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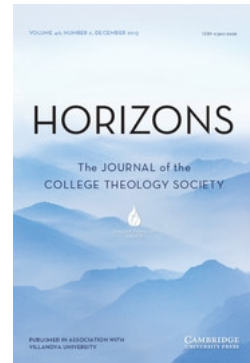
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Orthodoxy Requires Orthopathy: Emotions in Theology

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Those who study, teach, and write about orthodoxy typically omit almost entirely any explicit consideration of human emotions. It is not surprising, then, that theology can seem an abstract activity without much effectiveness either for inspiring ritual and moral practice or for fostering attachment to Christianity. Similarly, church leaders, in their concentration on orthodoxy or orthopraxy, pay insufficient attention to the affective alienation occurring within and among Christians. This article brings to bear on theology the burgeoning philosophical and psychological research on emotions. It develops the cognitive and participative nature of emotions; their role in forming both an existential faith and community; the legitimacy and independence but also the inadequacy of conceptualist theology; the conflicts, tensions, and mutual contributions of intellect and emotion; and, finally, the role of emotion in moving ideas to practice.

Keywords: emotions, orthodoxy, orthopraxy, value, participation, existential faith, *ordo amoris*

THEOLOGY and religious studies commonly either neglect or even denigrate the important role of emotions. In our media-saturated and affluent culture, however, the affections are and must be prominent in any way of life that hopes to be influential.¹ Put less positively, ignoring the emotional alienation that derives from some current church teaching and practice threatens to empty our churches or to make Christianity irrelevant

¹ James Keenan, SJ, "Impasse and Solidarity in Theological Ethics," *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 64 (2009): 55.

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in our late modern culture.² More profoundly, the practical orientation of our culture needs Christianity's offer of depth, which is available only through "aesthetic appreciation" of the religious dimension of life.³

I will pursue a *phenomenological* inquiry that distinguishes and relates thinking, willing, and feeling. To the classical dyadic understanding of the human spirit as intellect and will, I add the human heart.⁴ I hope to show that our affections ground and give significance to our intellectual and volitional activity. Equally important, it is through our emotions that we are formed into communities and are related to God, ourselves, others, and our world. Put more provocatively, without the emotions Christianity is dead.

I. Sketch of Three Pure Types

Let me begin with an imaginative exercise. Envisage a great systematic theologian who brilliantly understands and organizes each major item of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This scholar, however, no longer believes any of these Catholic claims. He still teaches orthodox positions, but he has been alienated from Christianity. Imagine a second person who knows no theology and runs an exceptionally efficient medical clinic for children as a way of making lots of money. He has little concern for his patients but realizes that great medical care brings in wealthy clients willing to pay top dollar. Third, imagine an almost completely paralyzed woman who, stricken as a child, never became involved in any particular religion. She is unable to "do" anything for herself or for others; but in her heart she loves each person who cares for her, and she feels at peace with the God who made her and them.

With this exercise I have tried to describe three nearly pure types. The first person represents "orthodoxy," one whose theological understanding is acute. He passes on the tradition of right beliefs that a Catholic Christian should hold. His type indicates that it is possible for scholars to engage in these discussions and not really believe. Indeed, the shift from theology departments to those kinds of religious studies departments in which each faculty member is expected to teach several world religions suggests that

² Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead, *A Sociology of Religious Emotion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 172–206. Current liturgical wars, I suggest, are more about different sets of affections (in particular, transcendent versus immanent senses of holiness) than about language or specific gestures.

³ Robert Doran, SJ, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), 164–65, 183–84.

⁴ Franco Imoda, SJ, *Spiritual Exercises and Psychology* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1996), 67.

professors teach religions in which they do not believe.⁵ Students who learn theology only in order to pass a test also exemplify this type. Something more than orthodoxy is required to be a Christian.

My second pure type represents orthopraxy. The doctor's work, taking care of children, is the right thing to do, even if motivated only by greed. The Christian ethical tradition is ambivalent about such a person. It is good that the right act, healing, is done, but it is also possible to do the right thing for the wrong motive. Good behavior or practice may not reflect a good heart. Additionally, the long and trenchant Christian attack on works' righteousness highlights how good deeds can in fact be antithetical to the Christian life. Something more than a deficient orthopraxy is required to be a Christian.

My third case, the completely paralyzed woman with a good heart, is the most unlikely, though I have met someone who partially fits the picture. This pure type suggests that it is possible to know very little theology, engage in neither good nor bad behavior, and yet be saintly. She exemplifies "orthopathy." As is obvious, I am inventing a new word. Just as *praxis* is the Greek word for "practice," so *pathos* is the Greek word for "feeling," which appears as a suffix in terms like "sympathy" or "empathy." The prefix "ortho-" suggests that there is a right or good set of emotions as well as a wrong or bad set of emotions.⁶ As Aristotle observed, a crucial part of education is learning to feel the right emotions.⁷

What I have tried to establish with these limit cases is that orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy are, to a considerable degree, distinct from one another. I do not want to say this is ideal, but I also do not want to fall into the mistake of suggesting that they easily harmonize. Irenic exhortations to holistic integration cloud the legitimate independence of these types of activities as well as the complex ways they conflict or interact. The goal of this article is to provide a more adequate theological anthropology.

⁵ George Karuvelil, SJ, "Absolutism to Ultimacy: Rhetoric and Reality of Religious 'Pluralism,'" *Theological Studies* 73 (2012): 55–81, at 79.

⁶ Libraries of books have been written on how emotions can function badly in our lives. It is well beyond the scope of this article to treat those aberrances. One mistake to avoid, however, is to assume that our intellectual or volitional activities are always in themselves perfect and that therefore whenever they malfunction the cause lies in the emotions.

⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999) 2.3.2 (p. 21); Ronald De Sousa, *Emotional Truth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24, 109. If we were to shift from Greek to Latin, another name, familiar to Augustinian scholars is *ordo amoris*.

II. Emotions: Value and Connection

Our emotions are essential in Christian thought and practice. In order to show this, I must give a brief, truncated exposition of how emotions function in our lives. As a prefatory comment, let me warn that there is no consensus on this topic.⁸ The *Catechism* broadly locates our topic: “The term ‘passions’ refers to the affections or the feelings. By his emotions man intuits the good and suspects evil.”⁹ This text conflates four standard words pertaining to our topic: *passion*, *affection*, *feelings*, *emotions*; to these we might add *moods*, *sentiments*, and *affects*. The fact that these terms are used rather interchangeably in popular discourse will serve the broad purposes of this article. People, especially scholars, sometimes make distinctions among these terms, but they do so in no generally accepted way, and their precise distinctions are stipulative definitions designed to make some legitimate and useful point.

