

and how do we practice this kind of God's grace? We will discuss these questions in the next Chapter.

Chapter IV

Affections and Practices

In this chapter, I will analyze in more depth the fundamental reasons why affections have the ability to produce actions in Edwards' thinking. It will mainly focus on his idea of disposition and habit. Then there is a brief discussion of some practices relating to affections Edwards proposes in *Religious Affections*.

4.1 The mixed affections of saints

Since the saints have received this precious grace, why is there often a disconnect between reason and action? In other words, why are people so often indifferent to the great things of religion yet enthusiastic about things that are closely related to their secular interests? Edwards says that "this arises from our having so little true religion."²⁹⁹ Since Edwards repeatedly points out that "true religion, in great part, consists in holy affections." Therefore, what he means here is that we have too few truly spiritual affections.

Edwards states that the purest and most perfect true religion (spiritual affections) exists only in heaven.³⁰⁰ Religion (spiritual affections) on earth is defected and mixed.³⁰¹ Not all affection in the true saints is from grace, but much from nature.³⁰² Compared to the future state of the saints in heaven, they are the only spiritual children on earth today. The gracious affections they possess are only a foretaste of

²⁹⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.122.

³⁰⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.113.

³⁰¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.114.

³⁰² Edwards, *Works*, 2.118.

the affections of the perfect and mature state to come. Here, Edwards clarifies that even regenerate saints still have a part in carnal affections.

Then, why does this happen? What exactly are these affections which come from human nature? According to Edwards, the natural affections intermingled with the true spiritual affections boil down to self-love. “Love is the chief and the fountain of all other affections.”³⁰³ For this reason, it can be said that all spiritual emotions come from loving God, and all-natural emotions come from self-love. Therefore, spiritual affections and natural affections come from two distinct sources: love for God and self-love. According to what was mentioned in the previous chapter, a man was initially governed by supernatural principles (the Holy Spirit). However, natural principles (self-love) became the absolute master of the human soul after the fall. Salvation restores to a certain extent the original state when Adam was created; that is, the spiritual principle regains control over the natural principles of man and becomes the ruler in the souls of the saints again. However, this domination is incomplete for the saved believer because “the grace of the saints in this life is imperfect.”³⁰⁴ It means that there is still a battle between the affections of the Holy Spirit and the affections from the flesh in the hearts of the saints, which is a battle for sovereignty between the love of God and self-love. Edwards mentions that this warfare is manifested in the fact that when a saint is captured by the sweet glory of God and Christ, one can completely forget himself.

On the contrary, it is reasonable to infer that he can completely forget God and Christ when he is immersed in his own enjoyment (bounded by self-love). Undoubtedly, true believers oscillate between these two poles in this life on earth. This is also the main reason why even the born-again saints are sometimes indifferent to religious matters but rush to their worldly interests. It is also the main obstacle between a person being

³⁰³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.106.

³⁰⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.365.

able to “know spiritually richly” but not being able to live a holy life commensurate with what he knows.

Hence, does that mean we have to struggle with this imperfect reality our entire lives? The answer is yes. Of course, the grace that the saints receive from God in this life will never be perfect. However, this imperfection also strongly suggests growth. Edwards wrote,

“Grace, as long as it is imperfect, is of a growing nature and in a growing state...and we see it to be so with all living things, that while they are in a state of imperfection, and their growing state, their nature seeks after growth; and so much the more, as they are healthier and more prosperous.”³⁰⁵

In fact, Edwards did not discuss and explain much about the mixture or struggle of spiritual and natural affections in believers' hearts in *Religious Affections*. Instead, he often looked at the saints' mixed affections with the certainty of victory: Although allowances must be made for true Christians' natural temper, there will still have unspiritual emotions and behaviors at certain times. However, it is undoubtedly determined that all truly Christian affections are under the government of that lamblike, dovelike spirit of Jesus Christ. This is the natural tendency of the fear and hope, the sorrow and the joy, the confidence and the zeal of true Christians. Furthermore, this is essentially and eminently the nature of the saving grace of the gospel and the proper spirit of true Christianity.³⁰⁶ Both the acquisition and growth of spiritual affections are entirely dependent on the sovereignty of God.³⁰⁷

While Edwards emphasizes the absolute sovereignty of God in grace, he never ignores the responsibility of man. Drawing from the Scripture, Edwards said that

³⁰⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.378.

³⁰⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.356-357.

³⁰⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.100, 275, 341-342.

“God, in His Word, greatly insists upon it, that we be in good earnest, fervent in Spirit, and our hearts vigorously engaged in religion.... The business of religion is, from time to time, compared to those exercises, wherein men are wont to have their hearts and strength greatly exercised and engaged; such as running, wrestling or agonizing for a great prize or crown, and fighting with strong enemies that seek our lives, and warring as those that by violence take a city or kingdom.”³⁰⁸

True religion is called the power of godliness, and this power appears in the first place, in the inward exercises of the heart of saints. Therefore, good earnestness in religion means strongly exercising our wills and inclinations. And the Holy Spirit inspires a surge of holy emotions in the hearts of those who have sound and solid religion.³⁰⁹ Billy Kristanto rightly noticed that “being and becoming human means strongly exercising our wills and inclinations. It is precisely in religion... Edwards concentrated on human affections as a special aspect of the exercise of the will.”³¹⁰

Hence, to what goals should we exercise our will and inclinations? To what extent should our spiritual affections be cultivated? Edwards wrote,

“The degree of religion is rather to be judged of by the fixedness and strength of the habit that is exercised in affection, whereby holy affection is habitual than by the degree of the present exercise: and the strength of that habit is not always in proportion to outward effects and manifestations, or inward effects, the hurry and vehemence, and sudden changes of the course of the thoughts of the mind.”³¹¹

Habit or disposition, we see, is the more fundamental “controller” in the human soul than affections. Edwards’s dispositionalism suggests that human beings are guided and shaped above all by their affections—the sum of which constitutes their temperament or character.³¹² So, on the surface, the holy dispositions and habits are

³⁰⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.99-100.

³⁰⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.99-100.

³¹⁰ Billy Kristanto, *Human Being - Being Human: A Theological Anthropology in Biblical, Historical and Ecumenical Perspective* (Berlin: Peter Lang GmbH Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2020), 88.

³¹¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.118-119.

³¹² McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 5.

the purpose and target of our practice of affections. However, things are not so simple.

4.2 The idea of disposition and habit

Now we can talk more about Edwards' distinguished concept of disposition and habit. I shall begin by briefly explaining Edwards' terminology and then offering an initial sketch of the main features of Edwards' idea of disposition or habit according to the line he discusses in *Religious Affections*, particularly related to action. In order to clarify his thoughts in more detail, other writings of Edwards will also be cited when necessary.

4.2.1 Terminology

Edwards uses many terms to refer to the basic idea of an active and real tendency in his works. The most important and frequently used words are "habit," "disposition," "tendency," "propensity," "principle," "temper," and "frame of mind."³¹³ However, "disposition" and "habit" are the most representative terms among these in *Affections* because Edwards refers to them both when he carefully and comprehensively summarizes the core concepts of the whole book:

"It is doubtless true, and evident from these Scriptures, that the essence of all true religion lies in holy love; and that in this divine affection, and a *habitual disposition* to it, and that light which is the foundation of it, and those things which are the fruits of it, consists the whole of religion."³¹⁴

In another place, they also appear at the same time when Edwards explains the meaning of the "new spiritual sense":

"This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions that attend it, are no new faculties but are new principles of nature... By a principle of nature in this place, I mean that foundation which is laid in nature, either old or new, for any particular manner or kind

³¹³ Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 15.

³¹⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.107.

of exercise of the faculties of the soul; or a natural habit or foundation for action, giving a person ability and disposition to exert the faculties in exercises of such a certain kind...”³¹⁵

It seems that Edwards did not clearly define the meaning of these two terms. We cannot assert that “disposition” or “habit” is more fundamental in the soul than the other. So, it can be understood as dispositions and habit are both the principle of nature, the foundation laid in the nature of the soul for faculties exercise, especially the foundation for action. It is considering that in *Religious Affections*, the word “disposition” appears much more frequently than “habit” (45 times VS 11 times). Therefore, I will mainly use the word “disposition” in what follows. However, whether “disposition” or “habit” are used, the meanings they represent are not significantly different.

4.2.2 The nature of disposition and habit

Then, what is the nature of disposition or habit? *Religious Affections* represent the most extended treatment of dispositionalism in Edwards’s writings.³¹⁶ For Edwards, as shown above, disposition or habit is not a quality possessed by a man but is the *nature* of man. Moreover, especially, the disposition is “a natural habit or foundation for action,”³¹⁷ which is why we must discuss this concept here. The disposition is more fundamental in the human soul than all faculties (reason and will).

It is worth mentioning that although both disposition and will are directly related to behavior, the disposition is not will. Disposition is greater than the will, and it is the basic principle of the functioning of all faculties of the soul (reason and will) and the foundation of all actions, that is, a person's nature. Edwards's dispositionalism includes a *necessitarian* aspect.³¹⁸ As shown in *Original Sin*, where he discusses the

³¹⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.206.

³¹⁶ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 5

³¹⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.206.

³¹⁸ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 6

dispositional foundation of acts in various locations, human beings invariably follow their tastes or inclinations, but the disposition exists before the will:

“Human nature must be created with some dispositions; a disposition to relish some things as good and amiable, and to be averse to other things as odious and disagreeable. Otherwise, it must be without any such thing as inclination or will. It must be perfectly indifferent, without preference, choice or aversion towards anything, as agreeable or disagreeable.”³¹⁹

Therefore, first, it is clear that disposition is more fundamental than the will in the human soul. It has a dynamic aspect, as it is the nature that is related to actions. For Edwards, one must possess a given habit or disposition before one can act from that disposition. In other words, acts are the results of dispositions.³²⁰ In other words, acts are the results of dispositions. But why do human beings have such a disposition that could produce actions?

