are a tradition passed down, the saints can also “see” the beauty of God's holiness and glory as of the protagonist of the stories, and acquire the same divine knowledge as they have in the complete sense of the term, through the new spiritual sense given by God. As scholars point out that Edwards’s idea of spiritual perception or “the sense of heart” should be seen against the backdrop of Locke’s philosophy. Edwards used Locke’s empiricist principle—that everyone must see with his own eyes— against Locke, that “the intellectual certainty of the believer’s spiritual perception was greater than the certainty gained by mere human reasoning about God.” Besides, for Edwards, revelation does not merely “enlarge” natural reason—as Locke had claimed—but transcends it, conferring that which the human mind could not attain by its own resources.¹⁴¹

Second, reject Locke’s disagreement of affection in religion. Since Locke does not believe in the direct revelation from God other than the saints recorded in the

¹³⁸ Locke, *Essay* IV.XVIII.4 (Prometheus Books,585).

¹³⁹ Locke, *Essay* IV.XIX.4 (Prometheus Books,590-591).

¹⁴⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.270.

¹⁴¹ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 163.

Bible, he is generally suspicious of claims to have “immediate revelation” from God and advises against placing one’s faith in such. To have such faith would be an instance of “enthusiasm.” In Chapter “Enthusiasm” of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke shows a clear disparagement of emotions or affections in the sphere of religion. Here are some of the claims that Locke makes.

“The enthusiasts behave as follows: whatsoever odd action they find in themselves a strong inclination to do, that impulse is concluded to be a call or direction from heaven and must be obeyed.”¹⁴²

“Enthusiasm lays both reason and revelation to one side and ‘substitutes in the room of them the ungrounded fancies of a man’s brain, and assumes them for a foundation both of opinion and conduct’.”¹⁴³

By contrast, the reason is natural revelation, and scriptural revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches for the truth by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God. “So that he takes away reason, to make way for revelation, puts out the light of both.”¹⁴⁴ Here, Locke’s general position on faith is that faith must be tested by evidence or reason; otherwise, it would be “enthusiasm.” Obviously, he was acutely suspicious of religious responses that were not carefully controlled by calm and dispassionate reason. For Locke, an idea was an object of mental contemplation, not emotional engagement. Besides, “by defining revelation as an enlarged version of natural reason (rather than natural emotion), Locke privileged the intellect and invalidated the affections, which means that reasonable religion had to be dispassionate.”¹⁴⁵

On the other hand, needless to say, how much Edwards exalted the importance of religious affections. However, it is worth mentioning that some of the phenomena of religious “enthusiasm” mentioned by Locke were also opposed by Edwards, yet he is

¹⁴² Locke, *Essay* IV.XIX.6 (Prometheus Books,591).

¹⁴³ Locke, *Essay* IV.XIX.3 (Prometheus Books,590).

¹⁴⁴ Locke, *Essay* IV.XIX.4 (Prometheus Books,591).

¹⁴⁵ McClymond, *Encounters with God*, P15.

not as extreme as Locke. In *Religious Affections*, Edwards equally sternly condemns those who base their emotions on fantasies or “imagination” of religion in their heads. “Many who have had such things have very ignorantly supposed them to be of the nature of spiritual discoveries...The common and less considerate and understanding sort of people are the more easily led into apprehensions that these things are spiritual things because spiritual things are invisible...”¹⁴⁶ And Edwards even quite definitely sees imagination or fantasies as the place “wherein all those delusions of Satan are formed.”¹⁴⁷ Therefore, Edwards' attitude towards religious affections is not as extreme as Locke's, who exalted the status of reason, and despises the value of emotion in religion. The general position of Edwards is calling for a middle way between the two extremes: the unthinkingly embrace of all affections that they are from God or the complete rejection of all affections in faith that they are from the evil spirit. It is important to bear in mind that “head” and “heart” are distinguished but not opposed, as the principle, he oft-repeated claims that the understanding and the sense of the heart are intertwined.

It is vital to bear in mind that “head” and “heart” are distinguished but not opposed, as the principle, he oft-repeated claims that “the understanding and the sense of the heart are intertwined.” The sense of heart involves the whole person in the affective dimension: it is an “inward tasting or feeling, of sweetness or pleasure, bitterness or pains.”¹⁴⁸ Therefore, as mentioned above, another character of “the sense of heart” is the unity of the human soul, which also shows considerable similarity with the thoughts of John Locke. Paul Helm points out that Edwards' view on the unitary account of the human self was influenced mainly by Locke.¹⁴⁹ Obbie Tyler Todd also confirmed that “the question of human faculties was at the very center of the

¹⁴⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.211-212.