I shall discuss two essential features of our emotions: they reveal values, and they are acts of connecting or participation.¹⁰

Intuiting Values

Among the various theories of emotions, the *Catechism* espouses one I find deeply insightful: “By his emotions man [or woman or a group] intuits the good and suspects evil.”¹¹ This claim counters one of the most common misunderstandings of emotions—namely, that they are simply physiological or psychological movements within ourselves that signify nothing beyond themselves, such as chills down the spine or a sinking feeling in the stomach. Rather, the *Catechism* makes the crucial point that our emotions are cognitions. They are like perceptions. Far from being simply blind movements, emotions tell us something about the world.¹²

⁸ Luciano L’Abate, *Hurt Feelings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 26–30; Paul Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 104.

⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), §1771. The article on the emotions as a whole is, unfortunately, rather confused, even self-contradictory.

¹⁰ In this article I am not addressing the “expressive” function of emotions, which is otherwise so important in life and community. See L’Abate, *Hurt Feelings*, 39–41; De Sousa, *Emotional Truth*, 33; Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*; Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 7; Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are*, 137–49; Margaret Clark and Ian Brissette, “Relationship Beliefs and Emotion,” in *Emotions and Beliefs*, ed. Nico Frijda *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 212–37.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1771.

¹² A long line of thinkers, including Thomas Aquinas and William James, seem to restrict emotions to an experience of bodily activity, and many feminists, in their appropriate

Since we are animals, many of our emotions, like our sense perceptions, function at the bodily and psychological level. Like other animals, we dislike being confined and fear threatening predators. But we can and often do have emotions that are as spiritual as our intellectual and free volitional acts.¹³ The profound awe we might experience during worship, the guilt we feel if we betray a friend, or the deep admiration we have for someone who has sacrificed her life for another are spiritual emotions. It is essential for a theological anthropology to affirm this spirituality of the emotions. If all our emotions were restricted to the psychophysiological realm, it would be literally impossible to love God.¹⁴

It is a common mistake to think that emotions involve only short-term experiences such as the anger we feel now toward someone who has just offended us. Some of our most effective emotions are longer-term dispositions, such as the anger we continue to have toward an uncle who long ago insulted us, or the disdain that reappears each time we meet a person of a different race. Just as we “know” that Jesus died on the cross, even when we are not actually thinking of the crucifixion, so also we can have the emotion of love for Jesus even when we are thinking about something entirely different.¹⁵ These longer-term dispositional emotions in great part constitute our *ordo amoris* or orthopathy. In large part, the process of growing in maturity consists in developing these dispositional emotions.

What is the aspect of an object that emotions enable us to know?¹⁶ It is the dimension of value. “Beyond its effects on our body, the principal feature of

desire to reclaim the body, also tend to reinforce this limited understanding. See Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 214; Desiree Berendsen, “Traditions as Paradigm Scenarios,” in *Religious Emotions*, ed. Willem Lemmens and Walter Van Herck (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 66–69.

¹³ Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007), 20–40; Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are*, 104, 118–22.

¹⁴ The *Catechism* (§§1763, 1765, 2093) is quite confused on this point. It says that the passions are movements of the “sensitive appetite,” that love is a passion, and that we can love God. Since God is not a sensible object, the passions must also be spiritual. Elsewhere I have tried to describe the enormous difficulties theologians have had in describing what it might mean to love God; see my forthcoming article “Problematic Love for God.”

¹⁵ Keith Oakley, “The Sentiments and Beliefs of Distributed Cognition,” in Frijda et al., *Emotions and Beliefs*, 78–107; Nico Frijda and Batja Mesquita, “Beliefs through Emotions,” *ibid.*, 45–77, at 55–61.

¹⁶ “Object” is here an epistemological category—namely, the referent of our cognitive acts. It extends to anything that can be known, including persons, and even God.

an emotion is to inform the subject of the significance objects and events have for her. Emotions reveal to us a world imbued with value."¹⁷ The corollary is that without our emotions, we would not experience the world as valuable. As a parallel, consider that a person blind from birth cannot see things. If there ever were a person without any emotions at all, that person would not be able to "see" good or evil at all. Or consider that a color-blind person may see things but still miss some of their beauty. The parallel is that since all of us are at least somewhat emotionally deficient, there are some realms of good and evil we miss.

For these emotional cognitions, some philosophers use words such as "judgments," "thoughts," "interpretations," "perceptions," and, like the *Catechism*, "intuitions." Intuitions are usually not simply some inborn capacity, but rather the developed facility to grasp without deduction or inference what is present to a knower. The objects of our intuition often are concrete beings, such as the difference in affection we feel for a dog and for its owner. But the objects of intuitions can also be imaginary, highly abstract, or profoundly mystical.¹⁸ An artist like Michelangelo might use intuition to know what will be possible in carving the *Pietà* out of a block of marble. A mathematical genius like Poincaré might have an intuition that takes generations of later mathematicians to demonstrate to be correct. A saint might feel the presence of God in the giggle of a child.

Intuitions at times are difficult if not impossible to put into words, but that deficiency does not mean they are not cognitions.¹⁹ Much of what we know we can hardly put into words. For example, even the most sophisticated among us could not name the more than seven million colors that scientists estimate the human eye can distinguish. Similarly, we could not possibly name what one researcher wildly guesses to be a hundred quadrillion possible emotions.²⁰ Just as colors are more than the so-called primary colors of red, green, and blue, so also human emotions are more than some basic set such as anger, love, fear, and the like. Some emotions are intense, but most are not. We experience a subtle shift in emotions whenever there is a change in our environment. Just as we can correctly say "I know it when I see it," so also we can correctly say "I know it when I feel it." On the other hand, just as our recognition of an object's color can be wildly wrong

¹⁷ Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni, *Emotions: A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 66.

¹⁸ De Sousa, *Emotional Truth*, 203.

¹⁹ Mark Wynn, "Religious Emotions and Religious Experience," in Lemmens and Van Herck, *Religious Emotions*, 27-33, at 27-28; Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 29.

²⁰ De Sousa, *Emotional Truth*, 116.

(e.g., in shadows or in filtered light), so also our emotions can misperceive their object.²¹ While our tradition has regularly concentrated on the ways emotions can be errant and on how to reform or control or compensate for them,²² the focus of this article is on “ortho-” or well-formed emotions.