Edwards's philosophical ethics and moral theology started with God. He spoke of God's being as “disposition” or “habit.” That is, God's essence is a constantly exercised inclination to repeat his already perfect actuality through further exercises. “God's actuality is already perfect because it is completely exercised in and through the inner-Trinitarian relationships.”³²¹ Regarding “the disposition of God,” Edwards did not mention it in *Religious Affections*, and the answer needs to be found in his other works. Perhaps the most relevant articles on this subject are his dissertations *Discourse on the Trinity* and *Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*. Other ideas on this theme are scattered throughout his “miscellanies.” When it comes to Edwards' idea of disposition, it is impossible to bypass the thought of Sang Hyun Lee. He had perhaps the widest influence in shaping recent readings of Edwards's philosophical theology by originally introducing “dispositional ontology” among Edwards' scholars.

³¹⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 3.232.

³²⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 3.229-230.

³²¹ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 529.

4.2.3 Assessment of the dispositional ontology of Sang Hyun Lee

For Lee's Edwards, "God, conceived as essentially a disposition, is capable of being a perfect actuality and an eternal disposition to repeat this actuality through further exercises."³²² In other words, "God is inherently a tendency towards an increase or enlargement of God's own being."³²³ Lee's picture of the life of God can be roughly divided into three steps: First, he describes the Father as "the divine primordial actuality of true beauty and the divine disposition to exert himself."³²⁴ Second, "the eternal and absolutely complete repetitions of the Father's self-existent actuality"³²⁵ results in the processions of the Son and the Spirit, by which God knows and loves himself and which constitutes his internal fullness. Third, by "the Spatio-temporal repetition of the prior actuality of the divine being, an everlasting process of God's self-enlargement of what he already is."³²⁶ The world was thus created.

To put it another way, internally, the divine nature is essentially a disposition, which is fully expressed in the processions of the Son and the Spirit. In the words of Lee, "the immanent Trinity is the eternal exertion of God's dispositional essence."³²⁷ Therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity is reconceived in dispositional terms. Both the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are described as "exercise[s] of the Father's disposition."³²⁸ Externally, the self-repetition of God's internal fullness in time and space finds its further expression in the creation of the world and the communication of God's knowledge and love to creatures.³²⁹

Holmes, however, strongly opposed these ideas, which considering "the most important response to Lee's interpretation of Edwards to date."³³⁰ Holmes argues that

³²² Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 173.

³²³ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 184.

³²⁴ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 188.

³²⁵ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 189.

³²⁶ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 6.

³²⁷ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 173.

³²⁸ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 192.

³²⁹ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 199.

³³⁰ Oliver D. Crisp, "Jonathan Edwards's Ontology: A Critique of Sang Hyun Lee's Dispositional Account of Edwardsian Metaphysics," *Religious Studies* 46, no. 1 (2010): pp. 1-20,

Lee's main argument about Edwards's embrace of a dispositional ontology is "simply wrong," given Edwards's traditional Reformed theological commitments.³³¹ The character of Edwards' trinitarian theology, as described by Lee, is "peculiar, indeed heterodox."³³² Because "his reconstruction of Edwards's theology demands that Edwards completely cast aside positions that were basic to the doctrine of the Trinity he inherited."³³³ Holmes' objections to Lee's views mainly in the following three points:

First, Lee's reconstructions seriously endangered "the trinitarian grammar that demands that the origin of the Spirit is different from the origin of the Son." Although Lee traces this through Edwards's employment of the Augustinian ideas of "the Son as the perfect idea of the Father and the Spirit as the perfect love shared by the Father and the Son." But he does not draw a clear distinction between God's "knowledge" and God's "love." Additionally, "Lee's account of the relations of origin within the Trinity considered in dispositional terms cannot incorporate the filioque; (the Father's disposition is repeated a second time in the spiration of the Spirit; the Son has no part to play in this process,) and there is certainly no suggestion of the Father and the Son acting as a single divine principle." Holmes pointed out that it is crucial to distinguish "the relationships of origin of the Son and the Spirit," otherwise "there would be no differentiation between the second and third hypostases and so no meaningful doctrine of the Trinity."³³⁴

Second, it is "a mortal error" to believe in God's dispositional nature of self-enlargement, as described by Lee. It is "impossible to coexist with an orthodox Christian theism." For Holmes, Clearly, Edwards accepted this classical doctrine of God's perfection that "God does not change (immutability), is sufficient to his own

<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0034412509990308>, 1.

³³¹ Stephen R. Holmes 'Does Jonathan Edwards use a dispositional ontology? A response to Sang Hyun Lee', in Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (eds) *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 99-100.

³³² Holmes, *A Response to Sang Hyun Lee*, 104.

³³³ Holmes, *A Response to Sang Hyun Lee*, 106.

³³⁴ Holmes, *A Response to Sang Hyun Lee*, 104-106.

existence (aseity) and totally unaffected by anything done by any created being (impassibility), is not subject to change over time (immutability, eternity), and is sufficient to all effects that he should intend (omnipotence).” Therefore, Lee’s self-enlarged God that requires “unfulfilled potential in God's life is unthinkable for Edwards.”³³⁵

Third, Lee’s dispositional ontology blurs “the distinction traditionally drawn between the internal dynamic of God's life, in the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, and the external dynamic, the creation and preservation of the world.” This is clearly inconsistent with the traditional theism that Edwards has inherited and committed. Because the “classical theism” which Edwards embraced, recognized that “to fail to make a robustly distinction between the generation of the Son and the creation of the world” (assert that the Son is homoousios with the Father and eternal, while the world is neither, but instead created ex nihilo) is to “either endanger the deity of the Son or to risk ascribing deity to the world.”³³⁶

Here is my response to Holmes’ critique of Lee’s “dispositional ontology.”

Firstly, for Holmes’s question about Lee's blurring of the distinction between the relations of origin of the Son and the Holy Spirit. In fact, Edwards himself also could not make a clear distinction between “God's knowledge” and “God's love.” For example, “The knowledge or understanding in God which we must conceive of as first is His knowledge of everything possible. That love which must be this knowledge is what we must conceive of as belonging to the essence of the Godhead in its first subsistence.”³³⁷ Additionally, I admit that Lee did not strictly follow the grammar of *filioque* in his description of the origin relations between the Son and the Holy Spirit in his dispositional ontology. But Edwards's own account of the Trinitarian statement also does not explicitly state that the Son was involved in the processions of the Holy Spirit, at least in this paragraph:

³³⁵ Holmes, *A Response to Sang Hyun Lee*, 107-108.

³³⁶ Holmes, *A Response to Sang Hyun Lee*, 106-107.

³³⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 21.141.

“The Father is the Deity subsisting in the prime, unoriginated, and most absolute manner, or the Deity in its direct existence. The Son is the Deity generated by God's understanding, or having an idea of Himself and subsisting in that idea. The Holy Ghost is the Deity subsisting in act or the divine essence flowing out and breathed forth, in God's infinite love to and delight in himself. And I believe the whole divine essence does truly and distinctly subsist both in the divine idea and divine love, and that therefore each of them is properly distinct persons.”³³⁸

Was Holmes too lenient with Edwards and too critical of Lee? No, because Lee indeed does not emphasize the classical Trinitarian grammar as Edwards does in other parts of his work. In Lee's reading of Edwards, more emphasis is placed on the possessions of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the same dispositional nature of the Father. Both the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are described as “exercises of the Father's disposition.”³³⁹

Secondly, Lee's “self-enlarged God” is impossible to coexist with the orthodox Christian theism that Edwards embraced, mainly the doctrine of God's perception or the immutability of God. Edwards had already responded clearly to it in his works, yet it should be separated into two parts.

Inside the inner-Trinitarian life of God, especially the processions of the Son, Edwards clearly claimed that “and I do suppose the Deity to be truly and properly repeated by God's thus having an idea of himself; and that this idea of God is a substantial idea and has the very essence of God, is truly God, to all intents and purposes, and that by this means the Godhead is really generated and repeated.”³⁴⁰ Edwards then uses human beings as an analogy for God's “self-repetition,” “a man would really be two. He would be indeed double; he would be twice at once: the idea he has of himself would be himself again.”³⁴¹ In the procession of the Holy Spirit, although the Spirit was “breathed forth” in “the mutually loving and delighting”

³³⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 21.131.

³³⁹ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 192.

³⁴⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 21.114.

³⁴¹ Edwards, *Works*, 21.116.

between the Father and the Son.³⁴² As the basic grammar of orthodox Trinitarian theology required, Edwards also emphasized that all the three persons are equal in essence and honor.³⁴³ Therefore, it can be said, as Lee described, that the Holy Spirit is the result of another “exercise of the Father's disposition.” But in a completely different manner, the generation of the Son was from God the Father only, while the procession of the Spirit was from both the Father and the Son, which is a crucial fact that Lee neglected to emphasize.

But on the other hand, outside the inner-Trinitarian life of God, for the created world, Edwards also responds to this argument. At the very beginning of his discussion in *Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*, Edwards stands firmly on the doctrine of God's perfection: “Because it is evident, by both Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy: that he stands in no need of, cannot be profited by, or receive anything from the creature; or be truly hurt, or be the subject of any sufferings or impair of his glory and felicity from any other being.”³⁴⁴ And later, Edwards seemed to be suggesting that there is unfulfilled potential in God's life. If the world had not been created, these attributes (the infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, etc.) which are in God “never would have had any exercise.”³⁴⁵ The reason is that if God “esteems these attributes themselves valuable, and delights in them, so it is natural to suppose that he delights in their proper exercise and expression.”³⁴⁶ Therefore, there is an original property of God's nature, a disposition to “an emanation of his own infinite fullness (of good).” Hence, “the emanation itself was aimed at by him as a last end of the creation.”³⁴⁷ “God makes himself his end, in such a sense as plainly to manifest and testify a supreme and ultimate regard to himself.”³⁴⁸ Most importantly,

³⁴² Edwards, *Works*, 21.121.