¹⁴⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.288-289.

¹⁴⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 18.460.

¹⁴⁹ Helm, Paul, “Jonathan Edwards, John Locke, and The Religious Affections.” *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 6, no. 1 (2016): 3-15.; “The Human Self and the Divine Trinity,” in *Jonathan Edwards as Contemporary: Essays in Honor of Sang Hyun Lee* (ed. Don Schweitzer; New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 93-106.

controversies growing out of the Great Awakening, and Lockean epistemology helped Edwards to comprehend the complexities and holistic nature of the human person in conversion.”¹⁵⁰

It is clear that Edwards’s definition of the affection (and his view on human nature) based on the unity of the human soul tends to dismiss the hierarchical faculty psychology, which is the threefold distinction of mind, will, and emotions that were common in nineteenth- and twentieth-century discussions of human psychology. This shows considerable similarity with Locke’s thinking. Both Locke and Edwards identify understanding and will as two distinct faculties.

By definition of affection, Edwards drew a line between understanding and affections.¹⁵¹ Just as Locke had distinguished between perceiving or understanding on the one side and preferring or willing on the other, as Locke wrote in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, chapter ‘Of Power,’ “the ordinary way of speaking, the understanding and will are two faculties of the mind.”¹⁵² Will is a power to control the actions of minds and motions of bodies, by a thought or preference of the mind. The understanding is the power of perception, which includes three sorts: ideas in our minds, the signification of signs, and the connection or repugnancy, agreement or disagreement, that there is between any of our thoughts.¹⁵³

On the other hand, both Locke and Edwards identify the understanding and will as two inseparably combined faculties of the soul. The twofold distinction of understanding and inclination tends to break down in Edwards’s discussion in *Religious Affections*. By Edwards’s view on the human soul, inclination or will is based on understanding. This means that even the understanding and the will are two different human soul faculties. They are not divided but as inseparably combined in

¹⁵⁰ Todd, *What Is a Person*, 130.

¹⁵¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.96.

¹⁵² Locke, *Essay* II.XXI.6 (Prometheus Books, 166).

¹⁵³ Locke, *Essay* II.XXI.5 (Prometheus Books, 166).

the same soul.¹⁵⁴ The will in no way works alone apart from the understanding. Just as MacDermott explained that

“Understanding and inclination are two modes of operation in the human self. Both of them are expressions of the total human self. Their distinction is more analytical than actual. They are not parts of the soul or self but intertwined with each other. The inclination’s affections include an intellectual dimension, while the mind’s thoughts include an affective dimension. In this way, the two faculties are interlocking in their operations.”¹⁵⁵

Just as Locke’s argument in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, “philosophers were in error when they treated the faculties as “some real beings in the soul, that performed ... actions of understanding and volition.”¹⁵⁶ In the words of Todd, “the will is not a self-activating entity that wills. Likewise, the understanding is not an independent agent who understands.”¹⁵⁷ Thus, For Edwards, understanding, and will or affection are not self-determined faculties in the soul that separate into two parts. On the contrary, all faculties cohere with one another within the unity of the human self. This follows the line of Locke in his *Essay* that he also plainly rejects the view that the mind has many distinct agents “which had their several provinces and authorities, and did command, obey, and perform several actions.” In other words, he insists that faculties are not separate, self-determining entities.¹⁵⁸

The sense of heart also borrows Locke’s unitary account of the human self to emphasize the unity of the two faculties, understanding and will/inclination/affection; according to Edwards, as Smith summarized that

“True religion shows itself in and through experience, which ultimately affects the person as a whole and as a living unity. Understanding, and indeed all the natural faculties, while important in their own right, do not suffice unless they are

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 314.

¹⁵⁶ Locke, *Essay* II.XXI.6 (Prometheus Books, 166).

¹⁵⁷ Todd, *What Is a Person*, 129.