Emotions are not the same as intellectual knowing. With ordinary intellectual cognition we grasp the “nature” or “whatness” of an object, whether that nature is an object’s intrinsic essence or merely a conventional construction, as nominalists would have it. Thus with our intellect we understand, for example, that there is a woman in the corner of the room. With our emotions, we feel that the woman is worthy of respect and we feel the corner is confining. Both our intellectual acts and our emotional acts are, to use technical jargon, “intentional acts”—that is, they grasp an object, each under a different formality.²³ Because we have an intellect, we do not experience the world as a booming, buzzing confusion. Because we have emotions, we do not experience the world as devoid of value. Such an experience of value is not simply an add-on. Rather, it transforms the experience.²⁴ An experience of “love” for one’s spouse is different from an experience of the spouse as a “rational animal,” and an experience of guilt changes the meaning of the neutral description “uttered a false statement.” An awestruck experience of the holiness of God changes who God is to us.

Normally, we come to know both what a thing is and its value simultaneously.²⁵ But this is not the only pattern. We may learn about something and then only subsequently come to appreciate its value. It also happens, more frequently than we might suspect, that we first experience an emotion and then only subsequently come to understand what the object of that emotion is. That is, emotional knowing may precede conceptual knowledge.²⁶ This is important to recognize because often our affective religious experience

²¹ Deonna and Teroni, *Emotions*, 66–67; Aaron Ben-Ze’ev, *Subtlety of Emotions* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 13–17; De Sousa, *Emotional Truth*, 61. For an analysis of different types of inability to name emotions, see Peter Moormann, *et al.*, “New Avenues in Alexithymia Research,” in *Emotion Regulation*, ed. Ad Vingerhoets *et al.* (New York: Springer, 2008), 27–42.

²² Harvey Egan, SJ, *Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976), 71–72.

²³ Robert Solomon, “The Many Dimensions of Religious Emotional Experience,” in Lemmens and Van Herck, *Religious Emotions*, 230–46, at 232–33.

²⁴ Wynn, “Religious Emotions and Religious Experience,” 28–29.

²⁵ Deonna and Teroni (*Emotions*, 91–98) try to distinguish the immediacy of ordinary sense perception from that of emotion by saying that the latter “supervenes” upon the former. Normally, I think, emotion occurs in and not simply upon the perception.

²⁶ Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are*, 26–27.

precedes and guides our religious reflection and teaching. The disciples felt “something about Jesus” before they named him Lord.

We commonly name things we have experienced because we have already felt some value or disvalue that attracts or disturbs us. We feel that something about a liturgy was not quite right, and so we ask ourselves or someone more articulate than ourselves to name what was askew. This frequently experienced priority of emotions to intellectual cognition rebuts the commonsense maxim that we must always know something before we can love it. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Blaise Pascal, William James, and Bernard Lonergan, each in very different ways, have argued for the priority of love over at least some kinds of knowledge, especially theological knowledge.²⁷

Participation

Emotions do more than reveal value. They connect us to their objects. This connection has a subjective and an objective aspect. On the one hand, we are affected. We may experience movement in ourselves toward positively valued objects, we may experience movement away from negatively valued objects, or we may experience contentment at being with the object.²⁸ Our own relational identity is modified. If someone we love or hate dies, our lives are different. If some project we are engaged in turns out to be “worthless,” we are depleted. Hence much of our emotional language points to the self: for example, “I am angry” or “I felt such awe.” In this sense, emotions are “subjective”; that is, they refer to self. They highlight the highly complex mental system by which we both initiate and respond, within the ever-developing narrative of our lives.

On the other hand, emotions are objective; that is, they necessarily refer to objects.²⁹ They do so by establishing with us or others a new relationship of significance and value. These objects become salient for us.³⁰ Thus through our emotions God, our world, ourselves, and one another become important to us. The felt difference between “a house” and “my house” or between “God” and “my God” suggests what is at stake. In the Old Testament, there is an engaging battle between our God and other gods. We cheer for or are disappointed in our God. When metaphysical reflection on the nature of God begins, however, this affective connection can easily be severed. Then theologians tend to speak simply of God and go on to name various attributes

²⁷ Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today*, 46–52.

²⁸ Solomon, “Many Dimensions of Religious Emotional Experience,” 232–33.

²⁹ Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion, and Will* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2003), 43. I cannot here develop the way moods, sentiments, etc. have “objects.”

³⁰ De Sousa, *Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 196.

(e.g., simplicity or omniscience) that are true of God. When that happens, the personal connection between God and the believer easily becomes attenuated or lost. A similar loss can be heard in the flat claim, “Oh, I believe that there is a God,” which might indeed be an indicator that the person doesn’t have an existential faith in God—that is, the person is not affectively motivated one way or another by God.

The formal object of religious emotion is an object’s religious value and disvalue. Through religious affections some people are able to connect everyday objects to God, and their religious value is thereby appreciated. A cherry tree in bloom becomes a gift from God; and a stranger or enemy becomes someone for whom Christ died. In a more narrow sense, religious affections refer to those “objects” that are specifically the concern of religion. “Religion involves a multitude of sacred objects imbued with emotional significance”³¹—for example, statues, icons, saints, or buildings. Even a religious leader such as the pope is for many people a unifying sacred object, quite apart from his role as determiner of orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

The implication of this line of reflection for orthodoxy should be clear. Unless and until the propositions of orthodoxy become affectively apprehended, they are external to us and lack existential meaning. As Pope Benedict XVI explained, “Ideas or voices which lack love—even if they seem sophisticated or knowledgeable—cannot be ‘of the Spirit.’”³² When orthodox propositions are affectively experienced as embodying great, indeed life-saving value, they draw us closer to God as well as to the community that teaches them.

The reason for this enhanced ecclesial communion is that “societies are created and held together, at their core, by people’s emotions.”³³ While it is common to think that a Christian community is unified around a common set of doctrine or practices, too seldom is it recognized that communities are largely formed through shared emotions. Its members are united through feeling positively toward shared symbolic realities such as the Eucharist, Mary, the rosary, or the Bible.

³¹ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 96.

³² Pope Benedict XVI, “Address to Young People,” July 19, 2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/july/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080719_vigil_en.html.

³³ Jonathan Turner, *Problem of Emotions in Society* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 60; also Luca Badini Confalonieri II, “The Election of Bishops by Clergy and People,” *Theological Studies* 73 (2012): 82–114, at 89; Nico Frijda et al., “The Influence of Emotions on Beliefs,” in Frijda et al., *Emotions and Beliefs*, 1–9, at 6–8; Oakley, “Sentiments and Beliefs,” 78–107.