³⁴³ Edwards, *Works*, 21.135.

³⁴⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 8.420.

³⁴⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 8.428-429.

³⁴⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 8.429-430.

³⁴⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 8.435.

³⁴⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 8.438.

“The more those divine communications increase in the creature, the more it becomes one with God... it must be an infinitely strict and perfect nearness, conformity, and oneness. For it will forever come nearer and nearer to that strictness and perfection of union which there is between the Father and the Son.”³⁴⁹

Now is God self-enlarged in this process? Yes, but only for God's own infinite fullness of good, which are God's knowledge, holiness and joy.³⁵⁰ Ontologically self-enlarged? Definitely No. The creatures are not the result of God's self-enlargement. They also can never be God, but only “becomes more and more conformed to God.”³⁵¹ So, God's disposition of self-enlargement should be limited only to the inner-Trinitarian life of God. There is no self-enlargement of God's nature, rather “emanation or communication” only in the creation of the world in any strict sense. Therefore, on the one hand, Lee's “self-enlargement God” has some merit. On the other hand, Holmes's doubts about it are reasonable. In Lee's interpretation of Edwards, he is going too far to say that Creation is then seen as “an increase or enlargement of God's own being.”³⁵²

Thirdly, for the distinction between the “mysteries” of God, the Father self-repeated in the inner-Trinitarian life of God and God's creation of the world. Lee's dispositional ontology does seem to be confusing the difference between the two, believing that both are the results of the Father's dispositional exercises. The Edwards' words Lee used to prove that “God the Father is essentially actual and dispositional” for the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit were originally Edwards's use of the Triune God to create the world.³⁵³ But in a key piece of evidence cited by Lee, Edwards wrote, “but if we distinguish it (the power of God) from relation, 'tis nothing else but the essence of God. And if we take it for that by which God exerts himself, 'tis no other than the Father; for the perfect energy of God with respect to himself is the perfect exertion of himself, of which the creation of the

³⁴⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 8.443.

³⁵⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 8.432.

³⁵¹ Edwards, *Works*, 8.443.

³⁵² Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 184.

³⁵³ See Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 187, Edwards, *Works*, 8.433-434, Edwards, *Works*, 13.227, *miscellanies*, No.107 the Fall.

world is but a shadow.” This is followed by Edwards' description of two other persons, the Son and the Holy Spirit.³⁵⁴ Therefore, God the Father indeed is the first and original self-repeated actually that generate the other two persons of Trinitarian God and created the world, as Lee describes. The differences are the Son and the Spirit are the repetition of the Father's actuality in the full sense of the term, but the world is only the “shadow” of it. But Lee ignored the difference and eventually came to a conclusion that “God is inherently a tendency towards an increase or enlargement of God's own being.”³⁵⁵

The reason for this wrong conclusion is that the foundation of Lee's entire dispositional ontology is wrong. It can be said, Lee's “dispositional ontology” is completely developed based on “God is essentially a disposition.” There is nothing wrong with that. For Edwards, God indeed is disposition. But a fatal error in Lee's interpretation of Edwards is that he considers God to be *Only* dispositional in essence. Because he refuses to accept the paradoxical God that Edwards believes in. Edwards' reverence for the inner-Trinitarian life of God and respect for the boundaries of biblical revelation strives to avoid using human reason to speculate on the God who created reason. As he wrote in *Discourse on the Trinity*, “the perfection of the manner will indeed infer this, that ... in God, there are no distinctions to be admitted of faculty, habit and act, between will, inclination and love: but that it is all one simple act.”³⁵⁶ For Edwards, the essence of God's being is at once actuality and disposition. No further explanation is possible. This is what Lee knows but doesn't agree with. In Lee's reading, however, Edwards' reverence for the Triune God becomes “not ready to” or “does not want to” “compromise God's actuality, and God as essentially a disposition,” for there is no such a God in Lee's thinking or belief that is both disposition and infinitely perfect. (But Edwards does.) Therefore, his method for compromising the “contradiction” of the incompatibility between “God's actuality as divine perfection” and “God's being as disposition” is that “disposition is logically

³⁵⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 13.262, miscellanies, No.94 Trinity.

³⁵⁵ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 184.

³⁵⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 21.113.

prior to actuality.”³⁵⁷ So, disposition becomes an ontological feature of God and thus developed his whole set of “dispositional ontology” theories. Lee tried to use “Edwards’s dispositional ‘reconception’ of the divine being” as a clue to explore the mysteries of “the exact nature of the dynamic character of the inner Trinity.” However, his attempt proved unsuccessful. Just as Lee doesn’t care about the basic grammar of traditional Trinitarianism, at the same time, he was trying to use human logic to “violate” the God who created logic. Using human reason to speculate about the mysteries of the immanent Trinity that the Triune God has not revealed through the Bible. As Iain Hamish Murray said, “the fundamental reason why opinions on Edwards are so divided...The division runs right back to the Bible, and, depending on where we stand in relation to Christ.”³⁵⁸ Edwards is historically considered a theologian rather than a philosopher, in the strict sense. Therefore, if someone does not accept the God, he believes in, which is the fountain of his entire life and thought, all readings of him will be false.

Indeed, there is not enough emphasis on the classical Trinitarianism inherited by Edwards in the language of Lee’s dispositional ontology. His preoccupation with the dispositional character of Edwards’ Triune God clearly exaggerates the primacy of the Father. The basic grammar of orthodox Trinitarian theology needs to be upheld. Otherwise, there is a danger of falling into heresy. For Edwards, God’s true self-enlargement is limited to the inner-Trinitarian life of God. In addition, the inner workings of the Trinitarian life of God are absolutely different from the process by which God created the world. The most serious problem, however, is that Lee’s entire dispositional ontology developed on the basis of his rejection of the paradoxical God that Edwards embraced with his whole life. Therefore, I agree with Holmes that Lee’s “dispositional ontology” is fundamentally wrong. We do not need a dispositional ontology to understand how God, who is infinitely perfect in eternity yet, can also potentially create the world and actively participate in history. Just as Edward had

³⁵⁷ David Willis, Michael Welker, and Matthias Gockel, *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions* (Grand Rapids etc.: Eerdmans, 1999), 448.

³⁵⁸ Murray, *A New Biography*, xxvii.

awe at Trinitarianism that “I am far from pretending to explaining the Trinity so as to render it no longer a mystery. I think it to be the highest and deepest of all Divine mysteries still”,³⁵⁹ so should Lee, as an Edwards’s interpreter. However, at least two points are certain, the dynamic or disposition view of God's existence in knowing and loving and the inherent relationality of the divine being.³⁶⁰ Both of them are in line with Edwards’ theology and the orthodox Reformed tradition, and also the views that Holmes accepts.³⁶¹

4.2.4 The necessity of holy practice

From the discussion above, we already have a clear picture of God's dynamic or dispositional nature. In Lee’s interpretation of Edwards, this divine nature or disposition is inherent in the Trinity God Himself. “It is God's essence to incline to communicate himself”; God's being is “a disposition to communicate” the Father's being is communicated to, and “repeated” in, the Son and the Holy Spirit as the result of the Father's exercise of his dispositional essence.³⁶² And such disposition is the tendency of emanation and communication itself. Therefore, “God’s action in the world is the Spatio-temporal repetition of God’s already-realized actuality.”³⁶³ Thus, Lee wrote, “dispositions and habits can mediate between being and becoming, permanence and process.”³⁶⁴ Hence, a dispositional God is a God with the potential and purpose of creating the world and who truly participates in time and history, intervening in this time and space according to his own purposes and plans. All things were created by him and share his own dynamic nature. Therefore, habits or dispositions are dynamic powers. It is the nature of Trinitarian God and all beings. So, reality can be defined as essentially dispositional, “as intrinsically dynamic, tending to actions and events.”³⁶⁵

³⁵⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 21.134.

³⁶⁰ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 183-184.

³⁶¹ Holmes, *A Response to Sang Hyun Lee*, 104.

³⁶² Edwards, *Works*, Editor’s Introduction, by Sang Hyun Lee, 21.6.

³⁶³ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 173.

³⁶⁴ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 4-5.

³⁶⁵ Edwards, *Works*, Editor’s Introduction, by Sang Hyun Lee, 21.8.

Now back to the question, why do human beings have such a disposition that could produce actions? Edwards' answer could be that it is God's own dynamic or dispositional nature that makes human practice necessary. However, another question naturally arises, if God is dynamic and dispositional, and all human beings are the image of God, sharing the same dispositional nature of God, then why do human beings behave differently insight of God, morally and immorally? Why can regenerate Christians practice different from unregenerate people?

For Edwards, the main feature of disposition is dynamic, which also implies its relational and directional dimensions. Created being is not only dispositional but also relational and directional. He considered Newton's discovery of the law of universal gravitation (the "mutual tendency of all bodies to each other") to be "a type of love or charity in the spiritual world."³⁶⁶ Thereby the unified tendency of inanimate being functioned as a symbol of the coming union of intelligent beings. All being is active, dispositional, and interrelated. Created being has these traits because it is an image of God's being (not the image of God).³⁶⁷ So, he construed the world as a dynamic network of relationships in that every entity was necessary for relation to others. In Sang Hyun Lee's words, "a thing *is* only as it is related to other things."³⁶⁸ This relational character of being is directional. In other words, being drives toward a goal, which is union with other beings. Intelligent beings achieve this goal through a conscious, volitional, affective union of mutual consent.³⁶⁹

Another relating concept for answering the question is the aesthetic aspect of disposition. Edwards specifically mentions that this infinite richness of God's goodness is the beauty of his holiness. He believes that God is the true beauty, the beauty itself, the foundation and source of all beauty, and the standard of all beauty.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 11.82.