¹⁵⁸ Locke, *Essay* II.XXI.6 (Prometheus Books, 166).

accompanied by "affections" which involve the participation of the person and the inclination of his will."¹⁵⁹

However, although Edwards indeed shows considerable similarity with John Locke, scholars point out that this tendency was not following Locke but further "went back to Plato."¹⁶⁰ Besides, It is apparent that "Edwards, through his great works like *Freedom of the Will*, *Religious Affections*, and *Original Sin*, situates him in an Augustinian-voluntarist tradition that characterized the human self more in terms of its desires and choices than its thoughts and concepts."¹⁶¹ This may be why in *Religious Affections*, although Edwards lists the understanding as to the first in the faculties of the soul, he says little concerning its nature or function. This could be because he thought its status less problematic than that of the other faculties. But most importantly, Edwards's unitary view of the person is deeply rooted in the Bible. By the evidence from the Scriptures that Edwards listed,¹⁶² he summarized that the essence of all true religion lies in holy love. The whole religion is about this divine affection is along with a habitual disposition to it, and with the light of truth as its foundation (understanding), and with those things which are the fruits of it (Actions).¹⁶³

2.2.5 The motivator of actions

As for the behavioral part, which is the "fruit" and the final "destination" of religious affections, it is also evidently influenced by Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. By Edwards's definition of affection, "the second faculty is called by various names...when it moves the soul towards or away from things, it is called inclination; and when it is emphasized on determines and governs one's actions, it is called will".¹⁶⁴ This follows Locke's notion that the will is connected with actions.

¹⁵⁹ John E. Smith, "Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Practice in the American Character," *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 2 (1974): 169-170.

¹⁶⁰ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 314.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Edwards, *Works*, 2.102-105.

¹⁶³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.107.

¹⁶⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.95.

Locke's "preference of the mind"¹⁶⁵ is what Edwards means "inclination" which has no difference from the will.

Paul Helm points out that Edwards borrows from Locke's idea, "pleasure and pain are the hinges on which our passions turn," considering that "the prospect of pleasure and of pain are the motivators of action, and they connect with a range of affections."¹⁶⁶ This is a position that arises from those propounded by Locke in his chapter XX, 'Of Modes of Pleasure and Pain' in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.¹⁶⁷ In Edwards' explanation of affection, he does frequently refer to like and dislike, love and hate as characteristics of the inclination and will:

"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, and complacency. Of the latter kind are hatred, fear, anger, grief, and such like."¹⁶⁸

It is clear that like and dislike, or love and hatred, are two directions of inclination, and when the inclination is vigorously exercised, it will govern and determine one's action. Edwards adopted Locke's contrast between a spectator with notional understanding and a person who is so engaged as to be attracted or repulsed by something.

When discussing the vigorous exercise of affections that leads to behavior, Edwards mentioned various affections that influence one's actions, including love and hatred, joy and grief, hope and fear, desire, and some other affections.¹⁶⁹ His explanation of

¹⁶⁵ Locke, *Essay* II.XXI.5 (Prometheus Books, 166).

¹⁶⁶ Paul Helm, "Jonathan Edwards, John Locke, and The Religious Affections," *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 6, no. 1 (2016): 3-15

¹⁶⁷ Locke, *Essay* II.XX.3 (Prometheus Books, 161).

¹⁶⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.98.

¹⁶⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.101.

these affections shows considerable similarity to Locke's in his *Essay*. Due to the length of space, I will not list them all here.¹⁷⁰

For Edwards, love and hate are the basis of all other affections and that joy and grief are not fundamentally different from love and hate but just the feelings that come with love and hate. Therefore, the love and hate mentioned by Edwards are basically equivalent to the pleasure and pain mentioned by Locke and are the foundation and source of all other affections. And these affections are related to whether the object of affections is present, certain, and possible, such as desire, which is also a borrowing from Locke.

Although Edwards draws on some of Locke's ideas about affections, there are still some significant differences.

First, they have different views on good and evil. For Locke, pleasure, and pain correspond to good and evil, respectively. Goodness means causing or increasing any pleasure, reducing any pain, and preserving the possession of any other good or absence of any evil. On the contrary, Evil means producing or increasing any pain or diminishing any pleasure. Or deprive us of any good or trap in every evil.¹⁷¹ Unlike Locke, Edwards cites the distinction made by theologians between moral good and evil and natural good and evil: on the one hand, moral evil means the evil of sin or that evil which is against duty and contrary to what is right and ought to be. Natural evil means contrary to mere nature, without any respect for a rule of duty. On the other hand, moral good means which is contrary to sin, a good in beings who have the will and choice, whereby as voluntary moral behavior agents, the good of what it is and does according to its will; natural good means good that is entire of a different kind from holiness or virtue, viz. that which perfects or suits nature, considering

¹⁷⁰ See Edwards, *Works*, 2.97, 107; Locke, *Essay*, II.XX.3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14 (Prometheus Books, 161-162).