On the other hand, if the propositions of orthodoxy are affectively apprehended as disvaluable or irrelevant, or as cutting us off from other relationships we already value, then we will be inclined to cut ourselves off from the community that teaches us such propositions. Currently, for example, the doctrine of an all-male priesthood has that effect on many. Similarly, when singing a repentance psalm at liturgy, if one member felt nothing or, worse, felt estranged by the words, that person might be exercising orthodoxy and orthopraxy, but she would not be sharing in the emotions that bind the community. When people share a more or less unified emotional regime, they are inclined to want to share more deeply in the community's teaching and practice, its orthodoxy and orthopraxy.³⁴ When, however, they feel alienated, they feel distanced from this orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Members of the community, especially its leadership, make a fundamental mistake if, ignoring the emotions of the community, they focus only on rightness of practice and doctrine.

III. Orthodoxy Detaching from Orthopathy

Conceptual and Existential Faith

Orthodoxy, traditionally, has been defined in the following way: "Orthodoxy (*orthodoxeia*) signifies right belief or purity of faith. Right belief is not merely subjective, as resting on personal knowledge and convictions, but is in accordance with the teaching and direction of . . . the authority of the Church."³⁵ As a corollary, an all-too-common understanding of revelation proposes that it primarily refers to a set of propositions disclosed by God in the Scriptures and handed down faithfully by the magisterium. In this view revelation "is mediated through conceptually formulated propositions. Conceptualist theologians typically insist on revelation's transcendence" of experience, affective or otherwise.³⁶ Revelation, in this understanding, proposes many profound truths such as the Trinity or the divinity of Christ. To use an image, these truths are like precious coins, paintings, and books, given by the great benefactor in the sky, now kept in a Vatican vault. Those who have never seen such items still can engage in learned conversations on the basis of authoritative reports about their size, composition, history,

³⁴ Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 47-51.

³⁵ Charles Callan, "Orthodoxy," in *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11330a.htm>.

³⁶ John McDermott, SJ, "Can the Blessed Trinity Be Experienced in Grace?" *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 18 (2011): 164; Jürgen Mettepenningen and Ward De Pril, "Thomism and the Renewal of Theology," *Horizons* 39 (2012): 50-68, at 52-54, 58, 64-67.

value, and so forth. Conceptualist theologians who propose such a propositional orthodoxy often, as in the text cited, discourage the role of “personal knowledge and convictions” in discussing these propositions of dogma.³⁷ Rather, they use expressions such as “the Church teaches” or “faith teaches” or “we know by faith.”

By contrast, “existential faith” essentially involves emotional experience of religious objects—that is, an experiential knowledge that affects us and connects us.³⁸ Most fundamentally, in religious experience, we appreciate our connection to the Ultimate. Schleiermacher’s feeling of absolute dependence, Heidegger’s introduction of a disclosive “care,” Tillich’s reference to “ultimate concern,” Freud’s “oceanic feeling,” and Kierkegaard’s “subjective” thinking, each in quite different ways, point to the role of affections in encountering whatever might count as their ultimate reality.³⁹ God is not only an object that we know about, but also a horizon of Ultimacy that sometimes attracts us, sometimes repels us, and sometimes puts us at peace. Because of the participative nature of emotions, affections directed to God will at times put our own lives at stake. God is enveloping and threatening Mystery on whom we are completely dependent and whom we cannot control.

Accordingly, for existential faith, revelation is not well described as some new information to be learned, consented to, and recited in the creed. Rather, as practicing believers and great theologians have known, revelation provides “objects” to be loved or feared or otherwise emotionally appreciated. Above all, revelation is a personal and affective encounter with God, of being loved and of loving in return.⁴⁰ This encounter is mediated through the Scriptures, particularly in its narratives, through church teaching, and through engagement in religious practices such as Lenten observance, but also through many other “secular” activities (e.g., protest marches) that the community may not officially sanction.⁴¹ Whatever the mediation, these objects are affectively engaged within the experience of Ultimacy; that is, God is emotionally experienced as “the light, depth and horizon for properly

³⁷ McDermott, “Can the Blessed Trinity Be Experienced in Grace?” 164–65.

³⁸ By existential faith, I do not mean the existentialism promoted by Jean-Paul Sartre. He so emphasized free self-determination that, rather than having an objective reference, our emotions were merely ways we magically transformed the meaning of the world. See Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are*, 150–53; De Sousa, *Rationality of Emotion*, 146.

³⁹ Karuvelil, “Absolutism to Ultimacy,” 67–73; Peter Goldie, “Freud and the Oceanic Feeling,” in Lemmens and Van Herck, *Religious Emotions*, 219–29, at 226–28.

⁴⁰ Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 151, 156–57.

⁴¹ Norbert Rigali, SJ, “On Presuppositions of Theological Ethics,” *Horizons* 38 (2011): 211–29, at 224; also Richard Gaillardetz, “The Johnson Case and the Practice of Theology,” *Horizons* 38 (2011): 330–37, at 335.

understanding and experiencing the *a posteriori*, historical saving mysteries⁴² that form the church and our lives.

While functioning within their own “existential faith,” most Christians likely will not be able to give affective assent to certain theological propositions that at present have no personal significance for them (e.g., Jesus’ descent into hell). They might give intellectual assent, but they hold this or that proposition in abeyance until such time as they might feel a need to gain some sort of affective appreciation of and participation in what the proposition names. In this vein, after he cites Saint Paul’s verse “Man believes with his heart and so is justified” (Rom 10:10), Pope Benedict XVI observes that “knowing the content to be believed is not sufficient unless the heart . . . is opened.”⁴³

Conceptual Theology

When this is the case, “faith seeking understanding” takes on the distinctive meaning of exploring the objects that are meaningful to us.⁴⁴ For those who have the intellectual inclination, this exploration can become quite conceptual and propositional. At that point, theology, properly speaking, is born. It becomes the conceptualist project of intellectual operations (understanding) that explore who God is and how God has been, is, and will be involved with the church and world.

At this juncture, caution becomes important. The birth of theology can signal the death of existential faith. Indeed, as C. S. Lewis once wrote, theological language “is alien to religion, crippling, omitting nearly all that really matters.”⁴⁵ Likewise Friedrich Nietzsche predicted that a religion that is thoroughly studied as an object of academic learning “will, when the process is at an end, be found to have been destroyed.”⁴⁶ Once revelation becomes propositional—which in itself is wholly appropriate because we are persons with intellects—we can learn the propositions without having the personal encounter with Ultimacy. We can know about God without loving God. More distantly, we can research theological positions without concerning ourselves with whether they are true. Even more distantly, we

⁴² Egan, *Spiritual Exercises*, 79.

⁴³ Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio (Porta Fidei)*, October 11, 2011, §10, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20111011_porta-fidei_en.html.

⁴⁴ Karuvelil, “Absolutism to Ultimacy,” 72.

⁴⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 136.