³⁶⁷ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 529.

³⁶⁸ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 50.

³⁶⁹ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 530.

³⁷⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 8.550-560.

And elsewhere in his writings, he mentioned that God is not only beauty in himself but a disposition or power that imparts his beauty to other things that he created.³⁷¹ Therefore, God is the supreme beauty and transmission of his eternal, infinite perfection in his inner life.³⁷² In Lee's words, “the created world is a network of divinely established habits and dispositions (or the so-called laws of nature) whose ultimate telos is to know and to love God so as to repeat in time and space God's own being.”³⁷³

Lee further points out that as one of the most important consequences, being is seen as inherently disposed to more activities and relationships. For Edwards, actual actions and relations have a greater degree of being than the dispositions that are disposed to those actions and relations. The exercises of dispositions, in other words, will increase being by making it more actual and more real. Being is, therefore, essentially disposed to repetition and an increase in self-realization.³⁷⁴ The source and foundation of all this is the very nature or disposition of the Triune God himself. For Edwards, it can be said that God disposed to further exercise his already perfect being and beauty, thereby, to more being and beauty. Lee commented that this aesthetic category refers to the content or character of dispositions and habits. Disposition and beauty are two ways of looking at the same reality. “Disposition” refers to the dynamic aspect of beauty, while “beauty” refers to the manner or direction of disposition. The nature of things, in other words, is disposed to be actively related in a beautiful way. True beauty is God's beauty. For anything to exist, it must be both disposed to and actually react in a fitting way to the true beauty of God.³⁷⁵ I won't talk too much about Edwards' thoughts on “beauty,” which is too far from the subject of this thesis.³⁷⁶ What's important about Edwards' idea of beauty here is it relates to morality, which Edwards called “the true virtue.”

³⁷¹ Edwards, *Works*, 13.277-278.

³⁷² Edwards, *Works*, 21.108-144.

³⁷³ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 8.

³⁷⁴ Edwards, *Works*, Editor's Introduction, 21.8-9.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 6.336. See more discussion of Jonathan Edwards' thought on beauty, Delattre

Because God alone is the supreme and good, and the disposition which God imparts to his creatures is the holiness of the moral excellency of his own divine nature. Thus, the disposition that is actively directed toward God, united with “the infinitely greatest and best of beings,” is the holy disposition, and the only god-loving disposition has true virtue.³⁷⁷ That is consent, propensity, and union of heart to Being in general immediately exercised in general goodwill.³⁷⁸ “This virtuous to love true virtue, as that denotes an agreement of the heart with virtue. But it argues no virtue for the heart to be pleased with that which is entirely distinct from it.”³⁷⁹ Therefore, Edwards writes, “moral beauty especially consists in the disposition and affection of the heart.”³⁸⁰

Because the nature of disposition is dynamic and active, it is impossible for human nature not to love or hate something to pursue or avoid it. When we pursue a thing or use our dispositional nature to point to it, we relate to it. In *Original Sin*, Edwards explicitly mentions that the relational object or the direction of disposition determines human nature's morally good and evil. A person's disposition is good when his disposition is in line with the nature of good things. On the contrary, when a man's disposition and tendencies correspond to the nature of inferior things, his disposition is vicious. There can be no medium between these.³⁸¹ So there are only two choices for man: love God and love things other than God.

Edwards holds that self-love is a natural disposition or, more accurately, a disposition of the natural man. An example in *Religious Affections* Edwards describes this as a disposition of “self-righteous, self-exalting” that naturally in man, “inexpressibly, and

Roland André, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards: An Essay in Aesthetics and Theological Ethics* / by Ronald André Delattre (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006).

³⁷⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 8.551.

³⁷⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 8.541.

³⁷⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 8.574.

³⁸⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 8.433.

³⁸¹ Edwards, *Works*, 3.232.

almost inconceivably” strong that “what he will not do and suffer, to feed and gratify it.”³⁸² Edwards wrote that

“From the disposition, there is in hypocrites to think highly of their humility, it comes to pass that counterfeit humility is forward to put forth itself to view...And also as this disposition of hypocrites to look on themselves better than others, is what God has declared to be very hateful to him.”³⁸³

As explained in the previous chapter, such disposition is the result of man's fall and the main reason that prevents the sinners' hearts from being affected by the things of the divine, primarily the beauty of God's holiness. For Edwards, an obvious fact is that “the things of religion take hold of men's souls” when “they affect them.” There will be an alteration in their (natural) disposition or behavior when they are affected by the Word of God.³⁸⁴ Such alternation means replacing the natural disposition with the holy disposition. Edwards described “that gracious, holy effect of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints, the disposition and temper of children, appearing in sweet childlike love to God, which casts out fear, or a spirit of a slave.”³⁸⁵

However, the holy dispositions of saints come entirely from the sovereignty of God. Edwards repeatedly stresses the same principle in his *Religious Affections*, “Tis very true that all grace and goodness in the hearts of the saints is entirely from God: and they are universally and immediately dependent on him for it.”³⁸⁶ For fallen men, they only have the nature of self-love (even if they love other things, it is essentially self-love), not the nature of love for God. Their lives have no connection with the Holy God. Only the power of a Creator can completely change the nature of man or give him a whole new nature.³⁸⁷ Dispositions precede actions. God changes people by changing their dispositions. This change is mainly a change in the direction of the

³⁸² Edwards, *Works*, 2.315.

³⁸³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.336.

³⁸⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.102-103.

³⁸⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.238.

³⁸⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.342.

³⁸⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.340.

human soul. For this reason, he writes, “the prime alteration that is made in conversion, that which is first and foundation of all, is the alteration of the temper and disposition and spirit of the mind.”³⁸⁸ When a man is converted, his very heart and nature are turned from sin to God's holiness.³⁸⁹ From self-love to love of God. Edwards specifically mentions that the direction of the life of the humble with true grace is toward God: “A truly humble person is a person to be poor in spirit, is to be in his own sense and apprehension poor, as to what is in him, and to be of an answerable disposition (to God).”³⁹⁰

Grace, for Edwards, is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit. We need to keep in mind that the new disposition of the saints is attended with the new spiritual sense.³⁹¹ And the new spiritual sense comes from the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and it has a rational aspect. The Holy Spirit first implants them new spiritual senses in regeneration, then renews their nature or disposition from natural to holy, guides their tastes through the Word of God to distinguish between good and evil, and finally produces holy behavior. I will not repeat Edwards' concept of “the new spiritual sense” here, as it has been discussed in detail in the previous two chapters. Therefore, Edwards writes, “and they that have the most grace and spiritual light, of any in this world, have most of this disposition.”³⁹² Spiritual temperament governs a person's actions, mainly to make a person react after using spiritual taste to distinguish between good and evil. Such heavenly disposition works together with the spiritual taste to teach and guide a man in his behavior in the world, to do all kinds of holy acts that please God.³⁹³

For Edwards, grace is the result of the participation of the three persons of the Triune God. He writes,

³⁸⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 13.462, “Miscellanies,” no 397.

³⁸⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.340-341.

³⁹⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.337.

³⁹¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.206.

³⁹² Edwards, *Works*, 2.323.

³⁹³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.283-284.

“The manner of God’s communicating himself and his Holy Spirit, in imparting saving grace to the soul. He gives his Spirit to be united to the faculties of the soul and to dwell there after the manner of a principle of nature... All the exercises of grace are entirely from Christ...as having life communicated to it; so as through Christ’s power, to have inherent in itself, a vital nature.”³⁹⁴

In Lee’s words, “the equal honor of the Holy Spirit as ‘the thing purchased’ is important for Edwards’ scheme of thought because it is the Holy Spirit who brings a new reality to the sinner and because this new reality has to be a Spatio-temporal repetition of God’s internal fullness. Only the Holy Spirit Himself, as the full Deity, together with the Father and the Son, can carry out such a task.”³⁹⁵

The disposition that truly pleases God is the disposition that actively directs its holy and moral actions toward God. However, only the holy God himself can fully please himself. Therefore, only the disposition of Christ as the second person of the Trinity God is the perfect embodiment of God’s holy nature and the only disposition that truly pleases God. Therefore, only in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit can saints possess a holy disposition that pleases God. For Edwards, the union and adherence to Christ lie primarily in the transitive practical acts of such principle.³⁹⁶ As mentioned above, for Edwards, actual actions and relations have a greater degree of being than the dispositions disposed to those actions and relations.

Therefore, Christlike dispositions naturally produce Christlike behaviors. This inward disposition naturally leads them to obey that precept of our Savior.³⁹⁷ For “all that are truly godly, and real disciples of Christ, have this spirit in them; and not only so but they are of this spirit; it is the spirit by which they are so possessed and governed, that

³⁹⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 2.342.

³⁹⁵ Edwards, *Works*, Editor’s Introduction, 21.39-40.

³⁹⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 18.531.