¹⁷¹ Locke, *Essay* II.XX.2 (Prometheus Books, 160).

nature abstractly from any holy or unholy qualifications, and without any relation to any rule or measure of right and wrong.¹⁷² And he clearly mentioned that “the evil of suffering is called natural evil, such as pain,” and “pleasure is a natural good,” which is directly against Locke.

After Edwards made such a distinction between good and evil, he proposed a statement, “there is no other true virtue, but real holiness,” and “holiness in man is but the image of God’s holiness.”¹⁷³ And in another Edwards work, “true virtue most essentially consists in benevolence to being in general.”¹⁷⁴ Therefore, for Edwards, it is not love and hate as the fundamental affections of the others, but only love. He firmly insists that the Scripture represents true religion as love, which is not only one of the affections but also the first and chief of the affections and the fountain of all the affections. From love arises hatred of those things that are contrary to what we love or oppose and thwart us in those things that we delight in.¹⁷⁵ Edwards singled out the variety of affections for discussion in *Religious Affections* above, only for explaining that the affection overshadows the rest is love.¹⁷⁶

Most importantly, when Edwards mentioned, “Love is the source of all affections” or “true virtue” or “holiness in man,” he actually meant “loving God, loving man,” which is the primary biblical principle. So, the love he is talking about is God-oriented.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, Edwards’s description of other affections is primarily rooted in the Bible rather than following Locke’s understanding of emotions. Edwards quoted a lot of Biblical verses to explain love and hate, hope and fear, desire and other affections, and the object of all these affections is God,¹⁷⁸ especially the two most important affections, love, and joy are to (in) Christ.¹⁷⁹ However, when Locke

¹⁷² Edwards, *Works*, 2.254.

¹⁷³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.255-256.

¹⁷⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 8.541.

¹⁷⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.106-107.

¹⁷⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.106-108.

¹⁷⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.107-108.

¹⁷⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.102-106.

¹⁷⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.94-95.

mentioned about Love, as well as other emotions, are all self-interested feelings.¹⁸⁰ And when Edwards spoke of a “counterfeit love” that produces “other false affections,”¹⁸¹ scholars refer to Augustine’s statement in *City of God*. An idea reminiscent of Augustine’s distinction between charity and concupiscence, each person’s love is the “gravity” that determines whether a person rises or falls. “Two ‘loves’ with different destinations, one driving some toward the City of Man and the other propelling others toward the City of God.”¹⁸² And what Edwards means by “false love” is actually self-love.¹⁸³ Another difference should be noted that for Locke, pain, and pleasure, as the foundation of all emotions, are two very considerable “simple ideas” which received both from sensation and reflection.¹⁸⁴ For Edwards, gracious affections, as has been discussed, arise from those operations of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸⁵

It is clear that Edwards’ fundamental source of affection is totally different from Locke’s. One from man and one from God. Therefore, Edwards is entirely different from Locke regarding the motivator of actions. Edwards was not simply, as Paul Helm summarized, that pleasure and pain are the motivators of our actions. The inclination and the act of pursuing are driven by the anticipation of the pleasure that an object will bring. In contrast, the disinclination and aversive behavior is driven by the anticipation of the pain that an object will bring in his argument in the twelve sign of true religion that “Holy affections as the motivator of participating religious business” can be seen as the summary of the whole Affections. It is the Holy affections that make holy behavior the practice and pursuit of the Christian life.¹⁸⁶ And it is entirely the work of the Triune God in redemption. More discussion of “how

¹⁸⁰ Locke, *Essay* II.XX.4 (Prometheus Books, 161).

¹⁸¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.150.

¹⁸² Augustine, *City of God* 11.23, Cited in McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 315.

¹⁸³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.246.

¹⁸⁴ Locke, *Essay* II.XX.1 (Prometheus Books, 160).

¹⁸⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.217.

¹⁸⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.383.

religious affections can be the foundation of life-long holy practices?” It will take place in Chapter 4.