⁴⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Advantages of History for Life*, cited by Stephen J. Duffy, “A Theology of the Religions and/or a Comparative Theology?” *Horizons* 26 (1999): 111.

can teach and write about such positions while believing they are false. Let me pursue this pattern of a nonaffective theology.

Christianity is sometimes identified with “orthodoxy.” In itself, this is quite understandable. It follows a normal pattern in daily life. From the moment we become conscious in life, we learn from others not only about the things that we experience, but also about things we are not experiencing. Similarly, we learn our first-order faith beliefs through simple propositions told us by parents, teachers, or books. Indeed, as teenagers, we may learn many theological truths, such as original sin or the authority of Scripture, which make little or no difference in our lives. Even for adults many theological truths remain rather irrelevant. Summarizing William James’s view of this process of handing on tradition, Charles Taylor writes: “There are people who have an original, powerful religious experience, which then gets communicated through some kind of institution; it gets handed on to others, and they tend to live it in a kind of second-hand way.”⁴⁷

This propositional faith is not bizarre. Even when we ourselves have directly experienced the value of some object—say, the dignity of being human—we regularly retain that affective evaluation as an intellectual judgment.⁴⁸ Subsequently, we might experience no emotion when we use “the dignity of human beings” as a premise in an argument against sexism. Just as we do multiplication and division by memory rather than going through the process of counting, so also we use memory to intellectually assert theological truths we once affectively learned.

Thus it is not the case that all or even most theological deliberation should be consciously affective or existential. Most theology need not be done on one’s knees. If theologians felt the full emotional impact of what they studied, they would never get past the word “God.” The academic study of Christianity, like the study of other religions, tends to put our existential faith in brackets or in the background. Ideas appropriately get detached from their affective origins and become independent objects for reflection. They are then strung together in ways that allow for full and wide-ranging discourse. Theoretical implications are pursued; objections are anticipated and answered; the views of other thinkers are acknowledged or rejected. Once we have formulated the proposition that “God is almighty,” we can then unemotionally deduce the falsity of “God is impotent.” (The example is ironically chosen, since it exposes a danger of a purely conceptual faith. Here the proposition of God’s omnipotence clashes with the powerful, emotional experience of Christ helpless on the cross.)

⁴⁷ Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today*, 5.

⁴⁸ Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are*, 98.

Most theology proceeds in this mode of conceptual discourse. The major criterion of any theological statement is its adequacy to its object, but an important logical criterion is consistency. Our first response to reading some new theological exposition is likely to be attentive to whether it is in accord with the *Catechism*, Church authority, or Tradition (2 Tim 3:16). If a student were to say that there are ten sacraments or that Jesus was reincarnated through Mary, it is likely that we would immediately think that these claims are “wrong,” and we would do so not because we had recourse to the religious experiences that through our predecessors became orthodox teaching. Rather, we have learned and retained in memory that there are only seven sacraments and that the idea of incarnation is different from reincarnation. We might confidently tell the student that reincarnation belongs to Buddhism, even though we believe no such return to life happens. In these cases, it is likely objective propositional knowledge, not directly existential faith, that is doing the talking in our heads and to the student.

In this mode, theology likely becomes a study of texts, and true religion is in great part a matter of having right beliefs.⁴⁹ Against the advice of some who worried about fostering a propositional faith, Pope John Paul II authorized an official catechism. His *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has 2,865 numbered paragraphs of items that Catholics are supposed to believe. Consistency with it is now regularly cited as the test of faith. This faith, once set down in the *Catechism*, becomes accessible as an impersonal kind of knowledge, available to believers and nonbelievers alike. The subjectivity of the reader is irrelevant to their truth.⁵⁰ The truths of the Catholic faith, we say, are true for everyone, whether they believe them or not.

IV. Orthodoxy in Tension with Orthopathy

I have argued that religious orthopathy includes an affective appreciation and participation in the objects of right belief. For example, a particular dogma like the Exodus becomes personally valued as, say, an impetus to political or economic liberation. In the previous section, however, I argued that theology, as an investigation or study of orthodoxy, can legitimately prescind from orthopathy. Here I want to examine five possible problematizing consequences of that separation. Theology’s propositional knowledge (1) can substitute for existential religious faith; (2) can be ignored by a person’s actual

⁴⁹ Cristina Traina, “The Johnson Case and the Practice of Theology,” *Horizons* 38 (2011): 286–92, at 290; Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 3; Solomon, “Many Dimensions of Religious Emotional Experience,” 234.

⁵⁰ Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, 135; De Sousa, *Emotional Truth*, 29.

existential faith; (3) can weaken or defeat existential faith; (4) can itself be changed by that faith; and (5) can deepen existential faith.

First, it is possible for people to believe that the church's dogmas are true and, accordingly, call themselves Christian even though most if not all of these teachings make little or no difference to what is really important to them. They can agree that there is a God and three persons in God, but these teachings do not affect their lives. If the church were to announce that it had discovered a fourth person in the Trinity or that it had decided to return to an earlier teaching of a binity, they would find this a curious change in orthodoxy, but it would not make a difference in their lives. The theological beliefs of such Christians may be firmly held, but they are like their firm belief that there are penguins in Antarctica.

Such persons may presume that they are good Christians because they do not doubt but rather assert the truths of their Catholic faith. Occasionally they may even become orthodoxy police, condemning anyone who deviates from the church's official orthodoxy, not because they are attached to a contested truth but because they hold that all Catholics are obligated to adhere to whatever the church teaches. These Christians for whom mere orthodox belief suffices should not be confused with an atheist who might acknowledge that the orthodox teachings of the *Catechism* are the truths of the Catholic faith, but still think that these teachings are false.⁵¹ While it may be hoped that the atheist might come to believe that the orthodox propositions are in fact true, the hope for persons for whom a propositional faith substitutes for an existential faith is that they develop at least some of the affections that are appropriate to these propositions.

Second, items of propositional theology may simply be ignored by whatever religious or nonreligious existential faith a person has evolved. For example, people reared in a tribal religion may intellectually assent to the new teachings from the Christian minister, but such new truths do not affect their older, existential faith. Within contemporary Catholic life, the hierarchy at times laments that its positions, say, on the immorality of birth control, are not received. As a result, bishops instruct theologians to devise ever better arguments to overcome people's "confusion." Often, little change occurs.