³⁹⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.321.

it is their true and proper character.”³⁹⁸ So this holy disposition can distinguish who is a genuine Christian. Edwards writes that

“The lamblike, dovelike Spirit (a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness, and mercy) and temper of Jesus Christ...as these things are especially the character of Christ; so, they are also, especially the character of Christians. Christians are Christlike: none deserve the name of Christians that are not so, in their prevailing character.”³⁹⁹

Now we can go back to the question, why can reborn Christians act morally different insight of God? Because although man is the image of God, the nature of human beings is habitual and dispositional. It is active and dynamic; what is unique about the regenerate or genuine Christian is that they are chosen by God to be united with his own nature and participate in his holy disposition. As a result, they are communicated by God’s dispositional nature as a disposition of true virtue. In addition, this union is the work of the three persons of the Trinity God, the Father who gave the Holy Spirit to unite the elects with the nature of the Son, Christ, who is the holy disposition that truly please God. And it is God’s dispositional nature that makes Christian moral practice necessary. Lee writes, “Edwards’s insistence upon the inevitability and necessity of the practical consequences of the regenerate is rooted in the inevitability with which the sovereign God will accomplish his own aim.”⁴⁰⁰ It is, as mentioned earlier, an increase, repetition, or multiplication of his own infinite fullness of good for his glory. Perhaps this goal is ultimately achieved in God's chosen believers who genuinely share in the beauty of God's holiness and make true virtuous behavior a necessary consequence.

As disposition is the nature of a man, our loves or affections are the truest indicators of who we are. The appearances of piety and even our loves or affections can be deceitful. People who are generally graceless can be very godly. Edwards writes that

³⁹⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.345.

³⁹⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.344-347.

⁴⁰⁰ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, 233

they may have religious affections of many kinds together, and yet they be without a spark of grace in their hearts.⁴⁰¹ Therefore, it is the disposition that renders a person either pleasing or displeasing to God. God chiefly looks not to outward actions but inward dispositions.

But on the other hand, Christian life consists primarily of the moral practice of holiness. True holy dispositions can't fail to produce holy actions (Christian moral practice), for “holy practice is thus not a subsequent response to Christian experience but the essence of Christian experience.”⁴⁰² Therefore, Edwards writes in *Religious Affections*,

“The tendency of grace in the heart to holy practice is very direct, and the connection most natural close and necessary. True grace is not an inactive thing; there is nothing in heaven or earth of a more active nature; for 'tis life itself, and the most active kind of life, even spiritual and divine life.... So, godliness in the heart has an as direct relation to practice ... as a habit or principle of action has to action.”⁴⁰³

By Christian “practice,” Edwards meant the entire Christian life of love to God and neighbor in heart and action. That is what Edwards called true virtue.⁴⁰⁴

Now we know that for Edwards, all being is active, dispositional, and outwardly directed. As the image of God, human nature is habitual and dispositional; it is dynamic, relational, and directional. And this is especially true for regenerate saints. The reason saints are able to have life-long holy practices that are derived from stable and long-lasting spiritual affections is that God makes man partake of his own holy disposition. This is achieved through the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of saints to give them the life of Christ. God has transformed man's fallen carnal nature into a holy love of God and man through the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells in the hearts of the saints, and this holy nature is the nature of Christ. However,

⁴⁰¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.182-184.

⁴⁰² McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 530.

⁴⁰³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.398.

⁴⁰⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 8.541.

all grace comes from the sovereignty of God. Grace is incomplete in this life, obviously, and reborn Christians cannot fully enjoy the holy disposition of Christ. God not only bestows the holy disposition but also gives his people means of grace to exercise this disposition to make it a stable habit. All God's people need to do is practice these disciplines, and God will naturally use these channels of grace to make people have Christlike dispositions and long-lasting spiritual affections.

4.3 The means of grace for affections

For Edwards, there are four primary religious responsibilities established by God to inspire and cultivate the spiritual affections of Christians: prayer, singing praises to God, the sacraments, and preaching. “This appears from the nature and design of the ordinances and duties which God has appointed as means and expressions of true religion.”⁴⁰⁵ One thing to be clear is that this paper deals only with how regenerated saints exercise their religious affections. Unregenerate hypocrites cannot have spiritual affections and are therefore out of the scope of this discussion. Edwards followed the line of reformed theology tradition and believed that whether a person is born again or not is not a matter of human judgment or concern. The saints also do not have such spiritual ability to discern whether a person is regenerated or not.⁴⁰⁶

When Edwards presented the four religious responsibilities of Christians, he did not place them in a strict order. In one place, he begins mainly with prayer and then refers to singing, sacraments, and preaching.⁴⁰⁷ But in another place, he begins with a sermon, then goes on to the sacraments, prayers, and singing.⁴⁰⁸ Therefore, the order of these four religious responsibilities does not seem necessary to Edward. The point he emphasized was that they are all designed by God according to the needs of human nature and frame and appointed as means for receiving grace from Him, with the aim

⁴⁰⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.114-116.

⁴⁰⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.181-182.

⁴⁰⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.114-116.

⁴⁰⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.121.

of deeply affecting the heart of saints for them to have religious affections. And the stimulation of such religious affections all contains an indispensable ingredient: a rational understanding of the Word of God. (See more discussion in Chapter 3) So far, we have seen a virtuous cycle: religious affections begin with God. The heart (disposition) to love the Lord is given by God. The believers obey His commandments and practice the religious responsibilities that He has given to us. In the end, the religious affections of the believers have been further stimulated and cultivated. To love the Lord even more. There is always a correct understanding of the Word of God throughout.

For the simulation, expression and exercise of religious affections, Edwards writes, “we have to treat and exhibit truly these means of grace according to their nature, so as tends to convey just apprehensions and a right judgment of them; the more they have a tendency to move the affections, the better.”⁴⁰⁹ Hence, first, we need to explore, for Edwards, what is the nature of these means of grace. The order of discussion will be in accordance with Edwards' main uses, that is, prayer, singing praise, sacrament, and preaching. I shall start with Edwards' idea in *Religious Affections* in each part of the discussion and then extend to his accounts in other writings if necessary.

4.3.1 Prayer

For Edwards, God appoints the duty of prayer is for suitably affect our own hearts with the things we express. And so, it prepares us to receive the blessings we ask for. Such gestures and manner of external behavior in the worship of God are only useful in that they have some tendency to affect our own hearts or the hearts of others.⁴¹⁰ Obviously, there are two questions here: What kind of things we express in prayer can be suitable to affect our own hearts? What kind of blessings that should we ask for and prepare to receive?

⁴⁰⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.121-122.

⁴¹⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.114.

These questions can be explored in Edwards' book *Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer*, 1748.⁴¹¹ This is perhaps the most thorough description of his views on prayer. Evidence suggests that Edwards' view of prayer is also linked to his unique aesthetic theology. For Edwards, the beauty of prayer lies primarily in uniting with the saints as the body of Christ and looking forward to the fulfillment of the promise of the last days. He illustrated a vision of the "peculiar beauty of the church" united in prayer and his strong apocalypticism:

"...that this union in such prayer is foretold as a *becoming* and *happy* thing, and that which would be acceptable to God, and attended with glorious success. From the whole we may infer, that it is a very suitable thing, and well-pleasing to God, for many people, in different parts of the world, by express agreement, to come into a visible union, in extraordinary, speedy, fervent and constant prayer, for those great effusions of the Holy Spirit, which shall bring on that advancement of Christ's church and kingdom, that God has so often promised shall be in the latter ages of the world."

⁴¹²

Following the Reformed tradition, Edwards argues that all the members in Christ, however dispersed, are thus *one*, one holy society, one city, one family, one body. The church of Christ is the visible manifestation of such union. But he specifically mentioned that the beauty and glory of this union are manifested in that all the members of this particular family are so strictly united in prayer to God for their common prosperity and advancement. It is so unspeakably great and glorious, which God hath so abundantly promised to fulfill in the latter days.⁴¹³

So far, those two questions have been initially answered. Edwards believes that as members of the body of Christ, praying for the prosperity and progress of the whole

⁴¹¹ Edwards, *Works*, 5.308-437.

⁴¹² Edwards, *Works*, 5.320.

⁴¹³ Edwards, *Works*, 5.366-365.

community or the whole body of Christ can rightly move our hearts and prepare us to receive God's great promises of abundance that will be fulfilled in the last days.

Edwards also specifically mentions that such prayer that is aimed at targeting the interest of the entire Christian community indeed can change hearts and behaviors. His argument for united prayer was aesthetic as well as practical. And not surprisingly, this transforming power is first and foremost the power of the Holy Spirit. For Edwards, outpourings of the Holy Spirit were, in some sense, harbingers of Christ's second coming and the end of the age.⁴¹⁴ In *Humble Attempt*, Edwards writes,

“Such a union in prayer for the general outpouring of the Spirit of God, would not only be beautiful, but profitable too. It would tend very much to promote union and charity between distant members of the church of Christ, a public spirit, love for the church of God, and concern for the interest of Zion, as well as be an amiable exercise and manifestation of such a spirit. Union in religious duties, especially in the duty of prayer, in praying one with and for another, and jointly for their common welfare, above almost all other things, tends to promote mutual affection and endearment.”⁴¹⁵

Its effect on heart and behavior change is that if ministers and people set themselves, in a solemn and extraordinary manner, from time to time, to pray for the revival of religion in the world, it would naturally tend more to awaken in them a concern about things of this nature, and the desire to be more involved in such activity. At the same time, it will naturally lead each one to reflect on himself and consider how religion flourishes in his own heart and how far his example contributes to the thing that he is praying for.⁴¹⁶

4.3.2 Music and singing praise

Such prayers also awaken our hearts and prepare us to rejoice and praise God.⁴¹⁷ In *Religious Affections*, he writes, God appointed singing praises to Him as one of our

⁴¹⁴ See more in Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapter 15&35.

⁴¹⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 5.367.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 5.367.

religious duties seems whole to excite and express religious affections. Because “such are our nature and frame that these things have a tendency to move our affections.”⁴¹⁸

So, according to Edwards, why does music or poetry stimulate our spiritual affections? And what kind of music or song can promote spiritual affections in us? Let's start with Edwards' view of music.