As scholars noted that Edwards’ “sense of the heart” was a restatement in Lockean empiricist terms of “Reformed orthodoxy’s insistence that grace qualitatively enhances the power of human faculties, without destroying their nature.”¹⁸⁷ Thus Edwards developed his approach to the age-old question of human versus divine agency along Reformed lines.¹⁸⁸ Most importantly, as Josh Moody explains, “Edwards’s ‘sense of the heart’ is to some extent formulated in terms of Lockean empiricism, but the source of its content is Puritan and Biblical.”¹⁸⁹ The sense of heart is a “clear and distinct perception” that might be compared to an element of sense experience.¹⁹⁰ Just as the “new spiritual sense” is not some “the sixth sense,”¹⁹¹ so is “the sense of heart,” since it is obviously not a sense connected to a particular organ like the other five senses. John E. Smith points out that the concept of “heart” was following the Bible that it is “the symbol for the spiritual center of the person in relation to God.”, which is Edwards’s fundamental basis for developing his original conception of “the sense of heart.”¹⁹²

For the close relationship between the thoughts of Edwards and Locke, there are still many points of view to discuss. But at this point, it is safe to conclude that Edwards utilized Locke’s empirical epistemology as a vehicle to serve his own theological pupus. That describes what the Saints experienced in their regeneration and conversion. In Religious affections, Edwards’ transformation of Locke’s thoughts mainly focuses on two themes, “the new spiritual sense” and “the sense of heart.” Just

¹⁸⁷ William K.B. Stoever, *A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven: Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 190.

¹⁸⁸ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 666.

¹⁸⁹ Josh Moody, *Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment: Knowing the Presence of God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 80 n.46, Cited in McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 331.

¹⁹⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.274.

¹⁹¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.206.

¹⁹² Sang Hyun Lee, *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 106.

as scholars confirm that he used the work of John Locke as a tool but did so critically,¹⁹³ Paul Helm famously suggested that “Edwards used Lockean empiricism” not as a theory for religious experience but “as a model for religious experience.”¹⁹⁴ William Sparkes Morris also agrees that Edwards used Locke “mainly as a point of departure for his own thinking, rather than as a master in whose footsteps he would willingly follow.”¹⁹⁵ And Hyunkwan Kim points out that Edwards’s epistemology is not consistent with Locke’s, but is a peculiar one of his own, as well as being faithful to the Calvinistic tradition.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, since George M. Marsden pointed out that “Locke opened up exciting new ways of looking at things” regarding a number of concepts, “yet Edwards was no Lockean in any strict sense.”¹⁹⁷ Hence, ongoing scholars attempt to place Edwards in a broader scholastic background. Their discussion for identifying the influences on Edwards seems to conclude that Edwards drew from various theological and philosophical streams and developed his own theological structure by using thinkers from various traditions eclectically.

2.3 Conclusion

To summarize, for Edwards, affection is primarily seats in the soul, it is active, rational, deep, long-lasting, unite the soul as a whole, always produce actions. While emotion is more emphasize on the union of soul and body, it is passive, irrational, superficial, fleeting, (often) disconnected from the mind and will, fail to produce lasting actions. Besides, his concept of affections is discussed in the framework of the unity of human soul: the two faculties of the soul, understanding and will are not

¹⁹³ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 26.

¹⁹⁴ Paul Helm, “John Locke and Jonathan Edwards: A Reconsideration,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (1969): 54.

¹⁹⁵ William Morris, *The Young Jonathan Edwards: A Reconstruction* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub., 1991), 576.

¹⁹⁶ Hyunkwan Kim, “Jonathan Edwards’s Reshaping of Lockean Terminology into a Calvinistic Aesthetic Epistemology in His Religious Affections,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 6, no. 2 (2014): 103-122

¹⁹⁷ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 63.

acting distinctly and separately, but as a unitary account. Affection, for Edwards, is the exercise of two faculties (understanding and will), the whole heart and soul.

Edwards is not a follower of John Locke, he utilized Locke's empirical epistemology as a vehicle to serve his own theological purposes. He utilized Lockean terminology to explain the procedure of regeneration or to say what happened in conversion. and used a Lockean notion of sensation as a model for his understanding of "a divine and supernatural light" producing "the sense of the heart." Although Edwards draws on many of Locke's ideas in his *Concerning human understanding*, Edwards' thinking of religious affections differs in many ways from Locke's empirical epistemology. The two notable departures of Edwards' thinking from Locke's are the rejection of Locke's denial of innate ideas and the rejection of Locke's disagreement of affection in religion. Most importantly, Edwards' concept of affections is based on biblical principles. In his discussion of the concept of religious affections, he quoted extensively from the Bible verses. Especially in the related concept of "the sense of heart," the sources of its content are Puritan and Biblical. It following the Bible that it is the symbol for the spiritual center of the person in relation to God, which is Edwards fundamental basis for developing his idea of religious affections.