Such ineffectiveness is not surprising. People's "confusion" may not be due to a lack of clarifying arguments. For example, rightly or wrongly, many married Catholics today have a strong affective commitment to the goodness of making love without worrying about the life-changing

⁵¹ Mara Brecht, "What's the Use of Exclusivism?" *Theological Studies* 73 (2012): 33-54, at 42-44, 53-54.

consequences of an unexpected pregnancy. The origin of that commitment comes from a changed sensibility about marriage that has been fostered by contemporary culture. In the face of that commitment, hierarchical teaching and contrary theological arguments are but winds whistling outside the window. As William James observed, a deep existential faith will usually disregard contrary arguments. In James's own words, rational argument "has the *prestige* undoubtedly, for it has the loquacity, it can challenge you for proofs, and chop logic, and put you down with words. But it will fail to convince or convert you all the same, if your dumb intuitions are opposed to its conclusions. If you have intuitions at all, they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhabits."⁵² Charles Taylor comments: "Rationalism gives an account of only part of our mental life, and one that is 'relatively superficial.'"⁵³ As psychologists and political scientists have concluded from research in their respective spheres, accurate information and argument are often no competition for our prior partisan allegiances.⁵⁴

Before we lament this stubbornness, we should reflect that this same pattern of allegiance to a deep existential faith usually works very much in favor of sustaining Christian belief. The possible truths found in other religions are rarely or barely considered. Furthermore, internal conflicts within the multiple teachings of the Christian faith may not cause much consternation. In such cases, existential Christian faith flourishes, immune to argument. A classic example is the problem of evil. Many Christians recognize the force of the questions that theodicy raises. But they are simply unpersuaded by rational arguments that seem compelling to atheists. Or they willingly content themselves with initially plausible counterarguments such as the inscrutability of God's providence or the consequence of human freedom. Alternatively, they sometimes acknowledge that Christianity has no intellectual answer to the theodicy problem. But then, with an air of reassurance, they affirm that, in the face of evil, Christianity provides programs for prayer, suffering with others, and mitigating that evil.⁵⁵ Whatever the approach, they then continue to believe much as before. The underlying reason for this continuity is that a deep existential faith typically is neither created nor destroyed by arguments. Rather, it is an often inarticulate

⁵² William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 67 (my emphasis).

⁵³ Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today*, 52.

⁵⁴ Ezra Klein, "Unpopular Mandate: Why Do Politicians Reverse Their Positions?" *New Yorker*, June 25, 2012, 30-33; Frijda et al., "Influence of Emotions on Beliefs," 3.

⁵⁵ Matthew Eggemeier, "Christianity or Nihilism?" *Horizons* 39 (2012): 7-26, at 19-25.

affective appreciation of and participation in profound or encompassing goods or in the Good. The evidence for these goods or Good is given in immediate experience and thus not easily refuted by argument.

Third, and contrary to what has just been said, propositional arguments sometimes do undermine existential faith. These arguments may originate outside traditional orthodox teaching. For example, the Darwinian discovery of evolution, now accepted by the Vatican, still jostles with the church's teaching on creation, monogenism, and original sin. The arguments may also come from within traditional teaching. For example, the internal incoherence of biblical texts discovered in the course of the quest for the historical Jesus has been known to undermine some scholars' existential faith.

We are rational beings, and we sometimes, though hardly always, reverse course in life because of the power of new information or contrary reasons. To be sure, we have to work harder to change our minds because of such challenges than to assimilate information that confirms our established beliefs. But we can do that work.⁵⁶ The deeper the belief, the harder the work.

Given what has been said in the previous few paragraphs about the normal resilience of existential religious faith, how does such change come about? We not only know the truth, but we also love the truth. Indeed, it is generally because we feel that it is good to know the truth that we pursue it.⁵⁷ Conversely, when reason is conflicted, we experience cognitive dissonance, which itself is an affective state. Emotions accompany thought and serve as feedback. Negative or dissonant feedback serves as evidence casting doubt on what we have believed.⁵⁸ At this point we may give up on the pursuit of the truth, with the feeling that there is no good to be obtained by further search. Or we might preemptively substitute ersatz explanations such as "mystery" or "paradox," by which we quiet our sense of contradiction rather than face the aporia. In either of these two solutions, we nevertheless subtly weaken the structure of loves involved in our existential faith.⁵⁹ An accumulation of such disturbances can finally prepare us to abandon such faith because it no longer supports our engagement with life.

⁵⁶ Klaus Fiedler and Herbert Bless, "The Formation of Beliefs at the Interface of Affective and Cognitive Processes," in Frijda et al., *Emotions and Beliefs*, 144-70, at 164-65.

⁵⁷ Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 73.

⁵⁸ De Sousa, *Emotional Truth*, 157-65; Fiedler and Bless, "Formation of Beliefs," 144-49; Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 98-100, 176-78; Gerald Clore and Karen Gasper, "Feeling Is Believing," in Frijda et al., *Emotions and Beliefs*, 10-44, at 21-23.

⁵⁹ Eddie Harmon-Jones, "A Cognitive Dissonance Theory Perspective on the Role of Emotion in the Maintenance and Change of Beliefs and Attitudes," in Frijda et al., *Emotions and Beliefs*, 185-211, at 185-93; Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 174.

Alternatively, we can do the hard work of resolving the tension. We reflect until we attain a “feeling” or “sense” of both adequacy and coherence in our thoughts and beliefs. The resolution may be a new understanding of belief and thereby a greater confidence in our underlying deep faith. But the resolution may be to give up on that faith because it no longer situates us well in reality. Thus, on the one hand, many Christians have learned to navigate the contradictions of Scripture, tradition, and authority, and they thereby develop the assurance that they have come to a more honest, even a more mature faith. They have put away the things of a child; even though they now see things somewhat darkly, they are confident that they now act out of a deeper faith (1 Cor 13:11–12). On the other hand, others conclude that the reason “we see things darkly, as in a mirror” is because there is nothing to be seen but our own reflection, projected out on the universe. The former, for example, happily and intelligently interpret Genesis’s first chapters as a “myth” that reveals something profoundly true in a way that literal statements cannot.⁶⁰ The latter conclude that the text’s mythical nature exposes the unreliability of the Bible, which had till then been confidently taken to be the “word of God.” In short, new information and argument can destroy an existential faith.

Fourth, in some cases, an existential faith discovers and develops goods that are outside what orthodoxy has proposed, but then these goods change official orthodoxy. The primary example of this change in orthodoxy, of course, occurred with Jesus. First, the disciples fell in love with Jesus. But the then-current understanding of the messiah, so well represented in Peter’s rejection of Jesus’ prediction of his own death, could not admit a messiah who dies on a cross. For the disciples who experienced the paschal mystery, this reigning orthodoxy had to be dramatically altered. Because of that challenge to and change in orthodoxy, these apostles (to use current language) were excommunicated. Then, as we know, their own discoveries were eventually formulated into a new orthodoxy.