Edwards loved music and valued its spiritual import. In Edwards' theology, his view of music is also linked to his unique aesthetic theory. He writes that music is one of many examples of “sensible things that, by virtue of the harmony and proportion that is seen in them, carries the appearance of perceiving and willing being.”⁴¹⁹ “When one thing sweetly harmonizes with another, as the notes in music, the notes are so conformed and have such proportion one to another that they seem to have respect one to another as if they loved one another.”⁴²⁰ Other examples were listed in the *Nature of True Virtue*, where Edwards argued that virtue is the foundation in the nature of things, in which beauty is unity in variety.⁴²¹ In other words, beauty is the willing or consenting unity of diverse elements: “by that uniformity, diverse things become as it were one, as it is in this cordial union of hearts.”⁴²² But those are only earthly or secondary beauty that is based on an agreement between or union of different things. The beauty of true virtue is the Triune Persons' infinite mutual consent and harmonious unity. All created beings' mutual consent and unity is an image of it.⁴²³ Therefore, the harmony of music, as a secondary beauty, can reflect the beauty of harmony in the minds of rational creatures, which in turn reflects the beauty of harmony in the inner-Trinitarian life of God.

In addition, Edwards often referred to music in heaven, a theme that tied into his understanding of beauty, proportion, harmony, consent, and sociability. And also has

⁴¹⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.115.

⁴¹⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 6.382.

⁴²⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 6.380.

⁴²¹ Edwards, *Works*, 8.623.

⁴²² Edwards, *Works*, 8.564.

⁴²³ Edwards, *Works*, 8.562-565.

eschatological meaning.⁴²⁴ Edwards mentioned in one of his “miscellanies,” “the best, most beautiful, and most perfect way that we have of expressing a sweet concord of mind to each other, is by music.” The human voice, as one of the “emanations of the soul,” can express the affections of love and joy (the source of all other emotions as Edwards sees them), as well as the inner concord, harmony, and spiritual beauty of the soul. Such emanation of the soul can resonate with each other’s hearts. Besides, Edwards believed that there are some other emanations (of the soul) than sounds in heaven for expressing “the inward concord and harmony and spiritual beauty of their souls,” of which we cannot conceive, that will be “vastly more proportionate, harmonious and delightful than the nature of sounds is capable of.”⁴²⁵ The point here is that music is the human way of expressing harmony and spiritual beauty in the soul, and the communication of such beauty is also the communication of spiritual affections, mainly in love and joy, even in heaven. Edwards’s fullest depiction of heaven appeared in a number of his sermons.⁴²⁶ There he depicts heaven as an active and progressive state in which the saints will forever advance into a closer relationship with God and with one another. The eschatological implication in Edwards’ statement is that this love and joy that saints enjoy and express in heaven is the result of their eternal union with God. While the union with God that saints experience in this world, and the sweet communion of souls among saints, is but a foretaste of that perfect union and perfect love and joy in heaven. It is clear, however, that music can convey the spiritual harmony and moral beauty of a saint from their union with God, that is, the spiritual affections of love and joy. Such spiritual beauty can resonate in the hearts of other saints so that these gracious affections are passed on among the saints.

⁴²⁴ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 305.

⁴²⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 13.331, “Miscellanies,” no 188, Heaven.

⁴²⁶ See “Heaven is a World of Love” Edwards, *Works*, 8.366-397, “Degrees of Glory” Edwards, *Works*, 19.612-627, “Serving God in Heaven” Edwards, *Works*, 17.253-261, “The True Christian’s Life a Journey Toward Heaven” Edwards, *Works*, 429-446.

At this point, the initial question seems to have been answered. According to Edwards, why can music or poetry inspire the spiritual affections of the saint? Because music can express and convey the love and joy that people have because of their intimate union with God or, say, the spiritual beauty of God. So, what kind of music or poetry can generate spiritual affections in us? Music that can lead or lead the listener to taste the spiritual beauty of God that is, music that reflects the moral beauty and harmonies of the inner-Trinitarian life of God.

That's why we need to listen to the music made by saints who have true faith in God. Those Christians throughout history or in the present who possess inner harmony and spiritual beauty have an intimate union with God in their souls. The spiritual beauty of their intimate relationship with God is conveyed and recorded (through sheet music, records, or other technological media) through music, resonating with the listener's heart in a way that transcends time and space. The resonance can also be called affectional. The spiritual affections in their inner lives are thus passed on to other saints. In this way, if the composer's inner beauty of spiritual harmony comes from his sanctified affections in their hearts, then such music can indirectly lead us to taste the absolute harmony and moral excellence of the Triune God. Our hearts must be affected because of this, and our spiritual affections are then produced. As Edwards constantly stressed that the perception of God's divine beauty is the source of spiritual affections.

Therefore, this harmonious or spiritual beauty, along with spiritual affections, also has reproduction, multiplication, and enlargement in listening to or performing music or poetry. And obviously, it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Because Edwards uniquely proposed that one of the main tasks of the Holy Spirit is to beautify the world. In his *Discourse on the Trinity*, he wrote, “this is very consonant to the office of the Holy Ghost, or his work with respect to creatures, which is threefold: viz. to quicken, enliven and beautify all things; to sanctify intelligent [creatures]; and to comfort and

delight them.”⁴²⁷ This kind of beautification in Christian sanctification is achieved by the arousal and emanation of the saints' spiritual affections. Music plays an important role in this process. This is why Edwards sees music as one of the means of grace used by the Holy Spirit to sanctify Christians

4.3.3 Sacraments

For sacraments, Edwards proposed in *Religious Affections* that God considering our nature and frame, appointed the sacraments as one of the expressions of His Word so that we may see the Word of God alive intangible representations and our hearts can be more affected by it.⁴²⁸ But the question is, for Edwards, what Words of God live out in the sacraments so that our hearts can be moved? Edwards agreed with his seventeenth-century Puritan forebears that the sacraments are visible words of God's grace, seals of the covenant of grace, which are also accompanied by a renewal of God's promises. He said they are means of grace that, like the Scriptures, supply the mind with notions, or speculative ideas, of the things of religion and thus give an opportunity for grace to act in the soul; for hereby the soul is supplied with the matter for grace to act upon when God shall be pleased to infuse it. Although it is not necessary, God chooses to use the sacraments' vivid pictures of the gospel because they help remove prejudices of reason by providing sensory images that move the heart to action.⁴²⁹ But “Edwards exalted communion with God so as to see the sacraments as ordinances at which Christ is peculiarly present to his people.”⁴³⁰

Recall our discussion in the previous chapter, the main reason that the heart of sinners cannot be affected by the things of religion is “the sinful nature of enmity in their hearts against God.” “The carnal mind is enmity against God, and against the law of God, and the people of God.”⁴³¹ But the discovery of “the divine excellency of

⁴²⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 21.123.

⁴²⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 2.115.

⁴²⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 18.84-86.

⁴³⁰ William J. Danaher Jr., “By Sensible Signs Represented: Jonathan Edwards's Sermons on the Lord's Supper,” *Pro Ecclesia* 7 (1998): 285–86. Cited in McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 482.

⁴³¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.261-264.

Christian doctrine” through the new spiritual sense destroys that “natural enmity against the doctrines of the gospel.” “A view of God’s divine glory” removes “the prejudices of the heart against the truth of divine things.”⁴³² We see that the “spiritual picture and reality of union with Christ” presented by the sacraments serve the same purpose, which is why the sacraments can inspire spiritual affections for Edwards. So, what specific affections, for Edwards, are stimulated and promoted by “this glorious picture”?

First, love and peace. For the sacraments of baptism, according to Edwards, this is what happens when persons regularly enter into God's visible church by baptism: God proceeds immediately to treat them as his people, gives them means of grace, such as Scripture, preaching, fellowship, discipline, and the Lord’s Supper—all of which the Spirit of Christ uses to challenge and nurture them. God is more ready to hear and answer their prayers and give them charismatic and common gifts of the Spirit.⁴³³ Besides,

“Christ Jesus likewise hereby confirms him and seals over again the same covenant, and to a worthy partaker gives the seal of the Spirit. Christ appointed it for that very end, to confirm and renew the covenant sealed in baptism, his covenant with them and theirs with him, and to confirm their union with the church (signified in baptism) by this holy communion with them in the bonds of love and peace.”⁴³⁴

In the eighth sign of gracious affections, Edwards wrote, “the Spirit that descended on Christ, when he was anointed of the Father, descended on him like a dove. The dove is a noted emblem of meekness, harmlessness, peace, and love. But the same Spirit that descended on the Head of the Church descends to the members.”⁴³⁵ The Holy Spirit is the Spirit who sanctifies Christians, and for Edwards, the main work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification is to sanctify human affections. Love and peace are also

⁴³² Edwards, *Works*, 2.307-308.

⁴³³ Edwards, *Works*, 18.252-254, “Miscellanies,” no 689, Visible Church.

⁴³⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 13.342, “Miscellanies,” no 207, Confirmation.

⁴³⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 2.348.

the dispositions of Christ.⁴³⁶ So, obviously, the Holy Spirit communicates the dispositions of Christ to the saints through the union of the saints with Christ and inspires their affections of love and peace, as they share the same divine nature of Christ. And needless to say, love is the chief of all gracious affections, and when the affection of love is aroused, all other spiritual affections will flow out of it one by one (if there is no hindrance from sin).