These changes in orthodoxy are often described as development of doctrine. The developments can be relatively minor or, as we have just seen, massive. Sometimes such change occurs when Christians develop an insight or rational connection that had not been seen before.⁶¹ The historian John Noonan, however, declares that “it would be preposterous to imagine that all these profound changes occurred simply by the acquiring of deeper

⁶⁰ Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 205.

⁶¹ William Barbieri, Jr., “Value of Experience for a Worldly Church,” in *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, ed. Charles Taylor *et al.* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), 109–26, at 114–18.

insights.”⁶² Rather, change happens when the underlying set of affections has been stressed and then reconfigured by some new emotions, such as love of Jesus and the marvel of the Resurrection. Put simply, change in doctrine happens when a standard belief no longer coheres with the evaluations given in affective experience.

Challenges to orthodoxy continue to happen. The American Revolution set in motion first locally and then throughout the world affective aspirations that the Catholic Church denounced, then accommodated, and finally embraced as part of orthodoxy.⁶³ A prime example of this occurred when the evolving American sensibility of the importance of religious freedom eventually changed the Church’s long-standing condemnation of religious freedom.⁶⁴ Another example currently in play has to do with an appreciation for the equality of all persons, a sentiment set in motion by the Declaration of Independence. This theme is at odds with the Church’s current teaching on women’s ordination. When the old arguments were found to be sexist, the Vatican tried to meet this challenge with new theological rationalizations. These new arguments will most likely remain ineffectual as long as they do not deal with the underlying thwarted aspirations and sense of frustration.

Fifth, it would be a mistake to conclude that conceptual statements of faith set down in the *Catechism* and worked out in theology must remain mere propositional faith. For us social beings, most of our knowledge, not just theological knowledge, is derivative; but that does not prevent us from also having an actual experience of our world. We may learn from our parents about dogs, but thereafter we can directly enjoy playing Frisbee in the park with Fido. A similar pattern occurs in Christian life. Catechetical and theological expositions tell us about a multitude of religious objects. We can then affectively experience the relevant religious values. The community aids us in coming to this emotional appreciation. Each human community not only develops and hands on its own truths and practices, but it also engenders in its members a set of affections appropriate to those truths and practices. Christians similarly develop and pass on a rich variety of religious emotions directed to their religious objects. Indeed, without prior religious instruction,

⁶² John Noonan, “Development in Moral Doctrine,” *Theological Studies* 54 (1993): 662–77, at 673.

⁶³ José Casanova, “Church and World,” in Taylor et al., *Church and People*, 127–36, at 127.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., statements from Pope Pius IX’s encyclical *Quanta Cura* (December 8, 1864) and the appended “Syllabus of Errors,” in *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum/Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, ed. Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann, 43rd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), DH 2890, 2915.

there are many religious emotions we could not come to feel, such as reverence before the monstrance at a Benediction service.⁶⁵

Thus theological learning and existential faith can mutually enhance one another. Theology provides religious “objects” for our affections, and the study of doctrine increases the content for those affections. The affections then grow and enable us to participate more in these objects. For example, the doctrine of creation becomes a doctrine about God’s activity now, and we might feel ourselves invited to participate in the ongoing new creation manifest in Christ’s life and in the transformation of cultures.

Reciprocally, Christian affections inspire further investigation of doctrine as an exercise of love. Strong emotions freshly awakened by one doctrine incline us to closer attention to other doctrines. Christians who sing with feeling “Holy God, we praise thy Name” become more apt to understand how God is *mysterium tremendum et fascinatum*. They may then also be moved to greater reverence before the Eucharist, since emotions make us more attentive to similar qualities found in different objects. The similarity in emotion then helps weld these two together and make them attractive as topics for further academic reflection.⁶⁶

Our emotions, when properly functioning, engage the multidimensional values involved in every religious doctrine. Over time, this engagement can increase; that is, through affective engagement with doctrine, we should in the course of a lifetime experience a new “depth” or a new “insight” that, when put in words, may be exactly the same old words we have always used. To put it differently, the theological statement may remain the same, but these words take on new meaning—that is, they are experienced in a richer affective way. This “deepened” appreciation refers to three interrelated changes: we “recognize” more of the religious value resident in the dogma; we reflectively give ourselves over more to its own dynamism; we are more changed by its significance in our lives.

As this process continues, our study may in turn require us not only to develop new or deeper emotions, but also to restructure our set of emotions, our *ordo amoris*. For example, where once fear before God the lawgiving judge may have organized our lives, now trust in the incarnate or saving Christ may become dominant. This “emotional regestaling,” to use Ronald De Sousa’s phrase, is what we call conversion.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ De Sousa, *Rationality of Emotion*, 249–52, 256; Frijda and Mesquita, “Beliefs through Emotions,” 56–57; Deonna and Teroni, *Emotions*, 99–100.

⁶⁶ Clore and Gasper, “Feeling Is Believing,” 28–29. This process carries danger too, since conflation can lead to mistakes; for example, reverence for God and the Church leads, all too frequently, to ecclesiolatry.

⁶⁷ De Sousa, *Rationality of Emotion*, 188; De Sousa, *Emotional Truth*, 216; Solomon, “Many Dimensions of Religious Emotional Experience,” 242; Doran, *Psychic Conversion*, 157.

V. Lack of Orthopathy Disconnects Orthodoxy from Orthopraxy

Every reflective Christian is aware that there is often a disconnect between what we think and how we behave.⁶⁸ Liberation theologians complain that we need “a new way of conceiving the objective of theology: it can no longer be considered as solely a speculative discipline; it also assumes an eminently ‘praxical’ dimension.” They argue that “the goal of theology is not simply to understand, but to understand in order to transform the reality of oppression, violence, and sin.”⁶⁹ My point in this article is that those who make such pleas usually do not recognize that, in good part, it is the lack of affections that leads to the disconnect. Their oversight reflects an incomplete theological anthropology. We will not move to overcome oppression simply by studying it more carefully; rather, we will be moved to action by anger or by some other emotion directed at the injustice. The step from understanding to practice, in both personal and public action, almost always takes place through emotions.⁷⁰ Well-reasoned arguments themselves usually are impotent unless they correlate with human affectivity.

There are at least five ways for a split to occur between doctrine and practice. The first two are rather benign; the remaining three highlight the role of affections in connecting doctrine and practice.

First, knowledge and practice are two distinct types of activity. Both types of activity can function independently of the other. Our interest in discovering the truth should not be reduced to pragmatic concerns. Our pragmatic concerns—for example, to help a sick neighbor or to recite the correct formulas at the altar—are not primarily matters of truth seeking. Still, it should be noted that both types of activity are rooted in affection, and without affection neither would likely occur. In other words, if we had no “interest,” we would exercise neither our intellectual nor our practical abilities. Rather, we “care” about the truth, and we “care” about our practices.⁷¹ It takes a third care to want to put a given doctrine into some form of practice in our lives.