Love and peace mean forgiveness between saints. This command to forgive one another is given in Christ's renewal of the promise in the Lord's Supper. Jesus Christ solemnly renews his offer to those coming for the sacrament: "Here is my body and blood slain and spilt. I offer it to you. If you will receive it and accept of it, you shall be possessed of it." For every saint knows that they are entitled to the benefits of the covenant "only by virtue of fulfilling the conditions of it."⁴³⁷ The most basic condition is for us to resolve to diligently and laboriously do the work God has appointed us. In his sermons on the sacrament, Edwards typically described that work as living in peace with our neighbors. Believers coming to the Supper should particularly examine themselves whether or not they have forgiven their enemies, those that have done them any hurt, so as to allow of no wishing of any hurt to them and especially so as never to design to do anything to gratify a revengeful disposition towards them. If they have quarrels with one another, they should settle them before approaching the table of the Lord. If they come with a "spirit of hatred," they eat and drink unworthily.⁴³⁸

Additionally, Edwards also mentioned in particular that by renewing promises, the Lord's Supper helps us "remember" Christ...we need a frequent celebration of the Supper to keep alive our memory of this greatest act of redemption. But the Supper is not only a memorial that helps prevent our forgetting; it also "revives" our affections of admiration and delight for Christ and what he did for us. Through its celebration,

⁴³⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 2.344.

⁴³⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 25.589.

⁴³⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 17.269.

we are given “fresh and lively scenes” of these epic persons and events so that we are properly moved and affected by them.⁴³⁹

After forgiveness, such sweet love and peace, of course, cannot be without joy. For Edwards, the big picture of union with Christ presented in the Lord’s Supper is the real presence of Christ at the Lord’s Table and a holy community in union with Christ. In his other sermons, Edwards portrayed the Supper as a feast, especially a wedding feast, with rich detail about laughter, joy, love, and friendship as its hallmarks. In Edwards’s earliest sacrament sermon, he said that “Christians, in the participation and *communion* of gospel benefits, have joy unspeakable and full of glory, a sweeter delight than any this world affords.”⁴⁴⁰

The source of all this joy is that in the Lord’s Supper, we meet by faith the objectively real presence of Christ. This is a spiritual reality. The basis of this reality is “a real ontological union” that is affected and enhanced in the Supper: saints become “partakers in the divine nature.”⁴⁴¹ Here we see the same picture as shown in prayer: As members of Christ’s body, they are “union as there [is] between a head and living members, between stock and branches, that there is an entire, immediate, perpetual dependence for and derivation of nourishment, refreshment, beauty, fruitfulness, and all supplies, yea, life and being.”⁴⁴² This also means they become partakers with God of his holiness and happiness, of Christ’s divine knowledge and his “comfort and spiritual joy.”⁴⁴³ They are all, with Christ, “one mystical person.”⁴⁴⁴ Like the doctrine of prayer, Edwards’ view on the Lord’s Supper is also full of eschatology. Edwards, from time to time, presents the Supper as a foretaste of the

⁴³⁹ Edwards, Jonathan. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, 49: 6-17. The online edition of Edwards’s *Works* is located at <http://edwards.yale.edu>. It is maintained by the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University and is available free of charge. It offers access not only to the 26-volume printed edition of Edwards’s *Works*, along with the “Editor’s Introduction” to each volume, but an additional 47 volumes of material online. All references to volumes 27–73 are cited here as WJEO.

⁴⁴⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 14.278.

⁴⁴¹ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 491.

⁴⁴² Edwards, *Works*, 21.444.

⁴⁴³ Edwards, *Works*, 8.146, 17:135.

⁴⁴⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 25.173.

marriage supper of the Lamb. In 1733 he preached a sermon with the doctrine, “the saints shall hereafter as it were eat and drink with Christ at his table in his kingdom of glory.”⁴⁴⁵ The Supper points us to future benefits we will enjoy in the eschaton. In the feast we share at church, we have the foretaste of that eternal feast of love and joy with Christ in glory.⁴⁴⁶ Edwards mentions that when the apostle Peter spoke in 1 Peter 1:8 about “the operations and exercises of religion,” He singled out the affections of love and joy. It is in these two affections that “true religion appeared in its genuine excellency and native beauty, and was found to praise, and honor, and glory.”⁴⁴⁷ Arguably, for Edwards, holy affections or true religion consist primarily in love for Christ and joy in Him (by faith). Sacraments are regarded as one of the means of grace used by God to stimulate the holy affections of the saints because they have the same effect of producing love and joy in Christ.

4.3.4 Preaching

Edwards considered preaching of paramount importance for the work of redemption. We must eagerly await the onset of the “glorious work of God’s Spirit.”⁴⁴⁸ “For the Word of God had priority in the divine-human relationship, preaching surpassed other activities in worship.”⁴⁴⁹ Preaching is the “principal means” God uses to bring good to the souls of people, and the greatest good is “bringing these poor sinners to Christ and salvation.” Preaching will not only save but sanctify, putting people on the road to heaven and making them holy as they walk the road.⁴⁵⁰ Edwards insists that if preaching is a means of grace, “ministers should manage their spiritual husbandry, to preach the pure word of God, to sow that holy seed alone without any mixture of the doctrines and inventions of men, or wild notions of their own.” That faithfully tells of the excellency and glory of the Savior, how great his love is, what he has done and

⁴⁴⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 17.457.

⁴⁴⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 20.232-233, *Miscellanies*, No.957.

⁴⁴⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 2.95.

⁴⁴⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 9.456-459.

⁴⁴⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 17.15.

⁴⁵⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 25.38.

suffered for poor sinners, and what we must do.⁴⁵¹ These are the essential message that preaching should be delivered.

Although Jonathan Edwards learned about preaching from the Calvinist Puritan tradition, in which sermons were generally expository, direct, and brief,⁴⁵² he places special emphasis on affections in preaching. He writes in his *Religious Affections*,

“God has appointed a particular and lively application of his word to men in the preaching of it, as a fit means to affect sinners with the importance of the things of religion; and with their own misery; and with the necessity of a remedy; and with the glory and sufficiency of the remedy that has been provided. Preaching stirs up the pure minds of the saints and quickens their affections by repeatedly bringing the great things of religion to their remembrance and setting them before them in their proper colors – even though they know them and have been fully instructed in them already. And particularly, preaching promotes those two affections in that are spoken of in the text: love and joy.”⁴⁵³

As mentioned above, Edwards places love and joy at the heart of all religious affections. For Edwards, the preacher’s sermon must penetrate the affections of his listeners and not simply change their thinking. But he was also emphatic about the necessity of cognitive content. In *Religious Affections*, Edwards never tired of repeating the thesis that “genuine affections are not heat without light.”⁴⁵⁴

In addition to the extensive treatment of this subject in *Religious Affections*, his work on *The Great Awakening* also mentions that an affective manner in preaching was helpful. He wrote,

“For all affections do certainly arise from some apprehension in the understanding... Therefore, the thing to be inquired into is whether the apprehensions or notions of divine and eternal things that are raised in people's minds by these affectionate preachers, whence their affections are excited, be apprehensions that are

⁴⁵¹ Edwards, *Works*, 24.256.

⁴⁵² McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 494.

⁴⁵³ Edwards, *Works*, 2.115-116.

⁴⁵⁴ Edwards, *Works*, Editor’s Introduction, 2.50.

agreeable to truth, or whether they are mistakes. If the former, then the affections are raised the way they should be, viz. by informing the mind or conveying light to the understanding.”⁴⁵⁵

The cognitive aspect of affection has been talked about much in Chapter 2. What's most important for Edwards is that the principal task of the preacher was to make truth become real in the perception of hearers. He noticed that lack of spiritual experience and frequent repetition of religious maxims could obscure the recognition of what is real. We have explored Edwards's notion of a simple idea imparted by a “divine and supernatural light” in previous chapters, which makes what was previously a mere notion become a vivid reality by “the new spiritual sense,” which was once merely conceptual is seen, tasted, and felt. It takes on a sensory dimension that forever fixes its reality in the apprehension of the believer. Edwards believed this new seeing and tasting of the reality of divine things comes principally, if not exclusively, through preaching.

In Joel R. Beeke’s outstanding work *Reformed Preaching*, Sinclair B. Ferguson followed the line of Edwards and pointed out that “there is one pitfall in preaching is that exposition is no more than educational instruction but never reaches the affections.”⁴⁵⁶ Later, Joel R. Beeke quoted Edwards’ words, “The Holy Scriptures do everywhere place religion very much in the affections; such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion and zeal.” if we cut out all the references to affections of the heart, there would be nothing much left of the Bible.⁴⁵⁷ So he introduces the concept of experiential preaching from the Reformed tradition that “experiential preaching is preaching from heart to heart; it often grows out of the preacher’s own experience of Christ in the midst of his sorrows and sins.”⁴⁵⁸ What the preacher is doing here is delivering his own sanctified affections to the hearer

⁴⁵⁵ Edwards, *Works*, 4.386-387.

⁴⁵⁶ Joel R. Beeke, *Reformed Preaching: Proclaiming God's Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 13.

⁴⁵⁷ Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 55.

⁴⁵⁸ Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*, 39.

through the sermon. Like music, preaching is the vehicle of Holy affections, whereby gracious affections are emanated, increased, and multiplied. Preaching is considered a more effective means of grace than music because it emphasizes the rational aspect, and of the four religious responsibilities that Edwards proposed, it is one of the best that perfectly fits the way the Holy Spirit works.

In addition, here, we also see that the awareness of sin can stimulate spiritual affections. Edwards confirmed this point in *Religious Affections*, “a discovery of themselves, of their own deformity, and the meanness of their experiences, though it will purify their affections, yet it will not destroy them, but in some respects sweeten and heighten them.”⁴⁵⁹ In Edwards's representative sermon *Sinners in the hands of angry God*, it is in this way, through his vehement, straightforward words, that he points out the sins of men, and through vivid descriptions, the audience can “see” what kind of sinful situation they are in.

And this awareness of sin obviously comes mainly from knowing Christ. This is reasonable because although the sanctification of affection is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, ultimately, the Holy Spirit was given to lead sinners to Christ. Therefore, the purpose of the Holy Spirit's use of all means of grace is to bring sinners to know and be affected by Christ and his redemptive work. So, Edwards proposes another important exercise of affections, contemplation on Christ. In *Religious Affections*, he writes that God and Jesus Christ are the foundation of truly gracious affections.⁴⁶⁰

“That wonderful and unparalleled grace of God, which is manifested in the work of redemption, and shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ, is infinitely glorious in itself, and appears so to the angels; 'tis a great part of the moral perfection and beauty of God's nature: this would be glorious, whether it was exercised towards us or no; and the saint who exercises a gracious thankfulness for it, sees it to be so, and delights in

⁴⁵⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.253.

⁴⁶⁰ Edwards, *Works*, 2.253.

it as such; though his concern in it serves the more to engage his mind, and raise the attention and affection.”⁴⁶¹

A clearer awareness of God’s holiness is increased exposure to our own sins, and we will naturally be more grateful to our Savior Christ. Our sinful affections will also be sanctified in this way. For God is the visible and perfect manifestation of the holy beauty of God. Here we can see that Edwards’ teaching on preaching is also not divorced from his aesthetic theory. Therefore, for Edwards, from the perspective of human responsibility, the key to the sanctification of affections through preaching is to lead the hearers to “taste” the spiritual beauty of God. It also requires the preacher to first be affected by such divine beauty before it can be passed on to others. While this is not strictly necessary, the Holy Spirit has purposed to do his own work in this way.

Therefore, last but not least, Edwards sometimes put prayer and preaching together in his works. For example, in his commentary on *Ezekiel 37:7–9*, he writes that “the prayer that ought to accompany preaching in order to the success of the word in men’s conversion.”⁴⁶² He believed that power was never guaranteed, of course, by simply preaching from Scripture. It was necessary that the preacher beseech God to inspire his preparation and enliven his words so that he might preach with fervor and pathos. Prayer was an indispensable element of preparation. From the information here, it can be inferred that the preparatory role of prayer here is primarily to prepare the preacher’s spiritual affections so that the preacher can emanate gracious affections to the hearers through the sermon. After all, the preacher need not display his learning or be especially eloquent. Power came from God’s blessing, without which even labored preparation and enthusiastic delivery would produce no lasting results. In the end, a preacher must be faithful and “leave the event [i.e., outcome] with God.”⁴⁶³

⁴⁶¹ Edwards, *Works*, 2.248.

⁴⁶² Edwards, *Works*, 24.756.

⁴⁶³ McClymond, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 505.

Now we already have a sketch of Edwards' understanding of the nature of these means of grace. In conclusion, Edwards' teaching on prayer, singing, sacraments, and preaching is based on his unique aesthetic theology. All these means of grace are designed to "taste" the spiritual beauty of God, which is the only source of religious affection. If he is right, all saints who have been saved by grace have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the living life of Christ in them, only to diligently and gratefully perform their duties in accordance with the nature of religious things and to use these means of grace correctly. Our affections must be sanctified by tasting the beauty of God's holiness. Because this is God's appointed means of grace according to human nature.

4.3.5 Sanctification of affections

Sanctification is a lifelong process for a believer. Although a Christian is freed from the power and penalty of sin, he still must deal with the presence of sin around and within him. If, as stated in 1 Corinthians 10:31, man's chief end is to glorify God, then the essence of sin is failing to accomplish this purpose. John Piper explains the connection between sin and beauty that sin is essentially failing both to apprehend and to take pleasure in God as supreme beauty.⁴⁶⁴ The doctrine of total depravity implies that man is completely unable to apprehend the beauty of God. When we were converted, we were given "new life" and the ability to apprehend God for who He is. This is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit. Edwards has specifically linked beauty with the Holy Spirit, the person of the Trinity primarily involved with the work of sanctification. He highlights the beautifying of the world as one of the Holy Spirit's primary functions and cites Genesis 1:2 in support, which he paraphrases as "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters . . . to bring it . . . into harmony and beauty."⁴⁶⁵ Edwards sees a close relationship between the two functions of sanctifying and beautifying. One statement from a sermon will summarize Edward's

⁴⁶⁴ John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996), 56-57.

⁴⁶⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *Unpublished Essay of Edwards on the Trinity with Remarks on Edwards and His Theology* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1903), 90.

thinking on this point: He says that the light of the Holy Spirit, which is “a kind of emanation of God’s beauty,” gives a “sense of the heart” whereby Christians discover “the divine superlative glory” of God.⁴⁶⁶ He asserts, therefore, that all true beauty can “enliven in us a sense of spiritual beauty.”⁴⁶⁷

A related question naturally arises, what is the relation between the Holy Spirit’s operation and the means of grace? How are they related to the Holy Spirit’s arbitrary or immediate operation? On the one hand, Edwards insists that grace comes totally as a sovereign act of God. In the Holy Spirit’s operations in the regeneration, there is “a respect to outward means; but they are not tied at all to them.”⁴⁶⁸ In other words, the means of grace do not and cannot produce grace. He cautions that means of grace are made use of, “yet they have no influence to produce grace, either as causes or instruments.” The means of grace are needed and useful only if “grace is infused in the heart.”⁴⁶⁹ “In this way, the integrity and the imperative necessity of God’s Word in Christ, and the sovereign operation in grace by the Holy Spirit, are given their due.”⁴⁷⁰ But at the same time, Edwards emphasizes with equally strong words that the means of grace are indispensable to the work of the Holy Spirit. For him, the Holy Spirit’s operation is immediate and also “after the manner of” a disposition.

According to Edwards’ epistemology and the logic of disposition, a disposition is a law that a certain type of action or event should occur upon certain kinds of occasions. In the case of the divine disposition in the regenerate, this precondition is the Holy Spirit’s immediate action of causing an act according to the divine disposition. And appropriate sense-data have to be received from outside the mind in order for the internal disposition to be triggered into exercises.⁴⁷¹ Since the disposition involved is the third person of the Trinity, the appropriate external sense data would come from earthly embodiments of the transcendent beauty of God. These

⁴⁶⁶ Edwards, *Works*, 17.408-426.

⁴⁶⁷ Edwards, *Works*, 8.565.

⁴⁶⁸ Edwards, *Works*, 13.235, “Miscellanies,” no. 64.

⁴⁶⁹ Edwards, *Works*, 18.86, “Miscellanies,” no. 539.

⁴⁷⁰ Edwards, *Works*, Editor’s Introduction, 21.58.

⁴⁷¹ Edwards, *Works*, 6.390.

embodiments are the “outward means” or “means of grace,” and they are “the word and ordinances and works of God.”⁴⁷²

Edwards strongly emphasizes the necessity of these means of grace. “If there could be a principle of grace in the heart without these notions or ideas there, yet it could not act because it could have no matter to act upon.”⁴⁷³ God used the “matter” that the means provided—i.e., notions or ideas concerning God, Christ, the future world, what Christ had done and suffered, etc. to show his power and dispense his grace. These ideas were the necessary “matter” provided by means of grace, giving the opportunity for the Spirit to act. Edwards goes even further, maintaining that “the more fully we are supplied with these notions, the greater opportunity has the grace to act...The livelier these notions are, the stronger the ideas, the greater opportunity for grace to act if infused.”⁴⁷⁴ Therefore, Bible reading, the hearing of sermons, attendance at worship, singing praise, personal prayer, and participation in the sacraments were all necessary to give grace “a better opportunity to act.” But after all, both the grace itself and the means of grace come from the sovereignty of God. It is the beauty of God embodied in time and space that functions as the occasion that triggers the habit of grace to exert itself into acts of knowing and loving that true beauty.

4.4 Conclusion

To sum up, the saints have received precious grace from God, that is the indwelling of God’s own spirit, the spirit of Christ. But we still quite often indifferent to the great things of religion, yet enthusiastic about things that are closely related to our secular interests. As a result, there is a disconnect between reason and action. For Edwards, the reason for this is that our grace in this life is not perfect, meaning we have too few truly spiritual affections. But even though we have to struggle with such imperfections all the time on earth, we don’t need to be discouraged. For the saints are

⁴⁷² Edwards, *Works*, 18.157 “Miscellanies,” no. 629.

⁴⁷³ Edwards, *Works*, 18.85

⁴⁷⁴ Edwards, *Works*, 18.84-86

those whom God has chosen according to his own dispositional nature to participate in the inner life of the Triune God. The saints share in God's holy disposition, which is His moral beauty or the nature of true virtues. Thus, it is God's own dispositional nature makes Christian moral practice necessary.

Sang Hyun Lee's "dispositional ontology" is based on the rejection of Edwards' paradoxical God. Therefore, he does not show enough respect to the basic grammar of orthodox trinitarian theology like Edwards did. This fatal error in understanding Edwards' belief in God leads Lee to interpret Edwards completely away from Edwards. However, the dynamic view of God's existence in knowing and loving, and the inherent relationality of the divine being are in line with Edwards' theology and in the orthodox Reformed tradition.

All grace comes from the sovereignty of God. He also gives his people means of Grace according to human nature and frame to exercise this disposition to make it a stable habit. For Edwards, these means of grace are prayer, singing praises to God, the sacraments and preaching. All God's people need to do is to practice these disciplines, to fulfill these religious responsibilities that appointed by God, the Spirit of God will naturally use these channels of grace to make people have Christlike disposition and long-lasting spiritual affections. The reason is that the Holy Spirit can use these means of grace to bring saints into the spiritual reality of union with Christ and make them deeply affected by this beautiful reality, with love and joy for God, looking forward to the fulfillment of God promises in the last days.