The second and most ordinary reason for a split is that there may be no occasion to put into practice the truth we know. A recently widowed woman may know well church teaching on marriage, but she has no spouse with whom to engage in the sacramental ministry of sexually

⁶⁸ Deonna and Teroni, *Emotions*, 54.

⁶⁹ Gioacchino Campese, CS, “The Irruption of Migrants,” *Theological Studies* 73 (2012): 3–32, at 6; also Brecht, “What’s the Use of Exclusivism?,” 41–46.

⁷⁰ Eugene Sadler-Smith, “Before Virtue: Biology, Brain, Behavior, and the ‘Moral Sense,’” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 22 (2012): 351–76, at 353–54; Frijda, “Influence of Emotions on Beliefs,” 3.

⁷¹ De Sousa, *Emotional Truth*, 7–8.

expressing love and bearing life. Even in this example, however, we can see how affections might move to practice. Our affections are directed not only to existent objects, but also to potential or even imaginary objects. So, this widow might begin to feel again marital affections, and these affections could incline her to seek a potential partner. In general, our affections can move us to create opportunities to put ideas into practice.

Third, for other cases, Plato rightly offers the explanation that the failure to turn theory into practice springs from ignorance. No one, he surprisingly holds, would knowingly do what is bad.⁷² We can get at his insight when we remember that sometimes it is said that if we *really* understood what was happening, we would act differently. While this distinction between knowing and really knowing may refer only to such matters as having all the facts or to ignorance of the larger picture, it typically refers to the absence of affections appropriate to the occasion. The explanation of ignorance also fits those many cases where we affectively focus on some good while keeping from our affective consciousness the evil involved. Not wanting to feel bad about ourselves, we self-deceptively attend only to what will uphold our self-esteem.⁷³ In each case, orthopathy is needed if we are to do what, in better moments, we know to be the right act.

Fourth, as Aristotle argues, weakness of will is an explanation for why we do not put our theoretical understanding into practice. We may agree with the theology of Sunday Eucharist, yet our warm bed or our annoyance at the turgid liturgical prayers keeps us from making the decision to go to church. Or, we agree with the Church's teaching on the universal destination of property, but we do not find the strength to overcome our attachment to our daily Starbucks caramel macchiato. While there are virtues of the will, which means that will's weakness can be partially remedied by practice and more practice,⁷⁴ a major source of this Aristotlean *akrasia* is the lack of sufficiently strong or appropriate emotions.

The fifth and most lamentable reason for a split between doctrine and practice has to do with sin. As Saint Paul observed, we can "know God's decree" but still sin (Rom 1:32). We can be great moral theologians, and yet be great sinners. We might have known what befits our relation to God,

⁷² De Sousa, *Rationality of Emotion*, 161.

⁷³ Edward Vacek, SJ, "Do 'Good People' Need Confession? Self-Deception and the Sacrament of Honesty," in *America*, February 25, 2002, 11-15; Daniel Goleman, *Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985).

⁷⁴ De Sousa, *Rationality of Emotion*, 199-20; Robert Roberts, "Will Power and the Virtues," in *Vice and Virtue in Everyday Life*, ed. Christina Sommers and Fred Sommers (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993), 266-88.

even as “our sinful passions . . . were at work in our members to bear fruit for death” (Rom 7:5). The remedy that is needed is not more knowledge, but a transformation by an appropriate set of affections (Rom 6:17)—that is, by healthy, nonsinful passions. Sin flows from a disorder of the heart, and it is rectified when the heart is properly devoted to God, self, neighbor, and world. We might call this “orthokardia.”

Conclusion

I have tried to show that the propositions of orthodoxy require orthopathy in order to become integrated in a Christian’s life. Put in the lapidary expression of the great American divine, Jonathan Edwards, “True religion is in great part a matter of the affections.”⁷⁵ As cognitions, emotions reveal the values involved in objects named in orthodox propositions. As connectors, emotions allow us to participate in these values and to be modified by that participation. For example, the pronouncement in Genesis that creation is good is not just a first premise in an argument that we should not abuse creation. Rather, it points to an affective experience of the goodness of creation as well as a sharing in God’s own affirmation of creation. This affective process is our sanctification. As Ronald De Sousa writes, “True moral (and religious) progress is emotional progress, governed by a regulative ideal of fully comprehensive, adequate emotional response”⁷⁶—in other words, orthopathy.

Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:2 (NRSV) prioritizes orthopathy over both orthodoxy and orthopraxy. First, “if I . . . understand all mysteries and all knowledge, . . . but do not have love, I am nothing.” Put in terms of the images used above, if I know and understand every dogma in the *Catechism*, but do not have the emotion of love, then I am nothing. Paul does not deny that, without love, we might competently expound theological dogmas. But religiously this in itself counts for nothing.

Second, Saint Paul continues that orthopraxy is by itself also worthless for us: “If I have faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.” Paul does not deny that, without love, we might change the world for the better. Indeed, Paul writes that we might give away all our possessions to the poor and even sacrifice our own life for others. But if we do so without love, we gain nothing.

⁷⁵ Jonathan Edwards, “Nature and Importance of the Affections,” *Religious Affections*, ed. John Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 93–124; Riis and Woodhead, *Sociology of Religious Emotion*, 56–57.

⁷⁶ De Sousa, *Emotional Truth*, 136, 139.

Thus, both orthodoxy and orthopraxis require orthopathy. My theological impetus for this article is that theologians too often ignore this aspect of Christian life. They speak only of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, of the exercise of intellect and will. An adequate theological anthropology requires orthopathy, the exercise of the heart. Furthermore, theological silence or even denial of the emotions can in fact be spiritually harmful, such as when people are told that emotions or feelings have nothing to do with love or with religion in general. Such admonitions turn people away from the very heart of both morality and religion.

Humans are not so integrated that orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy automatically or easily cohere. Fortunately, in a well-lived Christian life, they mutually aid one another. They usually do so in a rhythmic way. Sometimes one, sometimes another might rightly predominate. But they each fill out the other and thus contribute to our growth in the Spirit. Through the Spirit, we grow in an affective appreciation of some teaching we already know. Through the Spirit, we grow in affective appreciation of some ritual that we have long practiced. Reciprocally, through the Spirit, some new teaching or some new practice stimulates new or deeper emotions in us, and then we grow in orthopathy. When we do so, we are developing *orthokardia*, the heart of Christian life.